

## PROVERBS 28

## COVERING VS. CONFESSION

**Covering vs. confession (verse 13)**

*“He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.”*

God and man both cover sin. God does so in free and unbounded grace, but man does so in shame and hypocrisy. The two different kinds of sinners that are here contrasted both have the same guilt. But how opposite are the remedies that either one adopts, as well as their respective results! The contrast is not between “great” sins and “small” ones, but between sins that are covered and sins that are confessed and forsaken. Whoever covers the “smallest” sin shall not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes even the greatest shall find mercy!

Love covers our neighbor’s sins, but it is *pride* that covers our own. The proud sinner naturally wishes to be thought better than he is, and so his sin must have some cover. He must at least give it a good name. He even tries to cover it, if possible, from himself – by putting it out of mind, banishing all serious thoughts, stifling his convictions, and then trying to persuade himself that he is happy. And so to escape evil consequences, a lie is resorted to. Or if the facts are too plain to be denied, then an excuse is produced: “I was not in it as much as my neighbor was! Compared to *some* people, I’m a saint!” Ignorance, good intentions, custom, necessity, strong temptation, sudden surprisal, the first offence, physical weakness, and even the decrees of God themselves – one or more of these things are often pleaded as excuses for sin. Another way for the sinner to save his honor, rather than to sacrifice his pride, is to shift the blame upon someone else – perhaps even upon God Himself; but more commonly, upon the devil. Or some compensation or penance is used as a cover-up – paying for sin by some supposed “good deeds.” But all of these fig-leaf coverings for man’s shame only show his determination to hold on to his sin and pride, which would rather hide his sins from the Lord Himself, than submit to receive free mercy as a self-condemned sinner!

However, these attempts to cover sin shall not prosper. The voice of the offended God summoned Adam from his hiding-place to receive his sentence. The voice of Abel’s blood cried out from the ground, and his murderer became “a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth.” Conscience lashed Joseph’s brothers with the sin of by-gone days. Saul’s attempt to cover his sin cost him his kingdom. The leprosy of Naaman clung to Gehazi and his descendants forever.

Unsuccessful attempts to cover sin not only add to the guilt, but they are also attended with great misery. The love of sin struggles with the power of conscience. The door of access to God is closed and locked. Holy confidence and assurance are clouded; and unless Sovereign mercy interposes, the covering up of sin will surely end in the sting of “the never-dying worm.” The denial of the

disease prevents the possibility of the cure. Only a penitent confessor can be a pardoned sinner. Long, indeed, is the struggle before every false covering is thrown aside. But glorious is the Divine victory over pride and sullenness, when a personal confession of sin – the first act of repentance, and the first step of return – is heartily made! Our confession does not make us deserving of the Lord's mercy, but it is a preparation for the reception of it. Christ has already fully satisfied the claims of Divine justice, but the claims must be acknowledged



in preparation for the humble acceptance of the benefit. The mercy is ready; but the sinner must confess that he needs it before he can receive it. Our loving Father is waiting for this moment, so that He may be gracious to us. And then how sweet is the penitent's song: "Blessed is he whose sin is covered!"

This first act of the confessing penitent will mature into a daily habit of the forgiven saint. The further we advance, the deeper will be the tone of our confession. The moment that we recognize something in our lives as a sin, let us lay it immediately upon our Surety's head. Every moment of unconfessed sin adds to its burden and guilt. Never deem any sin so trifling as to *not* need the immediate application of the blood of atonement! Genuine conviction of sin will give us no rest, until – by the believing application of this remedy – the peace of God is firmly fixed in our consciences. As John Bunyan so accurately pictured in *Pilgrim's Progress*, it was not at the wicket-gate, but at the sight of the cross, that Christian found the grave for his sin to be buried in!

This sincere humiliation lays the only solid ground for practical Godliness in our lives. It is a sorrow that is actually full of joy, and no less full of holiness. Under the influence of this humility, no idol or lust will be spared; no right hand or right eye will be favored. It will not be like the unclean spirit that goes out, and then returns to his house with sevenfold influence; nor is it like the man who leaves his home, but does not really forsake it, since all his heart and joy are still there. Here, the forsaking will be without the thought of returning; in fact, it will be with the fixed determination to *never* return. It will not be the exchange of one section in the broad way of destruction for another that is more attractive, but it will be the relinquishment of that road altogether. It will be a giving up of the inner principles as well as the outer walk; "the unrighteous thoughts" as well as "the wicked ways" will be forsaken heartily and forever.

*Lord, we repent of our terrible tendency to attempt to cover up our sins, instead of seeking forgiveness by repentance and confession. We are indeed guilty by nature, but we thank You that Jesus has satisfied the claims of Your Divine justice! Amen.*