A month ago, during our 8:30 prayer time Becky Schwartz shared the following prayer request for her brother Fred. I was moved by her words and related to what she was and is currently going through with a family member and I am sure many of you will relate to her words also.

I asked if she would be willing to share this with all of you. Thus, I am here sharing it with you this morning permission.

From Becky Schwartz, August 2024

I am the youngest of 5 children. I have 2 sisters and 1 deceased and one brother.

We have always been a very close family and my brother Fred, and I were particularly close even though he is 9 years older than me. He would say “We respected each other's point of view.”

We were all raised in the church and Fred had supposedly gone forward to receive Christ. Sometime after he left home, he stopped going to church. He didn't want anything to do with the church or religion. That bothered me. BUT I knew he was watching me… how I was living my life, because he would jokingly always refer to me as a " good deed doer". When I would send him a card, I would always include a scripture verse but hadn't ever talked to him about his faith.

Over the years he has written all of us siblings a letter. I had the privilege of receiving more than one…. Lucky Me! Mine were not letters of love. They were full of hurtful things. Things about my husband and kids, who, until the past 7 or 8 years, I thought had a very good relationship with him. It was about this time that, for some reason unknown to us, he decided that my family and I meant nothing to him and shared this with us… in another letter, initiated, I feel, from a sense of jealousy and bitterness on his part with the purpose of hurting me.

For a while I had tried to reach out to him on his birthday and at Christmas but applying my faith this way just seemed to put more of a wedge between us, rather than softening his heart.

HE really seemed to resent any references I would share from Scripture. I still had good relations and felt very close to his kids and he either hated or was jealous of this too, so this was another point of contention between us. So, if we spent time with them, I would get another letter.

I had told him that I loved him on several occasions and that nothing he could say or do would change that, but I would not choose him over my faith… My God or my husband. At his choosing we would just avoid each other at family occasions or if he knew we would be there he just wouldn't come.

The last letter I received from him said " It's a sad, sad, day.... with you in it!"

He lashed out with words to hurt me anyway he could.

To keep me on track I rely on scripture to remind me what is true about me. One of them was...

MATT. 5:11. BLESSED ARE YOU WHEN THEY SHALL INSULT YOU AND PERSECUTE YOU, AND LYING, SAYING ALL KINDS OF EVIL AGAINST YOU, ON ACCOUNT OF ME.

I know the people that really know and love me. I believe what the scriptures declare about me. I know who I am... I am a child of God, I am in Jesus Christ, I know this because the Bible tells me so.... He has told me so. Because of Jesus, I know who I am.

Fred and I have not communicated since Christmas.

He has recently had a string of serious health issues. I know the Lord prompted me to send him an E-card while he was in the hospital. In it I said to him, “I know you don't want to hear from me, I can't change that, but I can't change who I am either. I and others are praying for you and for a bed for you in Iowa City. “

If I am honest, the things he has written to me have hurt my heart, but it is not my heart I am concerned about. My Brother needs the Lord. And only the Lord can change his heart.

I know that I tried to reach out to Fred. I pray he realizes he needs the Lord before God decides to take him.

If, by my words and deeds I can show him the love of Jesus, even after the way he has treated me, my prayers will have been answered. I want him to experience the difference in life with Christ.

I have a Savior, who has called me to witness; even to my brother who thinks he doesn’t need God and that I'm a "good deed doer".

I have not changed who I was. Christ did that.

I can't change Fred’s heart, but I have put my trust in God, who can.

I can’t save my brother, Only God can. What I can say is “Lord, may Thy Will be done.”

God uses us... Our words and our actions to reach the world, our families. He places a burden on our hearts. We want them to experience the peace and joy and the relief from sin that comes with a relationship with Christ. But Satan wants just the opposite. That is where the fear and lack of boldness on our part in these situations comes from.

But He who is in us is greater than He who is in the world. Becky demonstrated that each time she reached out to her brother, knowing full well she would be rewarded with…. Another letter. Another rejection. More hurt. But isn't a soul worth it?

Please pray for Fred physically and most importantly, spiritually.

You might ask, What is Fred's current condition?

He did get a bed at Iowa City. He had a 5 hr. Surgery, where they replaced his new pacemaker and took out the infected leads. They put in a leadless pacemaker. He got to come home, but has to have someone, (his daughter) give him antibiotics every 12 hrs intravenously, and goes once a week, for 10 weeks, to the hospital for infusions. Then he will still need cataract surgery at some point, which is why he went to the hospital in the first place.

This situation tells us that God is still trying to get his attention. Thank you, Becky, for encouraging us.