

WORLD TRUMPET MISSION – PRAYER TEACHINGS

12- COMBAT IN THE HEAVENLIES Love Covers A Multitude Of Sins

INTRODUCTION

In our Christian walk, the greatest fight we encounter, even as we deal with spiritual combat in the heavenlies, is the fight against our faith in God. However, Paul says to the Galatians in Gal 5:6 '*For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; **but faith which worketh by love.***' We have just been learning about our need to stand with Israel and the Arabs in prayer and intercession. It takes faith and love however; our focus on this teaching is how to walk with fellow believers. When we are walking with fellow Christians and hard things come up between us, the things that build walls between us, denominationalism and other religious separations, it takes us seeing each other through the eyes of God. If we can see through God's eyes, we can dare to have faith and love like He loved us – and that is a battle. If we can come to the place of real Christian love, then many other things we are facing will be straightened out. In John 13:34-35 Jesus said to His disciples that '*A new commandment I give unto you, that ye **love one another**; as I have **loved you**, that ye also **love one another**. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have **love one to another**.*' There must be a mixing between our faith and love. Paul rightly puts it in 1 Corinthians 13:13, '*and now these three remain; faith, hope and love, but the greatest of these is love*'. This message is prophetic and profound, easy to share but hard to apply. Pray that God will give you a spirit of understanding and revelation knowledge as you read this.

From time to time, many Christian individuals and organizations experience various shakings in their existence. These shakings and turmoil come in the form of loss of people, property, position, respect and honor, faith, spiritual walk with God and other brethren, due to sin. With these shakings, we experience break down of various spiritual and physical structures in our individual or corporate lives.

When God allows any shaking or turmoil in an individual or corporate body of Christians, many things become exposed which are uncomfortable, unpleasant and even shocking. The circumstances created by the shaking are a catalyst that brings to the surface and to light, hidden sins or character traits in that individual or group which God wants to deal with like adultery or other sexual sin, financial mismanagement and misappropriation, deep pride and arrogance, bitterness, woundedness, hatred and so on.

The Body of Christ has entered into that season prophesied in Haggai 2⁶⁻⁹
For thus saith Jehovah of hosts: Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations; and the precious things of all nations shall come; and I will fill this house with glory, saith Jehovah of hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith Jehovah of hosts. The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former, saith Jehovah of hosts; and in this place will I give peace, saith Jehovah of hosts.

There is a lot in the above scripture. However, in this context the scripture says that God will shake the nations. The precious things of the nations will come and He will fill His house with glory. God has already began a great shaking in the nations but He starts with His change agent here on earth, the Church; so that we are a compact vessel, ready to receive the precious things from the nations and are equipped to carry His glory. He wants to take the Body of Christ to greater glory. However, before you get to that place of glory, there must be a shaking off of the old, vile, un-renewed, carnal, besetting, dead things in order to put on the character and anointing of love, light and holiness that can carry the weight of God's latter glory. Some Christian individuals and organizations have already entered into this season of turmoil. **These shakings will never stop.** As you walk the Christian journey there will always be a season of shakings of varying intensity. Maybe you, or someone or organizations you know are entering into this type of season of great shaking and you need to remember some principles of how to walk through it.

In the past, men and women of God experienced shakings in their spiritual journey and many sins and weights both big and small that hindered their spiritual lives, were brought to the surface. In much of the world, they were rejected and relegated to failure. It was a very tough walk back into the journey of salvation. They were casualties of spiritual battle and if ever they recovered, it was with big spiritual scars and disabilities. Many became bitter people and even ended up walking in error. As I have

walked in my journey of salvation, I have come to learn that the preserving factor to help any child of God to stand through a period of much shaking and hard dealings with God, is when brethren around them display the compassionate love of God, even as Jesus Christ did for us.

