

You may have heard of Corrie Ten Boom. She and her sister were prisoners in a Nazi concentration camp during World War II. As prisoners of these cruel soldiers, they had endured great hardship and her sister had even died. It was only her great faith in God that brought her through.

Some time after the war was over, Corrie was speaking to a group of people about her ordeal and about forgiveness. As she spoke and her eyes looked over the audience, she suddenly froze. There sitting in the back of the room was a man she recognized as having been one of her prison guards at that concentration camp. She was able to continue her talk, but then afterwards, the man came to the front with many others to shake her hand and thank her for her message. As she looked into the eyes of one who had done such horrible things in the past, she wondered if she could even speak.

The man said, "As you know I was a guard at the concentration camp you spoke of today. I'm ashamed to admit it, but it's true. But since then, I've come to know Jesus as my Lord and Savior. It has been hard for me to forgive myself for all the cruel things I did but I know that God has forgiven me. And please, if you would, I would like to hear from your lips too that God has forgiven me." And the man held out his hand.

Corrie stood there for a moment, unable to even move. Her mind raced back and forth between hatred and God's love, and finally through God's help, she grasp his hand, with tears in her eyes, and said, "I forgive you, my brother, with all my heart!"

In Matthew 18, Jesus is talking to His disciples. As He teaches them about forgiveness, He tells them a parable of a servant who's master had forgiven him a great debt, but when another fellow servant owed this servant money - he refused to forgive him of his debt. He had been forgiven, but he refused to do so to others.

Look at verses 32-35, "Then his master summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?' And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt. So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart."

Did you catch that? "So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart." Remember, Jesus taught in the "Sermon on the Mount", "if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." (Matthew 6:15)

Many people's lives are ruined by that - they refuse to forgive others. I hear so often people say something like, "I could never forgive them for" And yet, they expect God to continue to forgive them of their daily trespasses.

"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy." (Matthew 5:7) It may not always be easy to forgive, just as I'm certain it wasn't easy for Corrie Ten Boom to forgive that guard, but none the less, that is what God commands!