

May 20, 2017 Florida Hospital Seventh-day Adventist Church
Psalm 51:5,6,16 & 17 Psalm 32:1-4A Sure Way to Stay Lonely by
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Each Friday I get an email from Tami Cinquemani with usually a paragraph or two about the focus of our worship for that week and the final format of how this worship service will flow.

This week I found the text and the note she sent sentinel to our message for today.

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 God among the trees of the garden. Genesis 3:8

Then she commented:

“This is one of the saddest verses in the Bible. I just think of the amazing relationship God intended to have with his children. Openness, joy, peace, fulfillment—walks in the perfect garden, sharing everything. Then this horrible choice that brought guilt, separation, and loneliness.”

There is a foolproof way to stay lonely. Hold on to your sin. Even if you come to the place where you confess and off load most of it, take a little back. Hold on to it as if you deserve it, or wish it, or want to pay for it in some way. And you can be guaranteed to be lonely.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote in his great book, “Life Together” these telling words. “He who is alone with his sin is utterly alone.” Writing today he would undoubtedly been more inclusive “Whoever is alone with their sin is utterly alone.”

In that story from Genesis 3 Adam and Eve are not alone they are together, they are in one another’s presence but their individual sins have isolated them. It is the nature of sin to demand to have a person all alone.

Although Adam and Eve were together hiding from God we recognize their “every person for themselves” their all aloneness as God confronts their sin.

“Adam did you eat the fruit”—yes, but it wasn’t really my fault the woman you gave me brought it to me and I ate it.

“Eve, how could you do such a thing?” God, it wasn’t really my fault, the serpent tricked me, that’s why I ate it.”

One of the most famous sins of scripture remind us of the reality that whoever is alone with their sin is utterly alone. That the very nature of sin is that it wants to remain unknown. That again, in the words of Bonhoeffer, “In the darkness of the unexpressed it poisons the whole being of a person.”

So if we are the slightest bit masochistic and wish to be lonely holding on to our sin is a sure way to stay lonely, because sin demands to have a person alone.

The famous sin about which I’m thinking is David’s sinning in the story of he and Bathsheba.

There’s something about the way we are wired that we are most susceptible to sin when things are most successful. It seems that in the relief after a hard season, after putting in our time, after serious discipline that has resulted in great accomplishment, that in that moment of no hardship when all is well and good, that in that moment of ease we are most vulnerable to temptation. We are prone in those hours of success to imagine that we accomplished it. Now with the struggle past we forget God’s part and imagine it was our strength, our intellect, our wisdom, our hard work that won the day and in that brief loosing sight of our entire dependence on God sin is immediately crouching at our door.

Anything that leads us toward self-exaltation, or to self-dependence is preparing us for a fall.

In moments of ease from the struggle of life we forget that we are up against forces stronger than us. Paul reminds us, “We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against wicked spirits in high places.” Ephesians 6:12

This was the case for David as he left Joab to finish the war with the Ammonites. The Syrians had already submitted to Israel, and the complete overthrow of the Ammonites seemed certain, so David returns to Jerusalem. He was surrounded by the fruits of victory. He was praised and given honors by his court. Recognized for his brave, wise, and able rule.

And it was in this time of ease and self-security that in an unguarded moment he committed adultery with Bathsheba. It might have gone unnoticed. She comes for a night to the palace and returns to her quarters. But there’s the later. The aftermath. The reality of their choices that can’t be undone. Later she discovered she was pregnant and she set a message to inform David.

He springs into kingly action and recalls her husband from the battle front and hope for a lonely soldier’s visit home to result in his eventual assumption that the child was his own. But that plan is thwarted by the nobleness of Uriah. And so Uriah takes a note, his sealed death sentence from David back to Joab at the battle front. Uriah is put on the front line of attack, they push toward the enemy’s fortress and the frontline soldiers, including Uriah are killed.

David gets word of the success of his plan. Bathsheba mourns and then David takes the widow as his wife, how noble.

David and Bathsheba are getting away with their sin.
David is getting away with murder.

