

Stumbling Blocks 5-10-20

Today is Mother's Day, a day of celebration and recognition of our mothers. Some of us recall fond times with our mothers, as she cooked and cleaned yet still found time to play with us, take us to the park and push us high into the air on the swings. My best memories are the swings. It seemed I would go higher and higher and my feet could almost touch the clouds. It was a freeing time with no worries, no thoughts of tomorrow, no sorrow, only joy. Our mothers take great care with us as children. They teach us many things. They train us how to do things, too. We are read to and fondled over, and mothers tend to brag more to others about their children. After all, they made us and kept us safe those nine months before they even knew us. Sounds like God who kept us safe and still does even though we have never met face to face.

However, even with the best of care we stumble and fall. I tripped a lot as a kid. I just didn't always pay attention to my ever-growing feet beneath me. One time I fell on new construction where a parking lot curb had never been on my well-known walk home from school. It was a rough fall and included some wound debridement which my mother quickly attended to because there was a church event that night and I had to go. As the tears ran down my cheeks as she scrubbed up that wound, it was clear the wound would not heal very quickly but eventually it would. We as Christians stumble, too. We fall from our faith at times of great loss when we wonder why God has allowed something bad to happen to us when we think we are so good. We turn our backs on God when we don't get what we want in the time frame we expect to obtain it. We may even fall from grace by rejecting God completely, thinking he has forgotten us in our times of need.

Just like our good mothers, God is good to us all the time. Even as kids, when we are being disciplined for being bad, our mothers still love us. Our mothers are always watching over us and panic when we are out of their sight. If you ever had young children and tried to take them shopping as I had with a friend and her two young boys, you can relate to them hiding under clothing racks perhaps. It's a game that needs to be played when mothers shop and children are not the center of attention. It's no game when you think your child is lost because for a few minutes they are out of your sight.

God always has us in his sight, even when we have fallen and may not want to get up and return to Him. God, like a good mother, always has a way to get us to come around and see the joy again if we will only pay attention.

In our world now, many people suffer from attention deficit disorders and there are many. Some are medicated for this problem and others are counseled and helped by those trained in this disorder to help themselves when their problems become stone walls in their paths. Perhaps we even as Christians also have an attention deficit disorder which causes us to stumble and fall, and not pay the proper attention to God. I Peter which we read today speaks about the corner stone that the builders rejected has now become the very head of the corner. Jesus was rejected. Not everyone who met him was thrilled. Many found him lacking in their expectations. Jesus persisted though despite those who meant him harm, who ignored him, and simply those who tuned him out completely. What a loss to have had the chance to speak or listen to Jesus speak and yet not hear his words. I Peter reminds the people they are a chosen race, as are we as Christians. We are God's own people. We use the phrase "my person" a lot now. It used to be called BFF, best friend forever, and that still is in use at times. My person though is just that one person you feel most comfortable with. You tell them things you would never tell another living soul. You confide in them your deepest thoughts and fears. In return, they simply have to be a good listener. Many of our "people" are good at giving us advice as well as calming us through life's storms.

Sometimes mothers are not able to raise their children. Sometimes a father must do dual duty as a parent and that can be very challenging. God is considered a man by many, although much modern thought envisions God as female. God has always been referred to as our Father in heaven in the scriptures, but yet doesn't he act like a mother too? He cares for us when no one else will listen. He sends us relief and mends our wounds when we stumble and fall. He picks us up after the biggest challenges in life and gives us words of assurance even if we have to seek them out by reading our Bibles and finding those verses of comfort. I have always found the right passages when I needed them by just holding my Bible and opening it usually to a Psalm. Most of those were written by David and he had many challenges and stumbled more than once.

I Peter reminds us we were not always God's people. Before we accepted Jesus into our hearts, we were seeking answers. We still may not have all our answers, but if you look back over the time you have lived, I bet you will find many answers were delivered to you along with some surprising results. We also like to tell others, it's not all about you. Yet sometimes it has to be all about us. We have to acknowledge ourselves every day when we gaze into that mirror. It's the good, the bad and even the ugly some days. We are our own worst critics of our appearance, but remember God created you and you are unique like none other. You may not look the same you did twenty years ago, but you are still loved. You are not rejected, because God loves you no matter what the circumstance or what the mirror says. Jesus was rejected, turned away, told to leave and never return. Did he listen?

When we are children we don't always listen to our parents. We even play our mothers against our fathers; I did that all the time. We know which one will bend to our whims and we use it. If you start praying to the one who will give you immediate results, you may be praying to the wrong god. Instant fame and fortune have its price. You may be stumbling and not even realize it until you fall. A fall no matter how great is never fully realized until we are flat on the ground, sometimes face to it. We are stunned and in a daze of how it all happened. When we allow ourselves to fall from the grace of God, to reject the mercy He offers, we are headed for nothing but woe.

God will still pick you up if you don't resist his assistance. Just like our mothers picked us up off the sidewalk and bandaged up yet another scraped knee, God does that to us spiritually all the time. It may not be as visible as a band-aid on a knee. It may not be a cast that is inconvenient until the break heals. It may not be the trauma we have from a horrific accident. It may be nothing a doctor can help. Only God can pick us up when we stumble spiritually. Only God can mend our torn emotions and calm our fears. We have to listen for His answers. We have to wait sometimes for the responses He sends. We have to keep our ears and eyes open to help that is sent to us in many different forms. Remember most of all, you are God's child. God is that parent that never leaves you. God is the one who will pick you up when you fall and set you back on the right path. You can wander off any path but be sure to know how to get back on track. Sometimes life is like riding a train. It has its bumps, many stops along the way,

and on the journey, you get to meet many new and interesting people. When the ride is over, and you reach your final destination, you may emerge in a place you have never been before. While on the ride, try to relax, enjoy the scenery, talk to the other passengers and keep a seat open for God because he's always travelling with us. Amen.