

Hide And Seek

Conquering Secret Sin

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I have not had the best start to this year's softball season. It is not that I have not played well, but I have suffered a few minor injuries. I am getting old and injuries do not heal as well or as fast as they used to.

Two weeks ago was probably my worst outing in many years of injury-free softball. We were taking batting practice, which we normally do when we begin, and while in the midst of that, my brother-in-law hit a sharp ground ball up the middle toward me, and I thought it was going to hop right into my glove. But I was wrong. It skipped, went right under my glove, and hit me squarely on the inside of my left ankle. I hobbled for a moment, but I was fine. I have handled this before, and so kept on playing.

A bit later, while scrimmaging, my side was up to bat, but I offered to play catcher since we did not have quite enough for two complete sides. We were having a pretty good inning, and the guy came around third base, and there was a play at home plate. The ball was thrown like a dart into home plate, and it was just like that ball going up the middle. I thought it was going to take a hop right into my glove, but it did not. It skipped, hitting me squarely on the inside of my left ankle—again! And, it was the same exact spot!

This time I yelled out because it really hurt. This was a double whammy, bruise on top of bruise. I hobbled over toward my wife to get some consolation, but then I pulled my sock back up, and went back out to play again. I am a die-hard. All this is what you do. You are a guy. You go out and play.

So, about an inning or so later, someone hit a line drive down the left-field line where I was playing, and I took chase. Remember, this is later in the same day. It was hot, and I was winded, and I was hobbled with my left leg not up to snuff anymore. My feet just did not lift as high as they used to, and there was a rise further out in left field where I was headed because of a former basketball court that is no longer there, but the rise in the ground is, and I caught my cleats in the grass, and over I went.

It could have been worse. I could have sprawled, which would have been bad, and there was all sorts of stuff on top of that concrete, and that would have been bad. But, I rolled like you are supposed to do in a situation like that, and I hit the concrete on my left side. I rolled over, stood up, shook myself off, and was okay. All I had was a slight cut on the

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outside of my left knee, and a couple of scrapes on my left elbow. I was fine, so, I just continued playing.

Well, that will be two weeks ago tomorrow. My cuts and abrasions are essentially healed. That double bruise on my left ankle is now just a yellow spot. I am a bit stiff there, but overall it is fine. However, what hurts is my left side—the one I fell on. Either I bruised my ribs and/or pulled a muscle in my chest. But when I look in the mirror, I cannot see any problem there. There is no bruising, or deformation, or inflammation that I can tell. There is nothing that I can see. But it hurts.

Even now, sleeping on my left side is a bit difficult. I have to be careful where I put my arms, but twisting my torso in certain ways is an invitation to pain. Picking up heavy things with my left arm is difficult also.

I am not telling you a story just for your sympathy. There is a lesson in all of this. It is true that I should make sure that I catch the ball, and I should make sure that I do not trip over my own two feet. But more importantly, I have realized in going through this in the past couple of weeks that the injuries that I could see, though painful at first, I could take care of and they healed up fairly quick. I got rid of them the soonest. But the lingering injury, the one that continues to hurt the most and the longest, is the one that I cannot see. It is inside me—out of sight. There are no outward indications that I am injured at all. If I had not stood up here and told you this story, most of you would not have known.

Open your Bibles to the Proverbs. Now, this may at first seem not to go with this right away, but I think after I discuss a few things, you will understand where I am going. In this passage, wisdom has been speaking. Solomon is telling us it is better to be wise, and it ends here with the way of folly, and talks about how foolish it is to get involved with sexual sins.

Proverbs 9:17-18 "Stolen water is sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant." But he does not know that the dead are there, that her guests are in the depths of hell.

What this is saying is that when we try to do things in secret which are not right, we often stumble without thinking that it is really going to hurt us in the end. To turn this a bit, most of us have skeletons in our past, skeletons in our closet, as we are known to say, and we would prefer that they stay there hidden in that closet too.

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I will confess one today for the sake of illustration. When I was nine or ten years old, we were living in West Columbia, South Carolina, and I was going to Pineview Elementary school. I tried to participate in my school's Christmas show. There! I have come clean! I thought I could justify this because I was going to sing a song that made fun of Christmas, so I signed up to be in a small group that was going to sing and act out, "All I want for Christmas is my Two Front Teeth." I even went to one of the after school practices. But, my parents soon disabused me of that notion, and I had to bow out as gracefully as I could, and my singing career was finished.

