



The Weight of Unconfessed Sin

By Steve Gallagher

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

For weeks after January 18, 2004, 21-year-old Dan Leach was able to cover up and suppress the truth of what he'd done. Most likely he initially felt relieved that his "little problem" was behind him forever. But one can only imagine the inner turmoil and guilt that eventually began to press down upon him after he methodically and meticulously carried out the murder of his 19-year-old girlfriend. He believed she was pregnant with his child and made her death appear to be a suicide according to investigators in the case. Rather than take responsibility for his actions and prepare to become a dad, he chose to blot out two lives simultaneously so that he could be free of his burden and any embarrassment.

Fortunately, almost two months later, Texas authorities credited Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* with helping to solve this crime. After going to see the film, Leach came under heavy conviction and desperately "wanted redemption," as he reportedly stated to a close friend and pastor. So overwhelmed by the message of the movie, the young man saw no way out other than to confess what he'd done immediately. He made a decision to turn himself in and face the consequences rather than continue to live another day under the weight of this brutal crime.

"For My eyes are on all their ways; they are not hidden from My face, nor is their iniquity concealed from My eyes." (Jer. 16:17)

How many professing believers today standing in the pulpit, singing on the worship team or sitting out in the pews are lugging around a host of unconfessed sins? True, they may not have committed such a heinous act as the murder mentioned above, but are their hearts any different? Week after week they assemble together to exalt God but they are weighed down, their spiritual backpacks crammed with all sorts of idols and other hidden sins. Pride. Rebellion. Unbelief. Bitterness. Anger. Unforgiveness. Laziness. Lying. Greed. Envy. Gluttony. Gossip. Lust. Adultery. Fornication. Homosexuality. Pornography. Masturbation. Drunkenness. Substance abuse. Any of these works of the flesh can rob a soul of his inheritance in God's Kingdom (Gal. 5:19-21). So why aren't many who profess the name of Christ quick to confess their sins and turn away from them?

But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints; and there must be no filthiness and silly talk,

or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. (Eph 5:3-5)

Because they seem to be doing well outwardly and appear to be enjoying God's blessings, some "Christians" have actually become accustomed to carrying around their pet sins, the "little foxes" which have nearly devastated their vineyards (Song of Solomon 2:15). Sadly, these religious actors have become so snug and content with their walk with the Lord *and* their lives in this world that their extreme complacency shields them from the gentle, convicting voice of the Holy Spirit warning them to get their sin out. Obviously quite satisfied with their current spiritual progress, they don't see their need to repent, nor do they even detect the weight of sin which has stagnated their walk with the Lord. They comprise a congregation of backslidden and lukewarm professors.

'Because you say, "I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing," and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked, I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see. 'Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent. 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me. (Rev. 3:17-20)

Another group simply justify themselves and minimize their sins, insisting that they are not as bad as their neighbor. When they come under conviction, they are quick to say to themselves, "But I've repented to God concerning my past. It's behind me now—in the sea of forgetfulness. Besides I don't drink any more. I don't do drugs. I'm not out sleeping around. I'm a good person. I love God and He understands that no one is perfect." Just like the Pharisees of Jesus' day, outwardly they are close to being squeaky clean. But the truth of the matter is that they are still very much given over to sinful attitudes in their hearts—the secret place where only God sees. Because of this heavy load, their spiritual growth is retarded, and their hunger and passion for God is practically on Empty. As long as the bar is raised no higher than their present level of mediocrity, they won't ever achieve the spiritual momentum to soar like eagles (Isa. 40:31). Nor will they ever produce any substantial fruit for God's Kingdom or experience the peace and abundant life in Jesus that God has for them.

A third group of desperate souls are weighed down by their sins and are full of guilt, shame and condemnation. Like King David after his adulterous affair and murderous plot (Ps. 32:3-4), they are under heavy conviction but for some reason are unwilling to bring their sin into the light. Needless to say, they are most miserable! While God's hand presses down upon them, somehow they manage to erect thick self-protective walls to keep others from knowing who they really are. To further avoid exposure, they strive to keep up a good "Christian image" outwardly—always hiding behind a mask while carrying their hidden sin around with them. And worst of all, they are so loaded down that they aren't able to run the race to which they were called.

Despite their differences, each of the three groups described above are stuck spiritually under the weight of their unconfessed sin. In each case there is only one way of escape: Repentance. Sinners can bring their heavy burdens to the One who bore their sins on the old rugged cross. Jesus Christ, our blessed Savior, took upon Himself the sin of the whole world. Imagine the tremendous weight He joyfully bore for wretched sinners like us so that sin would no longer have dominion over us (Rom. 6:14)!

True repentance involves more than admitting one's guilt. It involves brokenness and godly sorrow leading to a willful turning away from sin to obey and please the Lord (2 Cor. 7:10). Because of the finished work of Christ at Calvary, every weight can be lifted off of a repentant sinner once such a genuine confession before God has been made.

If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us. (1 John 1:8-10)

To avoid becoming weighed down by sin—which tends to stockpile the moment we fail to guard our heart (Prov. 4:23)—our daily prayer should be, “Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my anxious thoughts; see if there be any hurtful way in me, and lead me in the everlasting way” (Psalm 139: 23-24).

Secondly, spending time in the Word of God each day, studying and meditating on Truth, keeps us from sinning against God (Ps. 119:9). It will direct us to lay “aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save [our] souls” and will help us to be doers of the Word, rather than mere hearers who only go into spiritual delusion (James 1:21-22).

Lastly, whenever the Holy Spirit convicts us of sin either through the Word, through a sermon, or directly through a person, we must be quick to repent. That is, we agree with God that the sin He's exposed in our heart is sin we've allowed to creep in and then we immediately turn away from it back to our Forerunner.

Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. (Heb. 12:1-2)

Steve Gallagher is the founder and president of Pure Life Ministries. He has dedicated his life to helping men find freedom from sexual sin and the abundant life in God that comes through deep repentance.

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