

Father Stuns Courtroom With His Message for the Drug Dealer Who Killed His Daughter

Drugs stole his 20-year-old daughter's life years before natural causes could take her.

He faced off against the man responsible for her death, the man who sold her the fatal dose.

Mike Bailey sniffed back tears and prepared to read his family's words to Rodrigus Lee Pearson.

"As a family, we write this letter to you hopefully through the eyes of Christ, not to condemn you, but to allow your conviction to change your heart and your life," Bailey read.

"By God's love and grace we are saved and forgiven," the family said, according to the statement. "Forgiveness doesn't right a wrong, but it frees us from the bondage of that wrong. It also does not free you of the consequences of sin here on earth, but it allows you to be right with God as he walks with you through your trials. You need to know that we do not hold any ill feelings toward you as a person created by God. We extend forgiveness to you for the wrongs against our family in the same way that Christ has forgiven our wrongs, even without asking for that forgiveness. We neither hate nor condemn you in any way, but hope that through your conviction you will seek your own personal forgiveness from God. We pray that you will seek Him and walk with Him as you carry out the consequences of your actions."

Ashlynn Bailey died in January 2016 at age 20, five years after she first began dabbling with drugs, her father says.

Pearson, who dealt her the drugs, pleaded guilty in March to selling her fentanyl, a powerful painkiller Ashlynn reportedly thought was heroin.

An Alabama judge sentenced Pearson to 20 years on Wednesday.

Though the Bailey family is devastated by their loss, they are determined to let Christ shine through.

"Anyone who doesn't think it will happen, be real careful," Mike Bailey says. "She was a good Christian girl that grew up at Green Valley Baptist Church. She went to Hoover High School, was a cheerleader there for a few years, ended up going for a semester at Alabama."

They founded the Ashlynn Bailey Foundation to help others affected by the rampant drug epidemic in Jefferson County, Alabama.

"She grew up in the church, learned about God, and became a Christian at an early age—just after the 9/11 event that forever changed our peaceful world here in America. She loved God and had a real anointing for leading others to Christ. She felt that everyone needed to go to heaven. She led several of her friends to Christ," according to the foundation's website.

"We learned that Ashlynn had a terrible misfortune happen to her personally during high school and she just could never get over it. She would use drugs to hide her pain and her self-hate. She had used most every kind of drug, but the hook, line and sinker was her drug of choice: HEROIN! It is a very difficult drug to rehab from, especially in a true addict's brain. Looking back at Ashlynn's life and her personality, we truly believe that she had addictive tendencies all along, and it took one time of the right drug for her to be ever hooked on it and the constant craving of that first experience with heroin. As we look back, we believe the devil used the drugs to devour Ashlynn because the devil knew she would be a great Christian warrior. She was a threat to him and he went after

her with a vengeance. As a family, we claimed the verse Jeremiah 29: 11 over her life and our life: 'For I know the plans that I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope.'

We were going to hold onto God's word not matter what the devil was throwing at us." {eoa}