

BE SURE YOUR SIN WILL FIND YOU OUT

—by Peter Hammond

“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”

Num 32:23

Sin thrives in the darkness. Selfish deeds dreamed up in the unreal fantasy world of night all too often prove to be foolishness when exposed in the full light of day.

“Though his hatred is covered with deceit, his wickedness will be revealed before the assembly.” Prov 26:26

“Nobody has to know”

If satan can deceive you into believing that no one can see your sin, then he can blind you to what everyone around you clearly sees to be the truth. In the darkness, in private, in the hidden recesses of our imagination, satan can whisper: “Go ahead and sin! Nobody has to know.”

This ancient lie, “nobody has to know”, lies at the heart of the belief that it is only wrong if you get caught. *“For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known.” Luke 12:2*

How can anyone contend that wrong is made right by no one seeing it? Even if no one else knows what you’ve done, how could that make it right for you to do what you know to be wrong? *“God will bring every work into judgement, including every secret thing, whether good or evil” Eccl 12:14.*

Yet, all too often the world tempts us: “It doesn’t really matter what you do. It’s all relative. Take what you want! Do what you choose! Behave in whatever way you want to! As long as nobody sees you, as long as you don’t get caught - who cares?”

Violating God’s covenant

“Nobody needs to know. Just do it!” That is no doubt much of what was going on in the mind of Achan. As God led Joshua and the tribes of Israel to enter the promised land, He gave instructions that there was to be absolutely no looting. Jericho was to be completely destroyed, except for Rahab and her family, who had hidden and protected the two Israelite scouts.

However, after the people of Israel had marched around Jericho, blown their trumpets, and watched as the mighty

walls of Jericho collapsed, one man, Achan, coveted the gold and silver he found in the rubble. He violated the covenant, which God had commanded the Israelites to keep. He stole and hid these items in the ground under his tent. When the Israelites were defeated in their initial attack on Ai, Joshua tore his clothes and fell face down to the ground. He sought the Lord with much grief as to why the Lord had abandoned His people.

Many suffer because of sin

The Lord answered: *“Israel has sinned and they have also transgressed My Covenant which I commanded them. For they have even taken some of the accursed things and have both stolen and deceived, and they have also put it among their own belongings. Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, but turned their backs before the enemies because they have become doomed to destruction. Neither will I be with you anymore, unless*

that no one would know, but his sin was exposed before the entire nation of Israel and recorded in the Scriptures for all generations to learn from. Achan thought that he could get away with it, but his sin was exposed and he and his family were destroyed as a result.

The wages of sin is death

Those who gamble with sin always lose. The wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23). In the end no one gets away with anything. *“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 heart...” 1 Cor 4:5*

Acknowledging God

Gehazi was the servant of the prophet Elisha. When the Syrian General Naaman contracted leprosy, his servant girl directed him to the prophet Elisha. When Naaman found the house of Elisha, he was frustrated when the prophet sent his serv-

“He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy. Blessed is the man who always fears the Lord...” Prov 28:13-14

you destroy the accursed from among you” Josh 7:11-12. Many times whole nations have suffered because of the hidden sins of a few. We often fail, not because God has abandoned us, but because we have abandoned God.

God sees everything

Early the next morning, Joshua had Israel come forward by tribes and Judah was identified. The clans of Judah came forward and the Zarahites were identified. The clan of the Zarahites came forward by families, and Zimri was identified. Then the heads of each family came forward and Achan son of Carmi was identified. Achan thought that no one saw. But God always sees everything. Achan thought

ant Gehazi out with a message. Naaman was offended that the prophet did not come himself. He was also offended by the instruction to dip seven times in the Jordan River. But when he was finally convinced that he should do as the prophet had instructed him, Naaman was miraculously healed of his leprosy.

Grateful to God for this wonderful healing, Naaman tried to present some treasure to Elisha as an expression of his gratitude. However, Elisha refused to accept any payment for his services.

God’s blessings cannot be bought – or sold

Elisha was communicating a vital truth, that the blessings of God cannot be »

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bought. But Gehazi pursued Naaman to deceive him that Elisha would be grateful for his gifts and then hid the two talents of silver and the new garments. No doubt Gehazi thought that he could get away with it.

Even when Elisha confronted him over it: "where did you go, Gehazi?" Gehazi lied: "Your servant did not go anywhere." Elisha responded: "Did not my heart go with you when the man turned back from his chariot to meet you? Is it time to receive money and to receive clothing ...? Therefore the leprosy of Naaman shall cling to you and your descendants forever." And Gehazi went out from his presence leprous (2 Kings 5).

The consequences of sin

Sin always takes us further than we want to go, it keeps us longer than we want to stay, and it always costs much more than

"God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practise the truth." 1 John 1: 5-6

we want to pay. Gehazi thought that he could get rich quick, instead he became a leper. "They do not consider in their hearts that I remember all their wickedness; now their own deeds have surrounded them; they are before My face." Hosea 7:2

Ananias and Sapphira

The Church was born in the fires of Pentecost. God poured out His Holy Spirit upon the 120 gathered in the upper room, and three thousand were won to Christ that day. Many of these new converts came from the far reaches of the Roman Empire.

