

You know the story of King David - how he committed adultery with Bathsheba and secretly arranged for her husband's death. Yet, after the prophet Nathan exposed David's sin, holding it up before his face, the broken king repented of his horrible misdeeds. And he later wrote four psalms expressing the distress and terror he had felt as a result of his sin.

David's anguished heart-cries are found in Psalms 6, 32 and 51 - as well as in the psalm I want to focus on in this message, Psalm 38. In each of these psalms, David was looking back, recalling the torment he experienced during this dark period of his life. In Psalm 38 in particular, he describes being smitten by a tender conscience: *"Thine arrows stick fast in me, and thy hand presseth me sore."* (PSALM 38:2).

The hard fact was, David had to live out the shame caused by his sin. His terrible fall quickly became public knowledge, and the whole nation began talking about it. All the people - including David's supposed friends - were saying, "How the mighty have fallen! David is finished. His power, influence and dignity all lie in ruins!"

Even Israel's enemies gloated over David's fall. Nathan pointed out to him, *"...thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme..."* (2.SAM 12:14). These words probably hurt David most of all. He had brought reproach on his precious Lord's name!

Many Bible scholars believe it was during this period - when David was morally and spiritually weak - that his son, Absalom, planned to usurp his reign. David may even have heard about the plot. Indeed,

The Heaviness of Sin!

A Message of Warning and Hope For Christians Battling Hidden Sin

I believe he had Absalom in mind when he wrote:

"My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my sore; and my kinsmen stand afar off. They also that seek after my life lay snares for me; and they that seek my hurt speak mischievous things, and imagine deceits all the day long." (PSALM 38:11-12).

Obviously, David knew some kind of deception was going on. So, why didn't he speak out about it? Why didn't he point out the wicked plans of the plotting evildoers? It was because he was heavily burdened by his own hidden sin!

Proverbs tells us, *"He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy."* (PROV 28:13). The phrase "shall not prosper" here doesn't refer to material prosperity; rather, it speaks of physical health, emotional state, spiritual well-being. God's Word is saying that anyone who covers his iniquity will be cut off from all spiritual prosperity. And David's life proves it!

If You Were to Ask David Which Was More Painful - Harboring His Secret Sin, or Having It Exposed With All Its Shame - I Believe He Would Say Having His Sin Exposed Was a Much Lighter Burden!

For a whole year David carried the terrible burden of his adultery and murder. Only his military commander, Joab, knew about it. Then Nathan learned of it, through a revelation from the Lord. But until his sin was exposed, what an awful, terrifying time it was for David!

Part of David's terror might have been because he'd never told Bathsheba the truth about how her husband, Uriah, had died. He probably could have kept the facts from her. But Bathsheba might have suspected David had a hand in Uriah's death, anyway - simply because she saw her new husband's emotions in turmoil daily.

How true are Moses' words, *"...be sure your sin will find you out..."* (NUM 32:23). Now, as David writes in Psalm 38, his sin has already been brought into the open, with nothing hidden. And he begins to recount the terrible cost of his foolish choice: *"Mine iniquities are gone over mine head: as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me."* (PSALM 38:4).

By the time Nathan confronted David, this tormented man had reached the end of his rope. He had been crushed by the burden of his secret sin, and he had no strength to go on. He cried, "Look at all that my sin has done to my physical body, my family, my country. It's too heavy for me to

bear. I can't live under this awful burden anymore!"

Beloved, there is no greater burden a believer may bear than the heavy load of a hidden, unconfessed sin. Moses described sin as providing pleasure for a season (see Hebrews 11:25) - yet what a short season it is! It could be a single night of forbidden pleasure, a few hours of dark indulgence, or just a momentary high. Yet afterward, there always comes a crippling heaviness.

David lived for an entire year under such heaviness. He constantly feared God's chastening hand, and living under that pressure made him sick. His hidden sin took an awful toll on his body, possibly plaguing him with ulcers, as some Bible scholars believe.

Of course, not every sickness is the result of unforsaken sin; Job's example proves that. Yet, just as surely as partaking in the Lord's supper unworthily can lead to sickness and even death, so hidden, unforsaken sin can cause serious and sometimes fatal illness.

So, did God still love David through all this? Yes, he did. But was God angry with him because of his sin? Of course he was. And did he chasten David during the year he covered his iniquity? Yes - absolutely.

