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Power in Forgiveness

At the age of seven, I was evacuated from my home in London to a small village in Bedfordshire. I was billeted with a family of four. The parents, their two children, and two other evacuees, all seven of us were crammed into a three-bedroom council house in the outskirts of the village. I shared a bedroom with the mother's 14-year-old son and the other boy evacuee. For some reason the son (nicknamed Podge), probably because he was overweight, took dislike to me and bullied me. Every night he threatened to suffocate me, unless I told him a story to help him go to sleep. Not only did I have a growing fear of him but also a growing dislike which eventually turned to hatred. I carried these feelings for years.

At the age of 23 I became a Christian. For many years every time I thought of Podge, I had feelings of bitterness and resentment. I knew it was wrong but couldn't do anything about it. This continued for years until one day I thought to myself, these feelings I have about Podge are wrong. A friend close to me said, "Have you ever forgiven him?" If Podge was still alive, he would be in his 80's. What is the point in forgiving him now?

However, I began to realise more and more I had a problem and the problem was me. I never forgot the bullying, nor my resentment of him. However, I felt increasingly I need to forgive him. God has forgiven me and forgives me of my past and present. I sat at my desk and prayed, "God help me to forgive Podge. I can't do it by myself. I am too hurt." As I prayed, I had a strange feeling of release.

My unforgiveness had affected me. As God enabled me to forgive Podge, I felt really good. I have never had a negative thought about him since I prayed. Unforgiveness, being hurt and bitter is harmful to the bearer not the offender. Forgiveness starts with us. 'Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us'. I know from personal experience there is power in forgiveness.