

Sin Cover

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[0:00] Psalm 32. We are going to read the first five verses.

! Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. ! Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord does not count against him, and in whose spirit is no deceit.

When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me. My strength was sapped as in the heat of summer.

Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, I will confess my transgressions to the Lord. And you forgave the guilt of my sin.

Amen. We're going to come back to this passage in Psalm 32, so you might want to keep your Bible open there.

[1:12] We're talking this morning about cover-ups. On June the 17th, 1972, five men were arrested at 2.30 in the morning for breaking into and attempting to bug the offices of the Democratic National Committee in the Watergate Complex in Washington, D.C.

And immediately, President Richard Nixon and those on his staff began an elaborate cover-up scheme denying his involvement.

But evidence condemning him continued to mount so that 39 years ago this month, May of 1973, the Senate Watergate Committee began their nationally televised hearings on the matter.

Throughout, President Nixon maintained his innocence. I'm not a crook, he said. But evidence continued to say otherwise, and his cover-up was unraveling.

Congress was moving to impeach him. And so on August the 9th, 1974, after two years of covering, President Richard Nixon became the first ever United States President to resign from the office.

[2:35] God says in Proverbs 28, 13, He who covers his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them finds mercy.

In 1998, President Clinton was accused of improper relations with a White House intern. And he, too, immediately went into cover-up mode, deny, deny, deny, deny, on national televised interviews, in carefully worded denials before investigators.

But eventually, the truth came out. And though he barely escaped full impeachment, he did not escape the blot upon his character.

He who covers his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them finds mercy. Now, we would be mistaken to think that covering up sins is something that just guilty presidents do.

Rather, this is something that we all have done, and, yes, do do. In fact, it's almost instinctive to us as sinners.

[4:02] It's almost a reflex response to the discovery of our sins to cover them. But in grace, it's not the only option available to us, for our text says, whoever confesses and forsakes them finds mercy.

Mercy. And this option does not end in failure, but in the only true covering of our sins forever. So my question this morning for every one of us is, what are you doing with your sins?

Attempting futile cover-ups? Or getting them covered forever in the blood of Jesus Christ? That's the question we're considering today.

And as you can see, right from the start, we're talking about sin. That's a Bible word. What does it mean? There's a teaching aid that we use with our children that says sin is any lack of conformity to or transgression of the law of God.

That's a mouthful. Let me put it more simply. When God says, do this, and you don't, that's sin. Or when God says, don't do that, and you do, that is sin.

[5:26] It is sin against God, your kind maker, and your judge. And if we're honest with ourselves, then we must agree with God that we've all done that.

Indeed, we've all done that this week. For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Now, there's a moment of truth the moment we become aware of sin.

A critical moment when we become conscious that something we did was not right with God.

Maybe it was our own conscience, that inside preacher that God has in every one of us that said to us, John, that was wrong. Maybe it was the word of God because by the law is the knowledge of sin and as we read it or hear it read or hear it preached, maybe we become aware of our sin.

Maybe somebody else comes into your life and points out your sin and says, what you've done was just wrong before God. Maybe it was all three of those ways that you became aware of your sin.

[6:46] But at that point when we become aware of sin, there's this crucial moment of decision. A decision. Will we attempt some cover up or really get it covered with the blood of Christ?

And our text speaks of both actions and their corresponding results. When I speak of our text, I'm speaking of Proverbs 28, 13. Whoever covers his sin will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will find mercy.

Now let's just break that down into two parts this morning. First of all, our own covering up of our sins. The first half of Proverbs 28, 13. He who covers his sins will not prosper.

Let's talk about covering up our sins. To read the Bible is to become aware of the fact that God is very familiar with our tendency to cover up sin.

In fact, the very third chapter of the Bible finds our first parents, Adam and Eve, doing this very thing. You remember how God created Adam, the first man, and put him in a perfect environment in the lovely Garden of Eden and gave him a wonderful bride, Eve.

[8:08] And he told Adam he was free to eat from every tree in the garden except one. Just don't eat from this one tree of the knowledge of good and evil because if you eat from this tree, you will die.

But you may eat from all the other trees in the garden. And when the devil who took the form of a serpent tempted Eve, she ate it.

She ate the forbidden fruit and gave some to her husband and he too ate of it. And at that moment, they became sinners before God.

They broke his law. They did what he said not to do. And so they were both deserving of the threatened punishment. For the first time in their lives, they were guilty.

guilty. And they felt guilty. Unclean, exposed, and naked. That was a moment of decision at that point.

