

Reflections

Volume 38

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St. Paul Ministry

October 2018

How To Touch a Harden Heart



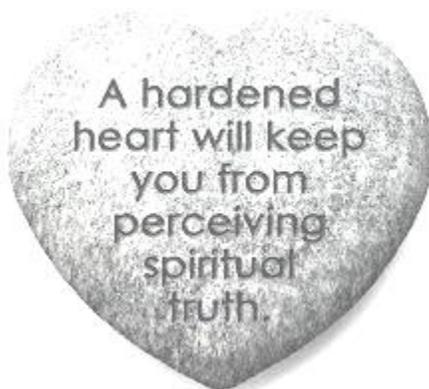
Pray for Our Church in These Turbulent Times

Isiah 5: 20

Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!

I will not discuss the recent problems within the church but will leave it up to Our Lord to rid the church of evil and to bring the Light of Grace upon the Shepherds.

Blessings to All:



There are sons and daughters, husbands and wives and friends and loved ones that have hardened hearts. Hardened hearts get that way by a myriad of circumstances. Sorrows brought about by sickness, injury, sudden deaths of loved ones, bad priests, sexual assaults of adults, sexual child abuse of the young and many, many more.

You may be a part of this group or know someone who has a hardened heart. The distress of the heart can be the greatest impediment to finding peace, forgiveness and spiritual truth.

I have heard that deep anger or a deep personal loss can change the heart into a place of darkness and anger. A place where hope and love dissolves into a terrible pit of loveless despair. A loneliness so deep, that only the grace of Jesus Christ can penetrate its darkness. The person with a hardened heart can raise their eyes to Jesus with the help of your prayers and showing them love whenever you are with them. Without grace their life becomes a burden as one carries this weight into each day. If you know such a person, offer your prayers and sacrifices for them, so that Jesus can place His light into their hearts.

There is a true story that happened on January 13, 1982 in Washington D.C. that highlights how love and unselfishness can become a flame in melting hearts of stone. The tragedy that unfolded could have hardened many hearts that day, save for one man named 'Arland Dean Williams'.



On that day, an Air Florida flight with too much ice on its wings, crashed into the 14th Street Bridge almost immediately after takeoff. The plane nosedived into the cold Potomac River. Seventy-eight people died that day, with six survivors trying to stay afloat in the frigid waters.

The local news broadcast the live event of a helicopter lower a rope into the water and a man who caught the rope gave it to a woman who was lifted to safety. This man was a passenger on the plane and when the helicopter returned and drop the rope, he gave

it to another person. After five people were taken to safety, the helicopter made one final trip to save the heroic man. But the cold of the water had sapped all his strength and he drowned.

This tragedy could have hardened many hearts of loved ones who knew that their husbands, wives or children met such a sudden horrible death. People could have easily blamed God and turned their hearts away from Him.

But the heroic effort by Arland Dean Williams, broadcast live on TV, showed his love and unselfishness when he gave his life to save others. Hearts which could have turned into stone, were saved by the love shown by Arland. The action of one person, with love in their hearts can be a **light of grace** for those that are trapped into the hardness that life has given them.



This is what Jesus did for us on the day of His crucifixion. He showed us how to react in the face of untold pain and the anger that surrounded Him on the Cross. He gave his life for us. Like Arland gave his life for others.

Love overcomes a hardened heart. Treat others with respect who suffer with a hardened heart. Pray for them. Be an example of goodness and be there to listen to them with God's help.

You can be an instrument for good or not. Depending on how you react to people that have offended you. ***To stay mad at someone is only hurting you.*** Some things to consider...from the writings of Rick Warren, an American Evangelical Christian.



Forgiveness

"Forgiveness must be immediate, whether or not a person asks for it. Trust must be rebuilt over time. Trust requires a track record."

Experience

"Experience is not what happens to you. It is what you do with what happens to you. Don't waste your pain; use it to help others."

Resentment

"Resentment always hurts you more than it does the person you resent. While your offender has probably forgotten the offense and gone on with life, you continue to stew in your pain, perpetuating the past. Listen: those who hurt you in the past cannot continue to hurt you now unless you hold on to the pain through resentment. Your past is past! Nothing will change it. You are only hurting yourself with your bitterness. For your own sake, learn from it, and then let it go."

