



guidelines for living

a 5 minute message

October 18, 2017

“WE CONTINUE TO LOVE”

I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more. Isaiah 43:25

The year was 1976. The place: Czechoslovakia. Alan Travers told about it in a Trans World Radio publication. He was ministering in a church which had been infiltrated by Communist agents who reported everything that was said and done. He wrote, "One of the men in the church was pointed out to me as the government spy who would report to the police the next day everything that was said in church that morning. I was not surprised that there was such an informer there, but what did surprise me was that during the morning prayer session this man stood up and prayed and the congregation joined in with him."

Do you have the picture? The spy was actually a member of the church, and a family man. Every Monday morning he went to the local police and ratted on fellow Christians. The people knew he was an informer, and they also knew that what he was doing compromised every one of them. How could you love and accept such a person. Why not expose him as a traitor and throw him out? No wonder Travers was puzzled.

"In my amazement," he wrote, "I asked why he was so well accepted by the fellow believers." And the response was, "None of us knows what we would have done in the same circumstances; and so we just continue to love him."

There is no human logic to forgiveness. It transcends the mentality of our sinful nature that says, "Do it to the one who hurt you, just like he did it to you!"

We live in a broken, sinful world. Our failures and our wrongs become wedges that separate us and turn love to bitterness and hatred. In the natural, there are plenty of reasons to hate, few to forgive. Hatred creates separation but forgiveness brings healing and restoration.

A 12-year-old girl living in Shanghai overheard her parents talking about an uncle who stole most of the inheritance which should have come to the father. One day she said, "Mother, Jesus said that if someone wants to take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. We are Christians, and even if Uncle has taken our portion we should not



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talk badly about him." Her mother was touched by what she said, and through this child, God spoke to her heart.

A year later, the uncle was diagnosed with cancer of the stomach, and the Christian family went to visit, encouraging him to let Jesus Christ come into his life. The result: Before he died, both he and his family came to faith in Jesus Christ.

You see, it was Christ who provided the model for forgiveness, and He also makes it very clear that our individual, personal sins against Him are greater than anyone can ever perpetrate against us. Because of that, He taught we have no right to not forgive others.

When General James Edward Ogelthorpe once told John Wesley, "I never forgive," Wesley replied, "Then I hope, sir, that you never sin." Why? Because sooner or later, every person needs to be forgiven.

When the disciples came to Jesus and asked Him to teach them to pray, He gave them the prayer known today as "The Lord's Prayer." In this, Jesus stressed the importance of forgiving our enemies as God forgives us. This disturbed the disciples, and Jesus read that on their faces for He immediately added, "For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins" (Matthew 6:14-15).

He who refuses to forgive, burns the bridge over which he himself must someday pass. Wise is the person who learns that lesson, and the sooner we learn it, the better off we are. Think about it.

Resource reading: Matthew 6:1-15