That was a pretty childish skeleton. It is one that I do not mind telling you about. It was from long ago when I was young and foolish. But, most of our secrets—our skeletons—are far worse. They are ones that we really do not want to get out, whether they are violent, larcenous, sexual, deceitful, spiritual, or whatever. Our skeletons are all different.

At the same time, though, when we did these things way back when, we probably thought that what we were doing was just great, and that it was maybe even beneficial for us. We probably did not slink around and sneak, but we just did it because it was advantageous—or so we thought.

This is where I came to this scripture in Proverbs, "Stolen water is sweet." It is something that at the time we felt was okay or good or pleasurable and memorable in a good way. Or we thought that we had gotten away with something at the time. And then, God called us into the truth. Hopefully most of your skeletons happened before you were called and converted. Of course, knowing the truth, knowing that the thing we did was wrong, we regretted it, and we realized the death that was in it, just as verse 18 goes on to say, "Her guests are dead." They are headed for the Lake of Fire if they do not turn around and go back.

But our acts—our skeletons in our closet—are part of the past. They are covered by the blood of Jesus Christ. They were forgiven by God when we repented and accepted His offer of salvation.

My main concern today is the same kind of concern I would have for my chest injury. The injury is still there. It is still painful, and it still needs healing. So, my question today is, "What hidden sins and spiritual wounds are we still hiding?" What about those spiritual sins and wounds that we are not even aware of that are in there causing problems?

In Psalm 19, David starts out looking at the Creation and the things God has done. "The

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heavens declare the glory of God," it says. And then he compares God's glorious creation to His glorious law, and shows that it is a wonderful creation also, and how much it helps us in our Christian lives. And then he says, in verse 12,

Psalm 19:12-13 Who can understand his errors? Cleanse me from secret faults. Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me. Then I shall be blameless, and I shall be innocent of great transgression.

When we talk about the subject of hidden sins, we often focus on the last half of verse 12, David's prayer to God to be cleansed of secret sins and faults. These are secret sins, faults, or errors of any kind that we have hidden from others, and even ourselves. Maybe we have done them in ignorance. David is asking God to forgive him of those many sins that he cannot name or number.

But, let us focus for a while on the first portion of verse 12, and the question that he asked, "Who can understand his errors?" When David asks, "Who can understand his errors," the first thing he thinks of is, "God, please clear me of these things; clean me up!" Why? What was on David's mind when he asked that question, "Who can understand his errors?"

I have three paraphrases of this question that I would like to share with you as we go along so that we come at this question of, "Who can understand his errors?" from several different angles.

The first paraphrase is: "Who realizes how much he sins?" Paul said in Romans 7:7 that he only knew sin by the law. When he looked into the law of God, it told him what sin was. So he said that he would not have known coveting was wrong unless the law had said, "You shall not covet." Our realization of our own sinfulness, in part, depends on how deeply we know and appreciate God's law.

Everybody knows that "You shall not commit murder." Everybody seems to know, "You shall not steal." They may not abide by them, but they do know them. Paul said that the Gentiles who were without the law of God, seemed to have parts of that law. They know that there are certain things that human beings should and should not do. We know this, so most people do not murder. Most people do not steal—at least not on the surface. But they do not understand all that those two commandments encompass. Jesus Christ tells us that when He comes with His ministry, as in Matthew 5, "The law says, 'You shall not murder.'" But then He says, "You shall not hate, you shall not say, 'You fool,'

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you shall not say, '*Raca*.'" He expanded it out to include how we treat our brother in more than just, "Bang, bang! You're dead!" It also includes our attitude toward them, and encompasses hate.

So, the more deeply we know the law, and the more we understand the principles that are behind them, the more conscious we are of our own sin. We could probably all say that we have never killed another person. We are clean in that matter. But, how many of us have gone through life so far and not hated someone, or not spitefully called a person, "You fool," or showed contempt as if they were the lowest thing on earth? When we understand God's law to a greater degree, we become aware of how much more sinful we are.

