

BIOGRAPHY: CORRIE TEN BOOM

(1892 – 1983)

Saturday, October 25

Matthew 6:14 For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

15 But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

Corrie ten Boom and her family were arrested by the Nazis on February 28, 1944 for hiding Jews in their home. Corrie and her sister Betsie were sent to the notorious Ravensbruck death camp. After great suffering and abuse, Betsie died on December 16, 1944. Twelve days later Corrie was accidentally released due to a clerical error. After World War II ended, Corrie traveled the world with the message of the forgiveness of Christ. In 1975, she recorded her story in the book *The Hiding Place*.

She relates a story about an encounter she had in Munich in 1946. She had finished speaking in a church about the forgiveness of God when she saw a man approaching to shake her hand. Although he did not remember her, Corrie immediately recognized him. He was one of the guards at Ravensbrück.

“It 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 skin.”¹

How could she forgive this man! She did not take his hand. “You mentioned Ravensbrück in your talk,” he said. “I was a guard 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. Fraulein, will you forgive me?”

In that moment, Corrie ten Boom did not have the strength to forgive. But she remembered Jesus’ words – “If you do not forgive men their trespasses neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses.” Later she wrote about that moment:

“And still I stood there with the coldness clutching my heart. But forgiveness is not an emotion—I knew that too. 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 the former prisoner. I had never known God’s love so intensely as I did then.”

Though she confessed to still struggling with forgiveness from time to time, Corrie ten Boom understood what Jesus meant in The Lord’s Prayer. Why is forgiveness so important? She said, “Forgiveness is the key that unlocks the door of resentment and the handcuffs of hatred. It is a power that breaks the chains of bitterness and the shackles of selfishness...Forgiveness is setting the prisoner free, only to find out that the prisoner was me.”²

¹ <https://www.guideposts.org/better-living/positive-living/guideposts-classics-corrie-ten-boom-forgiveness>

² https://www.azquotes.com/author/1659-Corrie_Ten_Boom