

# The Presence of Sin

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[ 0 : 00 ] Before we begin tonight, I want to say a little something about this morning, how you embarrassed me.

! Yay! Thank you. I never know how to handle that. I can stand up and preach in front of people, but as soon as something like that happens, I don't know what to say or do.

And I want you to know that Sherry and I read all those cards this afternoon, and thank you.

Just really precious, very precious, and I appreciate that very much. And three years is really not a very long time, you know. But I, you know, I keep, you know, you keep saying thanks for being your pastor, and our pastor is what you're saying.

And, but you don't understand how much a joy it is. And also, because you've never been a pastor, and I'm sure I've said this before, you don't know what it's like to have a congregation that loves you and respects you and shows that so often.

[ 1 : 41 ] And follows leadership. I certainly don't do everything right and say everything right, and there's always more that we can do. But your willingness to follow and to respect and to love openly, overtly, boy, I tell you, pastors need that.

They really do. And I must tell you, and I say this all honestly, this is not a flattery on my part, but in all of my ministry, I've never had a church that loved me like you do.

I just mean that. And I came here needing that. You may have thought you needed me, but I came here needing you. And thank you so much.

Now I need to preach. I'm more comfortable doing that. And so now that I've said all those wonderful things about you, we're going to talk about sin tonight.

All right? I can't help it. This is what's on tap. So if you take your Bibles and open them to Hebrews chapter 4, I've been preaching, or really started last week preaching through kind of a series, short little series.

[ 3 : 01 ] Four messages in all, so after tonight we'll be halfway done with it. I know it's not very many verses of Scripture, but we can just simply spend some time on really basically each one of the verses.

But it's Hebrews chapter 4, verses 12 through 16. And I've entitled this series The Bold Approach, and keying off of what I believe is the key verse really in the entire chapter, but it's the very last verse, verse 16.

Let us therefore come boldly before the throne of grace. Now let me read the passage again.

Chapter 4, and well, I'm over here in Luke.

Okay. Let's get to Hebrews. Chapter 4, verse 12. And our key, our focus tonight is verse 13.

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.

[ 4 : 20 ] Seeing then that we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are yet without sin.

And then the key verse, Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Now, when the author of Hebrews... See, Tom's back here tonight, and my pastor, Brother Ralph here, said he didn't believe Paul wrote it either.

And so, so disappointed, Brother Ralph. You said that.

But, be it Paul, or Luke, that's one possibility, or Barnabas, or Apollos, I don't know who...

[ 5 : 43 ] Apollos, one of your picks? All right. All right, he's on the list. Or, by the way, Priscilla. All right. That's the feminist's pick for the author of Hebrews.

I would say that the church almost universally regarded Paul as the author until the early 1800s, but we won't go into that. anyway, what's that?

Okay, yeah. Someone did. So, all right, that's what I'm about to say. Whoever it was who wrote, let us therefore, meant something.

Meant, obviously, that when you consider the truths that I have just told you, just shared with you, the only sound thing to do, the only right thing to do, the only thing to do that makes any sense to do, is to come to God.

run to him, to come to his throne, his throne of grace. And so that's kind of what we're talking about here tonight from this passage.

[ 6 : 52 ] Now then, what are those truths that Paul says, therefore, should compel us to come boldly before the throne of grace? What are those truths?

Well, I've called them realities. They are spiritual realities, spiritual truths. And the first of these realities we looked at last Sunday night, and I called it the probing of Scripture.

Because of the probing nature of Scripture, and the effect of that in our hearts and minds and lives, we are compelled to run to God, to run to his throne of grace.

The probing of Scripture. That supernatural quality of Scripture. And it does. See, this book's not like any other book ever written.

It has a supernatural quality that it possesses. I'm talking about the written Word of God. A quality that enables it to actually penetrate deep, probe deep into the inner recesses of our being, our soul.

[ 8 : 04 ] And the passage, of course, that we looked at and allowed where this truth is found, this reality is found, and there is, is there in verse 12.