Then, when we really come to understand that the standard is not God's law, but the perfect character of Jesus Christ and God the Father Himself, we can see just how awful and unrighteous we are. With almost with every breath we take, we sin. We fail. We come short of the mark of Jesus Christ.

As we come to know more, the more we realize that we *always* fail to live up to the standard. David says, "Cleanse me of my secret faults! I wasn't aware of how much I was sinning!" How many of us realize how much we sin? That is the question.

The second paraphrase is: "Who thinks that what he does is wrong?" Who in his carnal mind thinks that what he does is wrong? That is the second way to look at this. We should all admit that we are not completely spiritual of mind yet. So, this applies to us, not just the unconverted people.

This angle has to do with self-knowledge and with human nature. We can, even now, blithely commit sin after sin without condemning ourselves even if we know from the law of God intellectually that such actions or words are sinful.

Proverbs 14:12 is a memory scripture along with Proverbs 16:25:

Proverbs 14:12 There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.

Did you catch that? There is a way that *seems* right. "Oh, this is okay; this is a good thing, even though the law says that it's a sin." The carnal mind says, "But, I am doing this for a good reason." We justify our actions and even our sins because we think that there is some good that is going to come out of it. We convince ourselves that doing

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something is acceptable, and so we come up with a boat-load of reasons why. We can say, "We're doing this thing because it's an 'ox in the ditch,' 'or an emergency.'"

We can say, "This situation requires it. There is just no other way for us to solve (whatever it is) without committing this particular sin—such as lying. "I need to lie to get out of this situation because it is for the greater good." Or we say, "Even though it is sinful on the outside, my intentions are good." It is an act of love that I am doing this." I mean, people kill with this kind of reasoning and justification. "It is good for all humanity that I pull this trigger pointed at the temple of Hitler." It is still sin, even though it might be an act of love for all humanity. Who gave you the right to do that? I just pulled that out of the air, but you understand what I mean. How can you justify doing anything like that? It is because we reason with ourselves and convince ourselves that it is the right thing to do, or that it is really in that situation that it is good. So we do it.

In reality, though, what we are doing is putting lipstick on a pig. Have you ever heard that expression? Even though you use much lipstick, mascara, earrings, and a nice party dress, a pig is still a pig. Sin is still a sin. Just because we make it seem nice, does not make it to be nice. It is still a sin. And, God is going to treat it that way. Turn to chapter 30 of Proverbs,

Proverbs 30:12 There is a generation that is pure in its own eyes, yet is not washed from its filthiness.

I think that we have reached a point like that today. We think that we have convinced ourselves through all kinds of philosophy or convoluted reasoning that what we are doing in turning this country or this world into what it is, is a good thing. "We are pure in our own eyes." But, Solomon says that we are full of filthiness and sin, and need to be washed just like that pig. If you have lipstick on that pig, and you dress it up real nice, and you put it out, it will find the mucky mud and mire because it is a pig. It is the same way with sin. Sin always has disastrous consequences no matter how we try to dress it up.

So under this heading, we have to plumb the depths of our motives and attitudes, and stifle our human nature before we can begin to see our hidden sins, because our human nature is going to try to hide those things from us. It is going to try to convince us that we are still in the right. What we have done is still good. And as much as we hate to admit it, we are all still full of pride and self-righteousness.

This is a major point of the book of Job. Job was a righteous man. He was just. There

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was not anybody like him in all the lands of the east. He was pure. It says in Ezekiel that Job is among the three most righteous men that ever lived up to that point—Job, Daniel, and Noah. He was a good guy. He did good things, and made the right sacrifices. He gave to the poor. He was always there at the work parties. He never held back when somebody needed help.

He was wise. People came to him from all over for his advice. Everybody understood that Job was righteous and favored by God. He thought that he was all right. Job said many times in that book, "How can anyone accuse me of sin? I haven't done anything. I'm pure. I'm righteousness. How could God punish me like this for all that I have done?" All the while, his buddies are saying that he must have sinned, and telling him to repent.

