

“Freed From Hidden Sin”

June 23, 2013

Text: John 4:16:19

Of all the freedoms we might cherish most, freedom from guilt should be at/near the top of the list.

Guilt caused Adam/Eve such fear/distress after they sinned, that they tried to hide themselves from God’s presence among the trees in the garden of Eden.

Jacob felt so full of guilt/fear for having cheated Esau out of his birthright, that when he heard Esau was coming to meet him, Jacob prayed to God=> *“Deliver me, I pray, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau; for I fear him, that he will come and attack me and the mothers with the children”* (Gen 32:11).

Guilt caused Governor Felix to become so frightened that he told Paul to go away, after Paul had preached to him/his-wife Drusilla about righteousness/self-control/judgment.

Drusilla was Felix’s 3rd wife—a 19-year-old whom he had seduced/lured away from her previous husband.

Felix had neither righteousness/self-control, & he knew at some level that God’s judgment hung heavy over his head.

Hypocrites try to cover up their guilt, & ignore it.

But deep inside, their consciences won’t let them forget it.

And Jesus said of hypocrites like the Pharisees=>

“There is nothing covered up that will not be revealed, & hidden that will not be known” (Lk 12:2).

Confession is the solution, which brings freedom from guilt.

Confession truly is good for the soul.

But to confess, man must 1st abandon his natural tendency to hide his sin/guilt, the inheritance of his Adamic nature.

Real, guilt-releasing confession must be made to God, w/ a sincere/contrite heart, & as a result of humble repentance.

It must be made in the spirit of the publican who came into the Temple, beat on his breast w/o even raising his eyes, & prayed=> *“God, be merciful to me the sinner”* (Lk 18:13).

Genuine confession of sin isn't mixed w/ rationalization, such

as=>

* “God, be merciful to me a sinner, because it was mostly the other guy's fault anyway.”

* Or, “Lord, be merciful to me a sinner, & remember that I've been pretty good in the past.”

* Or, “Lord, be merciful to me a sinner this time, and I'll try to do better in the future.”

True confession simply acknowledges the fact that I have sinned & am therefore a sinner w/o excuse, who silently grieves/groans/sighs over the weight of my guilt, & w/ no option but to plead for God's mercy (of which I know I am unworthy).

An acknowledgement of our sinfulness is the only thing of our own which we bring to the table, before God.

Real confession stands all alone before God, as a repentant soul stops excusing/justifying his sin by comparing himself w/others who are worse than he, & deals only w/ its own sin/culpability before God.

It is the expression of a wounded conscience, that seeks to be all alone, like a wounded deer running deep into a dark forest to bleed/die alone.

It becomes oblivious to everything but its own sinfulness & the perfect holiness of God, which it has violated/offended.

Real repentance/confession is an act of self-rejection, which is why the publican beat on his breast, as he cried out to God.

It says in essence, “Here, Lord, is my problem=> my heart.

“It’s not my head—I didn’t sin because of lack of understanding, but because my rebellious heart loved evil, rejected good, & chose to defy You/Your-will.”

And real, guilt-releasing/guilt-relieving confession pleads the blood of Jesus X as the only reason God should forgive one’s sin, in response to his confession of it.

The moment a person prays such a prayer, every sin he has ever committed is blotted out of God’s book, and God reckons him a righteous man.

All the guilt for every sin he has ever committed is washed away—every evil thought/feeling, every wicked deed.

Even such detestable sins as theft, adultery, murder,
and even child-molestation.

The publican in Jesus' parable was undoubtedly guilty of
stealing from tax-payers, and yet Lk 18 says=>
"This man went to his house justified" (Lk 18:14),
because he had confessed his sin.

**In our text today, Jesus will graciously bring the woman at
the well to the confession/acknowledgement of her sin.**

He won't do it by humiliating her, parading a list of her sins
before her, or driving her into a defensive posture;
But by gently encouraging and prodding her to confess.

**In John 4:16-19, the woman at the well's confession is
unfolded in 4 stages=>
prodding, concealment, exposure, acknowledgment.**

*** Prodding**

**When we left the account of the woman at the well last time,
Jesus had offered her the living water of eternal life.**

She had challenged His claim to be able to provide such water,
observing that He had no means by which to draw it out of
Jacob's well.

She could not get past the notion that the water He was
talking about, and was offering her was literal, not
figurative, water.

Jesus went on to tell the woman that the living water He gives brings an end to thirst—by that, He meant the spiritual thirst of the soul.

He added that the water He gives becomes a well of water springing up w/i a person to eternal life.

Ultimately, she asked Jesus to give her that water.

X's response gives a whole new direction to the conversation.

No longer does He use figures of speech such as *“living water”* but speaks in the very plain/direct language of personal application.

