



Food for Thought: A Father's Love

"And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins."

~Mark 11:25

Over the past year, I have been slowly simmering over my relationship with my son. For all intents and purposes, at least from my perspective, it has been a one-way relationship – I gave, and he took. We are not as close as I would like and although I think that I have done all that I can do to draw us closer, nothing seemed to work. It has become a festering wound in me that will not heal. It has become, as the Bible says, a *"bitter root."* And try as I might, I can't seem to get over or around it.

During a phone conversation with him the other day, I brought up the subject and spoke some not so kind words to him in exasperation. In hindsight, I am fairly certain that what I said, hurt his feelings. And now, God is convicting me to do something about it. I know this because when I opened my Bible last night to do some reading, it opened to Ephesians 4 and as I read through the chapter, the words in verse 31 jumped off the page and spoke right to my soul. It was if the apostle Paul had written this letter to me. He said: "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice." When God has a point to make, He is very straight forward with it. There is nothing stronger than to be faced with the truth. I felt like He just slapped me on the back of the head, and said, "did you read that?" My heart ached! I knew I had to make this right!

As a Christian, there is a lot about this that troubles me. I know that I am not supposed to feel this way. I've pushed it aside for years. I have accepted our relationship up to this point, so what was different during this last conversation that sent me over the edge? It does make me wonder if there is a threshold beyond which we just snap? One perhaps one where it is impossible to move on despite what the Scriptures say.

But deep down, I already know the answer to that question. I know what I need to do because I am already regretting what I said and the way I said it. Therein lies the conflict. I know what I need to do, but it is not necessarily what I want to do—at least not on the surface. God has put such a burden on me that I have to see if I can figure this out.

In the Book of Micah, the Scriptures remind us that God has "cast all of our sins into the depths of the sea." *Not some, but all!* I guess that somewhere in

the back of my mind, I felt that since he is not a believer, that all of God promises and guidance doesn't apply to him.

I imagine that Jesus didn't have that luxury to have His sins cast off. He was subjected to scorning, mockery, and insults from those who "*despised*" Him and having almost every aspect of His character, His person, His reason for living "*rejected*" just for being him. It is one thing to be disliked, but it is quite another to be despised, hated, spit upon, ridiculed, humiliated, betrayed and wanted dead. Suddenly, this issue with my son doesn't seem to be such a big thing anymore. Maybe I am making a mountain out of a mole hill.

I did a search on the internet looking for references to forgiveness in the Bible and I got reminded that we serve the same God today, "*who blots out all of our transgressions; who "remembers our sins no more"; who found us "dead in our trespasses;"*" and who made us "whole" because of His "*Great Love*" for us.

But the power—and the absolute beauty—of being a transformed Christian is that God was already at work in me forgiving those feelings." I know that it will never be the depth of *my love* that will cause me to forgive him for any of the things about our relationship that irritate me. It will never be within *my power* to overlook any of the things that keep us from getting closer. By myself, I probably would never be able to get beyond this, much less forget any of the emotional pains I have carried all these years.

But as C.S. Lewis, the great British Christian writer and lay theologian, said, "to be a Christian means that we can forgive the inexcusable because God has forgiven the inexcusable in us."

It will be – and can only be—the love of Christ that was transplanted into us that allows us to exchange our weaknesses for His strength so that we can do what we cannot do alone. Because He has already forgiven us of our sins and because His love now lives within us, what offense then is too great for us to forgive with His help? None!

That is what separates us from non-believers!

The story of the Prodigal Son reminds us that it is never too late to turn back to our Father. who will, without exception, welcome us back with open arms. Country singer George Strait explained that reason in his song "A Father's Love: "

He said, "... daddies don't just love their children every now and then,
It's a love without end, amen."

God told me that I already knew the answer – that it is never too late for me to try and restore

my relationship with my son—and He was right. We have since mended some of our issues and are back speaking again.

I have learned that by ourselves, we are weak. But with His help, there is nothing too great for us to accomplish. My mountain, as it were, just jumped into the ocean. It seems that there is nothing that can't be accomplished with our Father's help.

There is nothing like the Father's love - it is truly a love without end, Amen!

Just some Food for Thought