For the Word of God is living and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword. Piercing. I mean, all these words, you can just, they're very full of image.

And piercing, even to the division, dividing of soul and spirit and joints and marrow and is a discernor. That's the penetrating the power of God's Word.

The probing power of the Scripture. It discerns the very thoughts and intents of the heart. All right? That's what we talked about last week, the probing of Scripture.

And so, it's always compelling us to take the bold approach daily, often, and that being to come boldly unto the throne of grace.

[ 9 : 05 ] Jesus. Now, tonight, I want us to see this second reality that's taught in verse 13. A second, again, what I would call an unalterable truth that calls for some kind of specific response, and that specific response being to come to God for mercy.

That reality is not only the probing of Scripture, but second, the presence of sin. sin. The presence of sin. Because sin is always present, and we're never, ever completely away from it.

Because of the presence of sin, we're compelled to run to God, run to His throne of grace. That's the point. Verse 13, 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.

Implication being sin. We must give account. Have you ever hidden something from someone so that they wouldn't find it?

Have you? Well, we do it all the time. How about Christmas? Oh, Sherry said, I'm not going to say what she said. Chocolate. Because we don't want Jonathan to eat too much chocolate, Sherry hides the chocolate.

[ 10 : 39 ] Of course, everyone here at the church knows that I cannot say no to chocolate, but anyway. It wasn't what I had in mind. All right, Sherry. We've all done it. We hide Christmas gifts, you know, birthday gifts, things we don't want people to find until the right time, and we also hide, by the way, unbecoming parts of us.

Well, at least some of us do, you know. Certain blemishes and age spots and wrinkles and bald spots and, you know, so we try to hide some of those things, you know.

I'm always amused by some of these men. Look around here, make sure I'm not going to offend anybody. What, James?

No, no, no, no. But I remember, you know, Richard Land, you know who Richard Land is? He was at one time head of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Council Commission, SBCs.

Anyway, you know, every time I'd see him at a conference or sometimes he'd come and speak in Mid-America, it just seemed like the part on his hair, on his head, went further. It's like, you know, you know how they just kind of bring that hair over, you know, and there's just a little bit of hair left

and they just bring it.

[11:58] What are they trying to do? Well, they're just trying to hide their baldness. But what's the big deal, James? No reason to... I mean, James is a very handsome man.

He doesn't need to hide. But we do hide things. We, you know, maybe not some things that some other people do. We also hide family secrets sometimes.

They're just things we don't want to get out. And we even hide our feelings, don't we? Probably a lot we do.

Hide our feelings, our true feelings. We even hide ourselves when we don't want anybody to find us or see us. I heard a story about a preacher who made a visit to one of his, one of the ladies in his congregation.

She was an elderly lady. And so he went to the house and knocked on the door and no answer. So he decided, well, maybe she couldn't hear me. And so he went around to the side of the house and tiptoed very carefully through her flower gardens not to smash anything and kind of pecking on the windows and calling out her name.

[13:03] And still, no answer. And so he just decided that she wasn't home. And so he left a note on the front door and it was just simply, he just scribbled out Revelation 320, behold, I stand at the door and knock.

If anyone will hear my voice, open the door, I will come in. Well, that next Sunday, she, after church, the lady thanked the preacher for coming by and apologized that she didn't come to the door but that she was indeed there.

But she couldn't come to the door because she was taking a bath. And then she handed him a note and it was Genesis 310, I heard your voice in the garden and I was afraid because I was naked and I hid myself.

now, of course, the point of the passage, Hebrews 413, is that nothing is hidden from God. Absolutely nothing. Nothing is hidden from his view. All things, I mean, it's put in very strong wording, all things are naked to him.

[14:11] All things are naked and open to the eyes of him to whom we must give account. Now, I want to take then this passage and see this reality that is inescapable.

It's a reality that leaves us no other good option but to constantly run to his throne and to come boldly before his throne of grace.

And we'll give you four words that will help us understand this text. And some of these words are just kind of implied. And I'll explain what I mean.