No longer is the discussion theological, but it becomes very personal, intended to bring this lady to confession of her sin, and faith in Jesus as the X, & as her Savior.

Jesus began by gently/tactfully prodding the woman to confess her sinful life to Him, so He could offer her forgiveness.

[Jn 4:16]—*“He said to her, ‘Go, call your husband & come here.’”*

If this woman was to receive the living water of eternal life, she first had to sense her own spiritual thirst for it.

Consciousness of her sin would awaken that thirst.

Confession of her sin would be the first step in quenching it, with the living water of life from God.

Jesus knew all about the woman—her whole heart/life—just as He had known all about Nathanael's character in Jn 1.

John 2 said=> *“He Himself knew what was in man”* (2:25).

This woman at the well would later tell her neighbors=>

“Come, see a man who told me all the things that I have done” (Jn 4:29).

But as of yet, she didn't know that Jesus knew all about her.

Jesus put her to the test, giving her an opportunity to be completely honest/candid about her immoral past;

Or to lie to Jesus about it,

Or to shade the truth, assuming that because He was a stranger, He wouldn't know the difference anyway.

Ultimately, her sin had to be exposed, because those who wish to drink the water of eternal life must confess/forsake their wickedness and receive God's pardon of it.

Isa 55=> *“Let the wicked **forsake his way** And the unrighteous man his thoughts; And let him return to the LORD, And He will have compassion on him, And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon” (55:7).*

Game-playing w/ the truth is not the Lord's way, so if a person is to receive eternal life from X, he must honestly reject his old sinful/deceitful ways, as the H.S. convicts him of them.

The Bible knows nothing of salvation apart from repentance, confession, & a turning from sin.

Titus 2:14 says X *“gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, & to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.”*

Jesus' purpose was to create conviction of sin w/i this woman's heart, so He gently prodded her in that direction by tactfully confronting her w/ her sin, so she would confess it.

* **Concealment**

This is fallen man's normal way of dealing w/ sin in his life, & it is the path chosen at first by the woman at the well.

Ever since Adam tried to hide from God in the Garden, man's strategy has always been either to hide his sin, deceiving himself/others, that he's OK morally/spiritually;

Or to rationalize it away, as Adam did when he told God=>

*"The woman whom **You** gave to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate" (Gen 3:12).*

Ultimately, concealment of sin never works, because God knows everything about us.

Rev 20 says that at the Final Judgment, His books will be opened, which contain comprehensive records of all the deeds of every human being (20:12).

Men/women can never hide anything from God.

As Num 32:23 warns: *"Be sure your sin will find you out."*

Jesus intended to override the normal strategy of concealment in this woman's case, because that was the only way to bring her to an acknowledgement of the truth.

He was going to accomplish that through His omniscient knowledge of her whole life.

He was preparing her heart to receive the blessing of salvation.

But her initial instinct was to conceal her sin, telling only half the truth.

[Vs 17a]—“*The woman answered & said, ‘I have no husband.’*”

Before this, the woman had been quite talkative, but now her answers get short/curt, because she’s now on her guard.

Jesus has zeroed in on the area of most blatant sin in her life, and suddenly she is afraid she might give too much away, so she becomes tight-lipped.

She has become one of those people who may pretend to be forthright, but they only admit to what they know you’ve already discovered, giving nothing away that they think you don’t know yet.

This woman wasn’t ready to make a full disclosure of her sin.

It was true that she had no husband, but that wasn’t even half the real story.

She was still trying to mask her own sinful past, and to ward off X’s probing into her life.

She was placing herself under the terrible burden (& hard work) of deception, through concealment of the full truth.

People like this weave a tangled web w/ which to entrap themselves, trying to keep their story straight as they withhold the real story, hoping it all sounds consistent/reasonable, adding lie upon lie, if necessary, to buttress the original deception.

* **Exposure**

The woman was now about to discover that she couldn't hide anything from X, as He confronted her w/ the full truth.

Her heart/life were an open book before Him.

[Verse 17b-18]=> “ *Jesus said to her, ‘You have correctly said, “I have no husband”; for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; this you have said truly.’*”

This woman's thoughts & her whole life are laid bare, & she suddenly realizes that Jesus knows all about everything she has been trying to conceal from Him.

Any attempt to hide the truth from X was/is totally futile.

Even though she had experienced humiliation over/over in the past because of the sin/foolishness that permeated her life, this had to be uncomfortable/embarrassing—even for her.

But it could have been a lot worse.

Jesus could have harshly derided her, raking her over the coals, not only for having tried to deceive Him;

But also for having lived such a dissolute (and prob. promiscuous) life.

But He doesn't do that.

In fact, He twice gives her mild commendations for being truthful—once in verse 17, with the words “*You have correctly said*”; once in 18—“*you have said truly.*”

There is a wonderful kindness/gentleness in Jesus' words here.

