

Msg #129 of *Scripture Beneath The Surface*

"We Are The Ransom"

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Hello! Thanks for being with us. Before we get started today, I'd like to talk about contacting us. If you've written to us, either by postal mail or e-mail, or have called and left a message, but have not received a response, please try again. Sometimes we receive phone call messages and can't quite decipher all the information. We don't want you to think that we don't care. So, if you don't hear from us, please try contacting us again. And just one more thing. The e-mail address for us is, "Preparation Ministries at Gmail.com." If you e-mail us, make sure you enter the two words, Preparation Ministries, as just one word, followed with the at sign, and then Gmail.com. But, feel free to call, also. Listen at the end of the program and Kim will give you the addresses and my phone number.

So now, let's go ahead with today's message. Today I'd like to talk about carrying one another's burdens. I don't think that we Christians do a very good job at bearing one another's burdens. And, I'm talking about myself, too. Of course, I'm sure that Christians try to be considerate, but sometimes we fall short of providing the necessary support to one another. Galatians 6:2, says, "bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." According to Galatians 6:2, the law of Christ is to love one another. The Bible says that if we don't love our brother, then neither do we really love God. God is love. And, those who truly do love God will love one another. In fact, Jesus tells us that we are even to love our enemies. But loving of our brothers and sisters in Christ is not just a good thing to do, but it really is the law of Christ. We are commanded to love one another.

I think most Christians can understand that we must love one another. However, I'm not quite sure that Christians understand the need to bear one another's burdens. When we love someone,

then we actually become willing to take on some of the responsibility for that person. It is one thing to say, “be ye warmed and filled,” but another thing to actually provide the warmth and nourishment that is needed. When someone is in need, we have a responsibility to bear their heavy load. Sometimes it’s easy to fall into the trap of blaming the other person for the situation they are in, and then refusing help because you think they should help themselves. But let’s take a look at a Scripture which might help us to better understand our responsibility for bearing one another’s burdens. It’s found in 1 John 5:16, and it says, “If any man sees his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for those who sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it.”

Now, this is just one verse, but it is packed with information. When it comes to loving our brothers and sisters in Christ, this verse is very significant. First of all I want you to notice that this verse is talking about two different kinds of sin. One is a sin unto death, and the other is a sin which is not unto death. It’s important to understand the difference between these two types of sin. A sin that is not unto death is a sin that can be forgiven. It’s that simple. And, a sin that is unto death, is a sin that cannot be forgiven. If a person turns away from Christ and wants nothing more to do with him, then that is evidently a sin unto death. This portion of Scripture tells us that we should not pray that God would forgive someone who doesn’t want it. However, if we determine that the person is either sinning in ignorance or in a situation of temporary backsliding, then this is not a sin unto death. A sin unto death is a sin which is willfully committed, and has no remorse. I think a key part of 1 John 5:16 is the term, brother. It says that if we see a brother sin, not that if we see an unsaved person sin. When you look at someone and determine that the person is a brother in Christ, then this verse has meaning for you. If you think they are a brother, then that means they have the same Holy Spirit in them that you have in you. The difference is that the brother who is sinning is out of the will of God. This is where you come in. You step in and intercede to God for your brother in order to keep your brother from sliding off into the pit of sin and never coming back out.

People in this world always sin. We are born into sin. However, through Jesus Christ we have forgiveness of sin. However, forgiveness of sin is only forthcoming when we repent. I don’t know about you, but I know that I sin. No, not like I used to, but I still find myself making mistakes and then having to repent. As Christians, we try not to sin, but, we never quite live perfect lives. Now, when we do sin, we can go to God in a state of repentance, and God will forgive us. However, what about those times when you’re caught up into sin without being consciously aware of what you’re doing, or, caught up into sin and having a rough time getting turned around? Have you yourself ever been there, done that?

I think you know as well as I do that sometimes others can see us more clearly than we can see ourselves. Sometimes it takes a friend to help us see something in us that shouldn’t be there. But, for the purpose of today’s topic, I’m not suggesting that bearing one another’s burdens necessarily means that we have to point out one another’s faults. Today I would like you to see how necessary it is to lift the burden of sin for your brothers and sisters in Christ when they are unable to do it themselves because of lack of understanding or lack of strength. People should

repent when they sin. But, sometimes Christians get caught up into sin either by ignorance, or because of temporary back sliding. In either of these two instances, the person is unable to go to God in a state of repentance. It's easy enough to see that if you don't know that you are sinning, then you can hardly repent for it. But also, when a person is back sliding, then they aren't always immediately able to go to God in a state of repentance. We should repent, always, but getting victory over sin is not always a piece of cake. Anyway, when a brother falls into sin, and your personal encouragement is either inappropriate, in a timely sense, or, insufficient to bring about restoration, then we have this commandment from God to intercede for them until such time as they are able to repent and turn away from their sin. It is our love for our brothers and sisters in Christ that should move us to step in and bear the heavy load that our brothers and sisters cannot bear themselves at the present time.