Now let me ask you: Does God love his people today? Yes, without question. Yet, does our hidden sin anger the Lord? Of course it does. And does God chasten us for covering our sin? Yes - undoubtedly!

David Lists Several Terrible Emotional and Physical Consequences of Living With A Deadly, Secret Sin!

From David's day down to our own, sin has always brought the same frightful outworkings upon God's people. Consider this list of emotional and physical disorders caused by hidden sin:

1. *"There is no soundness in my flesh..."* (PSALM 38:3). The Hebrew here suggests, "My mind and body are consumed by a fear of God's displeasure with me!"

David was saying, "I wake up every morning knowing I've got sin hidden in my heart. And it's like a cancer in my soul. A dark cloud of foreboding is always hanging over me." Likewise, if you have a hidden, covered sin, your once-joyful spirit will be taken from you. You will never wake up with peace!

2. *"...neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin..."* (PSALM 38:3). The word "bones" here can be translated "body." David was saying: "There's no health in my body now. My sin has affected my physical well-being!"

In the three other penitential psalms, David also refers to bones:

"Have mercy upon me, O LORD; for I am weak: O LORD, heal me; for my bones are vexed. My soul is also sore vexed..." (PSALM 6:2-3). *"When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long."* (PSALM 32:3). *"Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice."* (PSALM 51:8). Simply put, the longer David covered his sin, the weaker his body became.

3. *"My loins are filled with a loathsome disease: and there is no soundness in my flesh."* (PSALM 38:7). The word "loins" in Hebrew means "my strength, my confidence." And "loathsome disease" here signifies "shrinking, drying up." As David lost his strength and confidence in the Lord, it diminished his physical health as well.

4. *"My wounds stink and are corrupt because of my foolishness."* (VERSE 5). David was saying, "When sin got dominion over me and I erred foolishly, a moral stench wounded me. My iniquity became known to the world - and it stunk like a festering wound!"

David wasn't grieving because his own name was soiled. He grieved because his name had always been associated with the Lord's - and now he'd brought reproach upon God's name. He was saying, "My name once stood for something. When people heard it, they honored the Lord. But now my sin has made me the song of drunkards!"

5. *"I am troubled; I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long."* (VERSE 6). The Hebrew word for "troubled" here means "a heavy, dark-colored sadness." David was living under a dark cloud of despair. He was saying, "My shoulders literally slump from the load of guilt I carry. I go through the day with no peace at all!"

6. *"I am feeble and sore broken: I have roared by reason of the quietness of my heart."* (VERSE 8). Talk about groanings that can't be uttered; David was saying, "I moan and groan because there's a constant roar going on in my heart."

What was this roar in David's soul? It was a groaning for a lost peace! Sin had robbed him of his freedom. He'd lost all rest in God, as well as all of God's favor and blessings.

7. *"...as for the light of mine eyes, it also is gone from me..."* (VERSE 10). David's sin also cost him his spiritual discernment. It is one thing to lose your emotional well-being, your physical health, your reputation. But worst of all is to lose the light of truth - the revelation of Christ!

With every statement David makes in this psalm, his burden of sin grows heavier and heavier. He's looking back, describing his soul's heaviness - and he's warning us: "You don't have to go the way I chose. I became feeble and broken because of my sin. I lost God's precious favor!"

Several years ago, at a repentance conference held by our ministry, a well-known evangelist from years past attended. Throughout his decades of ministry, this man had harbored a secret sin of homosexuality.

He was about seventy years old at the time. I had never met him, until the conference. The man stuck out his hand - and when I reached to shake it, it was like feeling a dead fish. I looked into his eyes - and he seemed like a dead man. He had no life in him whatsoever. All his light was gone - because of the emotional toll of hidden sin. And light represents discernment!

**You Can Lose Your Reputation
Or Your Health -
But God Help You When You
Lose Your Light!**

Because David had lost his spiritual light, he also lost his ability to reprove sinners. His tongue was silenced because of his own sin: *"But I, as a deaf man, heard not; and I was as a dumb man that openeth not his mouth. Thus I was as a man that heareth not, and in whose mouth are no reproofs."* (PSALM 38:13,14).

The apostle Paul commanded Timothy, *"...reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine."* (2.TIM 4:2). Yet, the person who covers his sin hears a different word thundering in his soul: *"Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God? For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written."* (ROM 2:23-24).

