

The Discipleship Project-Summer 2017

Series 3: The Masquerade of Sin

A series by Eugene Wilson

Series Big Idea: Because Satan masquerades the destructive nature of sin, we must be honest with ourselves about the carnage sin brings.

Lesson 3.4: The Unmasking of Sin

Lesson Big Idea: Because God loves us, He brings conviction into our lives.

FOUNDATION

Scripture Focus: Psalm 51:1–4 (PPT)

Kathy Ormsby was a success story, or at least that is what she seemed to be. She was on the dean's list at North Carolina State University, a pre-med major, and an all-American distance runner.

At the University of Pennsylvania, in April of 1986, she set an American collegiate record for the 10,000-meter run and qualified for the NCAA championships in the 3,000, 5,000, and 10,000 meters.

Kathy was a celebrity, a twenty-one-year-old junior who appeared to have everything going right. But something was terribly wrong. No one could see it, but Kathy had become obsessed with winning.

So it was a shock when in June of 1986, while running the 10,000-meter race at the NCAA track championships in Indianapolis, that at 6,500 meters Kathy suddenly quit the race. She turned, jogged out of the stadium, ran to a bridge two blocks away, and jumped. She fell forty feet. As a result of the fall, Kathy became paralyzed from the chest down. She would never run again.

There are many people like Kathy Ormsby—people who seem to have it all together on the outside, but on the inside they are a mess.

This is what we do. This is how we live our lives. We project we are okay, that things are well, and that we have it together. But the truth is everything may not always be okay, things are not always well, and we don't always have it all together.

Why do we project as though things are well when they are not well at all? There are several possible answers. It could be that we hide our broken mess because we are afraid of what others might say or what others might think. Maybe we are afraid of being judged harshly, or disproportionately, or even being judged at all. We may like how things are and not want to change. Or it may be that we can't handle criticism of any kind, even that which could help us immensely. But whatever the reason for our projecting we have it all together when the reality is that we don't, this remains: we need help; we need to change; we need God.

FRAME

Such is the life of a human being. None of us are perfect. All of us are on a journey. And sometimes we make mistakes along the way. Sometimes we make small mistakes; sometimes we make big mistakes. But we make mistakes, nonetheless—rather, I should say, sometimes we sin.

Sin is an ugly word. It is much easier to say mistake, or mishap, or slip-up, or gaffe. But not only is it difficult to say the word *sin*, it is difficult to admit we have sinned. In this, we are not alone.

- **Why is it so difficult for us to say that we have sinned?**

The Bible shares a story of a man who made a mistake, a mishap—**King David** slipped-up. Actually, he sinned. But that’s not the end of the story. In fact, that’s not the central point of the story. This story is really about unbelievable and undeniable love. It’s a story about a God who loves and a God who did not leave the king as he was—broken, dirty, a messed-up mess. It is about a God who sought to restore the king to proper relationship with Him.

Our story begins on a rooftop. The king should not have been there. There was nothing wrong with him walking around on the roof of his house. It was actually a normal practice back then; houses were built in a way that made this feasible. It’s not wrong to walk around on the roof in the evening, either. Rather, the timing was wrong for him. **It was the time when kings go to war, but he had stayed home.**

He saw Bathsheba while he stood on his roof looking off into the distance. It was probably a little easier for him than it was for his neighbors to see out over the other rooftops, because his roof was probably higher up than most. He was the king, and this was his palace. She did not do anything wrong either. She was not bathing to tempt him. She was just simply taking a bath.

He should have turned around, looked away, and walked the other direction, but he did not. He should have forgotten about her, but he did not do that either. In fact, he did the opposite. He inquired about her. He asked around. And eventually he got his answer. “Her name is Bathsheba. She is married to a fine soldier, a marvelous warrior named Uriah.” After discovering who she was, David should have dropped the matter. But he did not. In fact, he went further. He sent messengers to bring her to him. They did, and he slept with her.