- In this message I mainly address the Christian who has seen their fellow brethren go through a season of shaking and did not know how to act toward them especially when some level of shame or loss of face is involved.
- I address those who feel condemned for their failure to stand during a season of trials and shakings in their lives. Dr. John Maxwell, the world famous leadership trainer speaks of “failing forward”. As we fall and submit ourselves under the hand of God, to be molded and shaped, chastised and raised up again, we fall forward, toward our goal of righteousness. Micah encourages the ‘fallen’ and says in 7⁸⁻⁹
Do not rejoice over me, my enemy; When I fall, I will arise; When I sit in darkness, the Lord will be a light unto me. I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him, until He pleads my case and executes justice for me. He will bring me forth to the light: I will see His righteousness.
- I also hope this message will equip those who are not yet privileged to experience any of the above on how to handle those among us who are weak and falling.

For God So Loved The World...

Romans 5⁶⁻⁷

For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

In His most famous and controversial sermon “*Sinners In The Hands of An Angry God*”, Jonathan Edwards, the great revivalist of the 18th century, painted a very vivid picture of what our plight is, as sinners in the hands of an angry yet loving God:

The God that holds you over the pit of hell, much as one holds a spider, or some loathsome insect over the fire, abhors you, and is dreadfully provoked: His wrath towards you burns like fire; He looks upon you as worthy of nothing else, but to be cast into the fire; He is of purer eyes than to bear to have you in His sight; you are ten thousand times more abominable in His eyes, than the most hateful venomous serpent is in ours. You have offended Him infinitely more than ever a stubborn rebel did his prince; and yet it is nothing but His hand that holds you from falling into the fire every moment. It is to be ascribed to nothing else, that you did not go to hell the last night; that you were suffered to awake again in this world, after you closed your eyes to sleep. And there is no other reason to be given, why you have not dropped into hell since you arose in the morning, but that God's hand has held you up. There is no other reason to be given why you have not gone to hell, since you have sat here in the house of God, provoking His pure eyes by your sinful wicked manner of attending His solemn worship. Yea, there is nothing else that is to be given as a reason why you do not this very moment drop down into hell.

Why won't God let go of you even at the worst and most sinful point of your existence? God loves and always wants to redeem mankind, and rescue us from sin; and He has made a way through Jesus Christ His beloved Son – *For God so loved the World that He gave His only begotten Son!* Just at the right time, God demonstrated His own love for us in this: while we were still powerless, while we were still sinners, Christ Jesus, in a display of great love and mercy, laid down His life for us. None of us qualified for such love and acceptance. However, at that moment when that harsh judgment was about to be justly meted out on us, Christ died on our behalf and all the anger, all the rejection of sin, the fury of God toward sin in all its totality, was unleashed upon His own beloved Son who went through all the horrors of death, hell and God's judgment so that we could be redeemed and accepted. One drop of the blood of Jesus is enough to wash all of humanity's sin since Adam.

We Walk in What He Died For

We don't usually grasp that on the cross, Jesus Christ represented every despicable sin ever to be represented in all creation. He was everything that many “righteous” people see in others and despise, hate and disassociate themselves from.

On the cross He became sin – it suggests that He became that prostitute being justly punished; on the cross He became that slave trader justly meeting his sentence; on the cross He became the child molester, the drug dealer, the drug addict, the rapist that defiled you or your loved one, the murderer who killed your loved one, the pedophile, the corrupt government official, that careless drunken

driver justly punished; on that cross He became that racist who segregated you and your people; on that cross He became that terrible witchdoctor, He became that cult leader who caused many deaths, He became the false prophet, He became that person with deviant sexuality, He became that chronic adulterer, that fornicator, He became that habitual liar, the alcoholic, that dishonest business person, that dishonest employee being justly punished.

Isaiah 53 captures His plight and says at one point, *"The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. ...and they made His grave with the wicked."* He became everything that represents sin in nature. He was Sin at its ugliest. Every sinner through the ages from that day of sacrifice on Mount Calvary can look to the cross and see himself reflected in the judgment that was meted out. It was all sons of men that hung on that cross in the being of the One Son of Man, Jesus Christ – On the cross He took it all into Himself – every sin that ever was and ever will be committed and **He became sin**. May God give us the revelation of this piece of scripture.

