Dear Lexie,

You are the Master of Your Fate

I am writing this article from "bear country" in the mountains of Virginia. My fellow Sligo pastors and our families are here for a time of reflection, re-visioning and relationship building. We spent some time yesterday watching the movie, Invictus, which is the story of how Nelson Mandela after spending 27 years in prison became president of South Africa and united a nation that was divided by decades of mistrust, violence and unjust legislation.

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Upcoming Events

Future events include:

- **CONCERT LINE-UP!**: We have a line-up of great concerts for you to invite your friends and family to at Sligo Church:
This Sabbath:  
August 15, 2015

Speaker:  
Pastor Charles A. Tapp  
"God's Good Work Part IV: The Secret of Contentment"

Special Musical Guest:  
Duawne Starling

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National Christian Choir Sept 26, Jaime Jorge Oct 10, Sandi Patty Nov 14!

- Prayer Gathering (every Wednesday night @ 7PM)

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I am writing this article from “bear country” in the mountains of Virginia. My fellow Sligo pastors and our families are here for a time of reflection, re-visioning and relationship building. We spent some time yesterday watching the movie, Invictus, which is the story of how Nelson Mandela after spending 27 years in prison became president of South Africa and united a nation that was divided by decades of mistrust, violence and unjust legislation.

What Nelson Mandela did to change South Africa from its Apartheid legacy to what is now known as a “rainbow nation” is the subject of many books, so I won’t take time to elaborate on all of that in this short article. Instead I will highlight three qualities of the great man depicted in the movie that provide practical examples for us in our Christian walk.

Having become president of South Africa, Mandela was in a position to take revenge on his enemies, but he chose to forgive them and called on his supporters to do the same to their enemies and former oppressors. This was arguably the most public expression in modern times of heeding Jesus’ injunction to love our enemies and bless those that curse us. It is not human to do this; it takes an orientation of mind that is not of this world to overlook and forgive the actions of those who have caused us pain and loss. Yet, this is exactly what all genuine Christians are called to do. It is in forgiving others that we come closest to being like Jesus, who asks us to practice forgiveness as a way of life when he taught his disciples to pray, “And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.” (Matt 6:12).

Another lesson that is hard to miss in the movie is the way in which Mandela treated people. Whatever their rank, color, nationality, level of education or social status, he treated every person he met as his equal. He spoke down to no one. He treated his secretary, the domestic assistant, the captain of his country’s rugby team, a visiting foreign dignitary with respect, courtesy and deference. Contrast this attitude with the attitude of some in our society who think that their wealth, fame, education or position somehow gives them the right to treat others as their inferior. The Apostle Paul reminds us that we should never assume a position of superiority in dealing with any other human being: “Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves.” (Romans 12:10).

The final point from the movie that I will share with you is based on its title, which comes from a Victorian poem titled, Invictus, written by William Henley. Mandela attributed his fortitude during his incarceration to the lessons he learnt from this poem, which incidentally I had to learn during high school:

Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed.
Beyond this place of wrath and tears
Looms but the Horror of the shade,
And yet the menace of the years
Finds and shall find me unafraid.

It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate,
I am the captain of my soul.

God has placed in each one of us the capacity, with His empowering, to rise above the circumstances in which we find ourselves to achieve that which might surprise us. Do not allow yourselves to be bound by disappointments, setbacks, broken dreams, fears or even personal disasters. You are the master of your fate. Your destiny is in your own hands and not another.

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