

Divine Coverings

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction 5

Chapter 1 7

GOD'S PROTECTION

Chapter 2 11

LOVE IS THE ISSUE

Chapter 3 14

COVERING CREATES A CAPACITY FOR MATURITY

CONCLUSION 20

INTRODUCTION

God's covering is vital for our growth and maturity. No matter how old we are, and no matter how mature we may be, we will always need a covering.

I always need someone to cover me, and then I must also be a covering for others. What better place to discover this covering than in the Word of God.

There are really two parts to a covering—one is sweet and the other is bitter. The sweet part is in knowing that God loves me. The bitter part is my responsibility to live in that love. It goes like this: God says, "This is what I expect from you, but with that, I will give you all that you need to fulfill that expectation. I will love you and encourage you as you do what I want you to do."

The pastor in his church, the teacher in the school, the husband and father in the family—each has expectations of a measure of responsi-

ble behavior from the people he serves. At the same time, he is responsible to create a capacity in others to meet those expectations.

People who tell the truth are great coverings for us. Few people will really tell me the truth except my spiritual friends. A worldly friend may not tell the truth because it does not profit him, but the Spirit of God in a man will always speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15).

As you will see in this booklet, God covers us so that we will keep moving forward in His great plan and purpose. How do we keep moving forward but by being around godly people who cover us with prayer, fellowship, and words of love spoken in season and out of season. And as we grow, we become coverings for others. The key is to live in and through a great God, hearing the Word of God from a great pulpit, and being led by the great Holy Spirit who guides us into all truth.

Chapter One
GOD'S PROTECTION

The Word of God refers to many different coverings. That is why it is sad when God's people will not forgive each other and will not be coverings for each other. Do not misunderstand this. We do have to deal with situations, and individuals need to be accountable the way God tells us. From the time Jesus Christ shed His blood for us, was buried, and rose from the dead, it has all been about God's coverings. Hebrews 9:22 tells us that Christ's shed blood covers all of our sins.

In the Bible, covering means "to protect, to hedge about, to cover." God is constantly covering His people. Positional truth (the principle that once we are saved by faith, we have an eternal position as a child of God) is a great example and demonstration of God's eternal covering. The fact that our position is eternally secure is another manifestation of God's eternal

covering. God disciplines His children in love, but He always covers us as He does it.

He Clothes Our Nakedness

After the Fall, when they realized they were naked, God provided a covering for Adam and Eve (Genesis 3). He has always been in the business of covering men's nakedness (see Isaiah 58:7; Ezekiel 16:8). One example of this kind of covering is found in Genesis 9, when Noah got drunk after planting a vineyard.

“And Noah began to be an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard: And he drank of the wine, and was drunken; and he was uncovered within his tent.

“And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brethren without.

“And Shem and Japheth took a garment, and laid it upon both their shoulders, and went backward, and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces were backward, and they saw not their father's nakedness.

“And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done unto him.

“And he said, Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren.

“And he said, Blessed be the LORD God of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant.

“God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant” (Genesis 9:20-27).

Noah planted a vineyard, partook of the grapes, got drunk, and was uncovered. His son, Ham, went into the tent, saw his father, and told his brothers. The moment Noah awoke, he knew what Ham had done; so he cursed Ham, and Ham was cursed.

Notice a couple things here:

1. Noah was guilty.
2. He did get drunk.
3. He was naked.

But notice how Japheth and Shem handled the situation. They had been taught to cover, and cover they did. They backed into the tent so that they would not see their father naked and unconscious. Ham’s actions can at very least be defined as slander and gossip. He, too, could have responded the way his brothers did.

Isaiah 30:1 talks about having a covering that is not from God: “Woe to the rebellious children, saith the LORD, that take counsel, but not of me; and that cover with a covering, but not of my spirit, that they may add sin to sin.” Is this

not what Ham did? He did not cover, but instead he added his sin to the sin of his father.

Chapter Two

LOVE IS THE ISSUE

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

Love covers the multitude of sins. Just plain love does it. One who cannot forgive another obviously does not have the right kind of love, because the right kind of love forgives as Christ forgave (Ephesians 4:32). Covering may mean it is necessary to go alone to a person in meekness to restore them. God covers sin (Psalm 32:1). He does not impute iniquity (Romans 4:7-8).