The greatly inspired hymns of old rightly captured this truth - from the hymn "There is a fountain filled With Blood" where the composer says *and sinners plunged beneath that flood loose all their guilty stains*; or "To God Be The Glory" which proclaims *the vilest offender who truly believes, that moment from Jesus a pardon receives*.

At that moment the Holy, Just God and all creation in all the universe, pointed a judging finger at the great Sinner hanging suspended on the cross and shouted "It is You, It is You. You deserve death." The heavenly hammer of judgment sealed the ominous words of judgment that would ring throughout eternity "The Sinner must die! God's just laws must be fulfilled!" God's fury at all sin committed since Adam and every sin that would ever be committed after that day, was lashed out on this One Sinner. At that sight, the entire Holy heaven turned away its face from Him. The sun could not even look – darkness covered the earth, all creation was groaning. The earth quaked and everything in creation rejected Him and vomited out upon this last Adam, all sin committed since the first Adam. The greatest sacrifice was made and everything in nature both animate and inanimate was reconciled to the Father through this great sacrifice. IT WAS FINISHED!

If Jesus came here today in the shameful state that He was on the cross, we would not want to be near Him; yet the very things that caused Jesus Christ to die are the sins we born again Christians walk with every day and are quite comfortable too. We recoil at the "big sins" or the ones exposed in others but do not think that our own "small" sins matter; yet *there is no difference for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God*.

The Bible says in 1 John 1⁵ that *God is light and in Him is no darkness at all*. All the sins we walk in, no matter how small, mean we have slipped into darkness. Whenever we do or say anything (or don't do or don't say anything) to hide what we are or what we've done – that is darkness. In V⁷ he goes on to say *if we walk in light as He is in the light we have fellowship with one another*. Everything that reproves us and shows us up as we really are – that is light, and everything exposed by the light becomes visible. The light includes "bad" things that happen to us or bad experiences we have with other people, Christian or non-Christian, that bring out our negative traits. They act like buttons, which when pressed, bring out what we really have within us; the carnality, pride, anger, bitterness, hatred, woundedness, lust, greed, weights and sins that beset us in our walk with God. Our entire experience as Christians can be used to build us up because *all things work together for good to them that love God*.

Every time we sin in our words, actions or reactions, God sees us wandering away from the path of light into darkness. We may not be walking in that "big" sin but sin in any form offends our Holy and Just God, yet He has not judged us and struck us down.

Whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. When we accept Jesus' sacrifice on the cross as ours and confess Him as Lord of our lives, the divine exchange takes place - He takes our sin and death and we receive His life and *it is no longer I who lives but Christ*. Therefore it should be the Christ life and nature that replaces our own sinful nature. We are born again and begin the journey of salvation. This is a continuous exchange until we become the express image of Jesus Christ. The sinful nature in us is exposed as we walk in the light, we continually submit these sins under the blood of Jesus in exchange for His truth and life and continue the journey of growing and changing more and more into the likeness of Christ. *He who knew no sin became sin that we may become the righteousness of God*.

We have established that God loved us while we were unlovable, pursued us, we submitted to His call and finally He has saved us. Where are we today? Today we are walking with Him at various levels of our Christian experience. However as we seek to walk with God in submission to all His Will, we are continually changed into the likeness of Christ. He continually purges us, removes the dross, shapes and molds us, removes the hard lumps, until we are pliable enough to be molded into better, stronger, bigger and more effective vessels that can be filled with the precious things of the nations, and be used to pour out the rivers of Water of Life over the nations through the Great Commission in this final hour. **Each of us is on God's work-table and we need to have patience, endurance and deep compassionate love for one another especially when the process begins to get messy.**

LOVE COVERS

God loved the world and He gave us a covering, through the blood of Jesus Christ. We want to challenge ourselves on the subject of compassionate love. Many times when people's sin is exposed, we write them off and say that they are beyond help. We forget all the good in them and see only their failure, yet, Jesus died and heaven considers that He paid the price and by His miraculous grace, which we cannot explain, heaven regards that we died with Him and rose with Him. Our sin is accounted to us as having been paid. By His stripes we were healed and forgiven; when the enemy shows us our sin, heaven shows him the account as paid by the blood of Jesus Christ.

