

Covering Love

#0086

Study Given by W. D. Frazee—February 9, 1973

We are told that Christ's favorite subject was the fraternal love of God.

The one who got closest to Jesus while He was here on earth entering into fellowship with Him was John the Beloved. As John meditated upon the infinite love of God for His children, he could find no words to express it fully. And so he just summoned all to look at it. In all his epistles he keeps echoing this message:

“Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God”
1 John 3:1.

John says, “Look at it. See what love this is.”

Now let's hear Paul's testimony about this love:

“But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” Romans 5:8.

God loves everybody in the universe. He loves all the angels that serve Him. He loves the inhabitants of the other worlds. But there's a special exhibition of His love reserved for this planet.

We didn't love God first. He loved us first. We didn't deserve His love. He sought us when we were not seeking Him. He loved us when we weren't loving Him. He not only loved us, He died for us. Notice the contrast:

“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” Romans 5:7–8.

Yet Christ loved us while we were sinners. He died for us. This is the proof of His amazing love.

Why did Christ die for us? He died to take away our sins. He died because of our transgressions. He died to forgive us—to cover us.

“Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered” Romans 4:7.

When God then, through Christ, pays our ransom, it is that our sins may be forgiven, and, according to this verse, covered. God is in the business of covering sins.

What does it? Love. Love delights to cover sin. God counts us as friends even though we've been His enemies. And He wants to redeem us and He wants to cover all our transgressions and treat us as if we had never sinned.

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”
1 John 1:9.

Trembling soul, take courage. Jesus loves you and wants to cover your sins. He wants to put them out of sight. Aren't you glad that Jesus is in the *sin*-covering business?

This is the great evidence of His love. He doesn't want to remember or have anyone else remember all the times we've failed Him. He wants to put that out of sight in Heaven and on earth. Are you with Him in this? Thank the Lord.

We can't cover our own sins, but God can cover our sins, and He has a program to do it. But the man who tries to cover his own sins is only fooling himself, and that temporarily. As Moses said, “Be sure your sin will find you out.”

But there is a way to get sin covered through the blood of Jesus:

“He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy”
Proverbs 28:13.

Here is one of the great Gospel paradoxes. The man who tries to cover his own sins will find them *exposed* to men and angels, whereas the one who will *confess* his sins will find them covered by the blood of Jesus Christ. Through the ages of eternity, all his iniquities will never be mentioned to him.

I'm so glad that when I go to Heaven and walk down the street, nobody, and I mean *nobody* will say, “Yes, there goes that fellow that did so and so.” Thank God.

“Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered” Romans 4:7.

Now, we can have a foretaste of that in this life, dear friends—by faith. Being justified, that is accounted righteous, covered by the blood of Jesus, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. We can cooperate with God; we can work with God in this sin-covering business as it relates to others.

Let's turn over to 1 Peter 4:8. I'm sure had experienced this sin-covering love among the brethren. Wouldn't it have been too bad when Peter was preaching that Pentecostal sermon that brought 3,000 souls to Christ if one of the people in the audience had nudged his fellow and said, “See that man preaching? Do you know

what he did a few weeks ago? He denied the Lord with cursing and swearing. What good is it for *him* to get up there and talk?"

I don't think anybody would have said that. Do you? Could it have been said? Was it the truth? Yet Peter was covered with the precious blood of Jesus.

Years later as Peter was writing his epistle, he said:

"And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins"
1 Peter 4:8.

Let me hasten to comment that this doesn't mean that if you have enough love it will make up for all the sins you have done. Nothing remotely like that. It simply means that if your brothers and sisters have enough love, they'll be in the business of covering your mistakes instead of exposing them. That's what it means. And if you have enough love, you will be working with God to cover sin, covering it with the precious blood of Jesus.

Everyone here is either working with God to cover sins, or working with the Devil to bring disgrace and dishonor to God by getting God's children to sin, and by letting everybody as far as possible know all the sins of the church and its members. This is what the Devil is after. In fact, we're told that he works 24 hours a day at it (Revelation 12:10). He's working at it all the time. That doesn't leave any time out. And as the sun goes round the earth, *somebody* is always working with the Devil to accuse the church and the members of the church.

Opposed to that is Jesus, holding up His wounded hands in the sanctuary above, presenting His blood, His life, as the covering for sins.