Why is it that we read these words over and over again? Could it be that God is trying to make a point to us? According to Psalm 85:2, God has forgiven the iniquity of His people and covered *all* their sin. In Proverbs 10:12, love covers all sins. God keeps using this word “covering.”

One who seeks love covers a transgression,

but those who do not seek love repeat a matter and separate even close friends (Proverbs 17:9). Either there will be covering, or friends will be separated because someone will not cover.

I have always looked at it like this: Why do I have to put the negative things I know into somebody else's head? Even if a matter remains unsettled, it is not my business to get others to carry that stuff around in their minds. They shouldn't have to, because God will take care of it, and God will have his way.

Things must be covered.

The Shadow of His Holiness

“And I have put my words in thy mouth, and I have covered thee in the shadow of mine hand, that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, and say unto Zion, Thou art my people” (Isaiah 51:16).

“Behold, the LORD will carry thee away with a mighty captivity, and will surely cover thee” (Isaiah 22:17).

In Exodus 26:13, the curtains were hanging over the side of the tabernacle to cover it. The ark was covered with a veil. The cherubim covered over the Mercy Seat with their wings (see Exodus 37:9). A covering of gold was over the

cherubim. God covered the ark with a cloud of incense (Leviticus 16:13). Everything about the tabernacle had to be covered because of the doctrine symbolized in the Old Testament. When the Lord passed by Moses, He covered Moses with His hand (see Exodus 33:22).

Only Finished Work believers will cover others. No one else will cover. Whether it is a pastor of a certain denomination or whoever it is, he will not cover unless he is grounded in the Finished Work. Why? Because it takes a person who knows he has been covered to cover another. It takes someone who appreciates all the coverings of God to cover someone else and to carry out the redemptive work of the grace of God.

Chapter Three

COVERING CREATES A CAPACITY FOR MATURITY

How many times have we talked with someone else and uncovered a person or a situation, all in the name of getting another person to pray with us? By doing that, we have, in a sense, trampled on the shed blood of Jesus Christ that covered that person. Therefore, we have “done despite” to the Spirit of grace (Hebrews 10:29).

According to the Word of God, when you confess your sin, acknowledge it, isolate it, forget it, and move on with God (see Philippians 3:13-14), that sin is buried forever, and it cannot be brought out of the grave. Our sins have been buried in the deepest, deepest sea (Micah 7:19).

“And of Benjamin he said, The beloved of the LORD shall dwell in safety by him; and the LORD shall cover him all the day long, and he shall dwell between his shoulders” (Deuteronomy 33:12).

God covers all the day long.

Here is something else God covers, even though man has tried to ruin and destroy it. According to Psalm 139:13-14, God covers babies in the womb. He has each one in His mind before they are conceived, and He covers them in the womb after conception. Abortion is taking away from God's covering for the child conceived in the womb. It is taking away the covering of protection that God ordained.

God covers us for the day of battle (Psalm 140:7). For the deep, we are covered (Ezekiel 31:15). For the shadow of death, we are covered (Psalm 44:19). God is always covering us.

Covering in the Home

How does a husband cover his wife? He covers her by laying down his life for her, by loving her as Christ loved the Church (see Ephesians 5:22-25). That is how he covers her. He nourishes her and cherishes her, covering her through washing of the water and the sanctification of the Word of God. It is my belief that there are many women who would respond wonderfully to that kind of covering, because it is a genuine covering of Jesus Christ's love. The husband loves his wife. He loves her uncondi-

tionally and he uses the Word of God to bless her.

The wife, in turn, can cover her husband by respecting him (Ephesians 5:33) and showing reverence for him. If she cannot show reverence for his life, then she can show reverence for the fact that he is her husband. Parents can cover their children by not provoking them to wrath (Ephesians 6:1-4). They cover children with love, with investment, with prayer, with kindness, and with discipline when they must discipline in tough love.

Covering on the Job

In the business world, employees cover their employer, and the employer does his best to cover the employees individually. There has to be a covering in the business world, just as everything else in life needs to have a covering.

