

Stumbled on A Thought...by Laura Shaw

I was in a pretty good mood that day with an extra spring in my step. While bouncing down the hallway at my children's school, all of a sudden, I tripped over my own feet. Since I managed to catch myself before my bottom hit the floor, it wasn't nearly as bad as it could've been. I noticed no one was around, so after a big sigh of relief, I went on my merry way. Another day, I had a pretty good tumble off the stage when I was leading praise in kid's ministry at my church. This fall wasn't from clumsiness, rather a lack of awareness of the poor lighting on the edge of the stage. And I fell ALL the way on my rumpus this time, with an audience of fourth grade boys enjoying it about as much as a movie with all you can eat popcorn, candy and soda pop.

It occurs to me now, after many days similar to these, that all of us have them. It is the case in our faith journeys as well. We can go through moments of great "highs" spiritually, skipping around joyfully singing His praises. Unexpectedly we trip, and the high mountaintop we were just singing on becomes more of an anthill we're wounded from.

James 3: 2 says that ***"we all stumble in many ways."*** One way could be that we tripped because we're clumsy, which would represent sinning. OR it could be that some obstacle was in our path that we just didn't see coming, such as a decision to be made or an illness or even a hurtful comment someone made to us. We may even stumble over our doubts regarding the ways of the Lord. Whatever the case, sometimes the falls are big, and sometimes they are small. Often, the bruises from them heal quickly; other times, the bleeding doesn't stop for a good while.

Could it be that this is a normal part of walking in the faith? While we as sons and daughters of the King will never EVER fall from our promise of Heaven, we're going to lose our footing now and then on this earth. When we do, Jesus is right beside us. He **STANDS** in the gap for us. He **COMFORTS** us. He **CORRECTS** us. He **PRAYS** for us--and He is faithful to ***pick us up*** in ***His perfect time***. Even though His peace, love and joy are always a part of us as believers, we don't always feel them with our emotions. When this is the case, we would be wise to search His promises and choose to lean on them, trusting that He will minister to us in the unique way we need at that time.

Let's be prepared, friends, praying that when temptation comes, He will give us an escape--praying that when someone hurts us, He will be our encouragement--praying that when something happens that we don't understand or couldn't be foreseen, He will give us the faith to trust in Him anyway. Most of all, let's pray that when we crawl or limp through the valley for any reason--be it *stress* or *depression* or *hormones* or *sin* or *circumstances* or ***WHATEVER***--that He would comfort, teach and grow us up there--right in that place. And may we be quick to take His strong hand the instant He's ready to pick us up and lead us to higher ground--fully restored, renewed and refreshed for the next leg of the journey.

"And the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will Himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. To Him be the power forever and ever. Amen."

1 Peter 5:10-11