The first word is absurdity. I think that's a good way to describe an implication here. Absurdity. I started to say Paul. The author of Hebrews. I really am trying Tom. I really am. The author of Hebrews wrote in verse 13.

[15:17] And there is no creature hidden from his what? His sight. Now, the word hidden, though, and I think in the King James it says, is not manifest.

Hidden, Hidden, probably a better word, easier for us to understand. And the word itself does mean literally to make obscure, to hide from view. But the form of the word here suggests this.

It's more than just simply putting something out of sight or something being out of view. The word speaks of a deliberate act. A kind of deliberate obscurity where we are taking deliberate action obscuring to obscure something, to hide something, to tuck something away, to dismiss something, to put something in front of it so it cannot be seen.

It's a deliberate obscurity. So he's saying what? He's saying when it comes to what God is able to see, absolutely nothing is hidden from his view, even those things that we deliberately hide from him.

And you say, well, I would never do that. Really? And the point I'm making is how absurd that is. That we could even think somehow that we could hide something from God that he would not see it.

[16:46] And so the point I want to make here is not that God, I don't think the writer is trying to make this point that God is able to see all things, that certainly is true.

God is able to see all things. But rather the point that I think he's making here is the absurdity of thinking that we could ever hide anything from God.

Kind of like a child, you know, playing hide and seek for the very first time, you know. Have you ever seen this happen with one of your children? And they don't really understand, you know, and so instead of hiding someplace, they maybe stand in the corner, put their hands over their eyes, you

know, thinking, well, I can't see them so they can't see me.

Now that's cute and that's a typical childishness, but, you know, we're childish in an embarrassing way, really.

Shameful way. Childish when we think that we could hide anything from God. We can't. And yet, in many different ways, that's exactly what we try to do. Hide our sins from God.

[ 18 : 05 ] And we deliberately, because it's not just, you know, haphazard, it's not just, you know, kind of we allow things, we take action, we deliberately try and hide our sin.

And how do we do it? Well, I'm going to give you actually nine ways that we do it. We call this the nine C's of hidden sin, because they all begin with C, all right?

We hide sin, number one, by concealing it. All right, that's the most obvious way, by concealing it.

And so we, maybe we sin in private, or, you know, or, you know, well, in private, and then because it's in private, and nobody knows, maybe we think nobody has guessed, nobody has seen, then we have some sense of comfort in the fact that no one knows about our sin, and so in our thinking, in our minds, then we've not sinned, because it's secret.

It's been concealed. No one knows, and how absurd that is, because of course God knows.

Number two, we hide sin by comparing it.

I think I'll list some things here that maybe you haven't thought about. So number two, by comparing it. That is, we compare our sin to the sins of others. And, you know, we can always find some bigger sinner, right?

[ 19 : 35 ] Someone who's committed certain sins that we would never commit, maybe even someone we know, and so we compare it to others' sins, and then what we do is we seek to kind of minimize or soften the seriousness of our sin, and pretty soon, it's just not sin at all, not in comparison.

Number three, we hide it by covering it up. Covering it. And what I mean by that is we cover it with good works. I think you would, you know, well, I've sinned, but if I just work harder at church, or read my Bible more, or do some good works, or something, that it'll somehow expunge the sins that I've committed.

It's really ridiculous thinking, but this is something that we sometimes do, and people do, covering it with good works. Number four, by calling it something else, calling it something else, we rename sin by calling it weakness, that's a favorite one, it's just a weakness, or maybe we call it a mistake, that's very common, not a sin, it's a mistake.

Right now, in our minds, of course, it is sin, but somehow the word mistake makes it less damaging, less severe, so it's a mistake, or maybe it's a sickness, and so what do we do?

We're calling it something else. Number five, we hide sin by canceling it, and what I mean is we just simply block it out of our minds and forget about it, just kind of put it aside, and soon forget about it, and so, you know, it's somehow not there anymore, because we've forgotten all about that, you know, that's past, that's done, we forget all about it, that's hiding our sin, and I'm convinced there are a lot of believers who have sinned that they have forgotten all about, and thank the Lord, He's so gracious that the Holy Spirit probes us, the Word of God probes us, and brings things to light so that we can deal with them, but we still, very deliberately sometimes, we'll just kind of, you know, cancel it out by blocking it out of our minds.

