

# Sin concealed sin confessed

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 01 January 2000

Preacher: Rev D.N.Macleod

[ 0 : 00 ] Now seeking God's blessing, let us for a few minutes turn to words found in the book of Proverbs chapter 28, the words of verse 13. Proverbs chapter 28, verse 13.

He that covereth his sins shall not prosper, but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.

Now here we have a proverb which finds a fuller meaning from the New Testament. In the first epistle of John we read that if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Now it's safe to say, I'm sure that none of us here tonight would be so foolish as to say, I have never sinned.

[ 1 : 24 ] We know better than to say that. We know that it is written, all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

All we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned everyone, everyone, to his own way.

Even heathen philosophers have declared that sin is a reality. This is our truth that is generally acknowledged.

We have, we've got to confess, fallen short of our own ideals, let alone God's standards.

We have broken our own rules of conduct, let alone God's holy laws.

[ 2 : 36 ] We are sinners. Let us think just for a little, first of all, of what sin is.

And then what is meant by covering sin. And then confessing sin.

And finally, the effects of covering and confessing. What sin is. Every child knows what sin is.

Every free church child, at any rate, knows what sin is. It knows a very good definition. Sin is any want of conformity to the law of God.

Or transgression of that law. The fall brought mankind into an estate of sin and misery.

[ 3 : 45 ] Friends, what a solemn thing it is, really to believe in the fall. Really to believe in the fall. That we are sinners.

That we are sinners. And that we do things that are not right, according even to our own code and our own rules, is a thing which everyone more or less acknowledges.

But that we are exposed to the just wrath of God, is a truth which is seldom believed.

Which is really believed only by those who are taught by the Holy Spirit. Those who are taught in a measure to believe.

By the Spirit. Not by human reason. That God is good and holy and just.

[ 5 : 00 ] And that he is glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders. And that he insists on absolute faith.

And we are equal here. Difference there is none between one and another here. And we are equal.

We are one. One in ruin and condemnation and sin. We are all exposed and justly so to the wrath of God.

Sin, according to the Bible, is primarily an offense against God.

Now its seriousness lies here. Most people think that a thing is a sin only if it hurts other people.

[ 6 : 10 ] Now that is wrong. However much our misdeeds may bring disgrace to ourselves. And sorrow and suffering to other people.

Their greatest evil is that they constitute a rebellion against God. Jesus, when asked what the most important commandment was.

Jesus replied. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart. Now that is a good test for anyone who comes seriously.

And honestly to the word of God. That's the most important commandment. Who would dare say that we have come up to that standard.

That we love God with all our heart. Of course we don't. And we're ready to admit that. Surely. Well if we do not love God with all our heart.

[ 7 : 19 ] That is sin. It's our relationship to God that matters. Most decent minded people agree that theft and fraud and drunkenness and the misuse of sex and hate and murder.

Such things are obviously wrong. But the trouble starts further back than these. Jesus said that all these things come from the same source.

And man's heart. And man's heart. Out of the heart of men he said. Proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, thefts, murders.

They're all from man's heart. There was a correspondence in one of the papers some years ago. It was prompted by a question asked. The question was what is wrong with the world.

[ 8 : 34 ] And among the many letters that were sent to the editor of the paper was one from a well-known writer of the day.

A Roman Catholic actually. And this was the letter. Dear Sir, I am.

Your sincerity. The content of the letter was I am. What's wrong with the world? I am.

But friends, no one can truthfully answer that question. Until he can say with honesty, I am.

What's wrong with the world? I am. Someone said, the heart of the human problem is the problem of the human heart.

[ 9 : 42 ] The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Who can know it? Well then, to fancy sin less than it is, is very dangerous.

It cannot be a little thing. Because it is against the majesty of heaven. Oh, think of the attributes and the majesty of God.

The God who is not merely infinitely powerful and wise and all-sufficient and glorious, but also supremely good.

He is a God whose character is matchless. He is a pure and holy God whom we worship.

