

## **The Pain and Stain of Sexual Sin: Part 3**

In this series, we've been looking at the pain and stain of sexual sin. We saw in Part 1 the true pain and stain that sexual sin brings. Then in Part 2, we looked at how to stay pure in this impure world. We saw how to put off sexual sin, be renewed in our minds, and replace the sin by using our bodies and spirits to glorify God.

However, there is a big piece of the puzzle missing. What do I do if I've already messed up? How do I carry on after having fallen into this sin? So in Part 3, let's look at picking up the pieces.

The tragedy of sexual sin is not only the terrible consequences that it brings, but the way we complicate our lives by dealing with those consequences. In essence, people bring further consequences into their lives by trying to escape from the ones they've already incurred.

For example, a girl gets involved in sexual sin. She now feels the defiling guilt that it brings, but her reaction to that is foolish. She gets deeper into the sin, reasoning that she's already spoiled. Sin is truly a trap, where once in, only the wisdom of God can release us to a fruitful life again.

A classic example in Scripture of dealing with the consequences of sin and picking up the pieces is King David. David, as we know, fell into sexual sin. He is first a case study in how not to respond, and then how to respond. First, let's look at what not to do.

### **1. Do not try to hide the sin.**

We know the story. David committed sexual sin with Bathsheba while her husband Uriah was away at war. Then Bathsheba comes to David with the news that she is pregnant. David is, at this point, not yet repentant of the sin. So, in his fleshliness, David's reaction is to try and cover it up. He reasons that if he can get Uriah home to Bathsheba, then the pregnancy will look as if it had been of her husband, and no one will blame David at all. So, he tries to arrange this.

Uriah comes home, but as an honourable man, he refuses to go home to his wife and relax while his comrades are still in the heat of the battle. David's plan A has failed. So, David figures if Uriah gets drunk, he'll lose his convictions and go home to lie with his wife. Unfortunately for David, a drunk Uriah seems to be as stubborn as a sober one. He refuses to go home. Plan B has failed too.

Now, David is angry. He tells the commander of the forces to put Uriah in the front of the battle so that he will be killed. This is done, and Uriah dies in battle. David lets Bathsheba do some mourning, and then marries her. David thought that it was over now. He thinks Plan C has worked. But it hasn't.

In the very next chapter, Nathan the prophet arrives with God's judgment on him. You cannot hide sin from God. He sees it. David made his situation worse by trying to hide it. He has now

not only committed adultery, but murder as well. He was the father of an illegitimate child, but also the blood of a husband was now on his hands. His attempts to hide the sin only complicated his life.

Clearly, David had refused to even confess the sin before God. **Psalm 32:3** says, *"When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer."* Refusing to own up to the sin, and trying to hide it, only produces worse results and consequences.

This is like a girl trying to cover up a pregnancy by having an abortion. However, now she not only struggles with the guilt of fornication, but of murder too. Or a man tries to hide his HIV status acquired by fornication by telling no one. But he only hastens his descent into AIDS by not getting treatment. Trying to cover sin will make it worse. Solomon, the second son of David and Bathsheba, knew this, and said:

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

**Proverbs 28:13**

See, when dealing with the results of sexual sin, we often show how little we think of God. We try to hide it from everyone, thinking nothing of the fact that God was there and saw it all. We are terrified at the thought of other humans finding out our sin, but the fact that God already knows does not seem to trouble us. Something is wrong. We should be more aware of the fact that God's eyes are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.

*For the ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord, and He pondereth all his goings.*

**Proverbs 5:21**

## **2. Confess and repent**

So where do we start? Where David did. By acknowledging his sin before God and repenting. The problem with sin is not that it messes up our lives, but that it offends our Creator. It violates His laws and incurs a debt over our heads. And without realising it, many a human being exists with his God-given conscience accusing him, urging him to make right with God.

God placed a conscience in each human to act like an alarm bell that eats at us, urging us to return to the only One we have truly sinned against – God.

Sadly, the world, and many Christians, learn to ignore their conscience. They try to reason with their conscience. They learn methods to try drown out their conscience – entertainment, games, work, parties, drugs, drunkenness, more immoral sex – all in the hopes that the terrible accusing nature of our conscience will quiet down.

We see David wrestle with his conscience in the Psalms. If you are like me, you will find a thousand things to do before returning to God in repentant prayer. Yet, as we avoid coming

before God, we are like the prodigal son, sinking deeper into the mire of the pig. But, friend, can I remind you of that exact parable. Jesus told it to emphasise God's heart.

