

Forgiveness

Hello! Brother, sister, acquaintance or friend,
It's 2:30 in the morning, and here we go again!
It is with great joy, yes, joy at its best
When my Lord stirs my mind and heart, and I just can't seem to rest.
His Spirit urges me to seek from His word and His heart what He would have for you;
Nothing but His very best
That you may experience His perfect rest.
Many times He will have me read, but most often it is to pray
About all the things you have shared that month, that week, or just that day!
Sometimes there are things of great joy,
Happiness and victory, to which we can say, "Oh, boy!"
But our Lord most often awakens me to seek
Wisdom for how to deal with loneliness, guilt, sorrow, shame -
Sometimes I feel guilty, because these feelings don't seem to have a name.
You see, we all have emotions, and some can lead to pride, and some can lead to shame.

On this particular morning, 1/30/01, now about 3:00 am, the Lord has led me to think on His instructions on prayer. If you remember the story, the disciples asked Jesus to teach them how to pray. In chapter 6 of Matthew, Jesus instructed them how to pray, and in verse 9 He gives the disciples' prayer. Two verses stand out to me this morning: verse 10, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." and verse 12, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." It seems to me God is very clear on this one thing, that we learn and put into practice one of the hardest things there is. That is to forgive others for anything they have done to us, just as we expect our Heavenly Father to forgive us completely. This must be done on earth, as the finished work is done in heaven.

If we want real peace in our lives, we must be a forgiving people. You may ask, "Why should I? You don't know what they did to me!!" Maybe not, but I know that the Bible teaches that we are to love the sinner, yet hate the sin that they do. Forgive that person, turn them over to God, and pray that they will repent and confess their sin to a loving God who can completely forgive them, just as He has forgiven you! Friend, stop - I want you to think and picture in your mind Jesus, Creator of all things, of earth and everything in it, even man. The picture is this: He has been illegally arrested and tried, stripped naked, beaten, scourged, spit upon, had His beard ripped out and been slapped in the face, mocked and laughed to scorn, and had thorns pounded into His head. Then He was barely clothed, and made to walk through the streets with a sign hung around His neck saying He was a blasphemer and a liar - "the King of the Jews." He was made to carry His cross down the Via Dolorosa (the Way of Sorrows) to Calvary - outside of Jerusalem at the city dump. There He was stripped naked again and was nailed to the timbers with large spikes through His hands and feet. In Isaiah 52:14 it tells us that His appearance was so beaten that you couldn't tell it was a man! The cross was then erected by dropping it in a hole, and as it hit bottom, the jolt tore all His bones out of joint (Psalm 22:14). Here is the picture of the Creator of heaven and earth nailed to a tree, hanging between heaven and earth, put there by His own creation! What is His cry from the cross? "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." That, my beloved, is real forgiveness lived out before us.

When we live out forgiveness in our hearts, the Lord will bless us with real peace and comfort, because we don't have to wonder anymore if He truly forgives us all our sins. Our hearts will be right with Him when we are able to forgive the person who has sinned against us. I beg you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you forgive any and every one who has caused you

pain, and turn them over to God. The Bible reads, "'Vengeance is Mine; I will repay,' says the Lord." (Romans 12:19) My Beloved, leave it with Him. You are only hurting yourself by carrying all the pain and bitterness that unforgiveness breeds. Pray and plead for God's grace and mercy as He gives you a softened heart of flesh that can forgive!

Then my dear Brother or Sister, you must forgive yourself for all the time that has been wasted in bitterness and hatred and pain. Yes, my friend, forgiveness is one of the greatest lessons taught in the Bible. God said, "My grace is sufficient for you." (II Corinthians 12:9)

May God bless you as you put forgiveness into practice.

In His love and service,

Pastor Tom