Jehovah, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises. Now there are degrees of guilt.

[ 10 : 56 ] But a single act of sin involves death. Some sins in themselves, and by reason of several aggravations, are more heinous in the sight of God than others.

Every sin deserves God's wrath and curse, both in this life and that which is to come.

And that is the Catechism's teaching. And it is the teaching of the Word of God. Thomas Watson wrote, View sin in the red glass of Christ's sufferings.

Would you, he said, take a true prospect of sin, go to Golgotha, and there see the greatness of your sin in the deepness of Christ's wounds.

It was John Owen who said that he who has slight thoughts of sin has never had great sights of God.

[ 12 : 17 ] And Rabbi Duncan said, Unless there was a little God against which we could sin, there can be no such thing as a little sin.

Now, Paul in the chapter of Romans, which we read, called sin exceeding sinful. When he wanted to find the very worst word that he could use to call sin by, he called it by its own name.

Sin exceeding sinful. No better word, no fitter word could be found exceeding sinful. And the greatest disservice that any man can do a fellow man is to make him think lightly of sin.

Any teaching which belittles the horror and terror of sin is poisonous teaching. Let us think of this word covering then.

He that covereth his sins shall not prosper. The proud sinner naturally wants to be thought better than he is.

[ 13 : 52 ] His sins must have some cover. He would cover his sin, if that were possible, from himself.

He would forget it. He would banish all serious thoughts. He would stifle convictions and then he would try to persuade himself that he is happy.

Now that was the way of man ever since he first disobeyed God and fell from his original state of innocence.

Adam and Eve, we are told, hid themselves from the presence of God among the trees of the garden. They were self-consciously aware of their nakedness and their loss of happiness. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons. And man still makes pathetic attempts to cover up, to hide from God what he knows himself to be.

[ 15 : 11 ] Now the practice of covering up or hiding sin is characteristic of unbelievers.

They neither acknowledge their sins nor feel their guilt or their danger. and consequently they do not cry to God to have mercy on them.

They do not fly to Christ for refuge. But their condition, their position is much more serious than they realize.

They are on the broad road that leads to destruction. remember that we are told that the voice of an offended God summoned Adam from his hiding place to receive his sentence.

the Lord called to Adam and said to him where are you? Oh the folly of trying to cover one's sins to hide one's sins from the all-seeing God.

[ 16 : 40 ] He who covers his sins shall not prosper. And now thirdly confessing sin.

Whoso confesses and forsakes his sin shall have mercy. Now there can be no true confession without conviction.

in the conscience. And this must be produced by the Holy Spirit through the truth. We mustn't suppose that this verse has no reference to believers.

Of course it has. There is a common and dangerous tendency among us to cover our sins.

Some people would have us believe that the whole idea of confessing is unhealthy. Now true it is that some forms of confession are unhealthy especially if we keep raking over our past which should have been long ago confessed and forsaken and forgiven.

[ 18 : 11 ] but true confession the honest uncovering before God of our sins far from being unhealthy is an essential condition of spiritual health.

It is he who covers his sins who shall not prosper. But it is he who is unhealthy. Other people do not confess their sins for a very different reason.

They imagine that they have no need to do so. They suppose that they have attained such a degree of perfection that there is nothing left to confess.

well Jesus was not of their opinion. He told his disciples to pray forgive us our debts forgive us our trespasses our sins and evidently he did not anticipate a time when these followers of his could dispense with that petition.

Let us remember friends that all things are naked and open before God. And we do not therefore confess our sins as if he were ignorant of those sins.

[ 20 : 00 ] We rather acknowledge what he already knows and remember if we cover our sins in this life they shall certainly be uncovered in the next.

Jesus said that all things will be uncovered. All things shall be made known. At the judgment we shall stand in God's holy presence without any pretense.

there we shall see ourselves as we really are in God's sight not as we appear to our friends or as we appear to ourselves but as Christ really knows us.