In other words: "Do you dare to teach others how to live, when you have a hidden sin in your own life? You're blaspheming God's name!"

The burden David carried for an entire year cost him dearly. It broke his health, plagued his mind and wounded his spirit. It created havoc in his home, disillusionment in God's people, mockery among the godless. Finally, he cried out, *"I am ready to halt, and my sorrow is continually before me."* (PSALM 38:17). The Hebrew word for "halt" here means "fall." He was saying, "I'm about to fall from this heavy load of sorrow!"

Now, some Christians might look at David in his time of turmoil and think, "What a tragedy Satan was able to bring upon David. How could this once-tender psalmist come to the brink of a fall? God must have been terribly angry with him."

No! It wasn't the devil who made David's sin so heavy - it was God! In his great mercy, God allowed this man to sink to the depths, because he wanted him to see the exceeding sinfulness of his sin. He made David's unconfessed sin so heavy, he could no longer bear it - and he was driven to repentance!

The truth is, only a righteous man like David could be so powerfully

affected by his sin. You see, his conscience was still tender - and he felt the sharp pains of every arrow of conviction God thrust into his heart. That's why David could say, *"...my sorrow is continually before me."* (PSALM 38:17).

And that is the secret of this whole story: David had a godly sorrow! He kept a deep and precious fear of God. He could admit, "I see the Lord's disciplining hand in this, pressing me down to my knees. And I acknowledge that my sin deserves his wrath. All these awful outworkings of my hidden sin have been brought on by my heavenly father!"

The writer of Lamentations says, *"I am the man that hath seen affliction by the rod of his wrath. He hath led me, and brought me into darkness, but not into light.... he hath broken my bones. He hath builded against me... He hath set me in dark places, as they that be dead of old. He hath hedged me about, that I cannot get out: he hath made my chain heavy.... He hath inclosed my ways with hewn stone..."* (LAM 3:1-9).

The writer's point is clear: When we live with hidden sin, God himself makes our chains so heavy, chaotic and terrifying, we are driven to open confession and deep repentance.

Consider David's example: He committed adultery. He arranged for a faithful soldier to be murdered so he could lay claim to his young wife (and David already had five wives of his own). He hid his horrible darkness for a whole year and came to the brink of total ruin. He brought shame on Israel and on his heavenly father's name.

Yet, even after all this God called David *"a man after his own heart."* How could this be? The secret is revealed in this verse: *"I will declare mine iniquity; I will be sorry for my sin."* (PSALM 38:18). Just before David was about to fall, he humbled himself and repented! He cried, "Lord, I've had enough! I can't carry this load anymore. It's too heavy for me. I repent - I freely confess my sin. Please, God, don't forsake me!"

"Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy

sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.... I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me.... Create in me a clean heart, O God... take not thy holy spirit from me." (PSALM 51:4, 3,10,11).

The Lord opened up every hidden place in David's life - to bring him to a full and complete repentance!

**This Message Goes Beyond
David's Experiences of the High
Cost of Sin!**

I want to speak now to the Christian who is in much greater danger than David ever was even in his lowest condition. This is the believer who cannot relate whatsoever to Psalm 38. He knows nothing of grief over iniquity, the heaviness of sin, the smiting arrows of conscience - because his heart is crusted with hardness!

This Christian has no true fear of the Lord. He can sin without remorse. Nothing can pierce the walls of his armored heart. He takes his sin lightly, calling it "just one little problem in my life." Such a Christian is in danger of being given over to a hard heart - totally deceived by his sin!

Not long ago, a very honest Christian woman wrote to our ministry:

"I'm scared! I have served the Lord for a number of years, but in recent years I've drifted, becoming cold toward God. I have no burden for lost souls, no urgency to pray or read the Bible. A spiritual darkness is overtaking me. Yet what scares me most is that I'm not concerned about what's happening to me. I'm scared that I'm not scared!"

How many thousands of Christians no longer grieve over their sin? Multitudes today excuse their besetting habits, thinking, "It's just a simple, human weakness. I can afford this one vice."

No - never! The prophet Ezekiel gives us a vivid illustration of what happens to a people who take their sin lightly. In this account, the seventy elders of Judah came to Ezekiel to receive a word from the Lord. These men were all in the service of the temple, and as they

gathered with the prophet to worship, Ezekiel was given an amazing vision:

"...as I sat in mine house, and the elders of Judah sat before me... the hand of the Lord God fell there upon me. Then I beheld, and lo a likeness as the appearance of fire: from the appearance of his loins even downward, fire... as the appearance of brightness, as the colour of amber.