Joseph & Nicodemus Were A Cover

John 19³⁸⁻⁴²

And after this Joseph of Arimathaea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave him leave. He came therefore, and took the body of Jesus. And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight. Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury. Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid. There laid they Jesus therefore because of the Jews' preparation day; for the sepulchre was nigh at hand.

Joseph and Nicodemus were secret disciples of Jesus Christ. They saw the whole suffering of Christ and how He paid for our sins. Nobody could take His life because He suffered willingly. However, between the time He said, **"It is finished"** and **the resurrection**, there was **a period of time**. Everyone ran away; but the Messiah had played His role. He was waiting for vindication and there was no one. He could not cover His nakedness, or bury Himself. Every disciple was gone because they thought there was no hope at all – He had been brutalized to a shameful death.

However, Joseph of Arimathaea and Nicodemus said, "Will Jesus hang on that tree during the Passover? Maybe there is no hope, maybe this is the end; but because we know the hand of God was on Him, we don't want the shame to continue. We won't let the birds eat His body. We will give him an honorable burial."

The other disciples who had been His closest friends, were nowhere to be seen, but these two men brought incense and linen and they performed all the burial rites according as to the customs of the Jews and laid him in a tomb and had it covered.

Going Through The Crucifixion

As we meditate on these scriptures, the Bible says we died with Him. If we were united in death so shall we be in resurrection. His death was a historical fact and our salvation is accepting this fact by faith. As we begin this journey of salvation, everyday we carry our own cross. This means a daily divine exchange. A dying to the old nature, taking His life in exchange for our sin and death that was already paid for more than 2000 years ago on that cross.

How do you die daily? Every day as you experience turmoil and shaking, things are exposed which destroy you and hold you back from your inheritance in God and remove the peace of God from your heart, yet it is the peace of God that guards your heart (Phil 4⁷). Author Roy Hession, in his book "The Calvary Road," described the peace of God as a referee in the heart. When there is a foul in a football game the referee blows the whistle, the game stops and until things are put right then the game continues. When there is a foul in your life, the peace of God blows the whistle on you. You lose peace and have to check your life to see where you have gone wrong. When you put things right through repentance and restitution and other actions, the peace returns and the game of life continues. It may be sin, the consequence of sin through generational bondage, or a testing that God allows in your life. Sometimes it is pain, or rejection, or another spiritual catastrophe happening to you

or those around you. Sometimes these things are dealt with between yourself and God, or within a safe circle of people praying and counseling you.

Other times you may pray and fast and try to rescue the situation you are in, but it continues to get worse and worse. Maybe you are going through that hard situation because you walked wrongly or sinned but you ignored the referee's whistle, therefore the consequent loss of peace in your heart. You became hardened and tried to move on in the game of life without a referee. Maybe in the past the grace upheld you though you had fallen into the same sin over and over again. The Bible says that even when we fall He pulls us back because of His redeeming Love. The Bible says in Psalms 37²⁴ *Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand.* In Psalms 19¹³ the Psalmist even prays *"keep back thy servant also from presumptuous [deliberate, intentional, done on purpose, calculated, planned, premeditated] sins; let them not have dominion over me.* The Psalmist knew that type of sin is present in every one born of man.