Are you covered? Are you working with Jesus to cover others? Above all things, have fervent love among yourselves, for love shall cover a multitude of sins. To forgive is to cover, to cover is to forgive.

"And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" Ephesians 4:32.

Why am I to forgive my brother? Because God has forgiven me. Do you think that's a pretty good reason? But notice. The reason I am to forgive my brother is not because he has humiliated himself sufficiently, and been good for six months, and I finally reluctantly say, "Well, I guess I ought to." That's not the reason I am to forgive my brother. I'm to forgive *him* because God for Christ's sake has forgiven *me*. My, what a mighty reason!

Notice also the manner of my forgiveness toward my brother. Even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven me. How has God forgiven me? Willingly. He runs to welcome the prodigal. He throws His arms around the repentant sinner and clasps him to His heart. This is the way I am to forgive my brother. Is that right?

But there's more. To what *degree* am I to forgive? Even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you.

How much has God forgiven you? That measure of His forgiveness for you is to be the measure of your forgiveness for others. Is that clear? That leaves no room for petty bargaining, for holding grudges. Be kind one to another. Tenderhearted. Forgive one another even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you.

Let's hear the words of Jesus Christ Himself on this vital point. In the Sermon on the Mount, He puts that model of prayer which we have come to call the Lord's prayer. What does He teach us to say?

“And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors”
Matthew 6:12.

Jesus is not talking about financial matters. He's talking about this matter of forgiving faults, mistakes, and injustices. He teaches us to pray that God will forgive us how? As we forgive others.

Notice that our text in Ephesians 4:32 says we are to forgive others as God has forgiven us. Here Jesus teaches to ask God to forgive us *as we forgive others*. The two texts belong together. They're like the two arcs of a circle. You can start anywhere you want to, and you'll just go right around. We're to pray that God will forgive us *as we forgive others*. We are to forgive others as God for Christ's sake has forgiven us. Do you see?

“For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” Matthew 6:14–15.

Do you mean that God won't forgive me if I don't forgive my brother?

That's what He says. I'd better believe Him. What do you say?

Oh, but I think Jesus died for my sins.

Yes, He did. He died for my brother's sins too. And watch. If I deny the efficacy of that blood to cover *him*, I refuse its covering to take care of me.

It is not that I can *earn* forgiveness of my own sins by forgiving the failures of others. Not that at all; I don't earn anything. But this is it, my friend: the man who refuses to forgive his brother closes the door to the work of Jesus and the Holy Spirit that would work in his own heart.

Christ often conveyed His precious lessons in a parable. We have Him telling the story of a certain king who was checking up on his servants. He found one who owed him 10,000 talents. That's a lot of money; figure it any way you want to.

The servant was hopelessly in debt, but he didn't have anything to pay. So in harmony with the customs of that time, the king commanded that he be sold into slavery with all his family and all his property, and in turn everything sold would pay the debt, which of course could only be a token payment. But the poor man fell down and begged for mercy, and the king moved with compassion, forgave him the whole debt.

Then Jesus goes on to tell the rest of the story. This servant went out and found a fellow servant who owed him a small debt. I'm told it was about \$16. He took that servant by the throat and said, "Pay me what you owe me."

The man said, "If you just give me time, I will."

He said, "No, I won't. Pay me." But since the man had nothing to pay, he had him put in jail.

Then somebody came and told the king what was going on. The king called the servant in. What did he say to him?

"O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall My heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses" Matthew 18:32–35.

Oh friends, I want that kind of love that my heavenly Father has. Every day there are opportunities for us to forgive others. Some of us are conscious that every day there are opportunities for our brothers and sisters to forgive us. What a wonderful thing love is. Love forgives. Love covers. Love is like the blood circulating in the body, in health bringing life to every tissue and organ. But what happens when a *cut* penetrates? The blood flows out. Do you know what for? To heal. To cover and to *heal*.

Love is like that in the church. Love is like that in the home. Love will fill in where the cut has been. Love will draw the wounded tissues together. Love will heal and restore. Oh, more love is what we want.

To forgive is to cover. We have read, "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered." We read Peter's admonition, "And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins." (1 Peter 4:8)

How did Jesus happen to tell the story of the king and his servant? Jesus had been telling His disciples how to work together in the church. He said that if your brother trespasses against you and does something wrong, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother.