"And he put forth the form of an hand, and took me by a lock of mine head; and the spirit lifted me up between the earth and the heaven, and brought me in the visions of God to Jerusalem..." (EZEK 8:1-3).

The Holy Spirit fell on this gathering, and God's holy fire filled the place with light: *"And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel was there..."* (VERSE 4).

Now, we know that whenever God's fiery presence appears in a meeting, sin is always exposed. Indeed, notice how Ezekiel was impacted by the Lord's glory: In this vision, God raised him high above the temple, suspending him above everything. And he opened Ezekiel's eyes to the secrets of the seventy elders' hearts.

Suddenly, the prophet saw that these men's minds were filled with *"...every form of creeping things, and abominable beasts..."* (VERSE 10). He's describing demonic strongholds, evil beings. And they had infiltrated God's house through the ministry!

Yet there sat the seventy elders, calm and placid. They appeared as worshipers seeking guidance from the Lord, showing respect for Ezekiel's prophetic office. But in truth, they were covering up a secret, hidden sin!

You see, these men had been going through the outward worship procedures of the temple ministry - killing lambs, washing their hands and entering the holy place. Yet, in reality, they all belonged to a secret society of sun worshipers. They employed prostitutes in the temple, who wept before Tammuz, the god of fertility. And as part of the worship ritual, these suppos-

edly godly elders took part in fornication.

Worst of all, these men were not convicted of their horrible idolatry. Now, as God's fiery presence filled the room, they merely sat in comfort, unable to hear or see a thing - totally unmoved. How could this be, you ask? There is only one reason: They saw their iniquity as trivial. They excused it as no big deal!

The Lord asked Ezekiel, *"...Is it a light thing to the house of Judah that they commit the abominations which they commit here?..."* (EZEK 8:17). God was saying, "These men are unmoved because they don't see sin as I do - exceedingly sinful. To them, it's just a joke!"

The seventy elders had convinced themselves God winked at their idolatry: *"...for they say, The LORD seeth us not..."* (VERSE 12). Yet God makes a powerful statement about them. He tells Ezekiel, *"...lo, they put the branch to their nose..."* (VERSE 17).

This verse describes an ancient gesture of contempt. The Israelites would pick up a twig, break it off, put it under their nose and then twist it. The modern equivalent would be for us to thumb our nose at someone, as if to say, "Here's to you!"

God is saying of these men, "You sit in my house, hear anointed preaching and experience my manifest presence - and yet you cover your sin as if it were a small thing. You won't allow my Spirit to convict you. You're thumbing your nose at me!"

These elders weren't like David, who was heavily burdened by his sin. They felt no arrows of smiting conviction, no loss of physical strength, no emotional pain. They had no inner roaring or groaning. Instead, they were deceived by what Moses called a "false peace":

"And it come to pass, when he heareth the words of this curse, that he bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst." (DEUT 29:19).

In other words: "A deceived person is like a drunkard - he has lost all ability to discern. He can't even distinguish between thirst and drunkenness!"

I Ask You - How Heavy Is Your Sin?

Are you troubled and grieved by your besetting sin? Does it keep you boiling inside, giving you sleepless hours, emotional pain, sorrow, guilt and despair? Do you feel you're on the brink of falling under the heavy load of it all?

Does your heart cry out, "Lord, my sins are over my head, beyond my comprehension. Yet I know all my troubles come from your chastening hand. Oh, God, I don't want to be a slave to my wicked habits any longer. Please - give me back my freedom!"

If this is your prayer, then you're on your way to healing and deliverance. You see, when David repented he was finally able to glimpse the light at the end of the tunnel. Listen to his triumphant prayer:

"I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Thou art my hiding place; thou shalt preserve me from trouble; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance." (PSALM 32:5, 7).

Dear saint, you can get back your shout and your joy. Simply confess and forsake your sin - and the Lord will pardon and deliver you. Like the prodigal's father, he's ready to kiss your neck, clothe you in a robe of righteousness and spread before you a great feast. Then you'll be able to testify with David:

"Many sorrows shall be to the wicked: but he that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about. Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous: and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart." (PSALM 32:10-11).

Hallelujah!

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November 24, 1997