

Covering Sin
2 Samuel 11:1-27, part 3
By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 4-21-2013

Introduction

When my kids were very young, one of the first lessons that they learned was that hiding their sins and lying about their sins was definitely not worth it. When they were clearly caught lying, after praying with them, I would usually have a scenario that went something like this: “Son, you know that things always go much easier for you when you confess your sins without getting caught, don’t you? They go a little harder for you if you confess your sins only after you are caught. But they go extremely hard on you when you lie or in any way try to cover up your sins. What you did was pretty serious, but if you had confessed before I had caught you, I would have had mercy on you. But I really need to punish you rather severely, and it makes me sad. Please bend over. And the kids knew exactly what to expect if the sin was the first time in the day, second, third, or fourth time – because the discipline kept escalating with exact numbers. But even though they knew, I would still say, “Here is the one whack that you would have gotten if you had confessed when I caught you.” I proceed to give him one rather hard whack with a strap on the behind. My one whack always elicited a reaction, but I did not allow kids to scream. They knew that would elicit its own discipline. They had to learn self-control. I then went on to say, “I know that this discipline was not pleasant (understatement of the day). However, because you lied and you tried to cover over your sin, here is the extra punishment that you must now receive.” And I would proceed with a very measured whack, whack, whack, whack – (four times as much) that would not be forgotten for a week. It didn’t take very many of these scenarios for the kids to know that covering sin was definitely not worth it. And word got around to the other children as well that you don’t want to hide your sin.

And by being so much harder on my kids when they covered their sins, I believe that I was following God’s consistent example set forth in Scripture. Proverbs 28:13 says, “**He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes *them* will have mercy.**” God’s discipline is so much less when we quickly repent and confess our sins that it is appropriate to speak of that mild discipline as a mercy. But over and over you find that God punished those who covered their sins much more

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Phillip G. Kayser • Dominion Covenant Church • 307.N 41st Ave. Omaha, NE 68131 • 402.934.3300

severely. David suffered the fruits of covering his sin for years to come. And we will look at some of that in chapter 12.

But I want to begin by reading Psalm 32, a psalm in which David tries to convince people that it simply is not worth it to try to cover your sins by yourself. Psalm 32. In verse 1 David starts by pointing out that the only kind of covering that is any good is the covering of our sins that God does when we confess our sins and find forgiveness. He says,

Psalms 32:1 Blessed is *he* whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.

Psalms 32:2 Blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit *there* is no deceit.

And that was the problem in 2 Samuel chapter 11 – David tried to cover over his sins with deceit instead of letting God’s grace alone cover over those sins. He goes on:

Psalms 32:3 When I kept silent, my bones grew old through my groaning all the day long.

Psalms 32:4 For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; my vitality was turned into the drought of summer. Selah

Selah means meditate. It means, “Take some time to think about what has just been said.” Even before Nathan came to David, David was miserable. There was an escalating discomfort until finally God opened the floodgates. It is not worth it to keep silent and to fail to confess your sins. He goes on to say what eventually happened by God’s grace. He says,

Psalms 32:5 I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,” and You forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah

Psalms 32:6 For this cause everyone who is godly shall pray to You in a time when You may be found; Surely in a flood of great waters they shall not come near him.

Psalms 32:7 You *are* my hiding place; You shall preserve me from trouble; You shall surround me with songs of deliverance. Selah

Psalms 32:8 I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye.

Psalms 32:9 Do not be like the horse *or* like the mule, *which* have no understanding, which must be harnessed with bit and bridle, else they will not come near you.

And you parents need to take that to heart when you discipline your children. Do not let them hide, or run, or fight against the discipline. Any resistance should have its own discipline. You don’t want discipline to be dangerous, so you teach them to control themselves. You are going to be self controlled and you expect them to be self-controlled. They should be taught while toddlers that taking the discipline bravely is much better than having

to be drug like a horse or a mule. Unfortunately, David had to be drug like a horse or like a mule in chapter 12. Anyway, David finishes the Psalm by saying,

Psalms 32:10 Many sorrows *shall be* to the wicked; but he who trusts in the LORD, mercy shall surround him.

