

Sermon Outline

FORGIVENESS MADE POSSIBLE | Paul Merenda

Bible reading: Philemon (Page 1702)

1. Paul reminds Philemon of his love for all of God's people (verses 4-7)

2. Paul appeals to Philemon to forgive Onesimus (verses 8-16)

"The ground is level at the foot of the cross" – Billy Graham

3. Paul demonstrates the sacrificial love of Jesus that brings forgiveness (verses 17-19)

4. Jesus makes forgiveness possible and expected of Christians

5. Forgiveness is costly but worth it

6. Forgiveness cannot be forced

Corrie Ten Boom's Costly Forgiveness

Corrie Ten Boom and her sister Betsie were Christians who had been arrested and sent to Ravensbrück concentration camp for concealing Jews in their home during the Nazi occupation of Holland in World War 2. They were inhumanely treated as you can imagine, beaten, starved, naked, cold and left to die.

Corrie survived though and after World War 2 she travelled all around the world giving talks on the love and forgiveness of Jesus. Suddenly, one day after such a talk at a church, to her shock she was approached by one of her former Nazi captors.

He said to her 'You mentioned Ravensbrück in your talk, I was a guard in there.' 'But since that time, I have become a Christian. I know that God has forgiven me for the cruel things I did there, but I would like to hear it from your lips as well. Fräulein'—his hand came out—'will you forgive me?'

'I stood there—I whose sins had every day to be forgiven—and could not do it. Betsie had died in that place—could he erase her slow terrible death simply by asking? I wrestled with the most difficult thing I had ever had to do'.

'For I had to do it—I knew that. "If you do not forgive men their trespasses," Jesus says, "neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses."'

"Still I stood there with coldness clutching my heart. I knew forgiveness is not an emotion. Forgiveness is an act of the will, and the will can function regardless of the temperature of the heart".

'Jesus, help me!' she prayed silently. 'I can lift my hand. I can do that much. You supply the feeling,'

And so woodenly, mechanically, I thrust my hand into the one stretched out to me. And as I did, an incredible thing took place. The current started in my shoulder, raced down my arm, sprang into our joined hands. And then this healing warmth seemed to flood my whole being, bringing tears to my eyes.

'I forgive you, brother!' I cried. 'With all my heart!'

For a long moment, we grasped each other's hands, the former guard and the former prisoner.

I had never known God's love so intensely as I did then".

Adapted from Corrie Ten Boom, Guideposts, accessed 2 June 2022
<<https://www.guideposts.org/better-living/positive-living/guideposts-classics-corrie-ten-boom-forgiveness>>