

Anger

“Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift“, Matthew 5:23–24.

As the saying goes, “The umpire is always right”.

I grew up in an era where the umpire was always right. It did not mean that I believed the umpire was correct every time, but the correct decisions were generally higher than the number of incorrect decisions.

I also am a very firm believer that God, as an umpire, gets it absolutely correct every time.

Lets face it, on the day of judgement, when only truth will come out of your mouth, how are you going to argue with God?

Over the years, it has become the norm to question the umpire – especially if his decision has gone against you.

Over the years, it has also become the norm to argue with God’s Word by re-writing it.

The writer of Hebrews states, “And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works“, Hebrews 10:24.

John Maxwell, an American evangelical author has given us the following, "Coping with difficult people is always a problem. Especially if the difficult person happens to be yourself".

I believe, that more often than not, God is waiting for us to make a response, that He then might bring forth joyous reconciliation, where neither party has lost, and both parties have gained.

I base this belief on a passage from Corrie Ten Boon’s book, “Tramp for the Lord”, where she tells of a meeting between herself and one of the cruellest camp guards from Ravensbrück.

She writes:

It was at a church service in Munich that I saw him, a former S.S. man who had stood guard at the shower room door in the processing centre at Ravensbrück.

He was the first of our actual jailers that I had seen since that time. And suddenly it was all there – the roomful of mocking men, the heaps of clothing, Betsie’s (Corrie’s sister) pain-blانched face.

He came up to me as the church was emptying, smiling. “How grateful

I am for your message, Fraulein”, he said. “To think that, as you say, He has washed my sins away!”

His hand was thrust out to shake mine. And I, who had preached so often to the people about the need to forgive, kept my hand at my side. Even as the angry, vengeful thoughts boiled through me, I saw the sin of them.

Jesus Christ had died for this man; was I going to ask for more?

Lord Jesus, I prayed, forgive me and help me to forgive him. I tried to smile, I struggled to raise my hand. I could not. I felt nothing, not the slightest spark of warmth or charity.

And so again I breathed a silent prayer. Jesus, I prayed, I cannot forgive him. Give me Your forgiveness. As I took his hand the most incredible thing happened. From my shoulder along my arm and through my hand a current seemed to pass from me to him, while into my heart sprang a love for this stranger that almost overwhelmed me.

And so I discovered that it is not on our forgiveness any more than on our goodness that the world’s healing hinges, but on His.

When He tells us to love our enemies, He gives, along with the command, the love itself”.

And she goes on to write, ‘For a long moment we grasped each other’s hands, the former guard and the former prisoner. I have never known God’s love so intensely as I did then.’

Forgive? Could you forgive somebody who had inflicted so much pain, and destruction and death not just to people in general, but to you and to your family. Forgive – really?

Jesus forgave us first, and then invited us to accept His Gift of forgiveness.

As Jesus taught in our opening Scripture, forgiven first, then worship me. As Corrie has given us her experience, if God has forgiven – who are we not to forgive?

Paul, writing to the Corinthian Church, said, “And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation”, 2 Corinthians 5:18.