Psalms 32:11 Be glad in the LORD and rejoice, you righteous; and shout for joy, all *you* upright in heart!

Hebrews 12 tells us that no discipline is joyful during the moment that it is being administered, but it does produce a renewed fellowship and a washing of the slate, and as a result it produces lasting joy that could not be had in any other way. And so, there are applications to how you handle the sins of your own children from the way God works with us.

And since I haven't developed my sermon outline for chapter 12 yet, I don't know if I will bring it up, but just in case I don't, I will mention that God's discipline in chapter 12 was not mechanical and without heart. He didn't just reach out and start belting a kid in an unmeasured way. Our God is not a God of whim or confusion, but a God of order and consistency. *And* God talked to him. God sought to capture David's heart with His infallible words from the prophet Nathan. And we must always accompany our discipline with the powerful Scriptures and with the grace of Jesus Christ. Just as the sacraments have no power without the Scripture being spoken, discipline has no power without the Scriptures accompanying it. And along these lines, I highly recommend the book, *Withhold Not Correction*, by Bruce Ray. I think he does a marvelous job of showing how to reach the heart through the application of Scripture in the discipline process.

But back to the theme of today's sermon, the human tendency is strongly to cover over our sins from the time that we are very young. And if you parents don't teach this lesson early, they will have to learn it the hard way through providential hard knocks just like David did. So let's dive into the outline.

I. Covering sin through self-deception (11:1-4)

Fist, covering sin through self-deception. In the previous two sermons we have already looked quite extensively at verses 1-4 and we have seen that both David and Bathsheba must have engaged in a fair bit of self-deception. In fact, to break through *David's* self-deception in chapter 12, Nathan had to help David connect with his own wrong at a visceral level through a story. And as a side note, let me just mention that what Nathan was doing was engaging in both sides of Presuppositional Apologetics. He actually started by answering a man according to his folly. So, unlike Evidentialist

Apologetics, which tends to assume that humans are for the most part intellectually honest and that they just need more evidence in order to believe, Presuppositional Apologetics assumes the exact opposite. It assumes that our sin nature causes us to suppress the truth in unrighteousness when we really want to do something. Isn't that what Romans 1 says? And it is because Presuppositional Apologetics goes to the core heart issues that it is by far the most powerful approach. And I encourage you parents to study apologetics, because it doesn't just apply to evangelism; it applies even to the raising of our young children. And if you want to study how apologetics must take self-deception into consideration, I highly recommend Greg Bahnsen's lecture, *The Apologetic Implications of Self-Deception*. It's kind of highbrow stuff, but it is amazing. And I believe that the church library has it, and if it doesn't, I can donate my copy to the library.

But for this morning, I just want to point out that we shouldn't be baffled as if it is contrary to human nature when Christian homeschoolers can suddenly convince themselves that dating an unbeliever is really OK. You might scratch your head and wonder, "Why would that teenager suddenly think that dating and especially dating an unbeliever is OK? They were brought up with the courtship model, and I've heard them argue the courtship model with their friends before. And now they are dating an unbeliever and arguing that it's OK for a Christian to do that? How could that be?" That should puzzle Arminians. It's completely contrary to their theology. But if you are Reformed, you should not be surprised. Nor should you be surprised at the capacity of the human heart to convince itself that it is OK to steal from the boss, or to think that it is not really stealing – especially when you are being underpaid. It shouldn't surprise us when Christians think of themselves as good Christians despite being involved in some pretty serious sin. Luke 16:31 says that *evidence alone will not change their hearts*. You've heard the expression, "Don't confuse me with the facts"? It is describing this remarkable ability of the human heart to engage in self-deception. And your view of child rearing, discipleship, evangelism, church discipline, politics, and other things will be impacted by whether you believe this doctrine of self-deception or not. Unfortunately, many Reformed people are not consistent with their theology when they are OK with sending their children to government schools, or they are OK with pluralism in politics, etc. I want you to understand this doctrine of self-deception because it can impact all of life and it explains why we need God's grace in all of life.

