

## FROM FALLEN HUMANS TO NEW CREATIONS

### I. 2 Corinthians 5:11-21

A. So what'll you do when someone you dislike walks thru these Chapel doors hoping to find Jesus? What if it's someone who's wronged you? Or what if it's an ex-spouse, boyfriend, or girlfriend? What if it's someone who bullied you in high school, or swindled you out of money, or drug your name thru the mud? Or what if it's someone with a dark past, immoral reputation, a social outcast, or someone who doesn't share your ethnicity? Might God's Word give us some answers

B. Today's text finds the Apostle Paul writing to a church he's helped father. These folks have had their share of issues. Paul writes them four times, only two letters make the Cannon. (*I'd love to see the other two!*) Among the problems are the influence of false teachers. These were crafty and deceptive manipulators. Their ambition was money, power, and fame--no matter how many people they destroyed along the way. Paul & Co are among their targets. Paul writes in 2 Cor. 2:17: "*You see, we are not like the many hucksters who preach for personal profit. We preach the word of God with sincerity and with Christ's authority, knowing that God is watching us.*" Using the NLT today, Paul makes a Godly and insightful defense...

#### C. 2 Corinthians 5:11-21 (NLT) is God's Word to us...

1) **V11: 11** *Because we understand our fearful responsibility to the Lord, we work hard to persuade others. God knows we are sincere, and I hope you know this, too. ('Hopefully First Corinth you know what's up, who's right, and who's genuinely looking out for your spiritual good!')*

2) **V12-13: 12** *Are we commending ourselves to you again? No, we are giving you a reason to be proud of us, so you can answer those who brag about having a spectacular ministry rather than having a sincere heart. 13* *If it seems we are crazy, it is to bring glory to God. And if we are in our right minds, it is for your benefit. (False apostles are accusing Paul & Co of being off their rockers, a few pickles shy of a full jar. But Paul is undaunted by the attacks and appeals to Godly reason.)*

3) **V14: 14** *Either way, Christ's love controls us. Since we believe that Christ died for all, we also believe that we have all died to our old life. (Paul points to the power of the Gospel.)*

4) **V15-16: 15** *He died for everyone so that those who receive His new life will no longer live for themselves. Instead, they will live for Christ, who died and was raised for them. 16* *So we have stopped evaluating others from a human point of view. At one time we thought of Christ merely from a human point of view. How differently we know Him now! (Paul originally saw Jesus as a false Messiah; it took a blinding encounter to open his eyes to who Jesus really was. And he knows Jesus is in the business of doing the same for others. How about you? Is there anyone on your list whom you believe is beyond the grace of God?)*

5) **V17: 17** *This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun! (OVs New creature! New creation! Think regenerated, born again, rebirth, born of the Spirit...)*

6) **V18: 18** *And all of this is a gift from God, who brought us back to Himself through Christ. And God has given us this task of reconciling people to Him. (The ministry of convincing God's enemies to become His friends because of Jesus' cross!)*

7) **V19-21: 19** *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. 20 So we are Christ's ambassadors; (Peace treaty bearers) God is making His appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, "Come back to God!" 21 For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ. (Your worst enemies need to hear this!)*

**D. Here's a great danger with respect to this Good News: I deserve it but others don't. I deserve it, but those I don't like, don't! The truth is, none of us deserve it! (Alistair Begg is a Scottish pastor up near Cleveland. He gives a great illustration about the thief on the cross. Here's an excerpt...)**

\* **A. Begg:** Think about the thief on the cross... I can't wait to find that fellow one day to ask him, "How did that shake out for you? Because you were cussing the Guy out with your friend. You've never been in a Bible study. You never got baptized... You didn't know a thing about church membership, and yet... you made it! How did you make it?" That's what the angel must have said, you know: "What are you doing here?" "I don't know." "What do you mean you don't know?" "I don't know." "Excuse me, let me get my supervisor." They go get their supervisor angel. "So, just a few questions for you. First of all, are you clear on the doctrine of justification by faith?" The guy said, "I've never heard of it in my life." "And what about the doctrine of Scripture?" This guy's just staring --and eventually, in frustration, [the supervisor] says, "On what basis are you here?" And the thief said, "The Man on the middle cross said I can come!"

