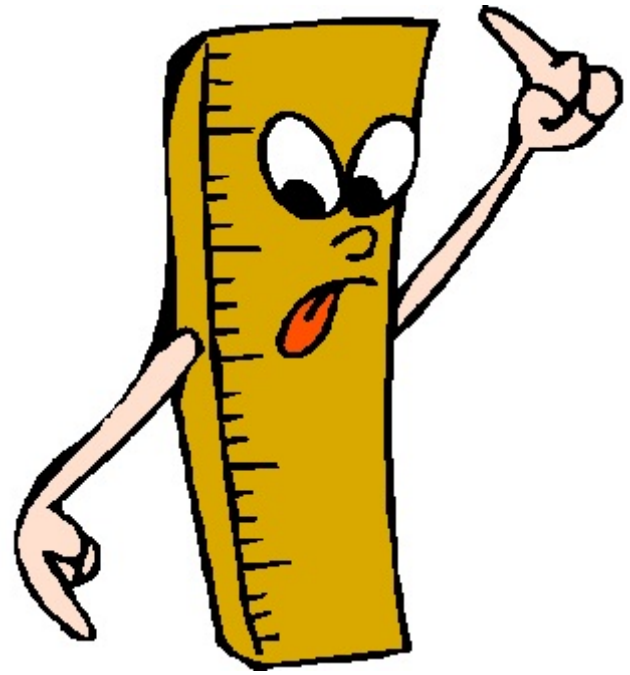
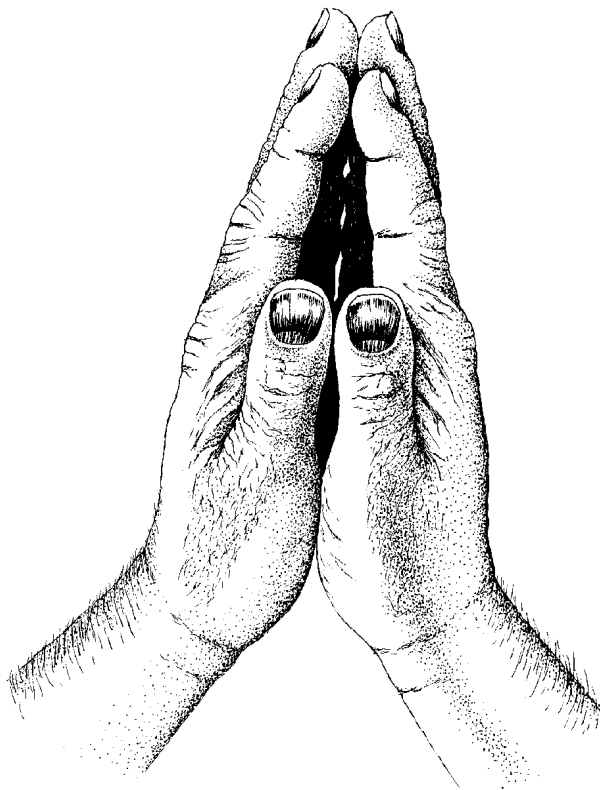


Facing



Others'

Failures



Facing Others' Failures

Douglas Thomas

One effect of Adam and Eve eating fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was that they were deceived into believing that they could know good from evil, and right from wrong, apart from God revealing these things to them. Just as all people were cursed with death by being children of Adam, we all have received this curse of trying to be independent of God for the ability to discern good from evil.

When God told Adam and Eve not to eat of one tree, which He called the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, He told them that they could eat of the rest of the trees, including the Tree of Life. He could have named these two trees the Tree of Death and the Tree of Life. I believe that He didn't refer to them this plainly so that He could emphasize the fact that *both* the knowledge of good *and* the knowledge of evil that come from the Tree of Death are deadly.

Paul taught the congregations in Rome that the law God gave Moses to make a covenant with Israel and cause them to become a nation was given so that humans could be convicted of sin. Please read Romans chapters 5 through 8 (pay special attention to 5:20 and 7:7-10). The law was not given to gentiles, and the law was not given to Israel so that they would become righteous by learning right from wrong through it.