There comes that time in your walk of salvation when God sees that presumptuous sin in your life or weight that besets you, hindering your growth in Him, He sees the devil stealing your joy or peace because of that sin, then in His heart God says "If that sin, that weight, that bad habit does not die, it will destroy him." God says, "It has to be exposed and die. It will be painful, shameful but it will be finished." He says "I must take him through dying and crucifixion in that area because I love him and want him to walk free of that weight, that sin. I must shine My light on that area so that it can be seen as it really is. If he presents it to Me, the Blood of Jesus is sufficient to cleanse him of all unrighteousness. However, he can only have lasting changes if I do it in the open." God takes away the grace of His covering Hand

Hanging On The Cross; Exposed!

The next moment your worst comes out. People think "We never expected this from him." They see your weaknesses; the things that make you stumble and get held back. When it starts or that thing is exposed you say "My Lord take this thing off, hide it, cover me" but God says "My son bear it." People who thought you were good say "Look at him, see what he has come to." You want to share with someone else and gain spiritual strength, and he says, "Let us pray, God will handle it." All the time you know deep inside, that they don't believe you and their trust is eroded. You turn away and you feel empty, rejected and alone, without anyone. You are dying!

To the world, even sometimes, to those close to you, you are fallen, defeated, but to the Father it is necessary that the rottenness and nakedness come out. He has not forsaken you. You ask, "Why have You allowed this to come out?" The Father says, "You don't understand but it is finished."

However, between "It is finished" and the resurrection there is a period of time when you, as it were, hang naked and exposed on that cross, your world is full of darkness and all you hear are words of disapproval and mockery; your closest friends feel ashamed of you or disappear, and everything in you is crying "Where is everyone? My Lord, my Lord, why have You forsaken me!?"

We Need Joseph and Nicodemus

I was thinking how, many times we need Nicodemus and Joseph who will say "I don't understand, I cannot explain it, but help me to cover the shame of my brother or sister. Help me to give him or her a decent prayer cover and let God do what He is doing."

Compassion implies having sympathy, empathizing [feeling with, putting yourself in the sufferer's shoes], showing concern or kindness, showing consideration or care. Be a Joseph, be a Nicodemus, cover that man or woman; say "Father, I don't know what You began, today the person is on the cross but I will not let them stay there one more day in exposure and shame. Today I want to give decent prayer-cover even when circumstances say something contrary. I will put them in their tomb and let them have opportunity for God to do His great work in a secret, safe place, away from the eyes of men. I know that they walked with God before and I have seen the hand of God upon their life. Maybe they are dying now, maybe there is no hope but God who began a good work is well able to finish it. I will love that person and pray for him because I believe in him. He may fall again and again. I want to believe God. I will clean them, bind them up and cover them with the incense and linen of love and mercy and be a wall of prayer around them to keep their spirit protected in concealment. God, You have started a good work and You will accomplish it. I love You and put my trust in You and I will show love to this person." That is compassionate, covering love.

The Amplified Bible quotes beautifully 1 Corinthians 13⁷ *love bears up under anything and everything that comes, is ever ready to believe the best of every person, its hopes are fadeless under all*

circumstance and it endures everything [under all circumstances]. We need those who remember the word of God and say like Hosea 6¹⁻²

Come, and let us return unto the LORD: for He hath torn, and He will heal us; He hath smitten, and He will bind us up. After two days will He revive us: in the third day He will raise us up, and we shall live in His sight

How many times do we give up on our friends when they fall? How often do we avoid praying for them, visiting or calling on them when we know they are fallen or going through some disgrace or other? Maybe we prayed for them when we saw the problem but when it was not dealt with in secret or in a safe place and has finally come out, we give up, reject them and back off from them, writing them off. When God raises them up we assume they didn't notice our departure; we assume they did not hear the blasphemy and crucifying words. If ever they rise again, we come back with our lame encouragement after the fact and say, "Brother, sister the world is hard but God is good."