**E. Could Jesus do for those you least expect what He did for that thief?! To prevent us from thinking too highly of ourselves, check out some additional Scriptures...**

1) **Ephesians 2:1-5 (ESV) is about us all: 1** *And you were dead in the trespasses and sins 2 in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience-- 3 among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. 4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ--by grace you have been saved...* **(We're in the same choir. We can all sing along with John Newton: "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me?!" Jesus has been saving wretches for 2000 years, turning fallen humans into new creations. May we never stand in the way of His work! May we be stepping stones and never stumbling blocks, gateways but never hedgerows, bridges and not barriers!)**

2) **Colossians 3:5-10 (ESV) affirms: 5** *Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. 6 On*

*account of these the wrath of God is coming. 7 In these **you too (We too!)** once walked, when **you (We!)** were living in them. 8 But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. 9 Do not lie to one another, seeing that **you** have put off the old self with its practices 10 and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its Creator. (So IF God's rescued us from these very sins here named, might He not want to do the same for those we least expect or don't particularly like or those we deem beyond His reach, even those every bit as undeserving as what we once were?!)*

#### **F. Listen to a few comments from seasoned brothers in Christ...**

**1) D.A. Carson:** "What binds us together is not common education, common race, common income levels, common politics, common nationality, common accents, common jobs, or anything else of that sort. Christians come together because they have all been loved by Jesus Himself. They are a band of natural enemies who love one another for Jesus' sake."

**2) Author & Professor, Jared Wilson echoes similarly:** "The gospel of Jesus doesn't just make strangers into friends. It makes enemies into brothers and sisters. The church is a family created by grace. Just as Jesus called fishermen, tax collectors, and zealots into His flock. And when Christ is our God, everything else falls into proper orbit around Him. He is exalted above our preferences and affinities. And thus our motley band of worshipers makes Jesus look very big."

**3) The late R.C. Sproul was a bit more blunt when he wrote:** "For a Christian to be a Christian, he must first be a sinner. Being a sinner is a prerequisite for being a church member. The Christian church is one of the few organizations in the world that requires a public acknowledgement of sin as a condition for membership."

**G. Corrie Ten Boom was a Dutch watchmaker in the Netherlands. When WW II broke out, the Ten Boom family hid Jews in their home. The Gestapo raided their home and they were imprisoned. Corrie's father, Casper, died within 10 days. Corrie and sister Betsie were sent to the Ravensbrück concentration camp. In December 1944, Betsie died in that camp. Shortly thereafter, and due to a clerical error, Corrie was released. Her remaining fellow inmates were summarily sent to the gas chamber. Following the war, Corrie was sharing her testimony in a Lutheran Church in Germany. A greeting line formed after the meeting and there in line was one of the former Ravensbrück guards, one who'd been particularly cruel to Corrie's sister Betsie. The former guard had become a believer in Jesus Christ and he genuinely sought forgiveness from Corrie for the atrocities for which he'd participated. Corrie often taught on forgiveness but it was about to be sorely tested. As this man moved closer, could she indeed forgive him? From her book, *The Hiding Place*, here's Corrie in her own words:** "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."

**\* Close with a partial reprise of our Text and with Prayer...**

## **Scriptures, Videos, & Bonus Stuff**

### **2 Corinthians 5:11-21 (NLT)**

**11** Because we understand our fearful responsibility to the Lord, we work hard to persuade others. God knows we are sincere, and I hope you know this, too. **12** Are we commending ourselves to you again? No, we are giving you a reason to be proud of us, so you can answer those who brag about having a spectacular ministry rather than having a sincere heart. **13** If it seems we are crazy, it is to bring glory to God. And if we are in our right minds, it is for your benefit. **14** Either way, Christ's love controls us. Since we believe that Christ died for all, we also believe that we have all died to our old life. **15** He died for everyone so that those who receive His new life will no longer live for themselves. Instead, they will live for Christ, who died and was raised for them. **16** So we have stopped evaluating others from a human point of view. At one time we thought of Christ merely from a human point of view. How differently we know Him now! **17** This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun! **18** And all of this is a gift from God, who brought us back to Himself through Christ. And God has given us this task of reconciling people to Him. **19** 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. **20** So we are Christ's ambassadors; God is making His appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, "Come back to God!" **21** For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ.

