

Your sin will find you out

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[0 : 00] This is a warning from Moses, a warning that arose out of a discussion between him and some of the tribes of Israel.

Those tribes didn't want to go in with the majority across Jordan to possess the land of Canaan. They took an ocean, as we would say they took an ocean to the land on the east side of Jordan. You remember that when the Israelites left Egypt they didn't take the direct route from Egypt into Canaan.

They were taken on a pilgrimage, a roundabout way, so that they found themselves on the east of Jordan and had to cross there in order to get into the promised land.

Well, these people had a lot of cattle and they saw that the land east of Jordan was very suitable for rearing cattle.

[1 : 10] So they went to Moses with the suggestion that they shouldn't bother to cross the Jordan. They would take their inheritance there and then in the east of Jordan.

But past history made this a very touchy matter with Moses. He took their suggestion very ill. Indeed, he got quite angry with them.

Because he remembered what had happened 40 years before. When the Israelites had come to the borders of the promised land. He had sent out people to spy out the land, see what kind of land it was.

And they had come back. The majority of them, all of them indeed, talking about the riches of the land, its fertility. And they had brought evidence of it in a great bunch of grapes that they had to take, carry between two men on a pole.

All of them agreeing that the land was indeed something that was much to be desired. But, but, there's no way, they said, no way that we can take that land.

[2 : 35] At least the majority of them said that. There's the cities, it's a country whose cities are highly fortified.

And there are huge people there. Sons of the Anakim, as they said. There's no way that we could possess that land.

Only Caleb and Joshua had said, yes we can with God's help. With God's help, of course we can. Nothing will be too hard for us with God's help.

But all the people listened to the majority of the spies. And they turned back. Well, they made an aborted effort later on. But it came to nothing.

And as a result of that, so near, yet so far. God had said, he had doomed that generation to death in the wilderness.

[3 : 37] Their bodies would fall in the wilderness. And now after that, this new generation, here they are, just across from the promised land.

And this suggestion is made. We'll not go in. So you can understand how touchy Moses was about that. He tells these people that they're just a brood of evildoers.

An increase of ungodly men. Well, they went to think again. And after thinking again, they put it to Moses that indeed they were not anxious to discourage the people as a whole from entering and taking possession of Canaan.

They weren't anxious to encourage or suggest disobedience to God's command. They would take their part in the war of inheritance.

In the war of dispossessing the native inhabitants and possessing the land as God had promised them. They would do that. But they'd leave their families and their cattle behind, suitably guarded.

[4 : 57] And then they'd go in and help the rest of the Israelites to take possession of the land that God had promised them. That's what they covenanted with Moses to do.

And Moses was entirely satisfied with that. He made it a matter of honor with them that they would indeed fulfill that.

And so he says, If you will not do so, behold, you have sinned against the Lord. And be sure, your sin will find you out.

Now these are words that strike home to our own consciences. They're words that, it's a warning that applies in a whole variety of different situations.

That fits the situation in which we find ourselves from time to time. Because we're all too familiar with sin. We sin frequently.

[6 : 05] Sometimes thoughtlessly. Just on the spur of the moment. And we're surprised at ourselves at what we've done. And perhaps regret it bitterly afterwards. But sometimes also we sin deliberately.

With our eyes open. Knowing that what we are doing is in breach of God's command. And yet we do it. And when we do it.

We hope we won't be found out. And in the providence of God, it sometimes seems that we get off with it.

As though we're not found out. And we tell ourselves it's over and done with. It's a thing in the past. And it's never going to meet us again.

Well, there are some politicians in these last few days who have discovered on what thin ice they are. When they say to themselves, the dark secrets of the past can never be raked up again.

[7 : 08] The sin that I committed in the past will not find me out. But Moses reminds the people here that when they sin, they sin against God.

Against the Holy One of Israel. It's not just against people. When we sin, we wrong people. When we sin, we deal falsely with those people who suffer from our actions.

But the sin of it is always against God. That's what David confessed, you remember, in the 51st Psalm. As he reflected on his own disgraceful conduct with Bathsheba.

Against thee. Of course he had wronged. He had wronged Bathsheba. He had wronged. He had wronged her husband. He had wronged the nation. But insofar as it was sin.

He says against thee. Against thee only have I sinned. And David knew that God has a long memory.

[8 : 25] For you find him in another psalm. Pleading with God. To forget the sins of his youth. Now God of course does, can and does pardon.

None of us would be alive. None of us could endure the situation. If God did not pardon and put away sin.

But what Moses reminds us of here. Is that however skillful we may be in suppressing our guilt. In covering or hiding or denying our sin.