The son, Jesus said, spent his living on prostitutes. He was ruined by his sexual sin. Eventually though, he reasoned, even being a slave in my father's house is better than this. He planned his little speech of repentance that he would have for his father, no doubt expecting his father to be cold, inhospitable, and silent. But listen to how Jesus tenderly related His Father's heart:

*And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." But the father said to his servants, "Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet, and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry. For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found." And they began to be merry.*

**Luke 15:20-24**

The Father was not brooding in his house, he was scanning the horizon for his son. The son did not have to beg him to listen. When his father so much as saw him coming back, he ran to meet him. He did not even let his son finish his speech – his repentance was enough. The father's grace was lavished on him again. That's God, friend!

Yes, you have sinned, yes, you feel dirty and defiled and no more worthy to be called His child, but pick yourself up out of the mud and return to Him. Realise it was Adam and Eve that were hiding from God, not the other way around. It was God who came looking for them, saying, Adam where are you? God knew full well where they were, He knew they had sinned – but it is His heart to seek to help us, to love us to rescue us from our sin.

You have to understand that when your heart fears God's wrath on your sin, it is correct. But you must also understand that there is abundant grace in that heart too. Such that Jeremiah remarked it is of His mercies that we are not consumed (**Lamentations 3:22**). The one who tries to hide and cover their sin, is only hurting themselves. Confess and forsake it.

Come before the One who you have sinned against. Claim full ownership for your sin. Leave all your excuses at the door. There is no need to try and pretend before the One who sees and knows all. Don't blame others, don't pass the buck. Call your sin what it is, say the same thing about your sin that God says in His word. That's what confession is – to agree completely with God about your sin – that He might be justified when He speaks. Listen to David's repentance:

*Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight: that Thou mightest be justified when Thou speakest, and be clear when Thou judgest.*

**Psalms 51:1-4**

I encourage you to read this Psalm, pray each verse and mean it personally as you confess before God. As David says, God wants a broken heart from a sinner – that is what He accepts. The forgiveness is already accomplished, the price is paid, God looks at your heart to see if you truly want it.

See, many people do not really want forgiveness. They are not like David. They see their sin as some kind of personal problem. So when they pray, they are really saying, “Lord, I’m sorry I got caught. I’m sorry there are consequences. Please spare me from those consequences.”

Pharoah said, “I have sinned.” Judas said, “I have sinned.” Saul said, “I have sinned.” But none of them really meant and said what David said before Nathan the prophet: “*I have sinned against the Lord*” (**2 Samuel 12:13**). They didn’t acknowledge, “My sin is a wound to the heart of my Lord. It is not merely a problem – it was disobedience.”

Can anyone measure the blessings of a heart that is forgiven and knows it is forgiven? David began to exult in it as he said in **Psalms 32:1-2**: “*Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.*”

Perhaps half the so-called psychological problems in the world can be traced back to guilt. Guilt which is meant to be dealt with only by confession and repentance before God. I don’t pretend it’s easy. I don’t say it’s not humiliating and humbling to face our sin before a holy God. I’m not claiming it’s fun.

But I am saying on the authority of the Word of God that if you repent and confess your sin before God – you are better off than if you hide from Him. You have no chance of peace outside of Him. Trust His words when He says: “*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*” (**1 John 1:9**).

### **3. Make restitution**

The second stage of picking up the pieces is making amends. This is not something that is really mentioned today. However, if you read through Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy, you will find a familiar pattern emerging. If you harm someone else, by stealing, breaking their property or otherwise, the law expected you to make it up to them.

You had to replace that ox. Sexually, if a man slept with a virgin, and the father refused to let them marry, he was obliged to pay the father the equivalent of a dowry to, in a sense, make up for the damage he had caused. Now, the principle we draw from that is that though we are forgiven by God when we repent, there are humans we have hurt through our sin.

We cannot restore someone’s purity or anything like that, but I believe some effort should be made to set things right. John the Baptist explained to various groups of people what the fruits of repentance looked like. Soldiers were not to use violence for extortion, tax-collectors were

told to not take more than they were supposed to. In other words, repentance has fruits – practical outworkings.

If you have truly repented of sexual sin – there may be some practical restitution to be done. It will more than likely be asking for forgiveness from the person we have been involved with in an immoral way. “Oh, I could never do that,” you say. How then could you ask for forgiveness from a holy God?