But, in the end, what God finally forced him to do was to compare his own measly worthless self to God Himself. Then Job learned very quickly how full of sin he really was. Even if he was a righteous man, even if he had done all these good things, Job was still full of sin, and had justified himself countless times. The real problem was his own pride in his own standards of righteousness which were far below God's standard. He had to show him that He was still way, way up there in terms of holiness and righteousness, and that Job needed to get off his "high horse."

Even a very righteous man, a good man like Job, is utterly black with sin when compared to the holy God. It is that deceitful heart of Jeremiah 17:9 that fools us into thinking that we are just fine, and we are doing okay; we are good people. But, the truth of the matter is that we have only taken the first steps toward righteousness. We have got a long way to go.

The third paraphrase of the question posed by David in Psalm 19:12 is: "Who can truly perceive the consequences of his sins?" We are blind to the ramifications of what we do. All we see is the here and now. We are very "present tense" people. And, I think that Americans are the most "present tense" people in the whole world. We just like "Now," and we are going to make the most of it. We are the best "seize-the-day" people. Rather than seizing tomorrow, we want to seize the now, and be real, and live in it, and enjoy it. You have heard all those phrases.

We have the hardest time reading the future. Other peoples do it better than we do. The Chinese are renowned for it—of looking many years into the future and planning their whole nation's course. Now I do not know how well it comes out, but at least they make the effort of looking forward and try to see how things are going to turn out, and trying to move their nation into a place of affluence and power by that point.

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We do not do that. We want what is happening now. And we want the benefits now. So we have the hardest time reading the future, and that means that we often cannot connect the dots between present actions and future results—not for ourselves, or for others.

Now we know, intellectually, that the fruit of sin is always evil, always ending in death. Paul reminds us of this in Romans 6.

Romans 6:20-21, 23 For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? [He answers his own question.] For the end of those things is death. . . . For the wages of sin is death . . .

We know all that up here in our minds. We can say that is a memory scripture. We all know it.

But, sin and the results, or consequences are usually so far removed from one another that we cannot correlate the two. We cannot see the sin as the start of what we get in the end. We are too happy about the sin, most of the time, saying, "Woo hoo! This is fun!" Or, "This will put me ahead!" And so we are all wrapped up in the now, and we do not see how it is going to come out at the other end, and how it is going to bite us.

When we say cruel words to people, we fail to realize that they might be scarred for years, or certainly at least cause a split or divide in the relationship. This is especially true if the words are uttered by parents to their children. They make a deep impression upon their children. False accusation or ridicule of a child can reverberate for decades, causing all kinds of problems, just because the parent got mad, or was frustrated about something. Gossip and slander easily ruins relationships forever. A secret one-time liaison can devastate a marriage.

Most of the time, we fail to appreciate or to consider the consequences of our sins. We just do them and give them no further thought. Here is an example of this very thing:

Haggai 1:2-11 "Thus speaks the LOORD of hosts, saying: 'This people says, "The time has not come, the time that the LOORD'S house should be built." Then the word of the LOORD came by Haggai the prophet, saying, "Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, and this temple to lie in ruins?" Now therefore, thus says the LOORD of hosts: "Consider your ways! You have sown much, and bring in little; you eat, but do not have enough;

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you drink, but you are not filled with drink; you clothe yourselves, but no one is warm; and he who earns wages, earns wages to put into a bag with holes." Thus says the LOORD of hosts: "Consider your ways! Go up to the mountains and bring wood and build the temple, that I may take pleasure in it and be glorified," says the LOORD. "You looked for much, but indeed it came to little; and when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why?" says the LOORD of hosts. "Because of My house that is in ruins, while every one of you runs to his own house. Therefore the heavens above you withhold the dew, and the earth withholds its fruit. For I called for a drought on the land and the mountains, on the grain and the new wine and the oil, on whatever the ground brings forth, on men and livestock, and on all the labor of your hands."

Now, put yourself in the place of the Jews in this passage. They had no idea that their daily activities were an affront to God. They were doing what came normally and naturally in life. They sowed a field. They worked on their homes. They went to their jobs at whatever craft or occupation. They did all these things, and yet God was angry as only God can get. They were working at actions that were normally not sinful, because God wants us to work, to plow and sow, cultivate and reap; He wants us to work and produce. But their very actions were an affront to Him. It was sin. They were going along in their daily lives normally, and they were sinning the whole time. Interesting, is it not?