The Spirit of God came into the earth with several intentions. One was to convict the world of sin (John 16:8). If He instructs a man to become a judge in a court, the man is a minister of God if he obeys and takes the job. If He instructs another man to become an evangelist and to work for a used car lot, the man is a minister of God if he obeys and takes the job. If a man beats a girl to death after raping her, and is caught and convicted of the crime in the judge's court, the judge is responsible for sentencing him according to the law that makes him a judge. If the law says that the required sentence for that crime is execution, the judge must serve God by condemning the murderer. If the law requires the death and the judge doesn't order it, he is sinning.

If the Spirit tells the evangelist to go lead the murderer to Christ on death row, he is serving God by delivering him from condemnation in God's court. If he does not go when the Spirit instructs him, he is sinning, even if the dead girl was his daughter.

The only way to know who does what in these scenes with regard to sin and righteousness is to know what the Spirit of God knows about the situations. If He doesn't reveal what is right, we only have the knowledge of good and evil we inherited from the deadly tree to form opinions from. If we do that, we will have many differing opinions. We cannot all be right in the earth with our hundreds of differing opinions and opposing laws that we say define right and wrong. We could all be wrong, but we can't all be right.

God spoke through Isaiah: (5:20,21) **Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!** Luke's gospel records Jesus as saying, (16:15) **"Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God."**

Since we can only know the truth about right and wrong, and *our* sin, as the Holy Spirit reveals it to us, how much more likely is it that we would not know any one else's sin apart from revelation? How could we judge a situation righteously apart from His righteousness being established in our hearts by His Holy Spirit? If the knowledge of sin comes by revelation, then, shouldn't we *treat* any knowledge that we have of sin as if it is a revelation - a very weighty thing? We should respond soberly and with a heart toward accomplishing the will of our Father in His earth. This should be the case for our sin and for others' sin.

One thing to consider regarding other people's sin against us is that *it is not against us!* If we truly believe that Jesus paid for every sin on the cross, we must act like we believe it. Is it not true that every sin that ever has and ever will be committed by humanity (except blasphemy against the Holy Spirit) was paid for by Jesus' blood sacrifice on the cross? If He paid for every sin, then every sin to which we apply His blood can be forgiven. That includes my sin against you and your sin against me. It was all pulled down on the back of Jesus as a filthy baptism in sin.

If you owe me \$50 and cannot pay, I can take you to court. If someone comes to me and says, "I understand that a friend of mine owes you fifty dollars. I would like to pay that debt," I can receive that payment as if it is yours. If I refuse to receive the payment, I have hatred in my heart. I want to see you suffer more than I want to receive my \$50.

Please stop and read Matthew 18:21-35 and Matthew 6:9-15 before reading

any more of this article. Even here in the “disciples’ prayer” (the Lord’s prayer is, **“Send laborers into the harvest”**) we are instructed to ask our Father to forgive us *the same way* we forgive others. We are promised that if we do not forgive the people who sin against us, we will be handed over to “tormentors” by our Father. If He will hand us over to torturers for not passing on to others the forgiveness we have received, it can only mean that He is holding us responsible for it because *He* is going to *make it possible* for us. As the Holy Spirit said through Paul to the congregations at Ephesus, (Ephesians 4:32) **“And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you.”** If the most important work on the Father’s mind right now is using love to bring reconciliation through forgiveness and redemption so that He can produce from fallen humanity a Bride for His Son, be assured that if you are a roadblock to that forgiveness and reconciliation and love being spread in the earth, you will find an awesome God opposing you! No matter what additional response I may have to someone’s sin, I must *always* forgive them. There is *no other option* that is an alternative. There are *additional options*, things that I do along with forgiveness, but there is *no alternate option*.

With this truth as a foundation, we should be able to have the proper attitude to study what our responses to others’ sin and failure should be.

