

# Forgiveness is Key

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Forgiveness is the key that unlocks the door of resentment, and the handcuffs of hatred. It is the power that breaks the chains of bitterness and the shackles of selfishness. Corrie ten Boom wrote this, she was a Dutch watchmaker and later a Christian writer and public speaker. Her family helped many Jewish people escape from the Nazis during the Holocaust in World War II by hiding them in their home.

She believed her family carried out the actions by following the will of God. They were caught, arrested and sent to the Ravensbruck concentration camp, where she and her sister shared hope in God with the other prisoners. She went through many hard trials and her efforts of converting others along the way has helped bring many souls to Jesus.

The Lord began speaking, *"Corrie was a good example of how My People should behave during war and in times of trials. Forgiveness is key, you must recognize your own sin by coming to Me and seeking forgiveness, and then forgive all those who have hurt you to uproot all the bitterness and resentment from inside your heart. My love and compassion for you is so great and steadfast that I do not deal with you according to your sins, they wash away when you come to Me repentant and asking for forgiveness. I truly will remember them no more.*

*"Your pleas for My mercy is humbling and pleasing to Me and helps restore Our relationship, rather than when fellowship has been hindered due to sin. My dear ones, genuine faith always involves repentance and true repentance gives rise to unwavering faith. When your sincere repentance is offered to Me, then it allows My Spirit to renew your mind and this change in perspective causes you to trust in Me and provides for a greater indwelling of the Holy Spirit."*

And here I would like to share with you Corrie ten Boom's story of how she forgave her former captor.

"It was in a church in Munich where I was speaking in 1947 that I saw him, a balding heavysset man in a gray overcoat, a brown felt hat clutched between his hands. One moment I saw the overcoat and the brown hat, the next, a blue uniform and a visored cap with its skull and crossbones.

"Memories of the concentration camp came back with a rush: the huge room with its harsh overhead lights, the pathetic pile of dresses and shoes in the center of the floor, the shame of walking naked past this man. I could see my sister's frail form ahead of me, ribs sharp beneath the parchment of skin. Betsie and I had been arrested for concealing Jews in our home during the Nazi occupation of Holland. This man had been a guard at Ravensbruck concentration camp where we were sent.

"Now he was in front of me, hand thrust out: 'A fine message, fraulein! How good it is to know that, as you say, all our sins are at the bottom of the sea!'

"It was the first time since my release that I had been face to face with one of my captors and my blood

seemed to freeze.

"You mentioned Ravensbruck in your talk," he was saying, 'I was a guard there. But since that time,' he went on, '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. 'Fraulein,' again the hand came out, 'will you forgive me?'

"And I stood there, and could not. Betsie had died in that place, could he erase her slow terrible death simply for the asking? It could not have been many seconds that he stood there, hand held out, but to me it seemed hours as I wrestled with the most difficult thing I had ever had to do. For I had to do it, I knew that.

"The message that God forgives has a prior condition: that we forgive those who have injured us. *'If you do not forgive men their trespasses,'* Jesus says, *'neither will Your Father in Heaven forgive your trespasses.'* Still I stood there with the coldness clutching my heart. But forgiveness is an act of the will, and the will can function regardless of the temperature of the heart. 'Jesus, help me!' I 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 former prisoner. I had never known God's love so intensely as I did in that moment! Amen!"

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