[9:11] What do you do when you feel guilty for your sin? The Bible says they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings. Isn't that interesting?

Coverings for themselves. And as they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden, they were afraid and so they hid from him among the trees of the garden.

They camouflaged themselves with fig leaves and then probably hid around a fig tree. Wouldn't you suspect? Hiding.

This was the garden gate cover up. Covering, hiding, concealing their sins. Trying to make themselves look better than what they knew they were.

But their attempt failed as God found them hiding there and he called them to give an account of what they had done. Have you eaten from the tree I told you not to eat from?

[10:15] And the man said, well the woman you put here with me, she gave me some fruit from the tree and I ate it. that's blame shifting and it's just more attempts at covering up sin.

Oh, you think I'm guilty? No, the woman it's her fault. She gave it to me and we are so prone to covering our sins that we would even blame God before we would confess our sins.

the woman you gave me, the woman you put in the garden as if to say, God, if you hadn't given me this woman, I never would have done this.

And so God turns to the woman, what is this you have done? And she said, well the serpent, he deceived me and I ate. The devil made me do it.

She too is blame shifting. That is covering her sin. I'm not really that guilty. It's his fault. And in their crucial moment of decision, they both covered their sins.

[11:24] God was not fooled by their coverings and so his curses fell and death resulted because he who covers his sins does not prosper.

That was the first cover up in human history and sinners ever since have been covering up trying to cover their sins.

Have you noticed that no one needs to be taught how to do this? It's part of that nature that we have inherited from our guilty father, our sinful father, Adam.

So that 20 month old is caught doing something he knows he shouldn't do and you walk into the room and you've caught him red handed. What's he thinking that if I can't see you, you can't see me.

In other words, you didn't see me sin. You didn't see what I did that was wrong. I've just gotten rid of my sin. I've covered it. I said 20 month old.

[12 : 34] How did he learn to do that? There were no night classes offered to him on covering sin. He just did it instinctively because we're sinners and sinners by nature cover their sin.

And I would say that our attempts at covering sin look just that foolish to the all seeing God. whatever however adept we are at covering it's like that little boy putting his hands over his face. We try to cover our sins from ourselves from others and even from God. You say how do we try to cover sin from ourselves? Well our conscience comes accusing us when we've done something wrong it says you're guilty John you know it and I just push it away and ignore it and I get real busy with other things or I just turn the music on and keep my life full of noise and activities so that I don't have to think about my sin and try to convince myself that I'm really happy after all I'm covering my sin even from myself and then we cover it further by rationalizing it don't we we justify our wrong action we call evil good it's really not that bad it's kind of good I only did it once there's people that are worse than me and in all of that it's just another form of covering our sin

I was a victim I couldn't help it we make excuses for ourselves trying to make ourselves look better than what we really are we just spoke of blame!

shifting which we say it's not my fault and we cover our sins in that way there's a lot of examples in the Bible of people who shifted the blame and put it on someone else penance is a form of covering we try to cover our bad deeds by doing some good deeds thinking that those good deeds will cover up my bad deeds that's just another exquisite form of covering our own sins thinking that our own deeds of imagined righteousness can hide our ugly sins they're filthy rags and they're just splendid sins as Augustine called them and then there's perhaps what I think is one of the most common ways of covering it's the flat out lie just the flat out denial wasn't me I didn't do it trying to hide our guilt any of you parents will know just how quickly our children resort to lies and again we didn't teach them that it came quite natural to them indeed the

[15 : 52] Bible says that we go astray from birth from the very womb we are wayward speaking lies speaking lies where were you last night dear oh I went to so and so's house and did so and so did you a moment of truth a moment of decision am I going to tell the truth and confess what I did or am I going to cover and because there's the fear of punishment they lie and they flat out deny the truth and then when that lie is found out another lie needs to be told to cover the first lie and we add sin to sin in this way and the older we get we just grow more subtle and more adept at telling more convincing lies and then we can cover by hiding or burying the evidence so those white house tapes just happen to have some blank spots on them we pay hush money we cook the books we bury bodies anything to keep our sins out of sight after