God is not deceived. He sees through all the subterfuges. And all the excuses. And all the rationalizations.

That we can think up. He knows the facts for what they are. And he knows that we want to hide from them. God has a way of awakening the sleeping conscience.

[9 : 40] Sometimes as we noted in the case of David. He sends a messenger. As he did when he sent Nathan the prophet to David.

To awake his sleeping conscience. And we indeed marvel at. That David could be so at ease with himself.

Without having reflected upon the gravity of what he had done. Sometimes God sends a messenger directly.

To awaken the sleeping conscience. And sometimes he brings us into unexpected situations. That of themselves stimulate. And awaken the conscience that has fallen asleep.

You remember how it was with the sons of Jacob. With regard to their brother Joseph. They had sold him into slavery.

[10 : 40] They had gone home and told their father a cocked up story. About showing him Joseph's coat.

All bloodied. And listened to their father conclude. That Joseph indeed had been killed by a wild animal. It had no doubt it had bothered them for a while.

It must have bothered them when they saw the signs of grief. And the broken hearted state of their father. But given time they got over it.

They put it in the past. It seemed to be something long ago. That wouldn't bother them again. Until... Until the famine came.

And they had to go down to Egypt. And having met the ruler in Egypt. They found themselves in prison. And immediately conscience was stirred again.

[11:43] And they said to one another. This is because of what we did to our brother. We are verily guilty concerning our brother. In that we had no pity.

Conscience was revived. They faced the fact of their disgraceful conduct in the past. They faced the fact that they had broken God's holy law.

And now it seemed to them that God was wreaking judgment upon them. Well, it's better, isn't it? It's better that we face the fact of our sin and guilt.

Even so late. Even after a while. Better that. Than that we should go on and on and on.

Until we are brought before God in judgment. And there is no escape from us. For us from his condemnation. So what I want us to reflect on for a little while this evening.

[12:53] Is the inevitability of sin finding us out. And I mean finding us out in the way in which it damages our personality.

In the way in which it brings loss and bitterness into our experience. We've got to recognize that even though we think that sin is over and done with.

It still has its effects upon us. We have to face up to the fact that one way and another.

In the way in which it affects our psychology. Sin finds us out. So I want to reflect on some of the ways.

In which sin. By its effect upon our psychology and our experience. How it finds us out.

[14:06] The first I want to suggest is that sin finds us out. By the wounding of conscience.

It's always a dangerous thing. To wound conscience. If it's done repeatedly. If it's done over and over again.

We'll come to the point where conscience becomes totally insensitive. Totally impervious. It will be as though seared.

As with a hot iron. Of course we remind ourselves that conscience is not the ultimate authority.

Our obedience is not ultimately and finally to conscience. But to the word of God. And if conscience is not instructed as to the meaning of what God desires.

[15:17] It may impose. It may protest against us illegitimately. But I think these are rare occasions in our experience.

We can safely say I think. That it's always a very dangerous thing. To snub conscience.

Always a very dangerous thing to tell conscience to shut up. To close. To be finished with its protesting. Because.

We must be very very certain. That it is speaking falsely. Or speaking out of turn. As far as the word of God is concerned. If we have a right to suppress it.

So we have to be on guard. If we find ourselves arguing with our consciences. If we find that we have to take up.

[16:19] Take time to beat down that persistent witness. We have to take care.

Lest what we are doing is beating down and suppressing the witness for God. It's a witness that God has summoned.

Has placed within us. And has commissioned to testify of his truth. Silence it by anything other than the word of God. And you sin against God himself.

Silence conscience. Illegitimately. Do it once. And you'll do it again. And again. And again.

Of course you will. You hurt and weaken something that is most precious. You destroy your best friend.

[17:26] When you destroy the testimony. Of a conscience that is enlightened by the word of God. Because it means that you can't listen to truth.

It means that you have become alienated from the truth. As God has revealed it. And so you get yourself into a dangerous situation.

And sooner or later. You will come under judgment. And it's this wounding. It's by the wounding of conscience. That sin finds us out.

And does its damaging work upon us. A second. A second way in which sin finds us out.

Is by alienating us from God. If you disregard the testimony of a God summoned witness. You defy God himself.

[18 : 36] You find this out. Quite soon. You can make God himself.

You can think of God himself. As though he were your enemy. You try to justify yourself. You try to retain.

And to retrieve a measure of equilibrium and peace. So that you can carry on social relationships. Just as they were before. But in the area of your relationship with God.