The way we behave toward those who are disgraced is a display of how we would have behaved toward Jesus Christ on that day. Many Christians are horrified, even infuriated at the way the people of His day, behaved toward Jesus Christ at the crucifixion. Not only did Jesus die, but we died with Him and we die everyday. If you cannot have compassion on the brother or sister who is going through their dying process, would you have had compassion on Jesus Christ on His day of crucifixion? Wouldn't you throw stones at Him, run away from Him or both? If you cannot have compassion on the one you see today, how sure are you, that you would have had compassion on Jesus Christ the apparent "Sinner," on that day? Wouldn't you have been one of those screaming "Crucify Him!" Remember He was all those horrid things we hate to think or associate with and people's reaction to Him was only natural toward a sinner.

It Can Happen To Any Of Us

The Bible says He who began a good work will accomplish it. When a fellow brethren goes through hard circumstances and exposure of sin in his life, you may not understand it, everything about the situation may make you want to pull away; but remember, He who began a good work is faithful to accomplish it. Our attitude will determine whether *all things work together for good!* That is a child of God's family just as you are. He is redeemed by the blood of Jesus just like you were. He is still walking in this world in a human body, which is fallible.

The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 10¹² *Let Him that thinketh He standeth take heed lest He falls.* For stand, we do but by His grace and mercy. We stand as one upon a pinnacle. In His Daily guide *Morning by Morning* Charles Spurgeon wrote:

It is a curious fact that there is such a thing as being proud of grace. A man says, "I have great faith, I shall not fall; poor little faith may, but I never shall." "I have fervent love," says another, "I can stand, there is no danger of my going astray." He who boasts of grace has little grace to boast of. Some who do this imagine that their grace can keep them, knowing not that the stream must flow constantly from the Fountain Head, or else the brook will soon be dry. ...

Any of us is capable of falling. Today it is him; tomorrow it could be you or someone nearer to you. *People in glass houses do not throw stones.* They know if they do so, and throw stones at other people who "deserve it", they are at risk of having their own fragile house being broken too. You are in a glass house, a fragile, fallible human body, in a fallen world, be careful when you start to point fingers, criticize and accuse those who are falling. Cover them instead, with your prayer and loving support.

Be a Joseph, Be a Nicodemus

Someone had to take the body of Jesus Christ, clean, preserve and keep it where it could be safe for God's working even when they did not see it as a possibility, even sealing the sepulchre with a large rock. Jesus was a disgraced man and these were men of great repute but they did it anyway because they knew that "The Hand of God had been on this Man. We shall not let Him suffer greater disgrace if it is all we can do." We rejoice in salvation but never think of Joseph and Nicodemus; we never remember that the birds did not eat the body of Jesus because someone covered it. God was not going to come down from heaven to do it. He stretched His hands through mortal men.

This reminds me of another scenario in the Old Testament, the story of Rizpah, King Saul's concubine in 2 Samuel 21⁸⁻¹⁴

But the king took the two sons of Rizpah the daughter of Aiah, whom she bare unto Saul, Armoni and Mephibosheth; and the five sons of Michal the daughter of Saul, whom she brought up for Adriel the

son of Barzillai the Meholathite: And he delivered them into the hands of the Gibeonites, and they hanged them in the hill before the LORD: and they fell all seven together, and were put to death in the days of harvest, in the first days, in the beginning of barley harvest. And Rizpah the daughter of Aiah took sackcloth, and spread it for her upon the rock, from the beginning of harvest until water dropped upon them out of heaven, and suffered neither the birds of the air to rest on them by day, nor the beasts of the field by night. And it was told David what Rizpah the daughter of Aiah, the concubine of Saul, had done. And David went and took the bones of Saul and the bones of Jonathan his son from the men of Jabeshgilead, who had stolen them from the street of Bethshan, where the Philistines had hanged them, when the Philistines had slain Saul in Gilboa: And he brought up from thence the bones of Saul and the bones of Jonathan his son; and they gathered the bones of them that were hanged. And the bones of Saul and Jonathan his son buried they in the country of Benjamin in Zelah, in the sepulchre of Kish his father: and they performed all that the king commanded. And after that God was intreated for the land.