Time

"Time is your most precious gift because you only have a set amount of it. You can make more money, but you can't make more time. When you give someone your time, you are giving them a portion of your life that you'll never get back.

Your time is your life. It is not enough to just say relationships are important; we must prove it by investing time in them. Words alone are worthless.”

Love knows no limit to its endurance, no end to its trust, no fading of its hope; it can outlast anything. Love still stands when all else has fallen.

A True Story Worth Reading. From A Hardened Heart to Forgiving His Torturers

Unbroken: Path To Redemption



You'd think a man who survived two plane crashes, a Japanese POW camp and 47 days adrift in the ocean could conquer anything.

But WWII veteran and Olympic athlete Louie Zamperini couldn't win his battle with alcohol, depression and a heart that was turned into stone.

That is, until he encountered the life-transforming power of Jesus Christ when his wife practically dragged him to a Billy Graham meeting under a Los Angeles circus tent in 1949.

Brushes with Death

Louis Zamperini, a world-famous Olympic runner, was serving in WWII when his plane crashed into the south Pacific. Only Zamperini and two others survived the impact.

"I arched my back out, and popped to the surface swallowing fuel and blood," Zamperini said.

While clinging to a life raft, Zamperini prayed for one of the first times in his life: "God, if I survive this ordeal and get back to America alive, I'll seek You and serve You."

Zamperini did make it home, but only after being picked up by a Japanese boat and suffering through two years of torture in POW camps. As Zamperini nearly starved, a Japanese officer known as "The Bird" made it his personal mission to break him.

"His belt was about five inches wide, half-inch thick with a big steel buckle," Zamperini said. "He took that off and hit me across the temple, knocked me to the floor. Blood spurted out of my head.

"I was constantly being tormented by the guy. And you talk about hate. I wanted to kill him."

The War After the War

Nightmares began in prison camp and plagued Zamperini long after he returned home to California.

"The nightmares were every night," he said. "I couldn't get rid of it."

Time wasn't healing his wounds; it was making them worse. One-night Zamperini dreamed he was strangling The Bird. Instead, he woke up strangling his wife. Scared and desperate, he started getting drunk to forget about the horrors that plagued him.

With her husband out drinking every night, Zamperini's wife Cynthia filed for divorce. After surviving so much, Zamperini was about to lose everything.

A Turning Point

That's when a concerned neighbor invited Cynthia to the Billy Graham Crusade taking place in a Los Angeles tent dubbed the Canvas Cathedral. She accepted the invitation and then accepted Christ. Her husband wanted no part of Christianity, but his heart softened when Cynthia said she no longer wanted a divorce.



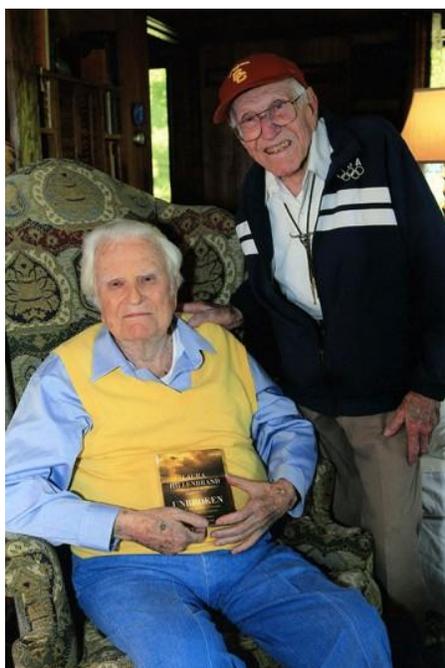
The Canvas Cathedral in Los Angeles, where Louis Zamperini and many others accepted Christ in 1949 after hearing a young Billy Graham preach the Gospel

After storming out of the tent the first night, Zamperini amazingly returned for one more evening. That time, the Bible verses Billy Graham quoted went straight to Zamperini's heart.

"Of all my near-death experiences my life never passed before my eyes," he said. "But when Billy Graham quoted Scripture my life did pass before my eyes." Matthew 6:14-15 "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father also will forgive you; 15 but if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

For the first time in years, Zamperini remembered the promise he made to God when he was floating in the south Pacific.

