

He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy. Proverbs 28:13

Secrets...Hidden things...Concealed sin...these are the reason we feel shame. This scripture has helped me more than any other to find joy in my new nature. The confession of my sin does not put my life in danger! The confession of my sin allows me to find mercy. All of us have an ability to hide certain things. We learn it before we are even taught it. When my kids were really young they would conceal every mistake they made. I remember finding dirty diapers in the closet, under the bed, everywhere but the trash can. There is something about making a mess that causes us to hide in a corner. It started with the first sin in the Garden and it continues today. Too many Christians live a passionless, almost lifeless existence, motivated by duty and obligation, and feel burdened by the perfect mark that they feel they must reach. They strive and strive under the heavy weight of their own expectations.

In his Pursuit of God, A.W. Tozer put it like this: "For it is not mere words that nourish the soul, but God Himself, and unless and until the hearers find God in personal experience they are not the better for having heard the truth. The Bible is not an end in itself, but a means to bring men to an intimate and satisfying knowledge of God, that they may enter into Him, that they may delight in his presence, may taste

and know the inner sweetness of the very God Himself in the core and center of their hearts."

THE BEGINNING OF SHAME

The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame. Genesis 2:25

In the beginning shame was not an issue. Adam and Eve were without sin, they had pleased the Lord from the day they were created. God had created them perfect, but until they rebelled against the will of God they didn't know what it was like to feel shameful for anything. As soon as sin entered into the world through Adam, shame entered into the world. With the entrance of shame came the issue of hiding ourselves and things from God.

7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.
8 Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD....
Genesis 3:7-8

How it happens: We blow it, our eyes are opened, and we realize we've blown it. The second thing that happens: We try and cover ourselves. When we try to cover ourselves we run into problems, because no matter how good we are at hiding our mistake from God...He knows! The crazy thing about hiding failure

from God is that we think the better I appear to be on the outside might cover the guilt I feel on the inside. You see the thing about a changed nature is that it is a work of God that begins on the inside. So, God isn't concerned with how we look on the outside if the outside is not a result of a changed inside. We make the same mistake that Adam and Eve made today. We hear the sound of God moving in the earth, so we run cover ourselves and think that our effort to hide our failure is somehow admirable. God sent his son so we wouldn't have to cover ourselves anymore. I want say no to my ability to conceal failure and yes to God's ability to free me by confessing my failure and finding mercy.

WHAT ARE YOU ASHAMED OF?

What is it that eats at your conscience? What are you hiding from God and others? Shame doesn't just involve mistakes you have made, but it can be mistakes that others have made toward you. Many people struggle with walking in their new nature because they were wounded in the past and have never brought it out in the open so they can find mercy. When we try and hide ourselves from the Lord mercy isn't found. The enemy's desire is to not just cause you to sin, he wants you to hide your sin so that you live in shame and never prosper. God wants you to confess your sin so that He can pour out His mercy in your life. Oh how we need the mercy of God. I've done some terrible things and

people have done terrible things to me. If it weren't for the mercy of God I would be living a secret life of guilt and anger. When I was younger, my family went through a very difficult time. A man in ministry was trying to hurt my family. I grew extremely angry with him and I secretly wanted to harm this man. One evening I finally got what I wanted, the man injured himself and I found myself happy about it. What an awful place to find yourself! Angry, bitter, and all because I kept my anger to myself. If I would have just turned the situation over to God, I would have found the mercy necessary to deal with anger I felt. One evening I finally sat down with my dad and told him how I was feeling and I can't describe the weight that was lifted off my shoulders. I didn't just feel better about myself; I felt the mercy of God poured out in my life like I had never known.

THE CYCLE OF SHAME

- **YOU EXPERIENCE SOMETHING DEEPLY PAINFUL.** All of us will experience great disappointment with ourselves and with others.
- **YOU CONNECT WHAT HAPPENED WITH WHO YOU ARE.** When disappointment comes we begin to label ourselves by what we did.
- **YOU BECOME A PRISONER TORMENTED BY YOUR PAST.** The enemy holds you captive by the shame you feel for the mistakes made.

JUDAS: Matthew 27:3-5

PETER: Matthew 26:75

Two different mistakes, two extremely different results. One man (Judas) decided that the shame for what he had done would be reason to take his own life. The other (Peter) chose to find mercy. The price might be as steep for you. Don't allow yourself to live a life full of shame. It might cost your life. Choose to confess your sin to God. Chose to bring the hidden things out in the open and find the mercy of God waiting for you. Too many people have let their past keep them in depression and many have hated themselves for it. Your enemy is a defeated foe, even if you feel like the defeated one, he is the loser and you are the victor. The past is over...MOVE FORWARD. Don't look back, look ahead.

Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the Angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to oppose him. 2 And the LORD said to Satan, "The LORD rebuke you, Satan! The LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is this not a brand plucked from the fire?" 3 Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and was standing before the Angel. 4 Then He answered and spoke to those who stood before Him, saying, "Take away the filthy garments from him." And to him He said, "See, I have removed your iniquity from you, and I will clothe you with rich robes." 5 And I said, "Let them put a clean turban on his head." So they put a clean turban

on his head, and they put the clothes on him. And the Angel of the LORD stood by.