### **2 Corinthians 2:17 (NLT)**

**17** You see, we are not like the many hucksters who preach for personal profit. We preach the word of God with sincerity and with Christ's authority, knowing that God is watching us.

### **Ephesians 2:1-5 (ESV)**

**1** And you were dead in the trespasses and sins **2** in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience-- **3** among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. **4** But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which He loved us, **5** even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ--by grace you have been saved...

### **Colossians 3:5-10 (ESV)**

**5** Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. **6** On account of these the wrath of God is coming. **7** In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. **8** But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. **9** Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices **10** and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its Creator.

### **Quote by D.A. Carson**

"What binds us together is not common education, common race, common income levels, common politics, common nationality, common accents, common jobs, or anything else of that sort. Christians come together because they have all been loved by Jesus Himself. They are a band of natural enemies who love one another for Jesus' sake."

### **Quote by Jared Wilson**

"The gospel of Jesus doesn't just make strangers into friends. It makes enemies into brothers and sisters. The church is a family created by grace. Just as Jesus called fishermen, tax collectors, and zealots into His flock. And when Christ is our God, everything else falls into proper orbit around Him. He is exalted above our preferences and affinities. And thus our motley band of worshipers makes Jesus look very big."

### **Quote by R.C. Sproul**

"For a Christian to be a Christian, he must first be a sinner. Being a sinner is a prerequisite for being a church member. The Christian church is one of the few organizations in the world that requires a public acknowledgement of sin as a condition for membership."

- R.C. Sproul, *Reason to Believe: A Response to Common Objections to Christianity*.

## **Bonus Goodies**

**The Man on the Middle Cross Said I Can Come - Alistair Begg**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sjDmbKaWH8c>

**7 Traits of False Teachers - Colin Smith (The Gospel Coalition)**

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/7-traits-of-false-teachers>

**We Cannot Cling to Bitterness and God - Vaneetha Rendall Risner - (Desiring God)**

<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/we-cannot-cling-to-bitterness-and-god>

**Common Questions Christians Ask About Forgiveness - Erik Raymond**

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/erik-raymond/common-questions-christians-ask-forgiveness/>

**The Prentiss Brothers: A True Story of [Battlefield] Reconciliation - Rebekah Colburn**

<https://www.rebekahcolburn.com/blog/the-prentiss-brothers-a-true-story-of-division-and-reconciliation>

## **Scriptures, Quotes, Excerpts, & Extras**

### **Romans 3:10-24 (NLT)**

**10** As the Scriptures say, "No one is righteous--not even one. **11** No one is truly wise; no one is seeking God. **12** All have turned away; all have become useless. No one does

good, not a single one.” **13** “Their talk is foul, like the stench from an open grave. Their tongues are filled with lies.” “Snake venom drips from their lips.” **14** “Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness.” **15** “They rush to commit murder. **16** Destruction and misery always follow them. **17** They don’t know where to find peace.” **18** “They have no fear of God at all.” **19** Obviously, the law applies to those to whom it was given, for its purpose is to keep people from having excuses, and to show that the entire world is guilty before God. **20** For no one can ever be made right with God by doing what the law commands. The law simply shows us how sinful we are. **21** But now God has shown us a way to be made right with Him without keeping the requirements of the law, as was promised in the writings of Moses and the prophets long ago. **22** We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are. **23** For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God’s glorious standard. **24** Yet God, in His grace, freely makes us right in His sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when He freed us from the penalty for our sins.

