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The Curse of Reproach in the Church

“Reproach has broken my heart and I am so sick. And I looked for sympathy, but there was none, And for comforters, but I found none” (Psalm 69:20).

The Church is supposed to be a place of encouragement, strength, and support for the Body of Christ in the face of the sadness, heartache, trauma, and pain of our persecuted walk in this world. Yet, in Churches across the world, many of us hide our true feelings and situations under a “joyful” exterior, putting on a brave face and raising a facade of serenity over the brokenness beneath, they return to their private struggles, tears, and difficulties, which no one knows about. Why is this so?

More than likely, it is because many Christians erroneously equate a lack of struggles with spiritual maturity and godliness. This is the umbrella of the prosperity gospel. While all Bible-believing Christians understand this is a false doctrine, many subconsciously employ the prosperity gospel as they go about their walk in the world. After all, most of us instinctively believe that the “blessed” are more righteous, and therefore, are more mature in their faith. This is clearly preposterous written out, but many of us have viewed others through this lens. For example, when someone speaks often of the many blessings they’ve received in the week and the miracles God has done for them, we think, “How spiritual this person is! God listens to them!” Conversely, we don’t know what to do with a Believer who is sad, discouraged, bitter, or traumatized—other than ask, “What’s wrong with you? Pull yourself together!”

At one time or another, we’ve wondered what is spiritually wrong with people who aren’t smiling in Church or who don’t feel joy! “Clearly, they aren’t doing something right! So, let’s figure out what they’re doing wrong and straighten them out!” We’ve been made to think that mature Christians arrive at a serenity in their walk where nothing can faze

them, taking what comes their way with such grace! And so, if you open up about your hurting, you are considered a problem to be fixed or something to be solved—often judged, rebuked, or corrected. It is as if we believe only immature people deal with doubts, frustration, bitterness, or sorrow in their lives. It seems at times that the Church has lost the ability to express love to the hurting, unable to bear the burden of those suffering in the fallout of this broken nature.

Perhaps this is why so few Believers are honest with each other in the Church. If we testify to our true state, will we not be met with judgment, advice, patronizing explanations of what we should do to overcome? If we let the facade of “blessed joy” fall, are we not admitting our own shame—our own spiritual shortcomings? But this is not the way Christ intended the Church! *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ”* (2 Corinthians 1:3-5), for *“we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength and not just please ourselves”* (Romans 15:1).

The Church is for the hurting, pained, suffering, and traumatized Believer to find support, love, and healing! We are not to be “spiritual” car-mechanics tearing people down to find their problem and “fix” them. This is not love—it is pleasing ourselves. May we expel the fumes of the poisonous prosperity gospel to realize that even the greatest saints expressed their suffering, sadness, and trauma—needing encouragement, support, love, and care from their brothers and sisters—not judgment, advice, correction, or to be “fixed.”

May we all bear with one another in true and honest love, even as Christ bears with us in all our human ugliness and frailties. Amen.

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