I believe that any additional response we could have could fit into one of four categories:

INTERCEDE

INTERVENE

ACCUSE

IGNORE

INTERCEDE

1 John 5:14-17

¹⁴ And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: ¹⁵ And if we know that he hears us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him. ¹⁶ If any man sees his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it. ¹⁷ All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death.

Since Jesus said that all sin had forgiveness available but blaspheming the Holy Ghost, perhaps, since John says there is “a” sin unto death, this is the sin he is referring to. He doesn’t say, so I will not presume to know surely. At any rate, that still leaves a grand pile of sin for which I may pray. Even if I am going to respond to someone’s sin in some way beyond intercession, I will not know what that response should be apart from the Lord answering me as *I pray* for the person regarding how to answer their sin. Prayer should always be my first response to someone’s sin. In some cases, it is all that is required. His answer to my prayer will change the individual or the situation.

Intercession that is offered to God by a person who has been injured by the person being prayed for is especially powerful. It resembles the power of the cross. Jesus, answering the evil of being nailed to a cross, to be tortured to death by the people He was dying for, overcame evil with good. His intercession came from a place of injury. His Father welcomed His prayer for the forgiveness of those who put His life on the altar to pay for their sins.

When Paul wrote to the congregations at Ephesus, he instructed them to forgive one another just as God in Christ had forgiven them (Ephesians 4:31,32). God in Christ forgave you at the cross. We forgive each other just as He forgave us - at the cross. The payment for forgiveness is through the sacrifice on the cross. The power to forgive can come from no other place. The price for your sin against me was paid on the cross, and for mine against you.

Intercession for blessing of one who is injuring me is prayer that our Father welcomes. Consider it a place of power and privilege to have been the victim of an offence. There is no better place from which to intercede!

INTERVENE

Matthew 18:12-17

¹² **How think ye? If a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray? ¹³ And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray. ¹⁴ Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.**

¹⁵ **Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. ¹⁶ But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. ¹⁷ And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.**

Here, we have instructions from the Lord about how to handle some situations in which another's sin or failure has been revealed to us. We are to confront the person at times. We are to get involved in stopping the sin from progressing or proceeding. Our intent should be reconciliation: **"If he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother."**

We only go to another person with the news about the first person's failure because we are asking them to go with us to talk to the offender, still with the intent of reconciliation. We are not trying to bring the person to justice. We are trying to bring them to full fellowship with Jesus and His family. Walking in the Light, as He is in the Light, frees His blood to cleanse us from all sin, and we have fellowship with one another. (1 John 1:7)

If he refuses to listen to the two of us, we try to restore him by informing leaders that we trust to be an "ecclesia" in the situation. Ecclesia is a word that I believe was ruined by the religion handed down to her offspring by the church of Rome and the church of England. In Greek as used by the Roman Empire, the word was not a religious word. It described any assembly that gathered as a group with a purpose. Typically, it was a portion of a larger group gathering to accomplish a certain goal.

Ecclesia is in the New Testament 114 times. Three times it is translated into

English as the word, “assembly ” by the men who translated King James’ version. Those three places are written by Luke, in Acts, chapter 19, verses 32 through 41. Once, Luke was quoting a government official, the other two times Luke was himself describing a gathering in the city of Ephesus. At one point, the gathering was a riot. The governor was using the word to instruct the citizens that there were legal assemblies that met regularly to take care of matters such as the one that they were rioting over. He mentioned that one such ecclesia was the court.

The other 111 times those translators used the word “church” to translate the word “ecclesia.” The word “church” is derived from two Greek words, according to the 1909 edition of Webster’s International Dictionary: kuriakê and oikia. The first word means “belonging to a master or lord.” The second word means “house, or household.” So, if the words that the writers of the New Testament had used 114 times had been “kuriakê oikia,” the appropriate word to translate that phrase would have been “church.” Since they used another word, that never meant “the house of the Lord,” even though it could have been used to describe a gathering of believers as His Household, try rereading all those places where some translations didn’t translate “ecclesia” as church with the word, “assembly.” Some translations use “assembly” in all 114 instances.

