

When You've Been Wronged

The High Cost of Reconciliation

Most of us have not come as far in our forgiveness as this prayer found in the pocket of a dead child at Ravensbruck concentration camp in Northern Germany which was exclusively for women between 1939-1945. At this camp, somewhere between 130,000 -132,000, largely Polish women met their death.

But, let us pray it for ourselves.

O Lord, remember not only the men and women 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. Amen!

Why Bother?

When the question is raised by those who want and seek reconciliation—whether between races, family members, or fellow Christians—the question often raised is: Why bother? Why bother to reconcile? After all, there can be misunderstanding and down-right rejection when you try to restore a relationship. Let's examine four reasons why Christians should attempt to restore broken relationships among believers.

1. *Reconciliation must be attempted because of our witness to the world.* Our light is supposed to shine in such a manner that people will see our attitudes in action and as a result glorify God (Matthew 5).

2. *Christians pursue reconciliation in order to influence future generations.* Remember, what we don't forgive, we pass on. As parents, we should model love and forgiveness before our children, passing on those qualities to the next generation.

3. *Without reconciliation, there is disunity, which weakens the body of Jesus Christ.* This is why racial reconciliation is so crucial for our Christian life and witness. If we are divided over race, we prove to the world that our bond in Christ is not very strong. Racism, whether wide open or skillfully hidden, is a discredit to Jesus, and a blot on the body of Christ. This is also true when it comes to Church splits, which are very painful, and also in families that are divided. Jesus said, *"If a kingdom is divided against itself, it cannot stand"* (Mark 3:24, 25).

4. *Reconciled Christians demonstrate the power of Christ's gospel.* Reconciliation represents the very core of Christian message. When we pray for a person because they have cancer and they are healed, a secular doctor does not accept our interpretation. He has seen so many remarkable recoveries without any reference to God and prayer. But, when a bitter couple reconciles, when a church has a reconciliation service after a split, then it is more difficult to deny that this is God. Read how the Apostle Paul describes the powerful notion of Christian reconciliation in 2 Corinthians 5: 17-19).

The Power That Transforms

Genuine reconciliation brings transformation because it comes from God. Every revival that I have ever studied always has believer's reconciliation as paramount.

In the early 1970's in Canada, a spiritual revival began when two brothers who had not spoken to each other for twenty years were reconciled. Their pastor had taken them to the church basement,

surrounded them with praying deacons, then insisted that they stay until they were willing to lay down their bitterness. After a time, there was deep repentance and restoration, and the next evening the brothers sang a duet together in the church. This ignited a spiritual awakening that spread to hundreds of churches. Reconciliation is always a by-product of the work of the Holy Spirit. It gives compelling evidence to the power of the gospel. When the Spirit moves, reconciliation can be found.

Clearly, true reconciliation is born of the Holy Spirit. Yet to accomplish genuine reconciliation, there are still steps to follow, which are outlined by our Lord. Taken together, with a true reliance on God's gracious power, reconciliation can come about and relationships can be restored.

Next Week: Six Steps To Genuine Reconciliation.