

## **A Personal Reflection: Open Rebuke Is Better Than Secret Love**

There are moments when I have found silence easier than truth. It feels safer to keep the peace, to let things go, to believe that avoiding conflict is love. Yet silence in the face of sin is not compassion, it is complicity. I know the Spirit of God never called us to protect comfort at the cost of righteousness. Each time I held back what needed to be said, it was not mercy, it was fear pretending to be kindness.

The Word says, Proverbs 27:5 “Open rebuke is better than secret love.” I have learned that a wound from a friend or family member may hurt for a moment, but the pain of silence cuts far deeper. If I truly care for the souls of those around me, I must be willing to speak even when I know they will not want to hear it. Love that never risks rejection is not love at all. True love exposes darkness so that light can heal what it reveals. Why would I stay silent and let them perish without even trying, simply because I fear being rejected?

The Scripture says, “Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.” (James 5:20)

This truth should encourage us to keep fighting for those we love. If helping someone return to the faith can save their soul, then obedience to that calling also restores something in us. Perhaps part of that covering is mercy for the times we stayed silent, afraid to speak when God prompted us. When we finally act in love and truth, we partner with Heaven’s mission to rescue what was nearly lost. In that obedience, even our past hesitation can be redeemed.

I have tried to bring truth to those closest to me, brothers, sisters, parents, even my own children, and more often than not, the conversation goes nowhere. Before I can finish a sentence, the wall is already there. I speak of Christ and His salvation plan, yet their hearts close like a door locked from the inside. Sometimes they twist my words, or assume things I never said, and answer with disrespect or anger. What began as an effort of love to bring them truth, salvation, and a chance at eternal life turns into rejection and conflict. It feels as if the very message meant to save them becomes the thing they despise most.

I have learned that it is not always stubbornness or pride that shuts them down. There are spirits attached to them, unseen influences that whisper comfort to their flesh and resistance to the Spirit. These demonic attachments defend the very chains Christ died to break. They convince the heart that what feels good must be right and that conviction is judgment. The enemy twists discernment until correction feels like control and truth sounds like attack.

Every person alive faces some measure of this darkness. There is oppression and there is possession, and they are not the same. Those who have never been born again may still carry spirits within, because sin gives them ground to dwell. Those who have never been born again may still carry unclean spirits within, because sin gives them ground to dwell. But those who have been baptized into Christ and received the indwelling of the Holy Spirit cannot be possessed, for no demon can share the same house where God's Spirit resides. The warfare they face is no longer internal possession, but external oppression pressures, temptations, and thoughts meant to weaken faith and exhaust obedience.

There are moments when God allows and grants authority to bind or cast out unclean spirits from a person. Yet Scripture warns us to proceed with great care. Christ Himself taught that when a house is swept clean but left empty, the spirit may return with others more wicked than itself. Deliverance without obedience, and freedom without surrender, leaves a soul exposed. I have witnessed this firsthand. A person received baptism through us, yet they believed it was nothing more than being dunked again. They never abandoned the doctrine of once saved, always saved, and never submitted to the full salvation plan. Months later, demonic attacks returned. Intercession was made, and spirits were bound, but when that binding passed, the oppression returned stronger than before. What was offered as baptism was rejected through unbelief, and the condition of the soul became worse than it had been at the beginning. This is not the place to unfold the full difference between demonic possession and demonic oppression, but it is a truth that must be handled with fear of God and will be addressed more fully another time.

I have seen this in myself. Oppression comes as mental warfare, thoughts of fear, accusation, anger, or self-pity. These are not random emotions, they are targeted arrows designed to pull the heart away from obedience. Yet those who walk in the Spirit should be able to overcome, because Christ's sacrifice has already stripped these powers of authority. In His name and through His power, we can overcome.

But for many of my loved ones who have not surrendered, these attachments still rule. They cannot hear truth because the voices ruling them drown it out. They cling to what feels good and resist what

convicts. They defend their pain, justify their sin, and protect the strongholds that destroy them. When I speak, I am not confronting their personality, I am confronting the spirit that governs them.