There are so many lessons to learn from this passage, however I will dwell on the theme of compassionate love. Though they were judged rightly because the covenant made between Israel through Joshua and the Gibeonites, had been broken by their late father King Saul, Rizpah would not suffer the bodies of these sons of Saul to be publicly disgraced. Nothing fazed her even though she was a woman, especially at night when the wild animals would be drawn by the smell of rotting flesh. She drove every one of them away. She covered these dead men and kept the birds and beasts away, for a long period of time – from the harvest season till the next rainy season.

When the king heard what she had done, he took the bones of these brothers, their father King Saul and Jonathan and brought them to be properly and honorably buried. Only after this action by David did God intreat the land and the famine was stayed!

How often do we stop any crucifying words or actions being made toward those who are in disgrace as we cover them with our prayer and actions of mercy despite any danger or rejection we may face in the process? I pray that God will teach us compassion, redeeming love and standing with those who are defeated and fallen; not because we believe in them but we believe in the saving and redeeming grace and love of God and we love and trust Him. When we don't believe that God forsakes them, we stand with them. Later on when they resurrect, people may never know us or those who do may forget us, but the Chronicles of God will show that, "When he was going through the death, so and so covered him with love and encouragement and prayed for him, so and so defended him even by merely discouraging gossip about him." Gospel singer Donnie McLurkin sings a chorus that depicts this:

*We fall down but we get up
For a saint is just a sinner
Who fell down and got up*

People only remember the testimonies of fallen brethren having overcome, but in heaven the records show who stood by him. May God teach us compassion, not judgment, intercession and not criticism, lifting up those who fall not giving up on them, acceptance and not rejection of them, upholding in prayer and tough love, not pushing down and nailing them with our crucifying words and actions, covering them with love and prayer, rather than exposing them by our words and actions.

The scripture in Romans 5⁶⁻⁷ tells us that when we were still powerless Jesus died for us. Nowhere is it written, "Have compassion on people because they are godly or because they are lovable and nice." We began by examining how unworthy we were and how lovingly Jesus Christ redeemed us. When we were unworthy He died for us. He calls this the proof of love. If He died for us, and spares even our "small" or unexposed sins, let us love others. Create an environment that allows God to bring resurrection power. Pull that person from the cross of crucifixion and put him in his tomb. Be a covering in your prayer, your words and actions toward that person. We need to pray that God will forgive us where in the past we were like the crowds, the Pharisees and the soldiers.

May the Lord teach us the compassionate, redeeming love that covers a multitude of sin. He counsels us through the Apostle Peter in 1 Peter 4⁸
And above all things have fervent love for one another, for "love will cover a multitude of sins."

Where do we start?

- Maybe, as you read this message, you were the victim. Maybe you underwent or are undergoing a season of crucifixion. Maybe your friends have turned away from you leaving you exposed, vulnerable and bitter, rejected and alone. Jesus said, "Forgive them Father, for they do not know

what they are doing.” He released them. He was not bitter toward them. He accepted their behavior toward Him as God’s will for Him even though it was not necessarily God’s will for His friends to behave thus. Their behavior toward Him brought out what He really was - a loving, forgiving, compassionate, person *even* in suffering. He accepted Judas’ betrayal, Peter’s denial and the other disciples’ escape from Him at His hour of most desperate need, as God’s will for Him so that He laid His life in God’s hands that He may fulfill all righteousness. He trusted God’s faithfulness to bring Him through it all.

You have not suffered more greatly than Jesus the sinless One did. The situation may have seemed unfair against you. However it was a button pressed to bring out what was really inside you. Did you become bitter? Angry? Frustrated? Unforgiving? Wounded? Vengeful? Defensive? Hateful? Bring that failing in your life to Him in repentance. Those sinful traits resulting from exposure of your sinful nature are to be presented to God - ask for healing and forgiveness and a total change in those areas being exposed. Ask God to grow in you the Christ-like response in contrast to these sinful reactions. Your self-nature dies hard but the Christ-life will manifest in that area gradually.