Their priorities were backward. That is where the sin was. They were taking care of themselves and their livelihoods, while ignoring or delaying God's work. We must put this into a spiritual setting for ourselves. God even tried getting their attention by sending drought and destruction on them. And when He goes through there in verses 9, 10 and 11, He mentions just about everybody and all the activities they were doing.

He said, "I brought all this destruction on you. I was getting your attention the whole time. Why in the world do you think when you put all that seed in the ground and only got half back that I wasn't angry? How could you not see that? Did you notice that it wasn't raining? There wasn't even dew on the ground when you got up in the mornings. You were not producing anything even though you were working hard at it. Why didn't you make the connection between these things and something that you were doing wrong?"

God does not do anything without a cause. They could not see how their routine activities were bringing ruin upon them. They saw no linkage whatsoever between

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pursuing their self-interests and the devastating acts of God upon their land.

"Who can understand his errors?" David said. "Cleanse me of my secret faults." That is a hard one to get. I am not belittling the Jews any at all, because the carnal mind would have almost no ability to see the connection. We have a hard time seeing the connection, and many of us have been in the church of God with God's Holy Spirit for twenty, thirty, forty, even fifty years and we have a hard time connecting all the dots between the sin and the curse.

So, that is why David says, "Cleanse me from my secrets faults. I don't understand where I'm going wrong all the time." It really is hard to perceive the consequences of sin. Sometimes it is even hard to see the sin, especially when it seems like the thing we should be doing. But, skewed priorities can change something that is normally good into something that can produce a curse. God wanted His house built. He had a job for them to do, and they were not doing it because they were stuck on themselves.

"Who can understand his errors?" This verse in Psalm 19:12 is really amazing when you think about it like this—the quantity of our sins, our own human nature convincing us that our sins are good—because of our deceitful human heart, and our terrible inability to see consequences. We miss so much that is wrong in ourselves because it is hard; we are men and women. We do not have the mind of God yet. So, we need to have God clean us up.

This next passage runs along the same lines as this previous passage in Haggai. But, this is before all this, and is a warning from God. He is telling the Israelites on the East Bank that He is giving them a job to do, and that they had better do the job, and if they do not do the job, there will be consequences.

Numbers 32:20-23 Then Moses said to them: "If you do this thing, if you arm yourselves before the LORD for the war, and all your armed men cross over the Jordan before the LORD until He has driven out His enemies from before Him, and the land is subdued before the LORD, then afterward you may return and be blameless before the LORD and before Israel; and this land shall be your possession before the LORD. But if you do not do so, then take note, you have sinned against the LORD; and be sure your sin will find you out."

I had never really taken note of the context of this passage before now. I had known Numbers 32:23 for a long time because it is another memory scripture, but looking at

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the context made me aware of this similarity to Haggai 1. This was a job, a work that God had given the children of Israel to do. They were to go in and conquer the land. He said, "If you do this, then you're going to reap the blessings, and you can stand before me blameless," and of course, there would be honor and blessing. "But if you don't do this, it's a sin to you. And be sure,"—what does it mean—"your sin will find you out"?

To put it into the vernacular, it would surely come back and bite them in the rear end. It would hurt if they did not do the work that God had given them to do. They would reap the consequences of their sin. And they did. Oh, believe me, they did. They failed to subdue the land as God originally wanted them to, even while under Joshua, who tried to do so much. I mean, even Joshua was fooled by the Gibeonites. He was not perfect.

But because Israel failed to completely subdue the land, they had century after century of troubles and conflicts and wars, not to mention the social problems; and worst of all, they left the idolatry of the Canaanites in the land. It was that same idolatry that came back and became the primary cause for their destruction, captivity, and removal from the land. As James says, "Their sin became full-grown, and it brought forth death." It took several hundred years, but they were reaping the consequences of their failure to subdue the land through their whole history.

Early on, they had to face the various Canaanite tribes, and then the Philistines, and then Gibeon rose during David's reign where he made that stupid decision, and so on. The good kings had to constantly go in and tear down the high places, and burn the idols. But if those other peoples had not been there, had they been removed as God had intended for them to do, it would not have been nearly so bad. Their time in the holy land would have lasted far longer than it did. But, they had all those inducements to sin among themselves—all those bad influences. And so their sin surely found them out.

