

Prayer Strategies to End the Vicious Cycles of Unforgiveness

Today, on June 28, we remember two anniversary dates which are linked together in a cycle of bloodshed and unforgiveness.

On July 28, 1914, 103 years ago, a young Serbian terrorist assassinated the archduke and crown prince of the great Austro-Hungarian Empire. The act led Austria-Hungary to revenge itself by declaring war on Serbia. The Russians entered the blood feud to protect their fellow Slavs, the Serbians. The Germans came to the support of Austria-Hungary, France and England came to the aid of Russia, and Europe erupted into the massive slaughter we now call World War I. All because of a cycle of unforgiveness.

Five years and millions of deaths later, the war was officially brought to a close on June 28, 1919 in the Treaty of Versailles. Once again, unforgiveness carried the day as the victorious Allies imposed draconian conditions on the defeated Germans. The resulting hardship and resentment created an opportunity for Adolph Hitler and his Nazi party to drive Europe into a second horrendous conflict which became the Second World War. Then, for another 50 years, the Russians extracted their revenge by turning the Eastern European nations into subservient police states. The First World War, called the "war to end all wars," ended with the peace treaty of Versailles, which a critic called "The peace to end all peace."

It was up to the Americans to break the cycle of unforgiveness. With the Marshall Plan in Europe and a humane occupation of Japan, the Americans turned their German and Japanese enemies into friends. America has also forgiven its

cold war enemies in China, Vietnam, Russia and Eastern Europe, leading the world into a time of prosperity and relative peace, and making way for the unprecedented worldwide Christian revival.

The American ability to forgive goes back to our history as a Christian nation. The Lord commands us to forgive our enemies, and the experience after the second World War showed how the biblical command to love our enemies produces Godly fruit of peace and revival. Forgiveness is perhaps the most powerful spiritual weapon to change the atmosphere and bring God's answers into a situation.

There will always be those who are driven to attack others, and we thank God for those who protect us. But we must also know that there is no true peace without forgiveness.

Let us pray that we will remember that we are called to bless and not curse, and that we can use the spiritual weapon of forgiveness to end destructive cycles of unforgiveness. {eoa}