You too can forgive, release and bless all who have, as it were, crucified and forsaken you. Remember that God will never leave nor forsake you. He will not reject a contrite and broken heart. He accepts and wants you back. His love for you is everlasting. Turn to Him and worship Him as King and rightful Judge. Accept the situation and season you are undergoing and repent. Ask Him to raise up those who will come alongside you in that tough season; and when your betraying friends return, do not reject them. Pray for them too. Ask God to help you overcome this season so that you too, will be able to help others overcome. He told Peter, *when you have overcome, you will help your brothers*. Peter fell, but he rose up again, overcame and indeed he became a major pillar in the founding of the Church of Christ! **Your attitude toward your circumstance can change your mess into your message and your test into your testimony!**

- Maybe you remember when someone needed you and you were not there for them; when some fallen brother or sister needed comfort and you nailed them with words and actions against them because they had fallen or were in the “wrong”. Maybe you gossiped about their sin among other brethren in the name of “giving a testimony” or “an example” or a “prayer request” about them. Maybe they needed you to be a Joseph or Nicodemus, but you were the opposite, you were a Pharisee and exposed them. Today you can come before God in worship and reverence for accepting you as you are. Repent for those whom you have not had compassionate love for. Repent for the times when you have kept silent or withheld love, when you could have covered or pull someone from their cross of shame. Ask God to help you pull those who are going through the death into that safe place in your prayer and loving support. Ask God to help you recognize that we all are weak vessels. Heaven is when we can cover one another with love and true intercession, and hell is when we become the devil’s assistants as “accusers of the brethren,” condemning, react negatively and exposing one another.

Tough Love

Did you too get Angry? Bitter? Frustrated? Did you gloat over their failure and say “It was coming to her/him” Is that how Jesus would have responded to that brother or sister’s sin? Jesus Christ mourns, He feels a great loss, He went to the cross, became sin and laid down His life so they do not perish. He is seated as High priest before the Father, forever making intercession for that brother or sister. Take the “log from your eye” – “the log” being your negative reaction to your brethren’s failures and sins, the way you see your brother’s sin; - to the foot of the cross and ask Jesus to give you His response to that brother or sister’s sin or failure (what would Jesus do? What would Jesus say?). The Bible says that *after you have removed the log from your eye you can see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye*. You still have the responsibility of correcting, exhorting, rebuking that fallen person – AFTER you ask God to give you the right response, then with **tough love**, you can help them resurrect to their rightful position as fellow heirs with Christ.

Take the next step and go and repent to that person for having that negative carnal reaction to their sin. Speak to them and ask their forgiveness, then purpose to walk in compassion just like Jesus. Jesus did not condemn the adulterous woman but pointed out her sin, counseled her after covering her from her would-be executors. He demonstrated tough love, rejected her sin and urged her to sin no more. Maybe you know someone who is going through the crucifixion. Let them know that God who has began a good work will be faithful to complete it.

Do not hesitate to rebuke and talk truthfully and firmly about sin and its consequence in their lives. Encourage them to bear through this season. **Just like Jesus Christ our aim should always be restoration of those who are falling.** Many times you require tough love; where you speak the truth in love to help them back on track and to get them in self-discipline. Volunteer to walk along side them in breaking bad habits or give them literature or other support that can equip them through this season. If you are in an organization and there are structures and routines that can be created and followed through to help them into a disciplined walk, please get assistance or set them up. Remember Joseph and Nicodemus; though they did their compassionate action in secret, to avoid a scandal on themselves, they provided that covering. You too can begin in secret prayer. As you start in prayer and as you are faithful to uphold that brother or sister, God will guide you into what step you should take next.

Prayer

Come before God and tell Him, "Thank You for not judging me. I received by mercy but I demanded others to be justified and deserving to receive my help and love at the moment when they did not deserve it. Teach me like Joseph and Nicodemus to allow people to resurrect. Let me not be an agent of judgment but justification; not an agent of death but an agent of resurrection. Teach me the reality that, LOVE COVERS A MULTITUDE OF SINS. Amen."

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