If we have caused the pain of others and hurt them, we need to reach out to them with a desire to forgive and restore. Only you will know what an appropriate response is, to those you have hurt. An apology, talking it over, whatever it may be. Do not beg for vertical forgiveness, and neglect the horizontal. Also, give the forgiveness, remembering that the Lord will not forgive an unforgiving heart. Forgive others their wrongs too.

#### **4. Responsibly manage the consequences**

The fourth step in picking up the pieces is dealing with the consequences responsibly. This is where so many go wrong. We saw in Part 1 of this series that sexual sin brings consequences. Well, that is unavoidable. But it seems many people compound this by dealing with the consequences irresponsibly and thus further complicating their lives, like David, who tried to hide Bathsheba’s pregnancy through murder.

Today, people turn to abortion to deal with pregnancy, They turn to more sex to deal with the pain of guilt or even HIV. People turn to casual sex, hoping it will make the loss of their purity seem small by comparison. People turn to all sorts of things to avoid repentance and responsibly dealing with the consequences of sin. And in so doing, they further hurt themselves and others.

The one turning to more sex only adds to their sense of guilt and defilement. The girl who resorts to an abortion lives with the guilt all her life. The one who abandons his responsibility as a father creates himself an enemy for life, and the curse of God as one worse than an infidel.

Sometimes, even more pain is caused by how people try to deal with the consequences than the consequences themselves. A doctor told me that if a person with HIV sleeps with another person with HIV, it doubles the strength of the virus and, without the correct treatment, probably halves their lifespan.

So, there needs to be a responsible approach to sexual sin’s consequences. We see this in David. David learnt his lesson with trying to hide Bathsheba’s pregnancy. Nathan had now announced some of the consequences. The child would die. The sword would never depart from his house, and his son Absalom would bring shame to him openly.

How did David respond to these consequences? Did he resort to more sexual sin? Did he forsake God? Did he drown his sorrows with wine? No, he dealt with each as responsibly as he

could. He prayed that God would spare the child. When God did not, David accepted it, confident he would see the child in heaven.

Absalom's rebellion was grievous to David, but always he sought a minimum of bloodshed, and as you read of his flight from Jerusalem, you see a man accepting this as part of God's judgement, and trying to deal with it in obedience to God. Eventually, Absalom was killed, and David restored to the throne, but he did not complicate his life further by disobeying God during the consequences of his previous disobedience.

This is so crucial. Remember, consequences for sin are definite. It is up to the gracious hand of God to decide how severe. Do not try to escape them, or cheat them, or run from them. Plead directly with God for mercy, and accept what He gives you as being better than what we ultimately deserve for our sin – which is an eternity in hell.

The consequences for sexual sin may be different and varied for each person – but no matter what they are, there is a Biblical, Christlike response to every situation in life. There is an obedient response to these consequences.

Obviously included in this third stage is to continue to flee fornication, which we looked at in Part 2 of this series. To continue in sexual sin after experiencing its bitter fruit is foolish. Repentance means a change of direction – a new behaviour, empowered by God's Spirit.

## 5. Teach others

Finally, as we pick up the pieces, we ought to teach others. You might say, how can I teach someone else about this when I've sinned? I'll feel like a hypocrite. Listen: firstly, most Bible teachers teach a slightly better message than they live. You try to practice what you preach, but even the apostle Paul mourned over his own inconsistencies. So, you do not have to be perfect to teach.

Secondly, we are not talking about getting into the pulpit and preaching, we are talking about teaching other believers. Do you realise this is part of the Great Commission of **Matthew 28:18-20**: *"...teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you"*? You have a command as a believer to teach other believers the Biblical truth about sexual sin.

Warn them. Plead with them. Tell them of your pain, that they may hopefully listen. Notice this was David's desire after being forgiven for his sin with Bathsheba: *"Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation; and uphold me with Thy free spirit. Then will I teach transgressors Thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto Thee"* (**Psalms 51:12-13**).

David did not want to just retreat and lick his wounds. He did not desire to become a hard, cold individual, brooding over how scarred he was and how he would never be the same again. He said, now that Your grace has forgiven me, I will teach others, I will warn them about this sin.

Truly, sexual sin has a pain and a stain. We saw its many consequences. But we saw how we can avoid it by fleeing fornication, and what that means. Here, we learned how to pick up the pieces. Repent and confess your sin before a waiting Father. Make restitution where necessary. Deal with the consequences responsibly. And teach others, that they may escape the pain and stain of sexual sin.