

# *Forgiving Is Miraculous*

## **My "Dog Story"**

I am a jogger, and I live on the side of a mountain. In the winter it is icy, and I can't run here; because I will fall and break something. Therefore I drive 4 miles to town. There is a street that is about 1 1/2 miles out and 1 1/2 miles back that is plowed and sanded and does not have much traffic. That is my running track in the winter.

One day a few years ago I was almost at the far end of the run when two mid-sized dogs ran out after me. I have learned that you don't run from dogs, so I turned on them and I shouted, "Hey, you get back there."

They skidded to a stop. The owner was a woman who was standing on the sidewalk. She said,

"Hey, don't talk to my dogs like that."

I said, "Lady, you have to be kidding me. We are in town, there is a leash law here. Your dogs shouldn't be here in the street."

She called her dogs and went inside.

As I continued my run, I was very upset.

I thought, "This is the only convenient place I have to run, and I'm not going to let them spoil that. What will I do about it? I know what. I have a foot long steel bar in my garage. I'll carry that. Then when they come out, I'll take care of them."

Then I thought again. It wasn't really the dogs' fault, and I'd probably get in trouble if I hurt them. Then what can I do instead?

"I know what I'll do," I thought. "I'll carry my cell phone. Then when they come out after me, I'll grab one of them by the collar and call the dog warden. Then she'll get a ticket, and that should fix her."

I finished my run, drove home, took a shower, and went to my office. As I sat down, I was still chewing over this situation. As I grumbled over it, I got the distinct impression that the Lord was tapping me on the shoulder. I knew what He wanted: He wanted me to forgive the woman. I didn't want to forgive her, and argued with the Lord.

"But she was so thoughtless. She had no right to let her dogs loose, etc, etc, etc."

Eventually I realized I was going to lose the argument. I reluctantly agreed to forgive her, though I still didn't want to. I was right, and she was wrong.

Initially as I prayed it was pretty mechanical and wooden. However, as I prayed, gradually I calmed down; and the forgiveness became more real. I forgave her, asked the Lord to forgive me for judging her. I asked Him to take out the bitter root I had just planted, to cleanse that place, and to fill it with His Holy Spirit.

As I prayed, I began to recognize that she had a permanent scowl on her face. It also occurred to me that a healthy person would have said something like,

"I'm sorry, sir. Are you alright? Did my dogs scare you?"

I realized that she was a wounded and unhappy person. I felt compassion for her, and I began to pray for her. I suspected that she might not know the Lord, and I began to pray for her salvation.

Suddenly it was as though I was struck by lightning. The change in my mindset was stark. I realized that I was now seeing her the way the Lord sees her. I wasn't praying for her salvation because it was the "Christian thing to do." I was praying for her because I saw her pain and neediness.

I realized that a miracle had occurred!

Before I prayed, I was a bit nuts. I was on the throne, she was wrong, and I was sure I was right. I was in the mind of the "flesh." Bad fruit (my plans to make her pay) was coming from that bad root.

After I prayed, I saw her neediness and wounding. I was now seeing her as Christ saw her. I now had the mind of Christ. Jesus was now in me where the bitter root had previously been planted, and that new good root was producing good fruit (my compassion for her). I wasn't trying to see her with eyes of compassion. I simply did.

When we forgive and Jesus forgives us, a miracle occurs. It is not something we can accomplish on our own. We can repress our anger, or try to be nice; but we can't change what is inside us. Only the blood of Jesus can accomplish that change. And He does it! He came and died and rose again to make this possible.