What a beautiful picture of what Jesus has done for us! The first thing I notice about this scripture is verses 1-3 Satan is accusing Joshua, but the Lord rebuked Satan, not because Joshua was innocent, but because the Lord was standing in the gap. Verse 3 says Joshua was wearing filthy garments...you and I have failed, but God wants to stand in the gap, give us new garments, remove our sin and clothe us with an abundant life. If you could hear my voice and weren't just reading my thoughts on paper, you would hear the excitement I am feeling right now. You would be able to look in my eyes and see that I am overwhelmed by what God has done for us! As you read this, know that the enemy is bringing you fault before the Lord and Jesus is refuting every accusation made by Satan. You are free to walk in your new nature without shame.

For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. 2 Corinthians 10:3-4

Shame is a stronghold *ochuroma* (okh-oo'-ro-mah); to fortify, a prisoner locked by deception. The enemy uses what we've done to lock us up in a deceptive prison. He wants us to believe we are trapped. He

wants us to believe if we lied we are a liar, if we stole we are a thief. What we forget is that God came to free us from the prison of shame. He wants us to know that we have power to demolish the stronghold of shame. Strongholds are established in the mind; that is why we are told to take every thought captive. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. 2 Corinthians 10:5

Behind the stronghold of shame is a lie, a lie that is contrary to the Word of God. When you believe that hiding your sin can help you get victory or save face you are deceiving yourself, because that idea is contrary to the Word of God.

Some weapons to war with:

God's Word – Hebrew 4:12, 13

“For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.”

The Blood of Jesus – Revelation 12:10-11

“Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, “Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the

accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. 11 And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.”

The Name of Jesus – Mark 16:17

“And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues;”

Matthew 13:44-46 “The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.”

We do not live for God because it is an obligation or out of fear. We live for God because nothing else can compare to the joy of knowing Him. In this passage, Jesus gives us an illustration of what the Kingdom of God is like. First, there was the discovery of the treasure and an awareness of its worth. Secondly note his heart motivation: “...in his JOY, he went out and sold all he had...” The treasure and the knowledge that he could possess brought him joy. It was not a sacrifice. It was not a burden. It was a joy. Even though it

cost him everything he had—the sacrifice of the merchant was nothing compared to possessing the treasure.

Giving up everything allows us to be dead to sin and alive to Christ. He himself is our treasure and His kingdom's rule in our lives is the fulfillment for which we were created—the hope, the peace, the life, and the love that only He can give. The Freedom that comes from a walk with God that is full of repentance and a passion to love God.

HOW TO BREAK FREE

YOU CAN'T CHANGE THE PAST. All of us would if we could, but we can't. We have all said "If I could just change that, man I would give anything." The good news is that you can't. You say why is that good news? It is good news because if you can't change the past you can let the past go! This story in 2 Samuel is a good illustration.

"While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept. I thought, 'Who knows? The LORD may be gracious to me and let the child live.' But now that he is dead, why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? 2 Samuel 12:22-23

David's men were shocked when he washed himself and pulled it together. They expected his mourning to go to another level. That is what the enemy wants from us. He wants us to mourn longer than we should; he wants us to hide forever. Surprise him!

Pull yourself together forget the past and focus on the new life that he has given you through the power of your changed nature!

CHRIST CAN CHANGE YOUR FUTURE. You might not be able to go back and change the past, but you can start your new life now! What hope we have in Jesus. No matter our past and no matter our current situation, He is a God of hope!

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. Romans 8:28

"Yet if you devote your heart to (God) and stretch out your hands to him, if you put away the sin that is in your hand and allow no evil to dwell in your tent, then you will lift up your face without shame; you will stand firm and without fear. You will surely forget your trouble, recalling it only as waters gone by... Job 11:13-16

Don't continue living in deception. God loves you. He died to not only save you from your sins, but He died to free you from the shame associated with it! Rely on the blood of Jesus to make you pure. Rely on the blood of Jesus to make you ready for his presence. When you make mistakes don't run and hide from God run to God. He is waiting with mercy!

Our new nature longs to please God. It longs to know Him and His presence in even greater degrees. Our new nature is no longer sinful. It is

dead to sin, and therefore, it is unacceptable to continue sinning. However, the good news does not stop there. Not only has the power of sin been broken in our lives, but we have also been made alive to God.

Romans 6:11: "In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus."

Our new nature is not the end, but it is the means by which we know God. We are made alive to God in Christ so that we can know Him, fellowship with Him, and experience His presence. We can enter the presence of God because of our righteous standing in Christ. Eternal life does not begin when we die, but it starts now as we daily press in to knowing God.

John 17:3: "Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent."

It is God that we were created for, and only in Him that we will find fulfillment. None of us deserve it, but He freely offers it to us. No one is disqualified. Therefore, let us press on to know Him, run with all our might, lay down our lives, and give up everything to find Him. Let us put away compromise and walk victoriously over sin through our new nature and the power of His Spirit.