There is nothing covered that shall not be made known. we shall not be able to keep any secrets on that day.

He who covers his sins shall not prosper but whoso confesses and forsakes them shall have mercy. Sin and confession and forgiveness cannot be separated and confession is the link between sin and its forgiveness.

[ 21 : 44 ] It is to be made to the one against whom we have sinned to the one from whom we need and wish to receive mercy.

Now the alternative between covering and confessing our sins is set before us here. And as so often in the book of Proverbs the contrast is not just between two opposite courses of action but between the consequences of each of these opposite courses of action.

No one who covers his sins will prosper. It is he who confesses and forsakes them who will find mercy. And now just a word about the effects of covering and confessing sin.

We were singing the opening verses of Psalm 32 and the sad effects of covering our sins are described there in that Psalm.

And that same Psalm 32 describes the happiness of the man in whose spirit there is no guile.

[ 23 : 24 ] The happiness of the man who confesses his sins so that God covers his sin or forgives his sin. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputes not iniquity.

Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. And then I acknowledge my sin unto thee and mine iniquity I have not hid.

Now the words covered and hid in these verses in Psalm 32 come from the same Hebrew word. And it is a word which means to cover in the sense of to conceal to hide. And you see how the word is used?

It's used of man in his refusal to forgive. And it is used of God covering man's sin by his merciful forgiveness.

[ 24 : 42 ] Man and God both covering. As soon as David uncovered his sin God covered his sin.

sin. And as surely as that was done for David it is done for ourselves if we come to God for pardon. God covers with his forgiveness the sins which we uncover in our confession.

one other thing we notice that mere confession is not enough. Sin must be forsaken.

Whoso confesses and forsakes them shall have mercy. The hypocrite confesses without forsaking.

[ 25 : 47 ] The hypocrite is the one who pretends to be a Christian. The man who says that God has brought a change in his heart where there is no change at all.

And that's the sort of man who confesses without forsaking. And friends sincere forsaking is the best proof of sincere confession.

You cover the sins shall not he who confesses and forsakes them shall have mercy. The whole purpose then of uncovering our sins is that we go on first to confess them asking for cleansing through the blood of and of Jesus Christ and then to forsake them praying to God for grace to overcome and such confessing and forsaking are required of us.

And if we want to receive mercy there is no other way. Let it never be said of us that we take sin lightly.

Let it never be said of us that we presume upon the mercy of God. But let us take these words he who covers his sins the very smallest of his sins whatever that may be he who covers his sins yes the smallest shall not prosper but who so confesses and forsakes them yes the very largest of his sins whatever that may be he shall have mercy that is God's promise and it never fails but a wonderful thing it is that we can claim the cleansing power of the blood of Jesus that blood which cleanses us from all sin and if there is anyone here tonight who does not know the love of

[ 28 : 30 ] Jesus and pardon then let him or her not forget that we have the word of Jesus himself for the welcome that it will be received by the person who comes with his or her sins to the Savior come unto me all you who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest take my yoke upon you and learn of me for I am meek and lowly of heart and ye shall receive rest unto your souls my yoke is easy my burden is light him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out come and know the blessedness of pardon and the wonder of being a member of the family of the

Lord and the joy of serving him let us pray gracious God we thank thee for our communion seasons we thank thee for this day that has for so long been set apart for forgiveness and confession and prayer we pray that we may all want to be shown ourselves and that as we are shown ourselves we may be able to look to Jesus and to entrust ourselves to him and to him only we pray that each part of the preparation for the sacrament on the Lord's day will be blessed to our souls remember each of us and all who are dear to us may we be remembered with the love which the Lord bears to his own remember those who could not come to this house tonight those who love thy house and who are prevented by illness or old age or some other happening of life from coming we thank thee Lord that thou art near to all who call upon thee in truth wherever they may be help us to remember one another to support one another in the work that has been given us to do and guide us in all the way before us take away our sin for Jesus sake Amen