Cain murdered Abel his brother it seems he went to the trouble of digging a hole and burying him trying to cover his tracks but men can never bury the evidence deep enough can they God comes calling on him Cain where's your brother that's worthy of an honest answer isn't it moment of truth Cain what will you do about your sin and he chooses to cover saying I don't know ever said that I don't know that's covering sin when we do know that Cain could have gone right to the spot and showed where his brother was and Cain actually turns it back on God's face as if to say am I my brother's keeper what do you think I am my brother's babysitter he's covering he's got something to hide doesn't he the more men protest sometimes the more it shows they're hiding something and God says listen listen do you hear that I hear the blood of your brother crying from the ground you see we can't hide our sins from God so we've been talking about the natural instinct of the sinner to cover his sin we come to the result of that what what happens to to someone who handles sin in this way well he who covers his sin does not prosper man is so skilled in covering up oh but God is even better at revealing our sins and so the story is told of the little boy who stole!

his neighbor's prized watermelon and he ate it one night in secret all by himself out behind the shed under the cover of darkness and even buried the evidence when asked about it the next morning about the missing melon he lied wasn't me don't know anything about it but after a couple of weeks unseen by the boy those watermelon seeds had sprouted and now we're coming up behind the

shed in a multitude of watermelon plants what was covered became known and he was found out he who covers his sin does not prosper that's the word of God he does not prosper covered sins have a way of surfacing somebody talks evidence is found a guilty conscience is too heavy to stuff any longer and folks

God is in control of all those events and he has an uncanny way of just bringing truth to light doesn't he sometimes there was just one track left uncovered and that's the track that's found and we're found out be sure your sins will find you out and they're often found out in this life but not all sins are uncovered in this life there are multitudes of murders and adulteries multitudes of lies and thefts and greed and pride and hatreds and slanders that go covered up painted over hushed up successfully hidden all the way to the grave no one ever found out but even if people make it all the way through this life covering their sins they still will not prosper the

[21:29] Bible says they won't because it's appointed unto men once to die and after that there is this thing called the judgment in which the judge of all the earth God the all knowing God will do what's right he'll uncover every wrong and he will expose every covered sin now we may have succeeded in covering our sins from ourselves from others but never from God the Bible says nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must!

give an account nothing is hidden in God's sight you say but I did it in the dark God has night vision I did it in secret he's everywhere present nothing is hidden from God's sight everything is uncovered before him what you did in secret what you did in private what you did in darkness it's all uncovered to him and in that day when the judge the son of God returns!

the Bible says that he will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and he will expose the motives of men's hearts so that deed that was done in darkness where no human eye saw!

He is going to bring it into the light where every human eye can see it and the very motives of our hearts the reason we do what we did things that no human eye has ever seen he is going to expose them he is going to put them up on the big screen this is judgment whoever hides his sin will not prosper in fact the Bible says what has been done in secret will be shouted from the tops of the roofs the best kept secrets uncovered and proclaimed from the house tops ever watch those shows about unsolved crimes every one of them is going to be solved unsolved mysteries every last one of them there'll be a last chapter written and the perpetrator will be known be sure your sins will find you out if not now then but oh hear me then will be too late to find mercy with the

Lord if you're found out then if your sins have been covered in this life only to be uncovered in that day what you will hear from the judge is depart from me you evil doer I never knew you and the wicked will go away into everlasting torments oh my friend it's a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God it is fearful when you have covered your own sins to come into his presence and to be judged but our text here in Proverbs 28:13 goes on to speak of somebody else that's just as guilty just as sinful his deeds are just as bad and yet he handles his sins in another manner and it leads to an altogether different result he who covers his sins does not prosper but whoever confesses and forsakes them will find mercy mercy now to read the

[25:37] Bible is to discover that God has a way to cover our sins I think it's pictured in the Garden of Eden that early in the Bible when they sinned they covered themselves with fig leaves didn't they God comes along and exposes their sin and then the Bible says that God himself made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them they covered themselves and it was unavailing God saw stripped naked again God himself clothes them and what does he clothe them with not fig leaves but animal skins kids what happens to the animal if you're going to make clothing out of its skin well it must die and I believe we have an early picture at least of God's way of covering sin even in the garden of Eden God is saying that it will be through the blood and the death of an innocent one that covering will come to guilty sinners indeed the

Bible speaks of this in Psalm 85 and verse 2 speaking to the Lord you forgave the iniquity of your people and covered all their sins there's the language you covered all the sins of your people Psalm 85:2 God himself covering sins and it's parallel to forgiving them he forgives sin in a way that covers sin so what we learn then is that both God and man cover sin God successfully man unsuccessfully so we're into the second part of the verse and we're considering secondly then getting our sins covered by God himself how does that work well by confessing and forsaking them whoever confesses and forsakes them finds mercy now confession is just the opposite of covering we consciously bring our sins out of the darkness we don't hide in darkness we come out of the

darkness into the light of the presence of

God where we're conscious that we're coming before God and we're we're bringing our sin into the light of his presence now he saw us in the dark but we now realize as we bring our sins!