I read about a schoolteacher who was presented by some businessmen with an investment opportunity that was too good to turn down. They promised her unbelievable returns. Unfortunately, it turned out that they were swindlers, not businessmen, and they took every dollar that she had in her investment account and they skipped town. She went to the Better Business Bureau to complain about them, and they asked her, “Why on earth didn’t you come to us first? Didn’t you know about the Better Business Bureau?” To which she responded, “I’ve always known about you. But I didn’t come because I was afraid you’d tell me not to do it.” Those are very revealing words. That’s a perfect illustration of this ability within the human heart to deceive ourselves into doing what we want to do, all the while recognizing the problems with doing it. And you probably have hundreds of your own stories where people don’t want to know the truth. Fyodor Dostoyevsky said, “Lying to ourselves is more deeply ingrained than lying to others.” Self-deception is the chief and most common humanistic covering that bypasses the joy that can come through God’s covering alone.

II. Asking others to cover your sins (11:5)

But there was a second way that David and Bathsheba tried to cover over the seriousness of their sin. When the consequences of sin appear, you would think that people would very easily repent, but no - the human heart doesn’t give up that easily and repent. It is still intent on covering that sin. When Bathsheba discovered that she was pregnant, she panicked. Verse 5:

2Samuel 11:5 And the woman conceived; so she sent and told David, and said, “I *am* with child.”

I doubt that she anticipated the horrible chain of events that her one little comment precipitated, but she was now vulnerable and scared. If her husband found out that she was pregnant, she could receive the death penalty. And of course, the unspoken point was that David could too. She was probably simply wondering, “What do we do?” But here's the point - confession to her *husband* was not the first thing on her lips. She was hoping that David could somehow fix this.

And we need to understand the dynamics of why young Christian girls today panic and get abortions. It is this terrible tendency of our sin nature to want to cover sins, and if we can’t do it, to have somebody else cover our sins. Thankfully, Bathsheba had no intention of murder in her heart at this point. She just goes to David to figure out what to do rather than to her husband.

III. Deceiving others (11:6-7)

This leads David to try to cover the sin by deceiving Uriah. And wow does he put on quite the show to hide his true intentions. Verses 6-7:

2Samuel 11:6 Then David sent to Joab, saying, “Send me Uriah the Hittite.” And Joab sent Uriah to David.

2Samuel 11:7 When Uriah had come to him, David asked how Joab was doing, and how the people were doing, and how the war prospered.

You can just imagine this conversation as David pretends to have called Uriah back to get a good feel for what is happening in the war. I'm sure Uriah was puzzled as to why he was even there. David could have easily gotten the same information from a messenger. But it's a conversation designed to make Uriah feel important, to put him at ease, and hopefully to explain the oddity of why he had been called home when he was needed on the battlefield.

I have seen this kind of upbeat conversation engaged in by Christians over and over again. It can be a young girl who goes overboard in being friendly with her parents and serving in ways she wouldn't ordinarily serve, because she feels guilty and she is trying to cover a sin; she hopes her parents won't find out. Or I have seen people engage me in spiritual conversation on Facebook and try to be friends while pursuing an unbiblical divorce. Or I have seen this behavior being used by someone who knows that he shouldn't be dating the girl he is dating. I have seen incredibly creative ways that counselees have used when they are trying to hide certain sins from me and from their spouse. And the Scripture has given me enough understanding of human nature that I know how to dig. But when the flesh is trying to hide sin, you can count on it being willing to use evasion, half-truths, or outright lies to hide the evidence from others.

IV. Covering sin by getting others to sin (11:8-13))

A. David asks Uriah to break a vow (11:8-11)

But point IV - when that doesn't work, David has to cover for his sins by trying to get others to sin. First of all, he asks Uriah to break a vow in verses 8-11.

2Samuel 11:8 And David said to Uriah, “Go down to your house and wash your feet.” So Uriah departed from the king's house, and a gift of food from the king followed him.

Uriah must have wondered, “Why is David treating me so well?” We are not told if Uriah ate the special treat. He probably did. But verses 9-11 say that he didn’t go home.

