

Dealing with Our Sin

Our world is a chaotic wreck, corrupted by the power of sin. We can't fix the world, but healing is available to each one of us—if we are willing to seek it.

“He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy” (Prov. 28:13).



In this simple couplet, the book of Proverbs summarizes two competing approaches to dealing with sin in our lives. Understanding these two approaches explains much of the brokenness we see in the world around us and within us—and a way out of it.

First, the author describes the man who chooses to “cover” his sins. Other translations read “conceal” (ESV), “hide” (GNT) or “whitewash” (The Message). The image is that of a man who, instead of addressing his sin problem directly, seeks to camouflage the defects that are undermining his life. We humans have become quite adept at devising ways to cover our sins: We deflect the blame to others; or we redefine our sin as a mere “misstep” or “mistake in judgment” that can be ignored; or we justify our sin as a legitimate response to the wrongdoing of others. Whatever the details, the objective is always the same: we refuse to face the hard fact that we have done wrong. Our pride will not allow us to admit failure.

Regardless of the strategy we use to hide our sin, the concealment never works to our advantage—we “will not prosper.” Sin is a cancer on our character, and denying its presence only allows it to

metastasize and spread. The disease in our soul sets us up for greater failures, and in time will eventually destroy us.

But it doesn't have to be that way. The preferred alternative to concealing our sins involves two responses: *confessing* and *forsaking* them. Both are necessary to fix what's broken in our lives.

Confessing our sin is the direct antithesis of covering it. We confess our sin when we openly admit it—no excuses, no subterfuge, no equivocations, just an honest acknowledgement that “I have sinned” (2 Sam. 13; Psa. 41:4; Lk. 15:21). That confession first must be directed to God, the chief victim in every sin; then to others who may have been affected by our failure (Jas. 5:16; Matt. 5:23-24). Confession of sin is not a magic formula that confers benefits, but a necessary realignment of our heart with *the truth* of who we are and what we have done. We cannot successfully deal with sin in our lives if we harbor a lie in our heart.

But confession alone is meaningless if we do not also “forsake” the sin. That's a synonym for *repentance*, a change of heart that resolves to chart a new, more godly, direction in our life. Pharaoh, King Saul, Judas, and many others were willing to admit “I have sinned” (Ex. 10:16; 1 Sam. 15:30; Matt. 27:4), but their confessions were not coupled with genuine repentance, so their lives descended deeper into chaos and destruction. The same fate awaits us if we do not commit our lives to radical change.

Finally, notice what a policy of confession and repentance leads to. We might expect the outcome to be “shall prosper”—the opposite of covering our sin in the first part of the verse. Instead, the result is “will have mercy.” By building confession and repentance into our daily lives as a habitual response to our failings, we are promised God's forgiveness. The burden of guilt is gone, and that psychological freedom allows us to move on with our life. There is no room here for moral preening. Remember, we have confessed to *failure*—we have earned nothing but have been given so much.

This world is a broken mess, and each one of us contributes our fair share to the problem by wearing masks, playing games, and pretending to be something we are not. The dishonesty is killing us, but we are too willfully blind to recognize what we are doing to ourselves. The path to healing begins with me learning to confess and forsake my sin. Do I have the integrity and courage to do so?

— David King