

Wrestling With Justice in the Midst of Sorrow and Loss

One year ago, [I lost a friend, a good man](#) who was driven to his untimely death by the wicked words and deeds of people determined to ruin his life if they could. People who loathed him—without knowing him in any meaningful human way—simply because he disagreed with their beliefs about political, cultural, and philosophical matters. It was a terrible thing.

We cannot change such things. All we can do is learn the lessons they teach.

My friend Mike Adams' death powerfully recalled to me the dreadful truth that justice is not to be had in this world. I believed I knew this already, but my ability to hide it from myself, in the vain hope that I might somehow forget it, is formidable. When Mike died, those who had desired his destruction claimed his own hatred led to his demise and that he had done things to deserve disgrace.

Those of us who knew him understood what a monstrous lie that was, and we challenged it publicly. But some of the people who hated the version of him they had created in their own minds are influential in the central cultural institutions of our society, and their lie has largely carried the day. Their insane hatred of him—which he did not reciprocate—made it impossible for them to recognize reality, and our current elitist culture embraces these same warped sensibilities.

Mike's death also taught me an essential lesson about forgiveness and its boundaries. Knowing the seriousness of Mike's religious faith, I have been mightily desirous of cultivating the spiritual ability to forgive. I would like to be able to absolve those who caused his end and then gloated about it after the fact. But I also know the passage in Leo

Tolstoy's [War and Peace](#) in which Prince Andrei contemplates an enemy whom he suspects of the worst of moral transgressions against him. His sister Maria calls to him to the path of forgiveness:

'Andrei! One thing I beg, I entreat of you!' she said, touching his elbow and looking at him with eyes that shone through her tears. 'I understand you' (she looked down). 'Don't imagine that sorrow is the work of *men*. Men are His tools.' She looked a little above Prince Andrei's head with the confident, accustomed look with which one looks at the place where a familiar portrait hangs. 'Sorrow is sent by *Him*, not by men. Men are His instruments, they are not to blame. If you think someone has wronged you, forget it and forgive! We have no right to punish. And then you will know the happiness of forgiving.'

'If I were a woman I would do so, Maria. That is a woman's virtue. But a man should not and cannot forgive and forget,' he replied, and though till that moment he had not been thinking of Kurágin, all his unexpended anger suddenly swelled up in his heart.

'If Maria is already persuading me to forgive, it means that I ought long ago to have punished him,' he thought. And giving her no further reply, he began thinking of the glad vindictive moment when he would meet Kurágin who he knew was now in the army.

Internally, I should perhaps forgive the hate-filled people who hounded my friend to his death. The moral good thereof might well help settle my troubled mind. I have not yet acquired this ability, and I admit this is a great struggle for me, as Prince Andrei's view of this matter overlaps considerably with my own. But the internal struggle goes on.

Externally, though, the example of Mike's life is perfectly in tune with a sound understanding of the distinction between the internal spiritual struggle and the political imperative to defeat the enemy. I can struggle internally to forgive them their hatred, while still working politically against the people who pushed my friend to his death. I would be vindicated in the work itself and in seeing their perverse

ideas defeated, even as I continue to try to forgive them for perpetrating their evil.

A final moral lesson learned from Mike's death, perhaps the most important of the three, is that even those we would least suspect of alienation and suicidal loneliness can fall into that dark pit and be unable to climb out alone. Mike was strong and confident, far from the stereotypical suicide risk.

We all need sustenance from those who love us, and we all are morally charged to look out for those we love. I will tell a friend today that I am here for him. May I ask you to consider doing the same?

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