Psalm 10:11 He [the wicked man] has said in his heart, "God has forgotten; He hides His face; He will never see."

"He won't see that I just clubbed this old lady over the head and stolen her purse. He won't see that I murdered this person for the \$6.50 in his wallet." He does not consider God.

Psalm 10:13 Why do the wicked renounce God? He has said in his heart, "You will not require an account."

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"God won't consider me. He isn't going to watch for every little person. I'm on the fringes of society. He's looking at the king and all those others. He's not going to require an account of me, little ol' me. He's too busy."

Psalm 10:14 But You have seen [the psalmist says], for You observe trouble and grief, to repay it by Your hand. The helpless commits himself to You; You are the helper of the fatherless.

It says here that not only does God see, He avenges!

Jeremiah 23:23 "Am I a God near at hand," says the LOORD, "and not a God afar off? Can anyone hide himself in secret places, so I shall not see him?" says the LOORD. "Do I not fill heaven and earth?" says the LOORD.

"Hey! I'm everywhere!" He says. "Little ol' you isn't going to get away with anything. I see it all. I'm not a God that is way off. I'm not distracted by My projects. I see everything. I'm a God who's near at hand, right beside you. Don't do that, because if you do, you're going to get it."

The wicked man, it says back in Psalm 10, thinks that he is getting away with his crimes and his sins because God is not a factor in his calculations. The wicked simply dismisses Him. He simply forgets about Him. "God? Who're you? Think I'm a fool? Does God really care about what I do?" That is how the wicked think. "I can get away with it. No problem. All God is interested in is theology, right? He only talks to the Pope. He's not going to worry about what I do." So, the wicked just dismisses Him.

But God is a God who is near at hand, and is not far off. He sees. Moses writes:

Psalm 90:7-8 For we have been consumed by Your anger, and by Your wrath we are terrified. You have set our iniquities before You, our secret sins in the light of Your countenance.

We certainly cannot hide our sins, even our secret sins, because God sees them all. The picture, here in verse 8, when He says that He sets our iniquities before Himself, is a picture of a courtroom, and God is sitting as Judge and He is having someone read the sins—we are being accused. They are being set before God. One after another, they are being read off, and the reason why every one of them is there is because of, as

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it says here, "the light of Your countenance." God is so bright, His glory is so great, and His gaze is so perceptive that nothing eludes His glance—He sees all. And when He sees it, He notes it. All of the sins are there, set before Him, and He is about to make a judgment.

That is the picture that Moses is setting up here, of God, in court, ready to pass sentence. His penetrating omniscient gaze reveals everything. The wicked, the righteous—no one gets away with anything.

This next passage is what Solomon himself concluded. He said in verse 13 that the best thing we could do is to fear God and keep His commandments, and then he says why:

Ecclesiastes 12:14 For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing whether good or evil.

Someday, all our good deeds will be shouted all over the world, but unfortunately, if we do not repent of them, so will all our evil deeds. Jesus Himself said something similar to this.

Luke 12:2-3 For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known. Therefore whatever you have spoken in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have spoken in the ear in inner rooms will be proclaimed on the housetops.

That is scary! All those skeletons Jesus says, "I'll take them out of your closet, and shake them for everyone to see, and I'll clank those bones so hard everyone will notice." It is a real threat. Do you want your skeletons revealed? Jesus says that there is coming a time when He may just have to do that.

The whole chapter of Romans 2 is about God's judgment, and how righteous and fair it is. And after saying that there is no partiality with God, Paul says,

Romans 2:12 For as many as have sinned without law will also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law.

Romans 2:16 in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel.

There is coming a time when judgment will be made. I am reading these passages because I do not want us to get the sense that what I have said before is just Old Testament because we have been mostly in the Psalms, Proverbs and such, but they are repeated in the New Testament.

I Corinthians 4:5 Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one's praise will come from God.