### **2 Corinthians 2:17 (AMP)**

**17** For we are not like many, [acting like merchants] peddling God’s word [shortchanging and adulterating God’s message]; but from pure [uncompromised] motives, as [commissioned and sent] from God, we speak [His message] in Christ in the sight of God.

Quote by Charles Swindoll

“Remarkably, the simple setting of the original church provided room for the Spirit of God to work and guide. Don’t misunderstand; a simple setting does not suggest perfect people. These new believers were far from flawless. But by the empowerment of the Spirit of God as He worked and controlled their lives, there was integrity, trust, joy, confidence, unity, generosity, forgiveness, compassion, harmony, and, of course, grace (to name only a few). It must have been magnificent!”

- Charles Swindoll, *The Church Awakening*, p. 16.

### **Quote by J.C. Ryle**

"Our Lord has many weak children in His family, many dull pupils in His school, many raw soldiers in His army, many lame sheep in His flock. Yet He bears with them all, and casts none away. Happy is that Christian who has learned to do likewise with his brethren."

### **Quote by Tim Challies**

"The church is not an art museum to display perfect masterpieces. It’s not a natural museum to display perfect specimens. The church is a hospital to heal the sick, and it takes time to heal people from a deadly disease. You can’t act surprised when a hospital is full of sick people and shouldn’t be surprised when a church is full of messy, sinful people. After all, it is not those who are well who need a doctor, but those who are sick. It is not those who are righteous who need Jesus, but sinners."

### **Quote by J.R. Miller**

"God is the God of the unsuccessful, of those who have failed. Heaven is filling with earth's broken lives, and there is no bruised reed that Christ cannot take and restore to glorious blessedness and beauty."

**Quote by Collin Hansen & Jonathan Leeman**

"God...invites us into a spiritual family of misfits and outcasts. He welcomes us into a home that's rarely what we want yet just what we need."

**Quote by R.C. Sproul**

The church is the most important organization in the world. It is the target of every demonic, hostile attack in the universe. Jesus personally guaranteed that the gates of hell will never prevail against the church. He made no guarantee that the gates of hell would not be unleashed against it, however."

**Quote by Sam Allberry**

"Church is not for your entertainment, as a consumer, but for you and others to find encouragement, as a contributor."

**Quote by David Wells**

"The marketing church has calculated that unless it makes deep, serious cultural adaptations, it will go out of business, especially with the younger generations. What it has not considered carefully enough is that it may well be putting itself out of business with God. And the further irony is that the younger generations who are less impressed by whiz-bang technology, who often see through what is slick and glitzy, and who have been on the receiving end of enough marketing to nauseate them, are as likely to walk away from these oh-so-relevant churches as to walk into them."

- David Wells, *The Courage to Be Protestant*.

**Quote by Augustine of Hippo**

"The church is a whore, but she is still my mother."

**Quote by Charles Spurgeon**

"The existence of hypocrites does not prove the non-existence of true believers."

**Quote by Billy Graham**

"I am not going to Heaven because I have preached to great crowds or read the Bible many times. I'm going to Heaven just like the thief on the cross who said in that last moment: 'Lord, remember me.'"

**Poem by Charles Spurgeon**

"The dying thief rejoiced to see  
That fountain in his day;  
And there may you, though vile as he,  
Wash all your sins away."

### **Quote by J.C. Ryle**

"One thief was saved that no sinner might despair, but only one, that no sinner might presume."

### **Sermon Excerpt by Alistair Begg**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SL8mJQ39zjw>

Without the preaching of the cross, without preaching the cross to ourselves, all day and every day, we will very, very quickly revert to "faith plus works" as the ground of our salvation. So, to go to the old Fort Lauderdale question, "If you were to die tonight and you were getting entry into heaven, what would you say?" If you answer that in the first person, we've immediately gone wrong. "Because I . . . Because I believed . . . Because I have faith . . . Because I am this . . . Because I am continuing."

Loved ones, the only proper answer's in the third person. "Because he! Because he!"