2Samuel 11:9 But Uriah slept at the door of the king’s house with all the servants of his lord, and did not go down to his house.

2Samuel 11:10 So when they told David, saying, “Uriah did not go down to his house,” David said to Uriah, “Did you not come from a journey? Why did you not go down to your house?”

2Samuel 11:11 And Uriah said to David, “The ark and Israel and Judah are dwelling in tents, and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are encamped in the open fields. Shall I then go to my house to eat and drink, and to lie with my wife? *As you live, and as your soul lives, I will not do this thing.*”

Commentators point out that the mention of the ark shows that Uriah’s solidarity with Yahweh meant that he could not engage in intimacy with his wife, and the next phrase indicates that his solidarity with the army meant that he could not engage in the same intimacy. The reason must have been that the battle against Ammon had been declared by David to be a holy war, and in a holy war, a soldier could not engage in such relations with his wife during the time of battle. So Uriah is being loyal to what David called the war to be, and David is trying to get Uriah to break his pledge and sleep with his wife. Uriah’s probably amazed that David would even ask him to do that.

B. David tries to get Uriah drunk (11:12-13)

When he can’t get Uriah to sin in that way, he then tries to get him drunk so that he will hopefully do so when he has got impaired thinking. Verses 12-13

2Samuel 11:12 Then David said to Uriah, “Wait here today also, and tomorrow I will let you depart.” So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day and the next.

2Samuel 11:13 Now when David called him, he ate and drank before him; and he made him drunk. And at evening he went out to lie on his bed with the servants of his lord, but he did not go down to his house.

Now I understand that David’s second attempt was simply designed to get Uriah confused enough to go home and hopefully think the child is his when it comes in 8 months. If he was drunk, maybe he wouldn’t remember if he slept with his wife or not. But the point is that David pushes a sin upon Uriah in order to cover his own sin.

Romans 1:31 says that when we cover our own sins, we tend to start approving of sin in others. That’s what has happened in our society –

nobody is judging any sins, except for the most heinous. In fact, sin no longer seems so heinous. What used to be black and white suddenly becomes fuzzy. All of a sudden God's law is not so clear to us anymore. O. Palmer Robertson, in commenting on Habakkuk 2:15, points out that when we try to make ourselves look OK when we are living in sin, one of the strategies of our flesh is to actually encourage others to sin so that their sin will ease the guilt of our own sins. I have seen Christian parents who fornicated before their own marriage because of the dating model. And you would have thought that they would warn their children against the same thing. But no – they push their children into making out. I am not making this up. Even though I know the theology of the human heart, it still makes me amazed. It's this strange characteristic in our flesh that makes Sabbath breakers want to strongly encourage other people to break the Sabbath, and cussers to feel good when others start cussing, and voyeurs to feel good when they can talk other Christians into watching the same NR-17 movies that they watch, and people who have killed their babies to suddenly become activists who promote so-called abortion rights.

And by the way, I think this also explains why Joab was OK with doing what David asked him to do. In the next verses, Joab is quite happy to help David out with the murder of Uriah? Why? I believe David's earlier attempts to remove Joab from office and to get him tried for murder have been uppermost in his mind. He is sick and tired of having his own murder thrown in his face. You've heard the expression that misery loves company? It is even more the case that sin loves company. This is the danger of using any other covering other than the covering of God's grace and forgiveness. It leads down a road of hardening and darkness that Romans 1 through 2 describes.

In any case, Scripture pronounced a curse upon anyone who did what David does here. Habakkuk 2:15 says, "**Woe to him who gives drink to his neighbor, pressing him to your bottle, even to make him drunk, that you...**" And then it proceeds to describe a sexual sin. That's almost exactly what David was doing here – to cover his sexual sin he is trying to make Uriah drunk. And God pronounces a woe upon David.

V. Using the government to cover your sin (11:14-25)

A. David asks Joab to commit murder (11:14-17)

Point V - we saw last week that this form of covering sin did not work, so David had to progress further. He had to use the power of

government itself to cover over his sins. In this case, he used the power of the military. Verses 14-17.

2Samuel 11:14 In the morning it happened that David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it by the hand of Uriah.