I hope we deserve it. Trying to hide anything from God is futile. He knows. It is no wonder that down through the centuries men have supposed that God keeps a written record—an account book on each person of every sin that we have ever done. Either He or an angel is furiously writing down all of our sins, and smoke is flying from the quill because we have been doing so many. He is having a hard time keeping up. And then, as it says in Revelation 20, these books will be opened, and we will have to give an account of our deeds. That is the old, scary Protestant final judgment picture you see in the little tracts that they put under your windshield wiper in the grocery store parking lot.

But, God does not need books. He can see right through us. He has a perfect memory. He sees in us. He knows everything.

I think that we are all writing the record of our sins right on our own faces, as it were. The effects of sin are written in our minds and bodies—maybe even our wrinkles are somewhat the effects of sin.

Psalms 44:20-21 If we had forgotten the name of our God, or stretched out our hands to a foreign god, would not God search this out? For He knows the secrets of the heart.

If we had at any time turned away from Him, done something that we thought was out of God's view, we need to be disabused of that notion, because God is searching these things out. He knows. He sees everything. Even if we just had only the intent of the heart to do such a thing, He knows. We cannot keep anything from Him.

Luke 9:46-48 Then a dispute arose among them as to which of them would be greatest. And Jesus, perceiving the thought of their heart, took a little child and set him by Him, and said to them, "Whoever receives this little child

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in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me receives Him who sent Me. For he who is least among you all will be great."

He saw right through them as a man! There are maybe 18 or 20 times where it says that He knew their thoughts. He knew what they were asking. He perceived this. He could look into them. It says those types of things often in the gospels. People were not able to pull anything over on Jesus. He saw right through them.

The next passage is in John 2. Remember what this is? John 2 is right at the very beginning of His ministry, just after the miracle at Cana, and He had just been baptized. He goes to the wedding in Cana, does what He does, and then it says,

John 2:23-25 . . . many believed in His name when they saw the signs which He did. But Jesus did not commit Himself to them, because He knew all men, and had no need that anyone should testify of man, for He knew what was in man.

He has our number. The Jews were "dead meat" trying to argue with Him. He saw everything every time they would bring something up in order to trip Him up. He knew it every time. Once they started off into their direction, He had an answer for them that would slap them in the face. I have always been amazed by His ability to do that. And this is how He could do that. He saw every intent of the thoughts of their heart.

It says in John 5:22 that all judgment has been committed to the Son. That is why He came here, because this is our Judge that we are talking about. Our Judge knows us inside and out. He is the God of the Old Testament who sees all. He is the God who is near at hand, and not far off. He is the same God and the same Judge.

He knows us, and knows what is in us. He knows all our secret sins. We cannot get away with anything. He sees into our very hearts, and into every dark and tiny crevice. He knows what is in man. He knows how we try to justify ourselves, and hide things from ourselves, and others—even from Him. He knows how strong human nature is. He knows how deceptive Satan is. He knows how alluring this world is. He knows how weak, pitiful, hard headed, and hard hearted we are. He knows that we prefer the easy way, the smooth way, and that we will try to get away with it like little kids. He knows.

Hebrews 4 puts this all in one nice little bundle. This personalizes it to Jesus Christ.

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Hebrews 4:12-13 For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.

He knows, so why try to hide it? He knows.

Now, this exhortation in Hebrews 4 is in reference to Numbers 32 and also a portion of Joshua and Deuteronomy regarding the conquest of the land of Canaan. God had told them that they were to take the land. They were to enter their rest, right? The Promised Land is a type of the Kingdom of God, and it said earlier in Hebrews 4 that they had not entered that rest. Hebrews 4:11 is the transition from Paul's explanation of them not entering that rest, and our need to enter that rest, to this exhortation not to try to fool God.

Hebrews 4:11 Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience.

That is the same example of disobedience that the children of Israel did in not conquering the land—in not entering the rest, as God had commanded them to.

Today, in the church of God, we are not subduing another nation. We are subduing ourselves. It is as if we are the Canaanites—well, our carnal nature is like the Canaanites. The works that God has given us to do is to root out and conquer everything in us that does not conform to the image and character of our own Joshua—Jesus Christ, our King and Captain. We are, like the children of Israel were supposed to do, to search out every hiding place, under every rock, behind every tree, and in every cave, nook, and cranny of the land to get the Canaanites and their false idolatrous religion out.

