

Grace Notes

The Hardest Prayers to Pray

2.09.10



***"But I say to love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,...If you love those who love you what reward will you get?"
(Matthew 5:44-47)***

"I couldn't do it." That's what one person told me after I'd asked everyone to pray for their enemies that night. Thank God for that person's honesty. Frankly, the first time I tried to pray for people who've hurt me the worst.....well, I couldn't do it either. Praying for our enemies, I believe, is one of the most powerful moments in the life of any believer. And Satan knows it – why else would it be so very difficult to do?

This week's "Grace Notes" is not intended to be a devotion on the topic of forgiveness as much as it about praying for our enemies. But it would be difficult to separate the two topics. Allow me to offer an insight I learned years ago. In his book, *"The Bait of Satan,"* author, John Bevere, wrote something that made me feel like I'd been hit in the chest with a sledgehammer. He wrote, *"[In the book of Genesis], If Joseph had not forgiven his brothers for selling him into slavery as an adolescent boy (causing him to spend years in slavery & prison) and instead, as second in command of all Egypt, decided to execute them, God would have let Joseph rot in prison."* Why? Because one of Joseph's brothers was a man named Judah. Why is that important? John, the apostle, answers that question: *"Then one of the elders said to me, 'Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed.'" (Rev. 5:5)* See where this is headed? Jesus would be a descendent of Judah. And there was no way God was allowing the blood-line of the Messiah to be severed. So, clearly, loving and forgiving his enemies saved Joseph's life.

Spent and exhausted from being up all night, suffering from extreme blood loss, enduring the weight of his body upon his diaphragm, knowing it was causing him to slowly suffocate, Jesus was able to make only short utterances from the cross. Matthew, Mark, Luke & John, together, record seven of those brief, labored statements. The first is found in Luke's account, 23:33-34: *"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do."* Here we find, plain and simple, Jesus praying for His enemies – while they were crucifying Him. Think about it - when you pray for your enemies you experience the power of perfectly identifying with Christ while He was on the cross. And we all know what followed the crucifixion – the resurrection. I believe that "resurrection power" follows this kind of praying.

Soli Deo Gloria, Nick