I wonder if we're in the business of spreading infection or containing it? The blood fights hard to ward off infection, to keep it localized. And if you and I are heart to heart with God in His great longing that love shall cover sin, we will work with Him in this way.

"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" Matthew 18:15.

Suppose your brother will not hear you? Jesus knew that sometimes that would happen. So He tells us what to do:

"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" Matthew 18:16.

Take them where? To the man that needs help. To the man who had done the wrong thing. Why? That they may help him, and if necessary help *me*. Because maybe, it just could be that what I *think* is a mistake might not be a mistake at all. And if the witnesses are good witnesses, they'll either help *him* to get clearer vision, or they'll help *me* to get the beam out of my eye. Do you see?

I don't want anyone to raise their hand, but I have two questions to ask: How many of you have ever done the first thing? How many of you've ever done the second thing? How many of you, after you had tried to help someone to overcome a fault or correct a mistake and didn't succeed, how many of you, without telling anyone else in the world anywhere along the line, took with you one or two more that you thought would be helpful, and labored for that friend personally? Letting him know that it's just between you and him.

Oh, I pray that in these simple, down-to-earth, practical things, we shall learn how wonderful the love of God is. It takes love to do this, friends. That's all it takes, but it takes all of that.

"A talebearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter" Proverbs 11:13.

The second word in this text is a talebearer. Do you know who a talebearer is? It's that bad fellow who's telling stories about me. But if I tell something about someone to someone else, what am I? Most of the talebearing that goes on is not something I saw someone else do. It's something that someone told me that they heard someone say about someone.

Did you ever see a snowball get smaller as it rolled down the hill? No. Every time it turns over, it gets bigger. And if you and I are repeating tales, we run this risk however true and accurate may be the story as we've heard it, and as we tell it, we do not know how it will be exaggerated or changed as it's passed on from one to another. Especially since God never gave us that job. He told us what to do.

Who will help in the peddling of those tales? Will the Devil help in that? Do you think he'll be willing to put in a bit as it goes along? Oh, yes.

Another great danger is that the man who is in the habit of passing on true reports of evil runs the risk of passing on fabrications and false reports. Doesn't he? And he certainly will.

"A talebearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter" Proverbs 11:13.

The man with a faithful spirit conceals the matter. He's working with God to cover sins. Remember that you can't cover your own sins. The blood of Jesus must do that.

Brother Boykin, will you stand here a minute? I'm going to let Elder Boykin represent the sinner, and Brother Boykin is like the rest of us, he has sinned at times. Haven't you brother?

[Brother Boykin] Oh, yes.

All right. Now I want to show you something, don't miss it. (Brother Boykin, stand back just a little.) Brother Finley, would you come here, please. I want to let you represent the Savior, and I want you to just stand right there in front of Brother Boykin. Just stand right in front of him. That's right. Now, Brother Boykin is what? He's covered. Now watch—don't miss it—when I lay off to aim a bow at Brother Boykin, whom am I going to hit? Do you see that? Jesus stands in front of him and covers him.

Now Christ may be invisible in the reality, but He's nonetheless *real*, and while these brothers stand here, I'm going to read this to you from the book *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*:

"He who is imbued with the Spirit of Christ abides in Christ. The blow that is aimed at him falls upon the Saviour who surrounds him with His presence" *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, page 71.

That's good coverage, isn't it, friends? How dare I then raise my fist and hit my brother? Whom am I hitting? Jesus.

But I say, "Yes, but I know my brother did it."

Sure, but blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven and whose sin is covered.

Covered with what? The blood. The blood is the life of the Son of God. My brother is covered. *Dare* I lift my hand and slap the Son of God in the face?

My brother is covered. But I say, "Oh, but I don't think he is."

Listen: if you forgive not men their trespasses, your Heavenly Father will not forgive you.

Think gently of the erring one,
Oh, let us not forget;
However deeply stained by sin,
He is our brother yet.

Heir of the same inheritance,
Child of the self-same God;
He has but stumbled in the path
Thou hath in weakness trod.

Forget not brother, thou hast sinned,
And sinful yet mayest be;
Deal gently with the erring heart
As God hath dealt with thee.

What do you say, friend?

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