Now, I'm not suggesting that you or I have the authority to determine in ourselves whether a person should be forgiven or not. If someone sins against God, then it is only God who can forgive that person. However, if the love of God causes a compassion to grow within your heart for a brother or sister who is caught up in sin, then I am suggesting that God himself desires to free that person from their sin and has moved your heart by his Holy Spirit to pray for that brother. When you feel the compassion, that's the signal to you that God is moving you to intercede.

As Christians we are tempted to condemn our brothers in Christ for sinning. We have a tendency to point our finger at others who are doing things that we know are wrong. And, I'm not suggesting that we should condone sin in any form. All I'm suggesting is that sometimes we get weak and fall into a state of sin and need some help. Because God is love, therefore love is the central theme and the central focus of Christianity. When someone is weakened in the faith, they need help to recover. Because we are in Christ, God has called us to reach out to our brothers and sisters who are in Christ when they are weak. We've been called to bear one another's burdens, and in this way we fulfill the law of Christ.

Now, let me describe what might actually take place in a given situation. What 1 John 5:16, is telling us, is that when we see a person sin, and if we consider that person a brother in Christ, and, also determine that this sin is not an ultimate sin which rejects Jesus Christ, then because of our love for our brother, we step in and pray for them. Because they are the ones caught up in sin, they are not doing a good job of praying or repenting. They have been overcome by temptation, and need help overcoming. But most important they need help from God. Sometimes they have heard all the exhortation they can handle, and they just need God's strength, but they are so overcome by the sin that they can't look up into God's eyes because of their guilty feelings. Now, if they're not praying for God to help, then how are they going to get help from God. This is where we come into the picture. 1 John 5:16 is actually telling us that when we see someone sin, and they are unable to get the proper victory over it, we go to God and petition him to have mercy and forgiveness, asking him to overlook the sin and bring deliverance to that person. Because of our love and compassion for our brother, God hears our prayer and treats it as if the brother had prayed for himself. In this way we gain life for our brother even

though Satan has earmarked him for death. We are to be the ransom for one another to help one another stand in the evil day.

There's a reference to this concept in the book of Job. In chapter 33 it talks of a person slipping away and falling into the pit of hell, for the grave is looming up and drawing the man into it. It talks of looking for a messenger, or a representative, who will be the ransom for the person and save them from the pit. It's like this for us. When we fall down, and Satan is having a heyday with us, and we are little by little being destroyed by sin, we need someone who will step in and be the ransom, and relieve our debt that we might have life. This is what Christians are meant to be for other Christians. We are meant to be the ransom for one another. We are meant to step in for one another and be the strength for them by going to God in prayer and saying, "Oh God, this is my brother in Christ. They are caught up into sin either by ignorance or by weakness. Oh Lord, their heart is not against you, but their flesh is extremely strong at this time, and Satan is devouring them. Father, in Jesus name, have mercy on my brother and deliver him from destruction. Father, do not lay this sin to my brother's charge, but forgive him I pray."

Now, you may not completely understand what I've been saying. But in essence, we are called to deliver each other from condemnation of sin by petitioning God, and thereby fulfill our responsibility as intercessors for one another. No man is able to stand alone. We need the strength of one another. We cannot do it in our own strength. In this current day Christians are being bombarded from all angles with Satan's fiery darts. The temptation to sin is greater than in the history of the world. We have never before experienced such diabolical deception as we are experiencing today. Yet, there is a tendency to point our finger at our brothers and sisters in Christ who have stumbled and fallen, instead of reaching down and picking them up. Oh, to be sure, we pray for our loved ones, but we have such a great tendency to condemn those who are more distanced from us or who have wronged us. We must learn to intercede for one another if we are to truly learn how to love one another. It is God who forgives sins, but it is you and I who go to God and pray for the forgiveness when our brothers are too weak to do it. Yes, we do have a personal responsibility to repent and turn away from sin. However, when the temptation is great, and our flesh is weak, we need the added help from each other. This is the love of God shown abroad in our hearts. This is the love that Jesus had for Israel in the days he walked on the earth in spite of their sinfulness. And, this is the love he wants us to feel for those brothers and sisters who are slipping and falling. And besides, they may need our prayers today, but tomorrow it may be us who will need the prayers of those same brothers and sisters when we find our own selves caught up in sin. What will you do for help in the day of your own calamity if you have already condemned to hell all those others who sinned prior to your own fall? Every time you pray deliverance for your brother in Christ who has fallen into sin, you are helping a brother stand back up who has fallen, and when he is standing, then he is able to help you when you fall. We cannot forsake one another. We must love one another.

In Romans, chapter 7, Paul explains that the sin he now does is not in him as a born again spirit person, but the sin he now does is in his flesh. Surely, the flesh is weak. What we must look for when we see sin in a brother or sister is to determine if that sin is in the flesh, or is in the heart.