the light and we agree! with God about our sin that's the most basic idea of this word confess that we agree with God about our sin Lord I've broken your law in this way Lord that thought was proud that look of mine was lustful that word of mine was unkind you see we tell him what we've done we own what we've done we hide nothing we excuse nothing we deny nothing we come and say this is me and this is what I've done and we have nothing good to say for ourselves we confess we come clean before God what a beautiful word confession what a beautiful reality to be able to come into the light and say God this is what I am this is what

I am if there's any excuse making in our confession any rationalizing any downplaying of our guilt because of this blame shifting we see that's just more of the old way of covering isn't it it's just more of the old way that's doomed to fail it's more of that old way that must be entirely forsaken if we are to find mercy no longer covering!

[29 : 45] this is what I am so strange as it may sound our sins are only truly covered as we uncover them before the Lord Jesus because in confessing our sins we are bringing them to the only one who can truly cover them so as long as we hide our sins we are cutting ourselves off from the only remedy!

for our sins found in the Lord Jesus God's Son for He alone can cleanse from every sin so in confession we bring our sins to Jesus to have him cover them with his blood and this way of covering was symbolized in the Old Testament sacrifices of animals the whole religious system that God required of sinners was pointing us to this way of covering sin in Jesus Christ and so in the Old Testament the sinner would lay their hands upon the head of the substitute sacrifice symbolically transferring their sins onto that substitutionary victim and then that animal bearing the sins of God's people was put to death his throat was slit and the blood was shed as it received the penalty of death that was due to the sinner sometimes the blood was sprinkled upon the people sometimes it was splattered over the door of their house to cover them from the avenging wrath of

God but these animal sacrifices could never ever take away sin they simply pointed us to the one who could and the one who would Jesus Christ the eternal son of God who became man and became sin that he might put away sin forever he's God's provided lamb for the sacrifice on Calvary's cross and all of his people's sins were transferred over onto his head and then he the lamb of God bore them up to the place of judgment and there on the cross he received the punishment due to his people for their sins he shed his blood he gave his life he suffered the death under God's wrath that every one of his sinful people deserved and so his blood covers their sins so that they walk away forgiven and cleansed from sin because

Jesus bore the wrath of God against sin there's no more condemnation for those who are in Jesus Christ the reason their sins are forgiven is because they're covered by the blood of Jesus it's that covering that's the idea in the sacrifice the blood of the substitutionary victim covers them and so forgives them John says the blood of Jesus God's son cleanses from every sin if we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness when sinners confess God blots out the sin from his book for the sake of Jesus blood it's no longer seen it's no longer counted against us they're covered forever in the blood and righteousness of Jesus now if you've got your Bible open to Psalm 32 I told you we're coming back because here King David tells of the blessedness of having God cover our sins verse one blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven whose sins are covered you see the language whose sins are covered blessed is the man whose sin the Lord does not count against him here's the man who's truly blessed David says here's the really happy man I don't care what you call happiness this is real happiness to have your sins covered that's to be a man a man to be envied a woman to be envied in a truly blessed state if your sins against God are covered notice not covered by himself but covered!

[34 : 42] David speaks here as one who's experienced this covering and the happiness himself his heart is rejoicing and overflowing as he says speaks of the blessedness of the man whose sins are covered but it wasn't always that way was it with David and oh he goes on to tell us that he goes on to tell us about his futile attempts to first cover up his sins and he's talking no doubt about his sin with Bathsheba the sin of adultery and the sin of murder of Uriah her husband and at first verse three he says I kept silent I didn't confess I wasn't going to uncover my sin I wasn't going to

confess!