They fear losing themselves, not realizing that God is calling them to bury the old man. What they see as death is actually the beginning of life. Every disciple walked this same road, surrendering the old self to be made new. Each of them changed. They died to what they were so they could live in the newness of Christ. The process that feels like loss is actually resurrection.

When that happens, I remind myself not to lose heart. I am not wrestling with flesh and blood. I am facing powers that have built invisible walls inside the soul. So I rebuke the darkness, but I do not hate the person. I pray through what my words could not reach, because some chains only break in silence before God, not in arguments before men.

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Even while standing firm in truth, the warfare can grow heavy.

There is also the quiet weight of discouragement that comes from the absence of encouragement. At times, there are no words of strength from friends, no support from family, and no reassurance even from brothers and sisters in Christ. The silence can feel isolating, as though standing alone while carrying a burden meant to be shared. Yet the lack of encouragement does not mean the path is wrong, only that obedience often costs companionship. Encouragement is a vital gift within the body of Christ, and its absence leaves wounds that deserve to be addressed. This is not the place to unfold that truth fully, but it is a matter I will return to, because the call to encourage one another is not optional, it is commanded.

I am reminded of the story told in *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Though the plan of salvation presented there is watered down, the people and the journey it describes are very real. The one called Christian represents each of us individually as we walk toward the narrow gate. Along the way, he meets evangelists who point him forward, but he also encounters many who try to pull him off the path, those who discourage him, distract him, mock him, or offer easier roads that lead nowhere. These figures are not fiction in practice, they are the very people we meet in our own walk, voices that sound reasonable, caring, or even religious, yet draw us away from obedience and truth. The danger was never only the obvious enemy, but those who claimed friendship while quietly steering him from the way that leads to life. When I see this pattern repeat in my own life, I understand more clearly why silence is not an option and why resolve must follow discernment.

Our walk with God was never described as easy, and God knows this well. Christ Himself said the way is narrow and difficult, and few find it. Yet many churches have misrepresented what that narrow road truly means. It has been reduced to holding the right beliefs or identifying with the right group, while the daily cost of obedience is minimized or ignored. The narrow way is not narrow because it is unpopular, but because it leaves little room for the flesh to rule. It presses against self-will, comfort, pride, and compromise at every step, and that is why many turn aside.

This difficulty is not a sign of failure, but of alignment. Resistance, pruning, and discomfort do not mean God has abandoned the walker, they often mean He is shaping them. When the narrow road is softened, people are unprepared for the weight of obedience and assume

something is wrong when the path becomes hard. But Christ never promised ease, He promised life, and life comes through death to self. Those who endure are not those who found an easier road, but those who accepted the cost of the true one.

Still, I must not let their rejection or misunderstanding silence me. To stay quiet in the face of deception is not love, it is surrender. If I see my family bound, I must still speak truth, even when it costs me peace for a time. Truth spoken in love may not be received today, but the Spirit can awaken it tomorrow.

There comes a point when the Spirit says, “Now be silent and let Me speak.” We are called to plant truth, not to force its growth. Even Christ told His disciples that if a city would not receive them, they were to shake the dust from their feet and move on. This was not rejection of people but release of burden. There is a difference between giving up and letting go. When hearts are hardened and every word turns into conflict, the battle must shift from conversation to intercession. Words may fall on deaf ears, but prayer still reaches the soul.

I understand now why the Scripture says open rebuke is better than secret love. Secret love watches destruction quietly. Open rebuke risks rejection to rescue. If correction comes from pride, it only hardens hearts. But when it is born of love, it pierces darkness when the Spirit wills.

I will walk this lonely path unshaken, refusing to retreat when truth offends or love is misunderstood. Even when the valley is carved by the hands of my own family, the power of God walks with me. If I must be misunderstood, let it be for standing with God.

In the end, the wounds caused by truth will heal, but the comfort of silence would become betrayal. So, I will speak when God prompts me,

and when my words are rejected, I will fall to my knees. What my tongue cannot reach, prayer still can.

2 Timothy 4:2-3 Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season... for the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine.

May the Lord give us eyes to see beyond flesh, courage to confront darkness, and strength to love those who cannot yet love us back.

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