He needed to confront her sin head on.

He couldn't allow her to think it was anything less than the vile offense against the holiness of God that it was.

But He didn't launch a tirade or a self-righteous attack to which she would have reacted by closing herself off defensively, hardening her heart, & becoming even more committed to her sin than before.

He did nothing that would cause her wounded pride to dig in its heels, making matters even worse.

He didn't humiliate her, by rebuking/scolding her harshly.

Though she now knew that Jesus was fully aware of all her sin, and that it was all offensive/grievous Him, His kindness disarmed her, and had a conciliating effect.

She must have sensed that He was on her side & wanted the best for her, even though He was strongly opposed to all the wickedness that had characterized her life.

And the truth was, that Jesus was preparing her heart to receive the wonderful living water of eternal life.

X's example teaches us 2 lessons about evangelizing the lost.

- 1) In sharing the gospel w/ others, we must confront their sin, just as Jesus confronted this woman's sins regarding marriage. And not merely in the abstract or "sinfulness" in general, but getting them to give serious thought to their own specific sins.

If people aren't convinced they are sinners, and that they'll answer to God for their sinfulness, they will never feel the need for a Savior from their sin.

This is why evangelists like Ray Comfort ask people which Commandments in God's Law they have broken.

And in a corollary sense, we must never say/do anything that would give the unsaved the impression that we condone their sin, or view it as a petty issue, or a minor peccadillo.

2) We must be gentle/kind/tactful in the way we do that, not becoming harsh/self-righteous, but caring for their souls & seeking to bring them to the water of life, as Jesus did.

Divorce, today, is so common, & so many people live together without even getting married, that it might surprise you I'm even referring to this woman's lifestyle as sinful.

But X dealt w/ it as sinful in His conversation w/ her, seeking to bring her to repentance from it—which means that it really is sinful.

God's plan is for permanent/exclusive male/female relationships that are legally binding, & based on a solemn/public covenant.

Jesus said=> *“For this reason [that God created the human race to be male/female] a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh”* (Mt 19:5).

When Jesus said, “*the one whom you now have is not your husband,*” He was rejecting the notion that simply living w/ a person constitutes a marriage.

Biblical marriage is something very different from the casual & tentative relationships that the world promotes today.

Those represent a rejection of the biblical pattern in which 2 lives are permanently joined together.

Biblical marriage involves 1 man & 1 woman, choosing to unite w/ one another, so their lives will become blended/bonded in love.

When this commitment does not nurture growth in mutual affection, it falls far short of the blessedness God desires for men/women, but you still have a marriage. You don't have a legitimate reason for ending the marriage w/ a divorce.

On the other hand, where such affection exists & is continually growing stronger, you have one of the happiest/sweetest kinds of life possible on this earth.

It portrays for the world, X's relationship w/ the Church.

Eph 5=> “*Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her*” (5:25).

Biblical marriage also involves accepting certain responsibilities.

It's a commitment, to nourish/cherish/protect/minister-to one's spouse, more than anyone else in the world.

The marriage-mate doesn't ask, "What is my sworn duty? What have I got to do?" but "How can I bless you & make your life better?"

In the process, as these 2 people invest themselves in one another's lives, individualism gives way to oneness.

Where husband/wife keep separate bank accounts and take separate vacations, you still have a marriage, but not much of one.

In true marriage, there is a sharing of confidences a/w/a joys/cares/hopes/labors/sorrows/pleasures—lives.

These are precious truths, to be carefully nurtured, practices, and protected if marriage is to truly become what God designed it to be.

When the marriage-partners don't strive to blend their lives and build their relationship according to this model, the marriage often falls apart, souls are wounded, & people sin against one another.

Unfortunately, that's exactly what had happened (& had happened repeatedly) in the life of the woman at the well. And this was the sin w/ which Jesus confronted her, giving her an opportunity to confess/repent of it.

*** Acknowledgment**

[Verse 19]=> "*The woman said to Him, 'Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet.'*"

This statement by the woman signals a major change in her perception of who Jesus is.

- * In verse 9, she had viewed Him merely as a thirsty/exhausted Jew, asking her (a despised Samaritan woman) for a drink.
- * In verse 12, she seems to have considered Him a self-deluded individual who put himself on a par w/ the patriarch Jacob.
- * By verse 15, she was either trying to call his bluff, or she was beginning to take him & his words about living-water seriously enough to say to Him, “*Sir, give me this water.*”
- * Now in verse 19, she says, “*I perceive that You are a prophet,*” and the word “*perceive*” refers to the contemplation of something, w/ progressive understanding of its nature. Jesus’ having told the woman all about her own life, even though she had never met Him before, had brought her to the realization that He was at least a prophet. Before John the Baptist, God hadn’t sent Israel a prophet for over 400 years, so this statement was significant. She had never met a prophet, and yet she was calling Jesus a prophet.