Sin that is in the heart is a different matter. When we desire sin, and that desire is in the mind, and we have determined that we no longer want to be righteous, then we have a very different and difficult situation. But just because you have desire to sin does not mean that your heart has turned away from God. Many people who backslide have sorrow of heart for the sins they are committing, but do not have the strength to turn away from that sin. Sin sometimes gets a very strong hold on us, and sometimes it is a very difficult task to break those chains of bondage. Yet, if two or three can pray, then there is additional strength. If the prayers of one saint is precious in the eyes of God, then think what power there is if ten Christians unite in prayer for a brother.

You know, it's easy to write someone off when we see them sinning. It's always easier to point the finger at someone than to go help them carry a heavy burden. But we were called to bear one another's burdens. 1 John 4:20-21 tells us that we cannot say that we love God if we don't love our brother. And you know, sometimes Christians only love other Christians if the other Christians are perfect. Oh, sure. We look at someone else and see them doing something that we wouldn't do, and right away we point our pious finger at them and condemn them to hell. Oh, come on. I've done it myself more times than I'd like to admit. I'm sure you've done it too.

But you know, Jesus demonstrated a very important aspect to us concerning the forgiveness of sins for one another. On the night of the last supper, when supper was finished, he took a towel and girded himself and washed the disciple's feet. Now, there are a few significant points of interest that we should look at. First, Jesus was demonstrating humility. Here was the God of the heavens humbling himself as a servant. Now, Jesus was perfect. If anyone ever had any right to point a condemning finger at someone else, Jesus had that right. However, instead of pointing the finger at his disciples for their sinfulness, he took on the role of servant to demonstrate not only that we should serve one another, but more specifically, that we should serve one another for the purpose of lifting their burden of sin. Notice that when Peter objected to Jesus washing his feet, that Jesus made the statement, "I only need to wash your feet, and if I do, then you will be completely clean." The reason that the concept of foot cleansing represents purity is that in Scripture the feet represent the intent, or the will, of a person. It is the hands that get into things they should not get into, but the hands don't get into anything unless the feet take them to that place. You can get your hands dirty in the mud, but only if your feet take you to the mud in the first place. Jesus was demonstrating that it's not the sin of the body which will condemn us, but that our righteousness is destroyed when the intent of our heart is to sin. If you sin willfully, then there is no forgiveness of sin. Righteousness through Jesus Christ comes from a pure intent. It comes from a desire for purity. Our righteousness is not because we do righteousness, but because we have a desire to be righteous.

Sometimes, we get pulled into sin when we let our feet take us to places we shouldn't go. But Jesus was demonstrating that as long as the feet were clean, or in other words, as long as our desire to serve God is still in our heart, then we still maintain the righteousness. Jesus humbled himself as a servant to wash the disciples feet, thereby cleansing them completely. Jesus said that we should wash one another's feet. In other words, we should help that person maintain righteousness when we recognize that the person really does intend to serve God, but that their

flesh is weak. In essence, we do the same thing that Jesus did, we wash each other's feet when the other person has walked in places they should not go. We only do this when we recognize that their heart really does want God. For if their heart doesn't want God, then it is a sin unto death, and the Bible says that we should not pray for it.

I'd like to recap some of the important points of today's message. First, love is the central theme of God's new covenant to us. Most importantly, Jesus told us to love one another as he has loved us. His love for us was specifically to bring about righteousness. Therefore, we also show our love for one another by praying for one another in order to bring about righteousness. As we intercede for a brother who is caught up in sin, we save a soul from death, just as Jesus saved us from death. And just as Jesus died for us while we were yet sinners, we need to pray for others when they are yet in sin. Remember, Jesus did not say, be perfect, but, be whole, thy sins be forgiven thee. We are to forgive one another for the sins they commit against us, but we are also to pray for one another for the sins they commit against God. If you do not have this compassion within you, then there is a very good possibility that you also do not have Jesus Christ within you. If it is the Holy Spirit that abides in Jesus Christ, then how can you say you are in Christ if you do not demonstrate this same Holy Spirit of compassion and love that Jesus demonstrated?

I personally believe that the Church has lost the ability to intercede for sinners. Oh sure, the Church always intercedes for those who are unsaved, and there is a great push for evangelism. I would suggest that the great push for evangelism could very well be just a great push for greater numbers in the church and larger churches. Whether this is true or not can actually be determined quite easily, in my opinion. All you have to do is to evaluate how much emphasis is put on evangelism, and how much emphasis is put on redeeming our brothers and sisters who have backslidden. Personally I feel that casting off a backslidden brother and replacing him with a new Christian is contrary to the love of Christ. It makes little sense to save thousands of people and then lose 80 or 90% of them to the temptations of the devil. This is specifically why the Bible gives us 1 John 5:16. God wants us to be the ransom for one another. Just as Jesus was the ransom for us, and paid our debt of sin, we also need to be the ransom for one another. Yes, evangelism is good and right, but evangelism should never replace the love for one another. Your brother or sister may look filthy in your eyes when they are caught up in sin, but, if you will take the time to wash their feet in prayer, then you may find that suddenly they will become completely white as snow once again.