

# Did You Say Your Prayers Tonight? (2)

Tim Rus

Now from the experience of being in the court room in front of an earthly judge, there are significant points to be considered, which I will do the best I can to describe. However, I am sure my words will fall far short of what they should be relating to God and his mercy and justice.

Entering the courtroom is an overwhelming experience. There is a great separation between the parties. Not so much in physical distance, but rather emotionally. The aisle separating the two sides is a great chasm, filled with fear and pain.

Knowing the person responsible for Charity's death was just a few feet away created an overwhelming feeling. Not one of anger, but rather confusion. My mind was simply unable to really grasp the totality of the whole experience. There was so much going on: Reporters, attorneys, cameras, crying, and sorrow.

Everyone wonders what's going to happen. What will be the plea? What kind of sentencing? Is she really sorry? How will I respond?

Some similarities between the earthly courtroom and the final judgment:

First, there is the judge. His sentence on earth is for the most part final, except if someone decides to appeal. With God there is no appeal. His decision is absolute and final; no one can challenge his wisdom or question his fairness. Then there is the guilty party. Before God I am the guilty one. Now I await the sentencing with great fear and trembling. but just as the judge of heaven and earth proclaims the sentence (eternal damnation) another one steps in and proclaims that he will take the punishment in my stead.

With that I begin to feel some relief. Who could this be that would take my punishment and be qualified to do so other than one who is both God and man? My Savior Christ Jesus! Christ Jesus, I say, Son of God and Son of man, the only one qualified to stand in my stead and make the payment for my debt. What a savior we have!

Now touching the earthly judgment. A plea has been entered or a jury has issued their verdict: **“Guilty!”** No gray areas, no more discussion, the decision has been made: **Guilty!** Now where do we go from here? There is none to take the punishment for the guilty party. The earthly judge will proclaim his sentence and the punishment will be implemented. Here I want to be extremely careful, for I do not in any way want to compare myself to Christ Jesus. But standing between the earthly judge and the guilty party, we received permission of the judge to speak.

We looked in the direction of the one whom the Lord used to take our daughter to heaven as she wept and cried out in pain and sorrow. In such a setting, we spoke the words, “We forgive you,” which have such a significance it’s hard to describe.

I ask myself the question. How would I respond if I did not see repentance, but a person who actually was blaming me for the situation? I know from a human perspective I would not have been able to say those three precious words, “We forgive you.” Now this is the amazing part of God; he forgave us while we were yet sinners living in enmity against him. Imagine that! Someone who has wronged you so deeply and yet that very person totally and unconditionally forgives. Moreover, the person pays the debt and sets us free!

Certainly a significant element of forgiveness is repentance. God calls us to live peaceably with all men as best we can. But what if there is no evidence of repentance? In this case I believe that this is one reason why God doesn’t expect us to forget, but to forgive.

I can honestly say that in my personal experience, love for my neighbor did not come automatically regarding the loss of my daughter.

Distractions or plunging into my work are coping methods that I have seemed to have fallen into. It’s kind of a mixed feeling, I know that work is not and will never be a true comfort, but it does help distract my mind from the pain of my loss. Nevertheless, there are times when I simply cannot control the tears. When this comes upon me, it is an absolute horrific experience that words cannot explain.

The fact is that I miss Charity so much that no matter how much I try, the pain simply overwhelms me at times. I know that these words are not too encouraging to someone who is

going through grief, but it's reality. There will be times where the road is so dark and the pain so intense that you will literally feel physically sick and totally exhausted. Even in this state we know that the Lord will not leave his people alone, and that as we read in Isaiah, a bruised reed he will not break. I wish that I knew of or could offer a plan to avoid this pain, such as start here at point "a" and proceed to point "b" and everything will be ok. Don't expect that to happen. As I am writing this, I am not only specifically giving this advice to my readers, but more so for me.

There is no clear path, but I know my redeemer lives and that I shall see God in my flesh at the last day. Glory be that he alone has conquered death and the grave! It's ok to miss our loved one!

Trusting only in God! One example that comes to mind is Joseph and his life. Just think of the fact that if there is anyone on this earth that you should be able to trust, you would think that it would be your own brothers, but what did they do? They sold him as a slave. Now I am sure Joseph never forgot what his brothers did to him, but I am also very sure he did not live with bitterness in his heart, but as we know from the Bible he loved his brothers and had pity on them in their need during the years of famine.

One can also think of the events in Joseph's life when he was put into prison with the baker and the butler. Think about the fact that Joseph saw them in distress and acknowledged their pain. Furthermore, he stated that the interpretation of dreams belonged to God. He even told them what their dreams meant. Granted, the interpretation of the one was not very good. But the interpretation of the other relieved him of his pain, and he was soon restored to the place as Pharaoh's butler. Joseph simply asked him to remember him. But the scripture tells us that he forgot him. If Joseph would have put his trust in the butler, believe me, he would have been extremely let down. Nevertheless, in God's timing the butler told Pharaoh of Joseph and we all know the story from there.

Eventually the brothers who did him wrong looked to Joseph for mercy and their daily bread. Did Joseph refuse them food or hate them? No, he showed mercy. If my brothers did to me what Joseph's brothers did to him, by nature I would not be very loving towards them. But God is able to work in our hearts to love and not hate, as God is love. My main point in telling this story of

Joseph is to stress that we do not put our trust in man. Every person, or for that matter, everything except God will fail us. Furthermore, think of Joseph as he went through these many trials. He had no idea what the outcome would be either from an earthly or heavenly point of view, but God worked it for the good on his chosen ones. Even more is the fact that God in his mercy gave us his word and told us of his workings in Joseph's life so that we could be comforted in our affliction.

Now even more incredible is the fact that God controls all things for the salvation of his church everything, even the death of our beloved Charity. The refrain in the old hymn, "Trust and Obey," written by John H. Sammis, puts it so simply: "Trust and obey, for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey."

For me a significant point was one day going to the grave site and weeping bitterly, but then "talking" to Charity and telling her that dad loves her so much and I will never ever forget her. But I have to move on or this pain is going to kill me. I think that at a certain level I was saying goodbye and asking her if that was ok with her. This was not a planned event; I only intended to visit the grave site. So, with that I considered the words of David found in 2 Samuel 12:23: "But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me," and applied them to myself, realizing that in these words David spoke of the resurrection. Please don't misunderstand me, I am not at all saying that at this point my pain was gone. Not at all. But I am simply acknowledging this point in my journey as a stepping stone on the path of healing.

In closing I will simply leave you with a quotation from Charity's journal that we found under her bed as we were cleaning out her room:

"But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God (Mark 10:14).

Whenever a door is closed, God opens a window. Whenever I need him, no matter where I am, He always finds me. And I pray if I have a problem and He answers my prayer. Do you know why? Do you? Because I am His child, and He loves me, and I love Him.

You should do the same. Because no matter what bad things you've done, you can be forgiven. And that's the truth."

\*Tim is a member of Grandville Protestant Reformed Church in Grandville, MI

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