Now, to the point: an ecclesia is a group of people gathered out of a larger group with a purpose or an assignment, and with authority and responsibility. This is the kind of group that needs to be the third level of inviting a sinning brother to change of mind and behavior, and to freedom. Paul seemed to have something resembling this in mind when he wrote to the congregations at Corinth (1 Corinthians 6:1-6) regarding how to handle their matters that needed judges.

If the ministry of the ecclesia fails to turn the offender around, we are to then treat him as if he is an unbeliever and a traitor, and only then allow the offence to harm our fellowship.

And then evangelize the offender...

ACCUSE

Revelation 12:7-12

⁷ And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, ⁸ And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. ⁹ And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. ¹⁰ And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and th kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. ¹¹ And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.

¹² Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! For the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.

To accuse is to find at fault, or to blame, or to bring charges against. I do not have to go to another person and speak for there to be an accusation. I simply hold someone responsible for failure or fault. This is the same dynamic that Jesus taught about when He said that I do not have to have sex with a man or woman in order to have committed adultery with them. If I am holding a person in a prison of unforgiveness in my heart, I am *guilty* of accusing them publicly before the Righteous Judge. If I am holding a person in prison *in my mind* because of their sin, I have become their accuser. Satan accuses us before our God day and night even now - even though he has been cast down - by using the Saints (believers) as they bring accusations against each other and against unbelievers in their hearts and even in prayer.

Yes, we bring accusation against others in prayer! I have observed for many years in many situations a person becoming a believer, and their spouse remaining in unbelief. I have heard the believing husband or wife pray for years, and ask others to join them in prayer over and over, for the unbeliever to come to salvation. I can't remember but maybe twice that I have seen such prayers be effective in more than 30 years. I have seen many times, however, when a child in a family becomes a believer, and Mom, and Dad, and aunts and uncles and brothers and sisters and neighbors get saved with them, in no time at all! I sought the Lord regarding this, and I believe He

showed me that with rare exception, the husband or wife was motivated in their prayer for another's salvation by their irritation with the sin of the unbeliever, but the child's prayer is motivated by love. The child does not want Mom or Dad to go to hell and suffer, etc. If there is any real ministry of any type going on in the earth, it has its root in John 3:16 - so that God's love is the place it gets its power and direction and value. God the Father so loved the world that He sent Jesus; Jesus so loved the world that He sent you and me (John 20:21). If we are going forth in any other power or direction or value, we are either on our own, or at the service of God's enemy.

If I go to prayer for someone with a motivation other than John 3:16 and John 20:21, it is likely that I am praying to expose the person rather than intercede for them. For a couple of months I prayed for an individual to be set free from the strongholds that were empowering her to destroy the effectiveness of a ministry she worked for. Finally one morning I felt that the Lord showed me that the demonic network had been pushed away, and the two things left to pray about were the "jezebel" spirit that she was submitting to, and the "ahab" spirit that the ministry's leader was submitting to that gave the woman the false power. About 3 weeks later, as I was praying one morning for her to get right or get removed, the Holy Spirit interrupted me and asked me, "Are you praying for her because you love her, or because you are sick of her?" Knowing that when the Lord asks us a question, He is not looking for information, but change, I responded with repentance. I asked Him to put in my heart the love that He had for the woman, so that I could pray for her properly. I did not continue to pray until I sensed a change in my heart toward her. I then proceeded to pray for her to be reconciled to God and set free to serve Him. The next day, she got mad at someone who criticized her for a decision she had made about a certain project that she had authorized, quit her job and left the ministry's property. She did not have any change of heart that I know of, but even the ministry was not blessed through my intercession regarding her until I prayed for her in love.

We have looked at two forms of accusation: accusing in our hearts and in our prayers. The third possibility is the one we usually think of when we consider accusation - making one person's sin known to another person. If we expose sin or failure, we are accusing the person. Many prayer requests are nothing more than gossip. Do not be deceived into believing that a report must be fake to be gossip. If it is not building up, it is probably tearing down. If I am not revealing something about another person with the hope that they will be built up, made stronger, healed, restored, encouraged, or protected, I am probably revealing it so that they will be stopped, discredited, exposed, harmed, feared, hated, brought down, etc. It is possible that I am hoping that

I will benefit positively from their loss - making them look bad to make myself look good, for example.