If we find sin in ourselves, we are to bring it out into the light of day, and put it to the sword. Paul had just been saying, "Look! We've been raised to this wonderful height. We are hidden with Christ in God." Therefore,

Colossians 3:5-10 . . . put to death your members that are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons

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of disobedience, in which you once walked when you lived in them. But now you are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him . . .

That is our job! Like the Israelites, we must search out all sin and get rid of it—mortify it, put it to the edge of the sword, kill it. As I read the next passage, please think about the spiritual analogy to it. We need to think of these things in terms of the sin within us.

Deuteronomy 7:1 When the LORD your God brings you into the land which you go to possess, and has cast out many nations before you, the Hittites and the Girgashites and the Amorites and the Canaanites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than you . . .

And, is that not the case, that our sins seem mightier and greater than we are?

Deuteronomy 7:2 and when the LORD your God delivers them over to you, you shall conquer them and utterly destroy them. You shall make no covenant with them nor show mercy to them.

No compromises! No alliances! No mercy!

Deuteronomy 7:3-5 Nor shall you make marriages with them. You shall not give your daughter to their son, nor take their daughter for your son. For they will turn your sons away from following Me, to serve other gods; so the anger of the LORD will be aroused against you and destroy you suddenly. But thus you shall deal with them: you shall destroy their altars, and break down their sacred pillars, and cut down their wooden images, and burn their carved images with fire.

Deuteronomy 7:16 And you shall destroy all the peoples whom the LORD your God delivers over to you [that is the second mention]; your eye shall have no pity on them; nor shall you serve their gods, for that will be a snare to you.

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Deuteronomy 7:21 You shall not be terrified of them; for the LORD your God, the great and awesome God, is among you.

He is *in* us!

Deuteronomy 7:22-23 And the LORD your God will drive out those nations before you little by little; you will be unable to destroy them at once [and do we not know that!], lest the beasts of the field become too numerous for you. But the LORD your God will deliver them over to you [that is the third mention], and will inflict defeat upon them until they are destroyed.

Who is doing the work here?

Deuteronomy 7:24 "And He will deliver their kings into your hand [the controllers; the powers behind that—demons?], and you will destroy their name from under heaven; no one shall be able to stand against you until you have destroyed them."

What a promise! No one will be able to stand against you, until you have done the complete work!

Deuteronomy 7:25-26 You shall burn the carved images of their gods with fire; you shall not covet the silver or gold that is on them, nor take it for yourselves, lest you be snared by it; for it is an abomination to the LORD your God. Nor shall you bring an abomination into your house [it is getting personal], lest you be doomed to destruction like it. You shall utterly detest it and utterly abhor it, for it is an accursed thing.

I hope you get the analogy. What God did in sending the Israelites into the land with (as moderns will say) atrocious orders to kill and slay, are actually a lesson for us about what we are supposed to do with the sin in ourselves. Root it out! Get it out! It is an abomination, He says, because He lives in us. He does not want to dwell where there is sin.

As we wrap up, what is our response? This is the proper attitude we must have:

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Psalm 139:23-24 Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

You see, He is the One who is going to go in and destroy them for us. But, we must give God permission to come in and search us out to the last corpuscle for secret sins and abominations that we have not overcome.

You need to ask God to evaluate you, and reveal your innermost sins so that you can get to work on them. Now, remember to ask Him to be merciful and not to give us too much to work on all at once, and not to so overwhelm us with the depth of our sins so that we quail before them, wanting to give up. But, by the brightness of His countenance, He says, He will reveal our secret faults to us, alone, so that we can repent and seek forgiveness before there is a need to reveal them any further, or to anyone else.

To conclude, turn to Psalm 32:

Psalm 32:1-5 Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit [guile]. When I kept silent [speaking about his sins], my bones grew old [speaking about his relationship with God] through my groaning all the day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; my vitality was turned into the drought of summer. Selah [He is saying to think about how terrible it is to be cut off from God and afflicted by Him while He is trying to get our attention.] I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD," and You forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah

So, why suffer the hurts and the judgments of our secret sins? The best course of action that we can take is to acknowledge them before God, and seek His forgiveness and help in overcoming them, because if we do not, we are only denying ourselves the fullness of joy and mercy that God offers so freely.