2Samuel 11:15 And he wrote in the letter, saying, “Set Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle, and retreat from him, that he may be struck down and die.”

2Samuel 11:16 So it was, while Joab besieged the city, that he assigned Uriah to a place where he knew there were valiant men.

2Samuel 11:17 Then the men of the city came out and fought with Joab. And some of the people of the servants of David fell; and Uriah the Hittite died also.

People think you are a conspiratorial crank if you think that the government has been using force to cover personal sin. But you will need to call the Scripture a conspiratorial crank, because that is exactly what is going on here. Apart from grace, it is a constant temptation for people in government to use government for personal ends. The iron triangle in Washington, DC, is a well-known example of such corruption for personal gain. It's fact; it's not conspiratorial theory. But when one of those personal desires of a politician is to cover up his or her personal sin, things can get ugly.

This is why the maxim, “Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely” *has been a maxim*. It has been recognized for centuries that people in government have a habit of doing this. And though America is much cleaner than most countries in this regard, there are a number of examples where people have been killed to cover over the sin of a politician (or in a couple of cases) to cover over the crimes of a politician. Thankfully, in most of the cases that I have been referring to, the politician was eventually caught and tried for his conduct. But not always. Especially during the War Between the States there were some heinous examples. But there have been in recent history as well. Psalm 2 says that conspiracy is the norm in government apart from God's restraining grace. It's why the Bible calls for such small government that Biblical government is as close to libertarian government as you can get without actually being libertarian.

B. Hoping unbelievers will do the dirty work (11:16-17; cf 1 Sam 18:17-21)

And David didn't just use Joab to do his dirty work. He used the Ammonites; he used citizens from another country. It's reminiscent of King Saul's attempts to get rid of David in 1 Samuel 18 by putting David into the

thick of the battle. It eased Saul's conscience a bit to know that it would actually be a *Philistine* spear, sword, or arrow that would be the immediate cause of David's death, even though he himself sought to arrange for David's death in a similar way. Saul had said, "**Let my hand not be against him, but let the hand of the Philistines be against him.**" Right? But whether it is a believing Joab or an unbelieving Ammonite, we should not be naïve about civil government's ability to use force to cover up its sins. Government can only be as good as its officers, and if the officers are corrupt, the actions of the government itself will be corrupt.

And I could give you a number of stories of the government doing similar things to what David did here, but it would take me away from the main purpose of this sermon, which is not to criticize our own government, but to point out that if we ourselves do not stop this impetus of our flesh to cover up at the beginning, it is possible for the cover up to become more and more sinister. It is so much easier to confess right away – preferably within seconds or minutes of your sin happening.

But when we consider confession, we get scared, don't we? "What will people think of me? Will I lose my job? Perhaps my husband will no longer respect me? What will the church think?" - and a hundred similar questions. Our flesh will raise its ugly head and try to keep us from confessing. Our flesh will try to make the consequences of confession seem so much worse than the consequences of non-confession. It's one of the reasons why we drilled into our children quite young that our flesh is lying when it makes us think that way. The long-term consequences of covering our sins are much more disastrous than the discipline that results when we uncover them and confess.

A few years ago I talked to a gal who was weeping over the fact that she had aborted her baby. And as we talked with her and tried to minister God's grace to her, it struck me how similar her situation was to David's. It started with rationalization of the sin of dating an unbeliever. She knew it was wrong, but she tried to convince herself that it was OK. Then it went on to rationalizing her sins of fornication, trying to convince herself that they were going to get married anyway, so what difference does it make? Well, he had never promised to marry her. And then when she got pregnant, she really had hopes that they would get married, and when he would not, she worried that her sin would get discovered. And between his pressure and the pressure of her own fears, she succumbed to abortion, convincing herself that it was better for the baby and for all around. And now she was experiencing post-abortion trauma. She came to discover God's grace and

forgiveness, but knew she would always have that empty hole in her heart. And she wondered why in the world she had not confessed her first sin at the beginning. But you see, at the beginning, the pain of being found out seemed to overshadow everything and make it hard for her to think of anything but cover up.