Think about the thief on the cross . . . I can't wait to find that fellow one day to ask him, "How did that shake out for you? Because you were cussing the guy out with your friend. You've never been in a Bible study. You never got baptized . . . You didn't know a thing about church membership, and yet . . . you made it. How did you make it?" That's what the angel must have said, you know:

"What are you doing here?"

"I don't know."

"What do you mean you don't know?"

"I don't know."

"Excuse me, let me get my supervisor." They go get their supervisor angel. "So, just a few questions for you. First of all, are you clear on the doctrine of justification by faith?"

The guy said, "I've never heard of it in my life."

"And what about the doctrine of Scripture?"

This guy's just staring — and eventually, in frustration, [the supervisor] says, "On what basis are you here?"

And he said, "The Man on the middle cross said I can come."

That is the only answer. That is the only answer. And if I don't preach the gospel to myself all day and every day, then I will find myself beginning to trust myself, trust my experience, which is part of my fallenness as a man. If I take my eyes off the cross, I

can, then, give only lip service to its efficacy, while at the same time living as if my salvation depends upon me. And as soon as you go there, it will lead you either to abject despair or a horrible kind of arrogance.

It is only the cross of Christ that deals both with the dreadful depths of despair and the pretentious arrogance of the pride of man that says, "You know, I can figure this out" and "I'm doing wonderfully well." No, because the sinless Savior died my sinful soul is counted free. For God the just is satisfied to look on Him and pardon me. That's why Luther says most of your Christian life is outside of you, in this sense that we know that we're not saved by good works. We're not saved as a result of our professions, but we're saved as a result of what Christ has achieved.

- Alistair Begg, Sermon titled, "*The Power and the Message of the Cross*," Parkside Church, Chagrin Falls, OH, November 20, 2019.

### **Corrie ten Boom on Forgiveness**

Excerpt from, *The Hiding Place*.

It was in a church in Munich that I saw him, a balding heavysset man in a gray overcoat, a brown felt hat clutched between his hands. People were filing out of the basement room where I had just spoken, moving along the rows of wooden chairs to the door at the rear. It was 1947 and I had come from Holland to defeated Germany with the message that God forgives. It was the truth they needed most to hear in that bitter, bombed-out land, and I gave them my favorite mental picture. Maybe because the sea is never far from a Hollander's mind, I liked to think that that's where forgiven sins were thrown. "When we confess our sins," I said, "God casts them into the deepest ocean, gone forever."

The solemn faces stared back at me, not quite daring to believe. There were never questions after a talk in Germany in 1947. People stood up in silence, in silence collected their wraps, in silence left the room. And that's when I saw him, working his way forward against the others. One moment I saw the overcoat and the brown hat; the next, a blue uniform and a visored cap with its skull and crossbones. 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. Betsie, how thin you were!

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 Ravensbrück concentration camp where we were sent. Now he was in front of me, hand thrust out: "A fine message, fräulein! How good it is to know that, as you say, all our sins are at the bottom of the sea!" And I, who had spoken so glibly of forgiveness, fumbled in my pocketbook rather than take that hand. He would not remember me, of course—how could he remember one prisoner among those thousands of women? But I remembered him and the leather

crop swinging from his belt. 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 Ravensbrück in your talk,” he was saying. “I was a guard in there.” No, he did not remember me. “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. Fräulein”—again the hand came out—“will you forgive me?”

And I stood there—I whose sins had every day to be forgiven—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.”

I knew it not only as a commandment of God, but as a daily experience. Since the end of the war I had had a home in Holland for victims of Nazi brutality. Those who were able to forgive their former enemies were able also to return to the outside world and rebuild their lives, no matter what the physical scars. Those who nursed their bitterness remained invalids. It was as simple and as horrible as that.

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.

And having thus learned to forgive in this hardest of situations, I never again had difficulty in forgiving: I wish I could say it! I wish I could say that merciful and charitable thoughts just naturally flowed from me from then on. But they didn’t. If there’s one thing I’ve learned at 80 years of age, it’s that I can’t store up good feelings and behavior—but only draw them fresh from God each day. Maybe I’m glad it’s that way. For every time I go to Him, He teaches me something else.

