

For Another's Crime

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*“Thy Word
Is
Truth”*

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Apostolic Faith Church

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FOR ANOTHER'S CRIME

THE power of the Gospel to change the human heart and plant in it the spirit of forgiveness is most wonderfully exemplified in the life's story of an ex-convict known for many years as "Forty-five." Few, perhaps, have heard to forgive the degree of injury that this man did. But Jesus said, "If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

At the age of sixteen, Forty-five left his home in Providence, Rhode Island and drifted West. One night he came into the city of Tacoma, Washington, in a Box car, reaching there just when a murder had been committed. He was arrested, tried, and sentenced to twenty-five years hard labor in the penitentiary.

For eighteen years of that time he suffered all the severity of punishment that was meted out to a desperate criminal. Many times he was placed in the dungeon for some infraction of prison rules. Once, for talking in line, he was placed in a dungeon twenty feet under the ground. He was handcuffed and his hands tied to the prison door from seven o'clock in the morning until five in the afternoon. The third day that he was there, as he was hanging chained by the wrist, he prayed to God.

There had been one bright spot in his prison life, and that was his friendship with the little daughter of the warden. He had once saved this child from being struck by a revengeful

prisoner. From that time on, she was always kind to him he had heart trouble and did not expect to leave to be free again.

There in the dungeon he prayed that if God would let him see this little girl again he would serve him, and he would read the Bible to the prisoners to the rest of his life. That very night when the deputy warden came to give him his allowance of bread and water, there stood the child. She held out her hand and said: "Come out, Forty-five; I have come for you. My papa says you shall work in the hospital."

He worked for three years in the hospital, where he kept his promise to read the Bible to the prisoners. At the end of that time he was discharged from the prison "nearly wrecked in body and mind, homeless, friendless, and nameless." As he left the prison and started down the road an automobile shot past him. Not having seen or heard of this invention, he was so frighten that he ran back to the prison; and when one of the guards let him in, he ran to his cell and crept under his bed. One of the guards, seen his fright, sent for the warden's daughter. When she asked him what was the matter, he said that the world was coming to an end, and he had seen the devil. Then, she explained to him about the changes that had taken place in the world in the twenty-one he had been imprisoned. Getting the Bible, she read to him in the Book of Nahum 2: 3, 4, that the chariots should rage, and jostle one against another in the streets that they would run like the lightning, and be with flaming torches in the day of "his preparation". She told him these things must take place to fulfil the Bible. then she said "come out, Bro. Forty- five; nobody will hurt; and you want to catch the train to Portland, Oregon, today. "He had been given a ticket to Portland.

He took the train for Portland. For four days he wandered about looking for work, with nothing to eat nor a place to sleep except Lumber Piles. At last he started down to the Burnside Bridge to throw himself into the river. The Bridge-keeper, pulled in down from the railing and said, "You cannot do that" as he walked away he saw the electrically-lighted sign of the Apostolic Faith church. An unseen power seemed to compel him to attend a Gospel service. He felt he was among friends.

The minister was preaching that night about the Prodigal Son. At the close of the meeting Forty-five held up his hand for prayer. He was too weak from lack of food to walk alone, so a brother helped him to the altar where he prayed, and God "washed his soul as white as snow." Then he fainted from hunger. But he was among friends who cared, and soon he was strong again.

A week later he received a definite experience of sanctification, and the next Sunday he was Baptized with the Holy Ghost. He kept on attending the meetings and often gave his testimony.

About two years later, as he was telling the story of his life and conversion, a man sat listening in the back of the church, tears flowing down his cheeks. He left his seat and ran down the stairs. A few days later someone who had talked with the stranger told Forty-five that this stranger knew something about him. Eager to learn something about his people, he

obtained a description of the man and find he had gone to San Francisco, California.

Forty-five followed the stranger there and learned that he was in a hospital, dying of tuberculosis. So great was his desire to talk to the man that Forty-five went to the superintendent of the hospital and asked for work. When asked where he had been previously employed, he breathed a prayer to God and told his story. The superintendent wept as he listened and told him to report for duty that night. Almost a month later he had the opportunity to converse with the stranger. He found him suffering from tuberculosis of the spinal column. One night the man asked him to read the Bible to him.

Forty-five read from the fifteen chapter of Luke - The Prodigal Son. While talking the man put his arm around the ex-convict and said "Can you forgive me for the wrong I have done you?" the ex-convict replied "You have done me no wrong." Can you tell me about my mother?" the man answered', "I know nothing about your people, but I am the man who committed the crime for which you have sent to the penitentiary." He said, "I want you to forgive me for all those years you that spent behind the prison walls."

Here was the real murderer for whose crime Forty-five had been spent twenty-one long years in the prison! And he was asking Forty-five to forgive him!

The thought of the ex- convict went back to the long years he had spent in the prison. He taught of the ball and chain he had carried for two years. He taught of the thirty lashes he had

received at the whipping post and of the time he was shot in the leg, and of the weeks spent in the dungeon. He felt he was not prepared to forgive from his heart. He left the sick man and went into a little room alone. He locked the door. Kneeling down on the concrete floor, he prayed. For nearly three hours he wrestled with God for a real spirit of forgiveness. At last a Voice said, “Forgive him for My sake.”

He went back and took the man in his arms and said, “I forgive you all the injury you have done me but you will also have to ask God to forgive you, too.”

The man was in a dying condition. He could not get upon his knees; but Forty-five could hear him say, over and over, “God, be merciful to me a sinner.” And God had mercy and saved him. Then he asked Forty-five to baptize him in water. So Forty-five filled the bathtub with water, put water proof bandages over the sore in the sick man back, and lifted the almost dying man into the bathtub, saying, “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”

Three days later, the criminal died in his arms. That criminal’s hands were stained with the blood, but God forgave him; and Forty-five, whom he had caused to suffer so terribly, also forgave the wrong, from the bottom of his heart.

Many years have passed since then – Forty-five, too, has gone on to be with the Lord. In eternity, with a new name – and no longer just a number - he is walking the street of gold. There he and the man in whose stead he suffered those many years

are praising God that their sins were washed by the Blood of the Lamb. The wronged and the one who did the wronged – each called upon God for mercy and received the pardon of a merciful God.

The Lord Jesus who taught us to pray, “Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors” gives everyman power to forgive.

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