There is constraint. There is a no go area. There is something in your experience. And something in your heart.

You don't want to talk to God about. I am not saying. But what you continue. As before. You continue making prayers to God.

[19 : 39] You go through the normal ritual. You go through the daily ritual of piety. In the reading of scripture.

In offering prayer. But. All the same. There is this area. That is not to be mentioned. You don't want to speak to God about it.

You know that God will. God would like to open up this topic. But you don't want to. God. God. God. And the exercises of religion become a duty.

Rather than a pleasure. The reading of the word. And the prayers. The daily prayers. Private and family prayers. Become like chores.

You have to do it. Get it over and done with for the day. Just like shaving. Or washing the dishes. Or something like that. It's got to be done. Get it.

[20 : 42] Out of the way. But it's a bad. Bad sign. When we can't have full openness. And full honesty.

Between ourselves. And God. When there's a coldness. And a hardness. And a sickness. In the soul. You can be sure.

That sin. Has found you out. And then. Also. Indulgence.

In sin. That is not confessed. And the sin. That we don't want to mention. In God's presence. Finds us out.

By a diminishing. Of spiritual appetite. Alienation. From God. Is marked. By a growing. Reluctance. To take his word.

[21 : 41] Seriously. We skip. Through. The reading. We don't make any. Personal application. We don't pause. To consider. What is the word. Saying to me.

Here. What. Does this word. That I have read. What does it want me to do. Because the word. Is practical.

In its impact. We skip over that. We have a feeling. That. This is not something. We want to.

Dwell on. At this particular time. We may even. Get to the point. Where. We get to the point. Where we resent. Preaching.

Or. Or. Or. Other people. Speaking to us. In certain ways. We think. They're becoming. Very legalistic. They're becoming. Too. Legalistic.

[22 : 35] All together. They don't understand. Don't know. The particular. Situation. In which. We find ourselves. He's got no compassion.

That man. Who's so legalistic. He's got no compassion. He doesn't understand. The weakness. Of human nature. And so on. The truth of the matter. Is that. We have a diminished.

Spiritual appetite. We're not. Keen. To be opened up. To the truth. As it is in Jesus. Because. Sin. Because. Sin. Has found us out.

And then. Here's a peculiar thing. When we. Are not. Ourselves. Spiritually. Alive. When we are. Under the deadening. Effect. Of. Unconfessed. Sin. Of sin. That we've. Tried to. Put. Behind us.

[23 : 32] Just by an act. Of our own will. Thinking that. Of it's out. Of our memory. It's out. Of reality. Here's something. That occurs. We have.

We become. Increasingly. Critical. Of the church. We become. Increasingly. Critical. Of the particular.

Fellowship. To which we belong. It's a kind of. Defensive mechanism. Because we're. Conscious. That. There's so much. Fault.

That people only knew. They could find. Or they could find. Such fault with me. If they only knew. And a kind of. Defense. Grows up. I want to be.

I want. I take the offensive. Against the fellowship. I take the offensive. Against the church. I begin to become. Critical of it. I begin to. Talk about.

[24 : 26] I become. Thought finding. I begin. I begin. To talk about. How ill. Managed. The church is. How poor. The preaching is.

Nowadays. Compared with. What it used to be. Man. I can remember. Preachers. Oh yes. We talk like this. And we talk about. The mismanagement. Of church fans.

And so on. All these. Things. Happen. To deflect. Attention. From ourselves. We're not looking. First of all.

To see. How. Submissive. We are. In our own. Persons. To the word of God. We're not. When we find fault. With others. For the mismanagement.

Perhaps of church fans. And so on. We're not looking. Critically. At the way. That we manage. Our own affairs. And whether we are. Open with God. As to the use. That we make. Of the resources.

[25 : 19] He has given us. And so on. All this. Criticism. Doesn't. Doesn't. Arise. From love.

It arises. Indeed. From a kind of. False self-love. We want. To defend. Ourselves. And we defend. Ourselves. By finding fault.

With others. And one other. One other. Way. One other. Way. In which. Sin. Finds us out. Is by. Having us. Immersed.

In the things. Of the world. By this. I mean. A distinct. And discernible. Change. In one's.

Priorities. I don't. Suggest. That there's. And there's. Necessarily. An overt. Or secret. Indulgence. In ways.

[26 : 12] And activities. That belong. To the world. That lies. In the wicked one. And that are condemned. In the word of God. It's not that. But we may.

In any activity. We may. Give. Give. Priority. To our. Secular affairs. Over. Against. Spiritual. If. Time. If we want to. If. We have to make. To make a choice. With regard. To our use of time. Whether it's going to be given. To our secular business.