The woman wasn’t ready to conclude yet that this Man she had met at the well was actually Messiah, but she was even beginning to consider that possibility.

In verse 25 she’ll say that, when Messiah comes, “*He will declare all things to us,*” and Jesus will have just declared all things to the woman about herself.

In verse 28, she will ask the men in the city, “*This is not the Christ, is it?*” & that will be after Jesus has specifically revealed to her that He is the Messiah.

More importantly for this woman herself, the statement in verse 19 signals her tacit confession to Jesus of all the sin in her life, that He has just described.

When she said, “*Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet,*” she was acknowledging that Jesus knew all about her sordid life because God had revealed the truth about her to Him. She was also confessing/admitting indirectly to the truthfulness/correctness of Jesus’ words; & therefore to her own guilt.

This was her moment of release from the burden of hidden sin.

She was no longer trying to mask it.

It was her moment of deliverance from hypocrisy.

This is the most wonderful moment in the life of anyone who ever becomes a believer=>

The moment he discovers that Jesus knows all about his sinfulness (every repulsive sin he has ever committed) and yet Jesus isn’t turning His back on him in disgust/rejection.

The person suddenly discovers the true meaning of God’s grace=> That God can love us in spite of His complete knowledge of our sinfulness.

This is the most freeing experience a man/woman can have.

X hates our sin so much that He died to cleanse us from it,
& yet that hasn't destroyed the love He has for us, in
His heart.

John doesn't tell us at exactly what moment the woman at the well believed in X as her Lord/Savior & became born again.

But what he does tell us, provides sufficient evidence that she did believe, because she did what new believers do=> told others about Jesus—others who also became believers.

Vs 39=> *“From that city many of the Samaritans [prob. in other cities of Samaria] believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, ‘He told me all the things that I have done.’*

Earlier, I mentioned the publican in Lk 18 who prayed, *“God, be merciful to me, the sinner.”*

At the end of that parable, Jesus said=> *“I tell you, this man went to his house **justified**...; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted”* (Lk 18:14).

Confession is a very humbling business, in which we put all our cards on the table before God, and openly acknowledge that we ourselves have no assets, just liabilities.

In a fallen world, anyone w/ nothing but liabilities is usually considered a liability himself.

But Jesus said this about those who humble themselves before Him, confessing their sinfulness;

Those who ask Him to forgive those sins, just as the
woman at the well asked Jesus for living water;
He said they are the ones who go home justified.
And they are the people who discover the joy of what
it means to be freed at last, from hidden sin.

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Text: John 4:16-19

1. Of all the freedoms we might cherish most, freedom from [12 guilt] should be at or near the top of the list.

Gen 32:11; Lk 12:2

2. Confession is the solution which brings freedom from [12 guilt].

Lk 18:13

3. Real, guilt-releasing confession pleads the blood of Jesus Christ as the only reason God should [16 forgive] one’s sin in response to his confession of it.

Lk 18:14

In John 4:16-19 the woman at the well’s confession is unfolded in four stages...

*** Prodding**

4. Jesus began by gently, tactfully prodding the woman to [16 confess] her sinful life to Him so He could offer her forgiveness.

[John 4:16]

Jn 2:25; 4:29

5. Ultimately, her sin had to be exposed because those who wish to drink the water of eternal life must confess and forsake their wickedness and receive God’s [14 pardon] of it.

Isa 55:7; Titus 2:14

*** Concealment**

Gen 3:12

6. Ultimately, concealment of sin never works because God [12 knows] everything about us.

Rev 20:12; Num 32:23

[Verse 17a]

7. This woman wasn’t ready to make a [10 full] disclosure of her sin.

*** Exposure**

[Verse 17b-18]

8. There is a wonderful kindness and gentleness in [14 Jesus'] words here.

Christ's example teaches us two lessons about evangelizing the lost...

*9. In sharing the gospel with others, we must confront their [8 sin].

*10. We must be gentle, kind and [16 tactful] in the way we do that, not becoming harsh or self-righteous.

Mt 19:5

11. Biblical marriage is something very different from the casual, tentative relationships that the world promotes today; two lives are [24 permanently] joined together.

Eph 2:5

12. When marriage-partners don't strive to build their relationship according to this model, the [18 marriage] often falls apart; that's what had happened repeatedly in the life of the woman at the well.

* **Acknowledgment**

[Verse 19]

Jn 4:9, 15, 19, 25, 28

13. Verse 19 signals her tacit confession to Jesus of all the sin in her life that [6 He] has just described.

Jn 4:39; Lk 18:14

14. Jesus said of those who humble themselves before Him, confessing their sinfulness and asking Him to forgive those sins, that they are the ones who go home [20 justified].