I recall the time, some 15 years ago, when some Christian friends whom I loved and trusted did something which hurt me. You would have thought that, having forgiven the Nazi guard, this would have been child’s play. It wasn’t. For weeks I seethed inside. But

at last I asked God again to work His miracle in me. And again it happened: first the cold-blooded decision, then the flood of joy and peace. I had forgiven my friends; I was restored to my Father.

Then, why was I suddenly awake in the middle of the night, hashing over the whole affair again? My friends! I thought. People I loved! If it had been strangers, I wouldn't have minded so. I sat up and switched on the light. "Father, I thought it was all forgiven! Please help me do it!"

But the next night I woke up again. They'd talked so sweetly too! Never a hint of what they were planning. "Father!" I cried in alarm. "Help me!"

His help came in the form of a kindly Lutheran pastor to whom I confessed my failure after two sleepless weeks. "Up in that church tower," he said, nodding out the window, "is a bell which is rung by pulling on a rope. But you know what? After the sexton lets go of the rope, the bell keeps on swinging. First ding then dong. Slower and slower until there's a final dong and it stops. "I believe the same thing is true of forgiveness. When we forgive someone, we take our hand off the rope. But if we've been tugging at our grievances for a long time, we mustn't be surprised if the old angry thoughts keep coming for a while. They're just the ding-dongs of the old bell slowing down."

And so it proved to be. There were a few more midnight reverberations, a couple of dings when the subject came up in my conversation. But the force—which was my willingness in the matter—had gone out of them. They came less and less often and at last stopped altogether. And so I discovered another secret of forgiveness: that we can trust God not only above our emotions, but also above our thoughts.

And still He had more to teach me, even in this single episode. Because many years later, in 1970, an American with whom I had shared the ding-dong principle came to visit me in Holland and met the people involved. "Aren't those the friends who let you down?" he asked as they left my apartment. "Yes," I said a little smugly. "You can see it's all forgiven." "By you, yes," he said. "But what about them? Have they accepted your forgiveness?" "They say there's nothing to forgive! They deny it ever happened. But I can prove it!" I went eagerly to my desk. "I have it in black and white! I saved all their letters and I can show you where—" "Corrie!" My friend slipped his arm through mine and gently closed the drawer. "Aren't you the one whose sins are at the bottom of the sea? And are the sins of your friends etched in black and white?"

For an anguishing moment I could not find my voice. "Lord Jesus," I whispered at last, "who takes all my sins away, forgive me for preserving all these years the evidence against others! Give me grace to burn all the blacks and whites as a sweet-smelling sacrifice to Your glory."

I did not go to sleep that night until I had gone through my desk and pulled out those letters—curling now with age—and fed them all into my little coal-burning grate. As the flames leaped and glowed, so did my heart. "Forgive us our trespasses," Jesus taught

us to pray, “as we forgive those who trespass against us.” In the ashes of those letters I was seeing yet another facet of His mercy. What more He would teach me about forgiveness in the days ahead I didn’t know, but tonight’s was good news enough.

When we bring our sins to Jesus, He not only forgives them, He makes them as if they had never been.

- Corrie ten Boom, excerpt from, *The Hiding Place*. Posted in Guidepost Magazine, on Jul 24, 2014. To read the article online, go to: <https://www.guideposts.org/better-living/positive-living/guideposts-classics-corrie-ten-boom-on-forgiveness>

### **Ravensbrück Forgiveness**

(Found in the clothing of a dead child at Ravensbrück concentration camp.)

“O Lord, remember not only the men and woman of good will, but also those of ill will. But do not remember all of the suffering they have inflicted upon us: Instead remember the fruits we have borne because of this suffering, our fellowship, our loyalty to one another, our humility, our courage, our generosity, the greatness of heart that has grown from this trouble. When our persecutors come to be judged by You, let all of these fruits that we have borne be their forgiveness.”