Don't ever buy the lie from Satan that it pays to cover your sin. There are counselors who recommend that a husband or a wife who has committed adultery just repent of it to God and to not say anything to their spouse. But that's not Biblical. And people say, "Yes, but she might divorce me." Yes, she might. But God's way is to confess and take the consequences (whatever those might be) rather than to cover over and take even greater consequences – especially to our spiritual health. I'm glad that this particular lady eventually realized that cover up does not work. She did not continue to try to cover her sin by marrying the loser that got her pregnant.

VI. Hiding sin through apparent kindness (11:25-27; cf. vv. 7-13)

But that's what Bathsheba did. David obviously was not as much of a loser, but marrying him was not God's will. The marriage was a marriage to cover up sin, and it did not have God's blessing upon it. And you might think, "Of course he should marry her. That's his child. He's responsible for that child." I would agree that he would be responsible to provide for Bathsheba and that child, but not to marry her. You don't fix one sin with another sin.

And people might respond, "Yeah, but Jesus descended from the second child that David and Bathsheba had." True, but the fact that Jesus descended through Bathsheba only proves that God can bring good out of sin, but He still does not condone the sin. And it appears that God never approved of yet another woman being added to David's harem. We will see that this conclusion is quite clear in chapter 12. In God's eyes, this last cover up mentioned in verses 25-27 should not have happened. They should have both confessed their sins and taken the consequences, however serious those consequences might have been.

Conclusion – only God's way truly covers sin (cf. 12:13)

In the next chapter we will look at the true cover of sin by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. Chapter 12:13 says, "**The LORD has also put away your sin; you shall not die.**" Now that's cool. He has put away your sin! In fact, when we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from *all* unrighteousness – even an unrighteousness as

heinous as the unrighteousness that David committed. Micah 7:19 says that God casts our sins into the depths of the ocean. No human can swim to the depths of the ocean to retrieve those sins. In fact, until recent years, they have not even been able to get submarines to go into the lowest depths. I think God's point is that those sins are gone. And it is a wonderful sense of release that we have when we confess our sins, turn from them, take the discipline, and receive His forgiveness. It is freeing; it is cleansing. In fact, the discipline itself is freeing for our children because it puts the sin behind them. It's dealt with. And you can hug them and be restored.

When I was in Bible College, I fought God's conviction concerning two sins for two miserable years. I kept rationalizing that I had confessed my sin to God, and that such confession should be enough. But God would come right back with the conviction, "But I'm not the only one that you sinned against." *Two miserable years* I fought with God, and when I finally cried uncle and confessed my sins to those that I had sinned against, and paid my restitution, I had such incredible joy, liberty, and peace that I stood in amazement that I would have held out for so long. All of a sudden I could see clearly. My flesh was no longer blinding me. I recognized finally what a stupid thing it was to hold out so long. And though there were consequences to my sin, and I paid the restitution, it was worth it to have my sins exposed to man and completely covered over by God. It was worth it.

And in the same way, Psalm 32 says it was worth it to David. Of course, David realized that there were still going to be consequences in his life too. In fact Nathan said that even though his sins were forgiven, and even though the punishment was diminished (he would not die), he would still suffer from the laws of harvest for years to come. Forgiveness does not always stop the laws of harvest. And this is yet another reason that would have made God's covering of grace so much better if it had been entered into earlier. But better late than never. When David finally confessed his sins, he said, "**Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.**" What a blessing! What a relief! Brothers and sisters, don't miss out on the blessing by covering your sins like Adam and Eve tried to do with their fig leaves. It doesn't work. God guarantees it won't work. He says, "**He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy.**" (Proverbs 28:13)

So I would urge you to enter as quickly as possible into that blessedness of *God's* covering. When you do so, you will look back on all your humanistic attempts to cover sin and wonder why you were even tempted to substitute your own fig leaves. And so, as we end this service by

singing Psalm 32, I urge you by the tender mercies and grace of the God of all mercy to confess your sins to one another that you may be healed (that's what James says can result), confess your sins to God that you may be restored, and enter into the joy of God's approval. Amen.

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