

AN EXAMPLE

An Iranian Christian minister converted the guard who tortured him. Roubik Hoospian was asleep in his jail cell where he spent 28 days in solitary confinement, exhausted from hours of interrogation, when the guard rapped on his door, according to the *Los Angeles Times*.

"Tell me about Jesus," the guard said in the early morning hours. Hoospian, tired and bitter because of his treatment and separation from his family, tried to put him off, but the guard persisted. "You have to tell me. You are a pastor," he said. Four hours later both men were weeping and the guard professed faith in Christ, Hoospian told the *Times*.

"I cried with him, because I was so full of hatred that I didn't want to share the Lord's Word with him," said the 42-year-old preacher, who now lives in California. "That night God saved me from my bitterness and showed me that you can love even your persecutors."

—*Religion Today*

“ Love lets the past die. It moves people to a new beginning without settling the past. Love does not have to clear up all past misunderstandings. The details of the past become irrelevant; only its new beginning matters. Accounts may go unsettled; differences remain unsolved; ledgers stay unbalanced. Conflicts between people's memories of how things happened are not cleared up; the past stays muddled. Only the future matters. Love's power does not make fussy historians. Love prefers to tuck the loose ends of past rights and wrongs in the bosom of forgiveness--and pushes us into a new start. ”

—*Lewis B. Smedes*
(*Love within Limits*)

TO STOP HURTING

David is serving a 21-year sentence for murder. He told a *Life* magazine reporter: "One day I woke and felt that I had been permanently stained by my act. ... The feeling of horror, of disgust, of shame grew.

"I consulted a priest in prison. He gave me a Bible, and as I began to read I was somewhat comforted, not initially by a sense of God's forgiveness but by the conviction that He was present.

"The sense of separation I felt suggested the existence of a Being who was offended, who

cared enough for me to be ashamed for me. I came to belief through guilt.

"What most impresses me now is the mercy of God, His refusal to be shocked by anything I could do. The God I know is a knowing but forgiving God."
—*Our Daily Bread*
(Radio Bible Class)

Some people are mad at God because they think He is angry with them. They think He will never forgive them for what they've done, that their sin was

too great, their pardon impossible.

But there can come a beautiful moment when we realize that He understands whatever it is we are ashamed of, and He hurts for us, for our failings. He does not gloss over the enormity of it, but in full knowledge of our failing, He forgives it all. Then the anger melts away at joy, at the sense of falling into His arms in gratitude. There is nothing so pure, so free, so clean as the feeling of being totally forgiven. Our anger disappears; peace remains.

—*Chloe West*