I kept silent about it I held it in trying unsuccessfully to cover them up oh David devised elaborate schemes didn't he to cover up his sins but they were all frustrated by a God in heaven and during that time of not confessing David tells us I was miserable his conscience accusing the spirit of God convicting it affected his very physical health his bones he says were wasting away he was groaning all day long day and night God's heavy hand of conviction was upon him such that his strength was sapped as in the heat of summer nothing more miserable than a convicted sinner David says that's exactly what I was because I was silent about my sin but then the turning point came another decisive moment in

David's life notice what it was what changed everything in the story verse 5 then I acknowledged my sin to you I owned up to it and I did not cover up my iniquity I said I will confess my transgression to the Lord and you forgave the guilt of my sin you covered it oh how blessed how happy it is to have my sins covered up by God David's testimony is that when he quit covering up his sins God really covered them up and oh the blessedness of having God cover your sins forever there's freedom there's joy no more fear of wonder if he knows wonder if she's found out here no more of this questioning and living with with in the dark and covering wonderful thing to walk in the light as he is in the light and to know whatever my sins have been there under the red thick blood of

Jesus that covers them forever you know that's the way we were meant to live not cowering in fear and guilt we were meant to live in face to face communion with God knowing that our sins were behind us sin is what came and ruined that open face communion with God but in Jesus Christ through faith in his blood we can know the blessed life again having our sins covered forever never to be brought up against us in judgment confession is the way to get our sins covered by God whoever confesses and notice and forsakes them finds mercy and forsakes them forsaking sin is the proof and the fruit of genuine confession that confession of sin is false if those sins confessed are not forsaken and wherever true grace is given to confess there will be grace accompanying it to forsake to renounce renounce those sins to declare war against them to desire to never return to them to make endeavors after true obedience and holiness before the

Lord and notice the promised result of dealing with our sins in this way whoever confesses and forsakes them finds mercy mercy you know what that says it says God owes no one forgiveness God doesn't have to forgive if he forgives you your sin you can know you've received mercy you can know that God has not treated you as your sins deserved he's been merciful to you he did not give you what you had coming you see our confessions do not earn his forgiveness that would not be mercy you're you're forsaking your sins does not deserve his mercy but nevertheless he promises mercy to bankrupt sinners who have nothing good to say but to confess their sins and say forgive me for Jesus sake mercy mercy he's plenteous in mercy he delights in mercy he takes pleasure in showing mercy he takes pleasure in covering sin forever and this promise mercy is what we need to bring us to quit covering our sins and to bring them out in the open in confession to him oh the instinct to cover is so strong but here's something stronger the promise of mercy that if you but confess and forsake them he will show mercy upon you why do sinners lie and cover up their sins they're afraid of punishment you see how Jesus undoes all that fear he takes the punishment so no need to hide no need to run come into the light receive the mercy freely given for Jesus sake come every soul by sin oppressed there's mercy with the Lord so what hinders you my dear friend from confessing to God your sin and need for Jesus to cover them every answer is found in Christ his promise of mercy is enough to give up your cover to abandon your futile attempts there's no more reason to hold out come and receive mercy freely from the hand of

[41:29] Jesus a day is coming when everything that is not covered by the blood of Jesus will be brought out into the open and uncovered and then men's coverings will be pulled off and pulled back as the judge judges and then men will call on the rocks and hills to cover them from the face of him who sits on the throne from the wrath of the lamb for the great day of their wrath has come and while others are having their sins uncovered and while they are being damned for them if you will come to Christ and confess today you will find in that day that your sins will be covered in that thick blood of Jesus and you will never be judged for your sins he's true to his promise whoever forsake whoever confesses and forsakes them will find mercy maybe you came in here today covering your sins maybe even here by the grace of

God he's begun to uncover them at least to yourself and you've seen yourself for what you are what will you do it's a moment of crisis for you it's a it's a moment of decision for you will you go on

covering or will you come to Jesus oh I urge you to bring your sins to Jesus to get them covered in his blood forever amen let's sing our response to God's word and I'll call on you even while we sing to do this you can do dealing have dealings with Christ right there in your seat we're going to sing number 465 and if you need to bring your sins to Jesus again for the thousandth time or for the first time even while we sing confess them to him and receive mercy that he's promised 465 though your sins be as scarlet though they be the worst of sins there's mercy with the Lord sinner friend if you need to talk further about the gospel and about the Lord Jesus and how it is that his blood blots out sins forever we would be most happy to talk with you any Christian here knows what it is knows a lot about confessing and finding mercy you could turn to any of them but your greatest need is to turn to the Lord Jesus himself let's turn to him now and pray what would this promise be worth in a dying day to know that our sins would be remembered no more what is it worth in the day of judgment to know that those sins under the blood of Jesus will never be brought up against us for punishment yet Lord we don't know when we will die and when we will meet you as judge oh that we would value the gospel promise today that we would find our hearts being drawn out to you whose promise to forgive and never remember our sins against us if we would confess and forsake them give such grace and cause us to go with the happiness the blessedness of those whose sins are forgiven whose sins are covered in the blood of Jesus we pray in his name amen