- **What happens when we fail to walk away?**

As bad as that was, the story does not end there. He had sinned; he had committed adultery. But sin never stops. **One sin almost always leads to another sin. (PPT) (PDG)**

- **What is it about sin that one sin almost always leads to another sin?**

And so it was with David. It was not long after when he received a note. It read, “I’m pregnant, *Bathsheba*.” I would imagine his heart skipped a beat. His initial thought was probably, “What have I done?” But if so, it was quickly replaced with, “What can I do to protect myself, to protect my reputation, and make sure no one ever knows?” And then it came to him, “I will summon Uriah home, he will sleep with his wife, and everyone will think the baby is his.”

So David did bring Uriah home from the battlefield. But Uriah, filled with integrity, refused to go home. Instead, he slept on the king’s doorstep. No matter what the king did, he could not get Uriah to go home. Again, it should have ended there. The king should have come clean; he should have confessed. But that is not how the story ends. It gets worse.

There was a time in his life when David would have never imagined it. The thought would have never entered his mind. Years previous he had killed a lion, and at a different time, a bear, to protect some sheep. But that was long ago. Yes, the thought should have never entered his mind, but it did. *What if Uriah were dead? That would bring an end to all of my troubles. I would be free to marry Bathsheba. No one will ever know about our transgression.* But that is not how it usually goes. Usually, at some point, what has been done in secret is made known.

- **Share some reasons why our trying to hide our sins is not a good practice.**

It should have ended with the thought, but it did not. Instead, he made matters worse. **He sent Uriah back to the battlefield with a death sentence.** (PPT) (PDG) Uriah did not know it, but the king had made a decision—Uriah must die. And die he did, on the battlefield fighting for the king.

After a time of mourning, the king married Bathsheba. All was well. No one knew. Everything had worked out for the good. At least that is what David thought. But nothing good comes from sin. Sin, when it is finished, always results in destruction or death.

It was not long after when **Nathan the prophet** came for a visit, and while visiting with the king, the prophet shared a story. He said, “There were two men in the city; one rich, one poor. The rich man had many flocks and herds, but the poor man had nothing, except for one lamb. The lamb grew up together with the poor man’s children, ate of his meat, drank from his own cup, and was like his own child. A traveler came to the rich man, desiring food. The rich man spared his own flock, and decided to take and kill the lamb of the poor man.”

When the king heard the story the prophet shared, he became very angry. He said, “The man who did this thing deserves to die.” And the prophet looked him in the eye and said, “This man is you.”

- **Who does God usually use in your life to correct you?**

How would you respond? You are the king. You can do just about anything you want, and your recent actions prove it. You have already murdered one man. Are you going to kill another?

- **How do you typically respond when corrected?**

Hear the response of the king:

“Have mercy upon me, O God,
According to Your lovingkindness;
According to the multitude of Your tender mercies,
Blot out my transgressions.
Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
And cleanse me from my sin.
For I acknowledge my transgressions,
And my sin is always before me.
Against You, You only, have I sinned,
And done this evil in Your sight—
That You may be found just when You speak,
And blameless when You judge.”

(Psalm 51:1–4, NKJV) (PPT)

The king had sinned, and **the king acknowledged his sin**. (PPT) (PDG) He pled for mercy, for loving-kindness, and tender mercies. He asked that his transgression would be blotted out, that he might be washed thoroughly from his iniquity and be cleansed from his sin.

To fully appreciate the story, though, it is imperative that we consider the chief character in the story. “Who is it?” you ask. “Is it the murdered husband, Uriah?” No. “Is it Bathsheba, his wife?” No. “Is it the prophet, the one who confronted the king?” No. “Is it the king?” Again the answer is no. “Who is it then?” you ask. The answer is God.

God is the central character in the story of the king who sinned. (PPT) (PDG) This is His story. This is a story of His amazing love. This is a story of how God used conviction to turn the heart of a king from sin and toward God. The story is not about sin. It is not about the king. It is about God.

What can we learn from this story? What lesson can we glean from it and apply to our own lives? The message is clear—God wants to save us from our mishaps, our mistakes, our missing the mark. Yes, He wants to save us from our sins. And He uses conviction to do so. Why? It is because He loves us.