"My life passed before my eyes, and I saw an ugly life," Zamperini said. "Yes, I had a lot of great times. A lot of great experiences, and a lot of escapes from death, but I still didn't like my life after the war. It was terrible."



home in 2011.

That night in L.A., Zamperini went forward and accepted Christ, and the biggest miracle of his life was set in motion.

"I knew I was through getting drunk," Zamperini said. "I knew I was through smoking, and I knew I'd forgiven all of my guards including The Bird. Never dawned on me again that I hated the guy."

"That was the first night in all those years I'd never had a nightmare, and I haven't had one since."

Louis Zamperini (right) traveled across the country to visit Billy Graham at his Montreat, North Carolina,

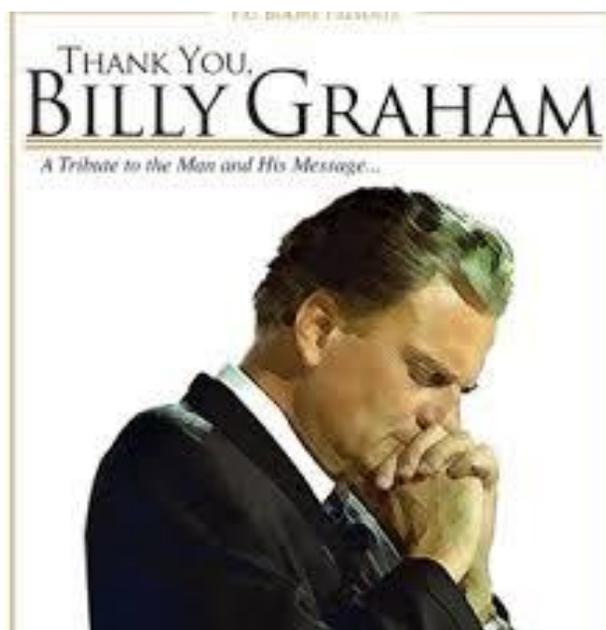
Zamperini's transformation was so all-encompassing, he returned to Japan to share the Gospel with hundreds of Japanese troops he once hated. This time, they were the ones behind bars, imprisoned for war crimes. Zamperini watched as many of them accepted Christ.

He went on to share his faith around the world, speaking at several Billy Graham Crusades and cultivating a friendship with Billy Graham that lasted until Zamperini's death on July 2, 2014.

Though they first met in 1949, the connection between the two men grew after Billy Graham read Zamperini's story in *Unbroken*, Laura Hillenbrand's 2010 bestseller.

"I had tears in my eyes and praise in my heart for what God has done through you," Mr. Graham wrote to Zamperini, who paid a cross-country visit to the evangelist in 2011 and held a book signing at the Billy Graham Library at the age of 94.

"This Billy Graham thing is a phenomenal miracle the way it started," Zamperini said. "The way it spread out. I'm one guy that got saved, and I've spoken to hundreds of thousands and had my testimony in papers where millions read it. One person! Think of the spider-web effect all over the world."



I accepted my job in God's vineyard.

Be Examples of Goodness



experience the world around them.

Your children watch you every day and will imitate what they see you do and say. No matter if your children are 2 years old or 22 years old. The little things done with love will be remembered.

Like saying night prayer with your children when they are little, sets a tone of thanking God for the day and to bless mommy and daddy and others. These time together will pay dividends as the children grow up and

God Shows His Love In Many Ways



When was the last time you saw God in the face of a child smiling at you?

That smile was a sign of love and trust.

Many of you reading this newsletter know in your heart that love is expressed many times with facial expressions.



And the reverse is true when love is not shown through facial expressions.

We humans communicate our feelings quite often with facial expressions.

When you greet someone, do you smile? Do you pretend not to see them? Do you avoid eye contact?

God in His goodness is showing us love everyday through other people. When someone smiles at you or when a friend calls you on the phone or when your children hug you.

Reflections Newsletter is published each month, free of charge. If you want to be on the mailing list, please send your request to r44pick@aol.com.

Soli Deo gloria

Our mission statement is to motivate people to pray and to be Christian examples in their work, home and with others, for those needing the Light in a world of Darkness.

Masses at St Lukes at the Vintage: Tuesday 11am; & Friday @ Noon

Mass at Methodist Willowbrook: Wednesday @ Noon.

St. Paul Ministry, Cypress, TX

