

Love Beneath the Bricks

While it is human nature to hold a grudge or to strike back at those who insult or harm us, we are emotionally moved by those who offer forgiveness and seek peace.

One such example was Gordon Wilson (1927 – 1995), a draper in Enniskillen, County Fermanagh, Northern Ireland. On the morning of Sunday, Nov. 8, 1987, Wilson took his daughter, Marie, a 20-year-old nurse, to a parade in the town of Enniskillen honoring those who were killed while serving in the British Armed Forces. As he and his daughter stood beside a brick wall waiting for English soldiers and police to come marching by, a bomb planted by Irish Republican Army terrorists exploded from behind, and the wall tumbled down on them.

The blast instantly killed half a dozen people and pinned Wilson and his daughter beneath several feet of bricks. His shoulder and arm were injured. Unable to move, Wilson felt someone take hold of his hand. It was his daughter, Marie.

“Is that you, Dad?” she asked. “Yes, Marie,” he answered.

He heard several people begin screaming from their injuries and the terror.

“Are you all right?” Wilson asked his daughter.

“Yes,” she said. But then she, too, began to scream. As he held her hand, again and again he asked if she was all right, and each time she said yes.

Finally, Marie said, “Daddy, I love you very much.”

Those were her last words. Four hours later, she died in the hospital of severe spinal and brain injuries.

Later that evening, a BBC reporter requested permission to interview Wilson. After Wilson described what had happened, the reporter asked, “How do you feel about the guys who planted the bomb?”

“I bear no ill will,” Wilson replied. “I bear no grudge. Dirty sort of talk is not going to bring Marie Wilson back to life. I shall pray tonight and every night that God will forgive them.” He also begged that no one take revenge for Marie’s death and pleaded with Loyalists not to do so.

Historian Jonathan Bardon said of Wilson’s interview: “No words in more than 25 years of violence in Northern Ireland had such a powerful, emotional impact.”

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In the months that followed, many people asked Wilson, who later became a senator in the Republic of Ireland, how he could say such a thing, how he could forgive such a monstrous act.

Wilson explained, “I was hurt. I had just lost my daughter. But I wasn’t angry. Marie’s last words to me – words of love – had put me on a plane of love. I received God’s grace, through the strength of His love for me, to forgive.”

For years after this tragedy, Gordon Wilson continued to work for peace in Northern Ireland.

Love can do miracles. Just as Marie Wilson’s last words to her father lifted him onto the plane of love, so God’s love for us lifts us onto a different level, enabling us to love others no matter how they may treat us.

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good (Romans 12:21).

– Beecher Hunter