But sin isn't satisfied. The guilt rots from the inside out. Have you ever gotten what looks like a beautiful mango. It seems just right, almost perfectly ripe, ready to peel and eat. You get the knife and your taste buds are already anticipating the juicy sweet flavor of mango. As you peel the mango it looks good but then you notice a small dark spot so you cut down to the seed and the deeper you go instead of being able to cut out the bad spot you discover that the fruit is rotten at its core.

This is the reality of sin. It demands to have you alone. And whoever is alone with their sin is utterly alone.

Reflecting back on the year to a year and half of time when his sin was unknown, David writes in Psalm 32:

“When I refused to confess my sin, I was weak and miserable, and I groaned all day long. Day and night your hand of discipline was heavy on me. My strength evaporated like water in the summer heat.”

David had hidden out in lonely places to escape Saul's pursuit of him. David had cared for sheep as a boy on the lonely hills surrounding his home.

David had felt the joy of love and then lost a wife and faced loneliness. David had basked in his friendship with Jonathan who was closer than a brother but who had been killed in battle.

But I don't believe there was a more lonely season in David's life than the period between that fateful night of lust and when he confessed.

Nathan shows up at David's palace. I wonder if he just stood at the door and told the story or if Nathan was invited in and sat down to tell the Lord's story to David: “There were two men in a certain town. One was rich, and one was poor. The rich man owned many sheep and cattle. The poor man owned nothing but a little lamb he had worked hard to buy. He raised that little lamb, and it grew up with his children. It ate from the man's own plate and drank from his cup. He cuddled it in his arms like a baby daughter. One day a guest arrived at

the home of the rich man. But instead of killing a lamb from his own flocks for food, he took the poor man's lamb and killed it and served it to his guest."

When David heard this story he was furious. "As surely as the Lord lives, he vowed, "any man who would do such a thing deserves to die! He must repay four lambs to the poor man for the one he stole and for having no pity."

Then Nathan looked David straight in the eye and said, "You are that man! The Lord, the God of Israel says, "I anointed you king of Israel and saved you from the power of Saul. I gave you his house and his wives and the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. And if that had not been enough, I would have given you much, much more. Why, then, have you despised the word of the Lord and done this horrible deed? For you have murdered Uriah and stolen his wife. . . 2 Samuel 12

The night before the crucifixion Peter had been so sure. His self-reliance, his self-confidence, his self-assurance were high and boldly he made big statements about his fidelity to Jesus. "Even if all the others desert you I never will. I'm even ready to die with you!"

Paul wrote words Peter would easily have seconded. "If you think you are standing strong, be careful, for you, too, may fall into the same sin." 2 Corinthians 10:12 NLT

There must have been no greater time of loneliness for Peter than the hours after the third denial of Jesus and their eyes meeting across the courtyard.

It's really not that hard to stay lonely. Hold on to your sin. Cover it up. Seek to follow its natural bent to remain unknown. Bury it in busyness. Hide it amid good works. Try and compensate for it without admitting any wrong.

Or if you are tired of it. If being lonely has lost its lure. There is a way out.

The fellowship the connection we crave comes when we arrive at the reality of who we are.

When Nathan told David that story about the lambs and David got furious and Nathan said “You are the man!” David faced a choice. It is the same choice we each face. When the Holy Spirit convicts us of sin in our lives we face David’s choice. Own it or deny it!

We pick back up in Psalm 32 with verse 5

“Finally, I confessed all my sins to you and stopped trying to hide them. I said to myself, “I will confess my rebellion to the Lord.” And you forgave me! All my guilt is gone.

And then David says something that may catch you off guard:

Vs. 6 “Therefore, let all the godly confess their rebellion to you while there is time.”

Listen. We may come here each week and share in corporate worship. We might read responsive prayers or even pray with one another spontaneously. We might greet and meet and fellowship and still find ourselves lonely, until we come to recognize that our solidarity of fellowship is as sinners.

