

The Legacy of Dirk Willems

Scripture Reading — Romans 12:9-21

*Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good.
Romans 12:9 —*

Some years ago, while vacationing in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, my family visited the Mennonite Information Center and saw a display that told the story of Dirk Willems. He was a Dutch Christian who lived in the 1500s. Dirk was baptized as an infant but decided to be re-baptized as an adult. Town officials in his hometown of Asperen considered that to be heresy, so they put Dirk in prison.

In jail, Dirk tied rags together to form a rope that he used to scale down the tower wall. He had lost a lot of weight while in prison, so he could walk across the frozen moat that surrounded the jail without falling through the ice. A guard saw Dirk escaping and chased him, but the ice broke beneath him.

Dirk heard the guard's cries for help and turned back to save his captor's life. After Dirk rescued him, the guard arrested him again. This time, Dirk was sent to a more secure prison cell and placed in wooden stocks. Soon afterward, he was burned at the stake.

It's a tragic story, but it illustrates the enduring power of love by which good conquers evil. Centuries later, the name Dirk Willems is recalled by many who saw in him an example of Christ-like love for one's enemies.

Are there any other stories of love for enemies that you can share?

Prayer

Dear Lord, you have lavished us with love even when we were most unlovable. Use us, we pray, to show your love to everyone— even our enemies. Amen.

Devotion topics: [Christianity](#), [Discipleship](#), [Love](#)

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