Perhaps you have wondered at some time why the people who lived in Canaan were treated so destructively by God when He took Israel in from Egypt. You must look back to Noah to find the answer. Please stop here and read Genesis 9:18-27. Note that Ham is called “the father of Canaan.” When Ham discovered his father Noah’s failure (drunken nakedness), he mockingly exposed the situation to his brothers. Their response was different - instead of exposing, they covered. They went into the tent backwards, and covered Noah with his garment. They did not even want to look on the failure, but Ham wanted to expose it. He may be the first gossip in the Book. When Noah sobered up, he blessed Shem and Japheth and their descendants, and cursed the descendants of Ham, through his son, Canaan. So we have a very costly and therefore a very valuable lesson to learn through the invasion by Israel of the land of Ham’s son Canaan.

By contrast, our ministry is love (John 3:16, 20:21). Proverbs 10:12 says, **“Hatred stirreth up strifes, but love covereth all sins.”** Peter had this in his heart when he wrote (1 Peter 4:7-9): **“The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray. Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling.”** We are to cover sin, not expose it. Note, though, that we do not cover it by sweeping it under a rug, but by covering it with the blood from the cross of Jesus!

There may be situations that do call for exposure, such as calling the police when we see a person being beaten or robbed, but even these times may be corrected instead by asking our mighty God for angelic intervention, etc. We will only know how to proceed in our response to a situation if our first response is intercession. As we pray, having love in our hearts, we are able to be led on to the next step, as Peter said above.

IGNORE

1 Corinthians 13:4-7

⁴ Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵ It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶ Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Sometimes the Lord will call me to keep no record of a wrong. If I am attempting to minister to an immature believer and he or she says something offensive, I may find no benefit in addressing such things on some occasions. I might need to stay on the track God has given me and not be distracted by the offence. Sometimes, the person is in the flesh, not in the Spirit, and would be incapable of comprehending my point if I made it. In these times, it would be best if I would spend a moment in intercession, seeking the Lord about how to respond. He may give me an anointed word that will bring deliverance, and He may give me instruction to ignore it and proceed to the more important, and perhaps the only, achievable goal.

When someone deals with me treacherously, or with incompetence, or any other failure of theirs is revealed to me, I must seek the Lord for His response to the situation. I must bear in mind that He was tortured to death so that I could be free to go beyond the offence to bring ministry to the situation or the individual. I must remember that covering and exposing are opposites, and exposure is something that the Judge will do at some point in time that may be far beyond the life I have here, and He has not necessarily called me to do it for Him prematurely. I must remember that every sin has been paid for, and that if I refuse to accept His payment for your sin against me, I am insulting His sacrifice. I must remember that He is so intent on my forgiving of others that He will hand me over to tormenting demons if my heart is not right to pass on the free forgiveness He has suffered to give me for my sin and failure.

Every time I think again about an offence, I must forgive the person again, until the time finally comes when I can think of that situation without seeing sin, but seeing their need instead. If my life is dedicated to exposing rather than covering, I can expect a very long and hard educational experience to be in my future.

Is there anyone who has sinned against you or let you down that you are having difficulty forgiving?

Try these steps to freedom:

- * Thank your Father for forgiving you for holding the debt unpaid.
- * Take this wonderful opportunity to thank Him for the many times He has counted your debts paid by virtue of the spilling of the blood of Jesus.
- * Ask Him to fill your heart with the love that He has for the person who offended you.
- * Intercede for them to be forgiven by Him.
- * Ask Him to set them free from any bondage to sin.
- * Forgive them yourself - perhaps you could imagine seeing them in a prison cell for what they did wrong, and then imagine walking to the door, unlocking it, and inviting them to freedom.
- * Every time you think about the sin they committed against you, you will probably have to go back through these steps again, until you no longer experience the bitter response of wanting them to pay for their sin. Repeat the steps as often as needed until you are free.