- **What are some ways God is working in your life, and you know He is doing so because He loves you?**

John writes about it in one of the most familiar verses of Scripture:

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16, KJV). (PPT)

Jesus said in John 12:47, “For I came not to judge the world, but to save the world” (KJV). (PPT)

The king had committed adultery. He had committed murder. And yet God did not write him off. Instead, God used conviction to bring the king back into right relationship

with Him. Why? It is because He loved him.

And so it is with us. We are not perfect. We make mistakes. We have mishaps. We miss the mark. We sin. And yet God does not write us off. Instead, **God uses conviction to bring us back into right relationship with Him.** (PPT) (PDG) Why? It is because He loves us.

Conviction is a work of God, and God uses it because He loves us. Condemnation, on the other hand, is a work of our adversary, Satan, and he uses it because he wants to destroy us. Conviction and condemnation are two different things. One is used to restore; the other is used to destroy.

Condemnation points out our failures, our shortcomings, our mistakes, our sins, and says God does not love us. It says God is against us.

Conviction does not deny we have sinned, yet it gives hope. (PPT) (PDG) Conviction tells us God does love us. It says God has not forgotten us. It tells us God still cares.

Condemnation is a tool of the enemy. According to Revelation 12:10, he is the accuser of the brethren. He does not have our best interest at heart. He is out to destroy us. Every time we miss the mark, condemnation tells us we cannot recover, that God does not love us, and that He is against us. Condemnation is the tactic of Satan, the accuser of the brethren.

- **How would you describe conviction? How does it make you feel?**
- **How would you describe condemnation? How does it make you feel?**

Unlike our adversary, the devil, God does not tell us that we cannot get up again. He does not tell us that we are a failure, a worthless piece of trash. He does not extinguish hope; He extends hope. Hopelessness is not of God. God loves and God saves. With Him there is always hope, regardless of the severity of our mistakes and regardless of the greatness of our sins. God's love reaches farther. **His love is greater than our sins.**

Paul wrote in Romans 8:38–39, “For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (KJV). (PPT)

Nothing can separate us from the love of God—absolutely nothing. So God uses conviction to call us back into right relationship with Him.

Paul wrote in II Corinthians 7:10 that “godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation” (NKJV). (PPT) This is what the king experienced. He experienced godly sorrow. And this is what a loving God does to save us.

- **Describe in your own words how you know God loves you.**

Conviction, or godly sorrow, is a gift from a loving God. We would do well to understand this because we sin—we mess-up. And when we do, we need something to help us confess-up. And conviction, or godly sorrow, is what helps us confess-up.

“Conviction of sin is one of the rarest things that ever strikes a man. It is the threshold of an understanding of God. Jesus Christ said that when the Holy Spirit came He would convict of sin, and when the Holy Spirit rouses the conscience and brings him into the presence of God, it is not his relationship with men that bothers him, but his relationship with God” (Oswald Chambers).

The king had committed adultery. He had committed murder. He was headed down the wrong path, and he was moving fast. But God, with conviction and love, reached out and brought him back to where the king’s heart used to be. And so it is with us. God, with conviction and love, reaches out to bring us back to where our hearts should be.

FINISH

Tim Snider, in his book *All Things New*, shares the following:

Wabush, a town in a remote portion of Labrador, Canada, was completely isolated for some time. But recently a road was cut through the wilderness to reach it. Wabush now has one road leading into it, and thus, only one road leading out. If someone would travel the unpaved road for six to eight hours to get into Wabush, there is only one way he or she can leave—by turning around.

Each of us, by birth, arrives in a town called Sin. As in Wabush, there is only one way out, a road built by God himself. But in order to take that road, one must first turn around. That complete about-face is what the Bible calls repentance, and without it, there’s no way out of town.

And that turn around—that leaving sin behind—begins with conviction. When conviction strikes the heart of a person, it should not be viewed any other way than as an amazing gift from God. Conviction is God reaching for us. It is God pulling for us. It is God loving us. Conviction is God’s way of telling us that there is hope. We can get out of the town of sin. Things don’t have to remain the way they are. God is giving us another chance to make things right. That’s what conviction is about.

God will use conviction to bring you into a right relationship with Him. He loves you too much to leave you as you are.