[ 22 : 06 ] Number six, by casting it off on someone else. it's my parents' fault, or it's my husband's fault, or my wife's fault, of course it's never the wife's fault, it's always the husband, right?

Did I hear amen? Is there an amen back there? You know, it's somebody else's fault, it's the environment, it's my culture, it's my upbringing, you know, I had a lousy father, or, you know, it's the government, or it's a chemical imbalance, you know, whatever, we kind of cast it off on someone or something else.

Number seven, we condone it, and this is really, really pitiful, this is really bad, we tell ourselves that it's all right, I mean, you know nobody's perfect, ever use that one?

I'm just a sinner, sinner saved by grace, well, I hope you are, but that's no excuse for sinning, and we just kind of condone it, you know, there's really, it's really no big deal anyway, you know, pretty soon it's just not sin anymore in your mind, so that's a way of concealing, hiding it, and number eight, we hide it by controlling it, and so rather than running to the throne of grace, rather than confessing our sin, repenting of it, and so forth, and seeking God's forgiveness and cleansing, then what we do is we try to keep it under control, we kind of use discipline on it, you know, and we're going to, you know, keep this thing from growing into a really big sin, sin, and then, you know, pretty

soon, because it is in our minds just a little sin, then pretty soon it's no sin at all, number nine, we hide it by changing it, by changing it, and this is where we redefine sin according to our culture, we could even use the word culturize it, of course I don't think that's a word, but we just blame it on the culture, what is culturally accepted, you see, is no longer sin, well we've been doing that for years, and so we make sin then relative to the current, kind of the current accepted norm of our culture, of our day, all right, now you can try all of those, you know, to hide sin from

God, you can try all those methods, and you might hide your sin for a time, you might hide it from others, you might hide it even from yourself, but you cannot hide it from God, that's what the scripture is saying here, there's no creature hidden from its sight, that is he sees all things all the time going on, and so absurdity, the absurdity of thinking that you could hide sin from God, the second word would be visibility, visibility, and this is very much like the first one, I mean, this explains the first one, all things are open and naked to the eyes of him, all right, so this passage is a proof text for a certain attribute of God, that being his omniscience, that God is the, he's God, he's the only true God, and he is the all-seeing, all-knowing

[ 25 : 56 ] God, visibility, God knows everything there is to know about everything, nothing excluded, he has perfect, absolute perfect, complete knowledge about all things, and listen, his knowledge is just as complete concerning future things as it is about past and present things, and God is not growing in his knowledge like we are, hopefully we are, God, to him, God is not getting new information because for him there is no new information, he's not learning anything, he's not discovering new things, he is omniscient, 1 Corinthians 13, 12, this brings it, brings it home to us and applies it to us, for now we see the Bible says in a mirror dimly but then face to face, now we know in part, then I shall know fully, but here's the part we need to get, even as

I have been fully known, God knows you fully, he sees all things and so here's what we need to understand, God sees perfectly all the things we don't want him to see, right, the Bible says in Genesis 6, 5, I'll just give you a few verses, God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth and that every imagination of the thoughts and of his heart was only evil continual, God saw all of that, Jeremiah the prophet spoke these words directly from the mouth of God, Jeremiah 16, 7, a couple of Jeremiah passages, Jeremiah 16, 17, for mine eyes are upon all their ways, they are not hid from my face, neither is their iniquity hidden, their iniquity hidden from my eyes, Jeremiah 32, 19, you are great in counsel and mighty in work, for your eyes are open to all the ways of the sons of men, to give everyone according to his ways and according to the fruit of his doings, so God can be just and a perfect judge because he sees all things,

