***Children’s Story* LOVE MADE A DIFFERENCE**

**by**

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**TEXT: Matthew 5:*44 But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, (NKJV)***

Saustin loved attending the Adventist school back in Malawi, but he definitely did not love one person in particular. Being the shortest boy in his class, Saustin was often the target of many jokes and teasing. Unfortunately, thirteen-year-old chunky Billy hounded him every day at school. Billy was a Bully!

One morning, Saustin was rushing to class with his arms piled high with books when suddenly, books were flying, hands and legs sprawled apart on the floor.

“Ouch!” Saustin howled loudly as blood was oozing out and running down his school uniform from his lower lip.

Billy looked at him and giggled. Poor Saustin helplessly looked up at Billy, with tears of pain and anger flowing down his face. The teacher finally came to help clean him up as other classmates collected his scattered books. Afterwards an angry principal told Billy that if he continued bullying others, he would have to find another school. Wow, the nearest school was about an hour’s walk away!

One Sunday afternoon after recovering from his injury, Saustin and his parents went for a walk along the river. Suddenly they were startled by a loud cry coming from way up the stream.

“Help, help!” shouted someone frantically, waving his hands before disappearing under the water. After a short time, the person reappeared but disappeared again.

"That person is going to drown!" Saustin shouted.

"We must save him!" Mother yelled.

"Hey, that looks like Billy!" screamed Saustin as he squinted his eyes to look carefully. "Yes, that’s the guy who tripped me at school,” said Saustin with certainty.

“Ah, it's time he faced the music," declared Saustin joyfully.

“Son, I know it hurts when someone bullies you, but two wrongs don't make a right,” Father said seriously, “Revenge is for simple-minded people. To love those who bully and persecute you is a sign of greatness. It's the highest quality one can possess," Father continued as he looked straight into Saustin’s eyes.

"Don’t forget Matthew 5:44 that tells us that we should love our enemies, bless those who curse us, do good to those that hate us, and pray for those who persecute us," Mother reminded him.

"Okay, I get it," Saustin shouted, “Here comes Billy. Let's hurry to help him."

Father grabbed a pole which laid by the bank of the river, stretched it over the water, holding the other end tightly.

"Billy! Billy! Grab the end of the pole and we will pull you to in!" Saustin shouted above the din of the rushing water.

Billy waved his hands in the air and again disappeared under the water.

"Where did he go?" Saustin asked frantically. They all looked around, but Billy was nowhere to be seen.

"What happened to him?" Mom asked, tears welling in her eyes.

They continued scanning the water. When Billy finally reappeared, he had passed the pole and was going downstream.

"There he goes!" Mother shouted.

Father, pulling the pole behind him, ran down next to the stream with Saustin close behind him. The water thrust Billy towards some rocks, and he got wedged between them. Dad and Saustin ran to the bank of the river.

"Billy, we will throw this end of the pole to you!" Father shouted at the top of his voice.

"Okay!" replied a trembling and tearful Billy.

"Hold the other end tight and we will pull you across!" Father commanded.

"I'll try," a trembling Billy replied. Then he looked carefully and said, "Is that …..err… err… is that you?"

"Yes. We are going to save you, Billy!" said Saustin confidently.

"And we have no time to waste," Father bellowed.

"Quickly! Hold the other end of the pole—and hold it tight!" Father commanded.

Billy stretched out his hand and grabbed the end of the pole. Father, Mother and Saustin began to pull a terrified Billy toward the riverbank. Sometimes Billy would disappear in the water's white foam and then reappear. As the three continued pulling Billy to safety, he suddenly shouted, "My hands are getting tired! I'm slipping!"

"Hold on!" Saustin shouted. "Just hold on!"

"I'm losing my grip!" Billy shouted as his left hand slipped from the pole.

"Don't give up!" Mother pleaded.

Billy struggled to regain his grip on the pole, but slowly his right hand also began to slip.

"We're losing him!" Father exclaimed.

"Billy, just hold tight!" Saustin shouted.

Just when Billy was about to reach the shore, he slipped and disappeared into the white foam.

"Oh no! He's gone!" Mother screamed.

Just then Billy reappeared. Father dived into the water and grabbed the exhausted Billy before he would be swept away again.

"Be careful of alligators!" Mother shouted frantically.

Saustin stretched out the pole and Father grabbed it. With one hand he held onto Billy and with the other, he held the pole as Mother and Saustin pulled them to safety.

Billy, his teeth chattering from shock and fear, lay on his back on the bank of the river in a state of exhaustion. When they were rested, Billy looked at Saustin and his parents, and tears began to flow down his face. In between sobs, Billy tried to say something. "Please… please…" but he could not speak because he was choked with emotion. Saustin moved closer to him and reassured him that everything was okay—there was no need to worry.

After some time, Billy said, "Please forgive me. If you had treated me the way I deserved, I would have died today." He said solemnly as he wiped away the tears running down his face.

"To be honest with you," Saustin admitted up front, "When I realized that it was you, I had no intention of helping you. I told my parents that you were the guy who bullied me at school, and we should not help you. But Father told me that revenge is for simpleminded people. Then Mother reminded me of what Matthew 5:44 says."

"What does it say?” Billy asked with great interest, “We don't have much time for memorizing Bible verses at home."

"The verse says that we should love our enemies, bless those who curse us and do good to those who hate us and pray for them.," replied Mother tenderly.

"A spirit of revenge keeps us at the level of our opponent. It makes our enemy our equal. As Christians, we must rise above that and love our enemies as Jesus did," Mother said smilingly.

"As Christians, we should not hold grudges," Father added.

"Billy, we are happy that you are alive," Saustin said excitedly

After Billy was rested, he stood up. With tears streaming down his face, he hugged Saustin, Father, and Mother tightly with gratitude in his heart.

"You have taught me a great lesson today. You guys are true Christians!"

When the boys met at school the following day, everybody was surprised how friendly Billy was to Saustin. Then Billy told everyone at school what happened at the river the day before. Believe it or not—big Billy the Bully never bullied anyone again! In fact, both Saustin and Billy became great friends.

An act of love made a difference!

**APPEAL**

May the Lord help all us that no form of bullying should be found in our lives. But should we be bullied, we will not hold a grudge against the bullies but instead we will love, do good and pray for them.