In my position in our ministry, I have been effective at covering. I deal with problems, but you must understand—I don't just cover sin and then do nothing about it. When things have happened, by the grace of God, we have exercised an amazing covering that has been very scriptural. It is so important for pastors to keep confidences so that people can trust them. Psalm 91:4

tells us that God covers us with His feathers. This means He protects us as a hen protects her little chicks. It means that God gives caring protection and a warm provision. God is faithful to give us a caring, warm provision for our lives.

We are covered with the robe of His righteousness (Isaiah 61:10). God covers us with the shadow of His hand (Isaiah 51:16). He covers us with silk (Ezekiel 16:10). Silk is one of the finest quality fabrics. In the Bible, silk speaks of the pure, unadulterated grace of the Finished Work. Exodus chapters 25 through 39 describes how God used blue and purple in the coverings of the tabernacle and the priests clothing. Blue is the color that points to Christ's heavenly character. Purple is the product of red (referring to the Blood and Christ's humanity) and blue together, and it refers to Christ's hypostatic union—the reality of Who He is: both God and man.

Sadly, many people cover themselves with their own works (Isaiah 59:6). Really they are covering themselves in their own dust, and that dust is energized by demons (see Isaiah 29:4). Some of those satanic coverings include the covering of shame (Obadiah 1:10), the covering of violence (Habakkuk 2:17), and the covering of confusion (Jeremiah 3:25).

Room to Grow

Covering is God's way of creating capacity, of stirring compassion, of conforming people to His nature by giving them space to grow, space to fail, space to rebound, space to fall again, space to grow out of that, and space to rebound again. This is what God's covering does for us. It gives us room to breathe. It gives us space until we are strengthened through the Word and have our own vertical and accept deliverance from whatever Satan is trying to tempt us with.

In Matthew 4, Satan tempted Jesus in the wilderness. The first temptation was directed at His physical nature, challenging Christ to turn stones into bread after forty days of fasting. The second temptation, misquoting Psalm 91, the devil dared Jesus to cast Himself down from the pinnacle of the temple.

The last temptation in the wilderness was aimed at the vocation of Jesus. Satan offered up all the kingdoms that belonged to the devil because of his status as the god of this world. All Satan wanted was for Jesus to bow to him. The devil knew that would put Jesus outside of His vocation, which was the purpose for His life on earth.

Satan also attacks our physical nature, then he aims for our spirituality and tries to tempt us to live in pride or in arrogance as we usurp authority when we have no right to. Lastly, Satan always attacks our vocation. The last thing he wants is for us to live in God's eternal purpose.

Thank God for His covering that will shield us from these attacks. Beyond that, God's covering creates in us a capacity to gain rewards that will be revealed in eternity. It is amazing how God rewards us. He rewards us for giving out the cup of cold water. Every time we go to church we earn rewards. Every time we talk about Jesus Christ, it is written down in God's book of remembrance (Malachi 3:16). Every prayer said in the power of the Holy Spirit will bring a reward. All of this is possible because of the covering that God gives us.

CONCLUSION

God covers us from the time we are saved until the time we go home to be with Him. God never, ever takes His covering back. Lot was covered even in the midst of his life in Sodom and Gomorrah and later when he sinned with his daughters. The results of his sin are still being felt in the world today. Yet, Lot was covered with God's righteousness, even though he was disciplined (see 2 Peter 2:7).

Never reject God's covering for others. Cover each other, even if you should have to deal with a certain problem. Cover and allow God to create a capacity for repentance and rebound. God desires that we would grow and grow. Remember, the righteous man can fall seven times in a day and get back up again and continue on (Proverbs 24:16-17).

Why does God allow such a thing? It is to give space for believers to get up, stay up, and grow up. He covers and covers until He gets

someone to the place where that person can stand on his feet and then live in the Spirit, walk in the Spirit, grow in the Spirit, and reveal the Holy Spirit.

God covers us to give us time, to give us patience, and to give us "space." There is not one Christian in the world who does not need room to grow. You would never think of approaching a little two-month-old infant and demand that he start walking immediately. No, you would train and teach the little one and allow him to learn by your example.

It is such a beautiful thing for God to deal with us at our own personal, spiritual level. He understands everything about us, and He always upholds us with the right hand of His power. He gives us His covering so that we may grow into His image word by word, step by step, and moment by moment.