Any. We want an extra hour. Or two there. Instead of giving. Attention. And being. Regular. In attendance. Perhaps. At a prayer meeting.

And so on. We opt. For the secular work. Because we want. To immerse. Ourselves. In things. In situations.

[27 : 08] Where we can forget. That nagging voice. Of conscience. That's within. All right then. These are.

Different ways. In which. Sin. Finds us out. Robs us of spiritual. Vitality. And joy. Obscures. And distorts.

Our vision. Of truth. And dampens down. The enthusiasm. Of hope. We become. Much more. Mechanical.

Robot like. In the discharge. Of our. Religious duties. So I want to suggest. That instead of sin.

Finding us. Out. It's our wisdom. Indeed. It's our spirit. For our spiritual life. It's a necessity. That we. Find out.

[28 : 03] Sin. Sin. With a view. To bringing it. Before God. So that it can be. Properly dealt with. So that it can be. Dealt with.

In the spirit. Of repentance. And can be dealt with. In the vision. Of the throne. Of God. And of the. And of the altar. Where the sacrifice. Is made.

And the blood. Is shed. That washes away. The sin. Of God's people. That's where. Sin. That's where we have to put sin. That's where it has to be dealt with.

That's the only place. Where it will be obliterated. When the blood of Jesus Christ. Cleanses us. From all sin. So let's use the points.

The points that we have considered. Let's use them. As tools. For testing. What our situation is. There are some questions.

[28 : 57] That we can ask ourselves. To see. Whether in fact. We are running away from. The acknowledgement of our sin. Have I been silencing conscience?

Have I been silencing conscience? Wrestling with it to suppress it? Well. Each one of us must answer that.

In God's presence. Have I lost zest and joy. In God's presence? Do I not find.

Do I find myself. Not nearly so enthusiastic. About the worship of God. In private and in public. Not nearly as enthusiastic. About the worship of God.

Than I used to be. And why is that? What deadens? What can it be? What exclamation can there be?

[29 : 58] What explanation can there be? For the deadening. Of my enthusiasm. For the worship of God. But that sin's baleful influence is there.

Finding me out. Have I lost the sweet savor. Or the truth? Do I back away from it? Do I find it too sharp and wounding?

The word of God is indeed. Like a sharp two-edged sword. That pierces to the dividing of soul and spirit. And am I backing away. From that clear incision.

That the word would make into the very heart. In order to reveal. And expose sin. Am I indulging. In finding fault.

In fault finding. With regard to others. It's so easy. As our Savior reminded us. So easy to see. The moat.

[30 : 58] The wee speck of dust. In our brother's eye. And not to heed. Not to be aware. Of the plank that's in our own eye. Am I more engrossed than I used to be.

In secular business and pleasure. Is that taking up more of my attention. Than it used to be. Ask yourself.

These questions. And you will know whether. Sin. Is finding you out. Check out the list. If you have to give a positive answer.

To any of the questions. Then search diligently. For the sin. That has to be confessed. Look out for sin. That's in good standing.

For this sin. For the sin. That so easily besets us. Look for the sin. You don't want to let go of. Tell yourself. That your life depends.

[31 : 57] On getting rid of it. But how to get rid of it. That's the question. There is only one way. We must come to God.

In the spirit of confession. In the spirit of acknowledgement. If we confess our sins. He is faithful and just. To forgive us our sins. And to cleanse us.

From all unrighteousness. Come to God. In total dependence. Only he can forgive. And only he can empower. To resist and overcome.

Come. And when temptation comes again. Call out fervently to God. Again and again. We know what it is.

To enter into. Pray fervently to God. The God of all grace. That we may not. That we may not. Enter into temptation.

[32 : 55] That we may not. Get the taste of it. And begin to savor it. For that is the way. To yielding and to. Defeat.

The sum of the matter is. That we must be honest. That we must be honest. With God. Better it is by far. However faith. Painful it may be.

To ask God to show us our sin. While it is. We are in a day of mercy. Better it is. However painful. That God should show us.

Our sin. While we are still in a day of mercy. Than that we should come. To the last. Judgment of God. With sin.

Unconfessed. And unforgiven. Let us pray. Thou art the God.

[33 : 55] With whom we have to do. Thou art the God. Who has searched us. And known us. We pray oh Lord. That. We may be willing.

And indeed anxious. To be scrutinized by God. To have our sin. And shortcoming. Brought to light. That we may confess. And depart from it. And know the peace of God. That passes all understanding. In Jesus name.

Amen.