

**BBC RADIO ULSTER**

**THOUGHT FOR THE DAY**

**Friday 30<sup>th</sup> January 2015**

Thirty-three years ago a 15-year-old boy in the USA did something that has affected everyone of us. In January 1982 while his classmates were probably listening to Duran Duran cassettes and watching Dallas on TV, Rich Skrenta must have been bored. So, just for a bit of a laugh, he created a computer programme hidden on a game on a floppy disk (remember those?) and as a prank he designed it to spread on to every computer that opened it. The world's first computer virus was born.

When the virus was released it would trigger a blank screen on the computer showing a poem that said:

'It will get on all your disks  
It will infiltrate your chips...  
It will stick to you like glue  
It will modify RAM too'

In the past 33 years computer viruses have cost businesses billions of pounds. In a world that has become more and more dependent on computers, the fear of a computer virus can panic people as much as real virus. A virus can stop all the essentials in life, such as banking and shopping and playing Candy Crush. The problem is that once a virus infects your computer it seems to be impossible to get rid of it.

It's a lot like bitterness. Once bitterness takes hold in your heart it can stick very stubbornly to your hard memory drive. Life and other human beings can be so cruel. But years of festering bitterness just eat you up.

Buddhists say 'Holding on to anger is like grasping a hot coal with the intent of throwing it at someone else; you are the one who gets burned.'

It seems that forgiveness is actually good for you.

Mahatma Gandhi, who was assassinated on this very day in 1948, said "The weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is an attribute of the strong"

Jesus of Nazareth said we should forgive someone not just once, not just seven times but 70 times 7 times. He said "when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins'.

When you get a virus on your computer you can either give up on the machine or do whatever you have to do to get it working again, so that it has a future. Maybe that's a good way to think about the impact of bitterness on your future. The people of the retired South African Arch Bishop, Desmond Tutu experienced the sort of injustice that could lead to generations of bitterness but he says clearly and unconditionally these words: "Without forgiveness there is no future"