As many stayed longer than they had planned, or budgeted for, in order to receive further discipleship before returning to their homes, the strain upon the hospitality of the early Church was extreme. Some of the believers sold

their property to provide for the urgent need to house and cater for these new converts, while they received discipleship training. After Barnabas sold a field that he owned and put the money at the Apostles feet, Ananias and Sapphira chose to sell a property, keep back part of the proceeds for themselves, but pretended to give all to the church.

No doubt they were doing what the Lord warned us not to do, which is making a public show of our giving in order to receive praise from men. Well, Ananias and Sapphira received far more than they bargained for.

Lying to God

The Apostle Peter challenged him: "Ananias why has satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit...? While it remained was it not your own, and after it was sold was it not in

your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men, but to God." Acts 5:3-4

"Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last. So great fear came upon all those who heard these things. And when his wife came in, not knowing what had happened, Peter asked her: "tell me whether you sold the land for so much?" She said, "yes, for so much". Then Peter said to her "How is it that you agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door and they will carry you out.

Then immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last. The young men came in and found her dead and carrying her out buried her by her husband. So great fear came upon all the church and upon all who heard these things." Acts 5:1-11

Your sin will find you out

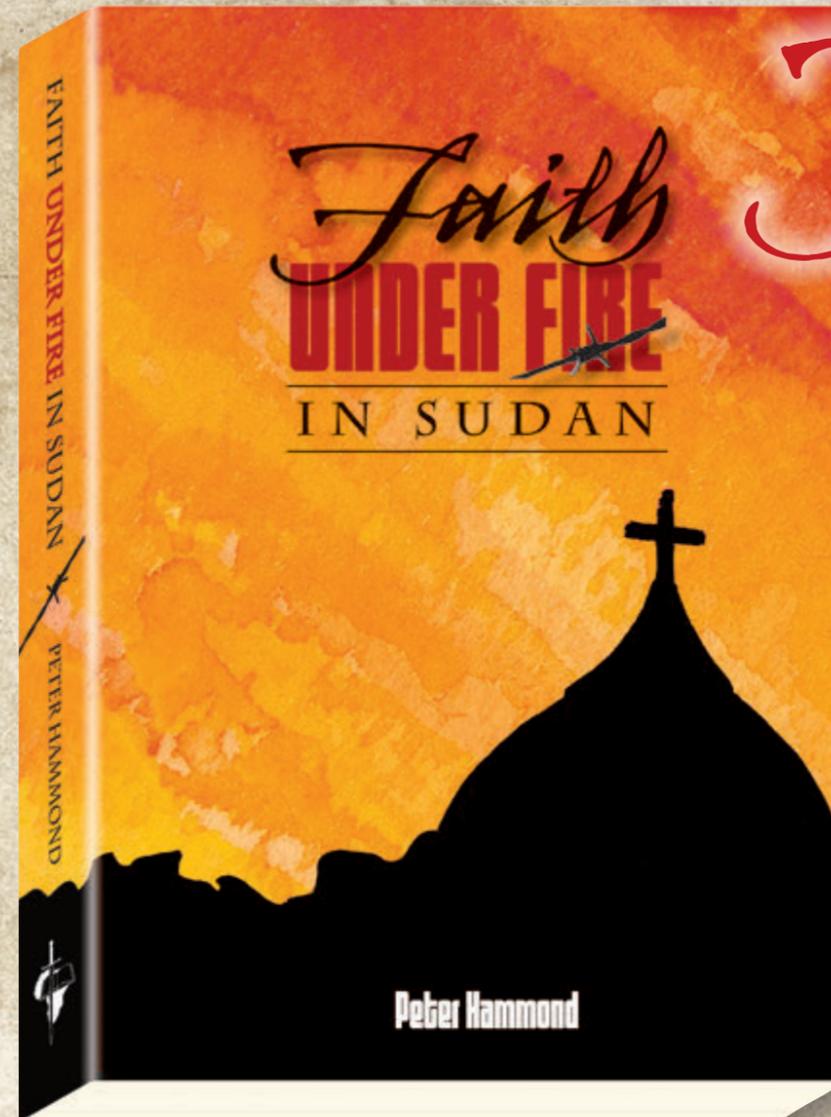
"He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy." Prov 28:13. The Scripture warns us: "Be sure your sin will find you out."

- Like the sin of Cain (Gen 4:8-10), it may be done in secret
- Like the sin of Esau (Gen 25:32-33), it may be done at the impulse of a moment
- Like the sin of Joseph's brothers (Gen 42:21), it may be years before its discovery
- Like the sin of Achan (Joshua 7:21), it may be well covered up
- Like the sin of Samson (Judges 16:16-17), it may be done reluctantly
- Like the sin of Ahab (1 Kings 21:7-20), it may be prompted by others
- Like the sin of Belshazar (Dan 5:1-27), it may be done under the influence of alcohol
- Like the sin of Herod (Matt 14:6-10), it may be the result of a foolish and rash promise
- Like the sin of Judas (Mark 14:10-77), it may have the approval of the authorities
- Like the sin of Pilate (Mark 15:15), it may be done to please the crowds
- Like the sin of the Jews (Luke 23:34), it may be done in ignorance
- However, we may be sure that our sins will find us out.

"God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practise the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin...

...If we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins He is Faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:5-10. ■

DR. PETER HAMMOND has pioneered missions into Mozambique, Angola and Sudan. Call 021689 4480 or see www.frontline.org.za.



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