

Pk's Perspectives ... Take Up the Gauntlet

Have you ever heard the phrase, "I'm throwing down the gauntlet?" Today the phrase "throw down the gauntlet" means to challenge or confront someone, but in its earliest use it wasn't meant as a metaphor, but was a physical action intended to issue a formal challenge to a duel. The word itself comes from the French word "gantelet," and referred to the heavy, armored gloves worn by medieval knights. In an age when chivalry and personal honor were paramount, throwing a gauntlet at the feet of an enemy or opponent was considered a grave insult that could only be answered with personal combat, and the offended party was expected to "take up the gauntlet" to acknowledge and accept the challenge.

So consider this newsletter article my personal gauntlet and know that I'm throwing my gauntlet down at your feet; not because you are my enemy or opponent but because you are my brothers and sisters. Yes, I mean to challenge and confront you but not for the purpose of initiating a physical confrontation or duel. I'm challenging you to face up to that dreaded relational issue that is stored like a 55 gallon drum of toxic waste in your soul.

I'm certain that almost every person reading these words is harboring a fractured relationship that has yet to be set right and as a result is quietly leaking anger or resentment or vengefulness or bitterness into the tender fibers of your heart. I'm sure you have your reasons for choosing to ignore the broken relationship: "I was in the right, he/she was in the wrong" or "He/she is going to have to take the first step and ask for forgiveness before I forgive" or "I'm too ashamed to address the issue after so much time has passed" or "It's best to let sleeping dogs lie" or "What if she/he is unwilling to forgive me?". Whatever your rationale, know that someone somewhere has already used the same reasoning to avoid the issue of resolving relational conflict and has suffered greatly from the poison seeping into their heart.

The Bible says "Work at living in peace with everyone, and work at living a holy life, for those who are not holy will not see the Lord. Look after each other so that none of you fails to receive the grace of God. Watch out that no poisonous root of bitterness grows up to trouble you, corrupting many." (Hebrews 12:14/15) Forgiveness is found at the core of living in peace with another human being. Seeking forgiveness and offering forgiveness is one of the purest fruits of the new life we have in Christ. 2 Corinthians 5:19 reminds us "For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people's sins against them. And He gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation." There is no moment in life when we more closely resemble Jesus than when we set right a fractured relationship, when we apply the healing balm of the Cross to the wounds we've incurred in our personal relationships.

The forgiveness Christ offers is neither deserved nor earned nor triggered by any appropriate human behavior (Romans 5:8-10); the healing forgiveness we have received from Christ is complete, unconditional, and permanent. Christ was absolutely 'in the right' yet He came to us offering reconciliation. Christ was absolutely 'in the right' but He was willing to assume the debt of our misdeeds in order to set right the relationship between God and man. Jesus desires that we follow His example of forgiveness by bringing the same forgiveness into the fractured relationships of our lives.

Will you take up the gauntlet? Renounce your rationales, excuses, and decide to not allow another day to pass without taking your first halting step to reconciling that fractured relationship. Yep, it'll be tough going in the beginning. There may be tears. You will sense how desperately you need the Holy Spirit to strengthen you. But reconciliation will lead you to peace; you will notice the absence of persistent heartache; and you will know the pleasure of your Father. It's worth it!! Take up the gauntlet.
Cya Sunday, PK.