The pious fellowship permits no one to be a sinner, but the reality, the harsh reality is that we are sinners. Maybe the hardest text for us to accept as true in all of scripture is Romans 3:10 “No one is good—not even one.”

The Gospel is hard grasp for those who think they are okay!

The Gospel, the good news, tells us, “You are a sinner, a great, desperate sinner; now come as the sinner that you are to God who loves you. He wants you as you are; He does not want any thing from you, a

sacrifice , a work; he wants you alone. He says, My son my daughter give me your heart.

The great qualifier for our salvation, for receiving grace is our great need.

We can hide nothing from God. There is no need to go on lying to ourselves or to one another as if we were without sin; we can dare to be a sinner. God loves sinners and God hates sin!

Now we are called to be there for one another and to come into great fellowship as sinners. Maybe that's why God inspired James to write Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other. Some of you don't like that and you want to retain the word faults, confess your faults, but the problem is the word in Greek is the same word for sin used all through the New Testament.

James calls for this Christian accountability because the nature of sin is that it wants to remain unknown. What we hide we become. But the gospel of Jesus Christ breaks into the darkness an dseclusion of the heart and when sin is brought into the light it's power is broken and we are freed. When we find a fellow believer who is in touch with their own human depravity and we confess in their presence our sin we lay down the last hold out to self-justification and while that fellow believer doesn't forgive us they do extend God's forgiveness, they remind us of his forgiveness and in our acknowledging our sin and hearing of God's total acceptance in Jesus we are healed.

The way to stay lonely is to hold on to our sin and try and keep it hidden and don't speak the truth about it.

And that loneliness will kill us.

It will drive us to some other attractive idol than God himself.

For some it will be the idol of money – the love of money the desire for wealth

Other will follow the idol of reputation and sweekig worldly honor.
Some may make an idol of a life of selfish ease and freedom from
responsibility
Unfortunately some may worship the idol of their own efforts to obey
God.
Even following God's rules can be made an idol over God.

To follow any idol is to walk in darkness. Instead confession is the
way to bring it all back into the light.

I want to close with a great passage of scripture. It reminds us that all
we have to give up for God is a sin polluted heart.

This is the message he has given us to announce to you; God is light
and there is no darkness in him at all. So we are lying if we say we
have fellowship with God but go on living in spiritual darkness. We
are not living in the truth. But if we are living in the light of God's
presence, just as Christ is, then we have fellowship with each other, and
the blood of Jesus, his Son, cleanses us from every sin. If we say we
have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves and refusing to accept the
truth. But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to
forgive us and to cleanse us from every wrong. If we claim we have
not sinned, we are calling God a liar and showing that this word has no
place in our hearts." 1 John 1:5-10

Confess your sins to each other and pray for one another.
Confess your sins to God and he is faithful and just to forgive. And he
says I will remember your sin no more. Confessed sin is gone. He casts
it into the deepest part of the ocean he removes it from us as far as the
east is from the west. Don't stay lonely confess.

Andy: Merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed

Congregation: By what we have done, and by what we have left undone.

Andy: We have not loved you with our whole heart and soul and mind and strength.

Congregation: We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.

Andy: We are sinners. In your mercy forgive us.

Congregation: By your grace transform us more and more to be like Jesus.

Andy: Teach us to humbly recognize our place in the fellowship of sinners, and to welcome opportunity to hear and speak confession to one another.

Congregation: To the glory of your holy name. Amen.



When was a time you got in trouble and tried to hide?

What is so sad about Adam and Eve hiding?

Why do you think there's a tendency to blame others for our failures?

When have you noticed that "good times" may make temptation harder to resist than "bad times"?

What is it about unconfessed sin that makes it so miserable ?

When David confesses his sin Nathan assures him of immediate forgiveness what makes that hard to believe?

What do you think about James telling us to confess our sins to each other and pray for each other?

Why do you think we resist confession?

How does it feel to belong to a church where there is clarity that we are all sinners and no one is good?

How will you exercise 1 John 1:5-10 in your life this week?



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