God said through the prophet Ezekiel in Ezekiel 11, 5, I know the things that come into your mind, every one of them, that's scary, isn't it? Because see, we have the idea that it's the things we do that matter most to God, and yeah, he sees those things, but I don't know that we give it a thought most of the time that God actually sees what we're thinking about, we sin probably more in thought than we do in deed, in fact, we're quite pleased with ourselves if it goes no further than the thought, and we think somehow that's not sin, God sees every one of them, all the things that come into your mind, the Bible says of Jesus in John 2, 25, he had no need that anyone should testify of man, Jesus didn't have any need for someone to come and say, let me tell you what's going on in this man's heart, this woman's life, he didn't need anyone to testify of man, what man's like, or anything like that, for he knew what was in man, he knows what's in me, he knows what's in you, visibility, now, let's look just a little closer at how this passage describes this aspect of

God, he says all things are naked and then he has the word open, all things are open to the eyes of him, they're open to him, now, that's an interesting word, actually, in its origin, in the Greek language, the word originally meant this, and it's kind of strange sounding, it means to seize and twist the neck or throat, now, in your wildest imagination, would you ever thought that the word open originally meant that in the Greek text, let me say it again, to seize and twist the neck or throat, now, obviously, this is being used metaphorically, alright, God's not going to strong arm you and grab ahold of your throat and twist your necks and such, though sometimes, you know, if I were God, that's exactly what I'd want to do, that's not, it's a metaphor, and so what does it mean?

Well, the word, in its origin, had a couple of usages, and these are even more interesting, it was used sometimes to describe what happens at a wrestling match, and in these days, in old days, ancient times, in the wrestling match, where the victor, the victor is the one who was able to grasp his opponent's neck and overpower him, and then twisting his neck so that his face is exposed to the spectators, who in ancient times, were the judges, and then he would be the victor, when he

could get his opponent's face turned so that he was looking at the spectator, interesting, and that's what the word means, to open, the word was also used in a criminal trial, in ancient times, where the accused, when he's about to receive judgment, the accused would stand before the judge, and then someone would stand beside him or behind him, but with a dagger in his hand, and he would take the dagger and put it just under the chin, you know, the pointy part right on the chin, and pointing up, and so, you know, it would raise the face of the accused so that he would be looking in the face of the judge, he would be facing his judgment, rather than, you know, like you see in these days, you know, interesting, that's what it meant to open, all right, now again,

[ 32 : 02 ] Hebrews 4.13 is using this word metaphorically, in both of the usages that I just mentioned a moment ago, still the idea is face-to-face, a face-to-face situation, and so the verb came to mean to lay bare, to expose, to uncover, and that's exactly how we understand it from this text, even today, I mean, we know the importance of looking someone face-to-face, in order to find out whether or not they're telling the truth, that doesn't work every time for us, and we're fallible, God is infallible, but there is something about a person's face, and their eyes, and such, I learned this when I was a Walmart manager, and I had to deal with shoplifters, shoplifters, but mostly employee theft, and I'd sit down with these people, and interview them, and look at them face-to-face, and see their facial expressions, and eyes, and though I couldn't tell the truth from that,

I could have a sense that maybe they're not telling the truth, and I could be very honest and say, you know, your face tells me you're guilty, don't you want to tell me about it, and so we still have that same kind of thing, we understand that, the exposure of the face, rather than hiding it, and so here's the idea about hiding our sin, for God, it's open, open to Him, no matter where we go, you see, no matter what we're doing, no matter what we're thinking, we are always face-to-face with God, I mean, it's like He's right there, I mean, think about that, next time you're where you shouldn't be, maybe doing what you shouldn't do, carrying on a dialogue that's not wholesome, or whatever, watching something you shouldn't watch, just think that God's face is right there, we're always face-to-face with Him, see, we are open to

Him, and naked before Him, that makes a big difference, doesn't it, and so, so this is our God, and so, visibility, so there's absurdity, the absurdity of trying to hide anything from God, the visibility, and we are always face-to-face with God, who has perfect, a perfect view into our very souls, and then third, accountability, accountability, all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him, to whom we must give account, accountability, now, in the larger text, immediate text, the, of this passage, the idea is that one day, there will be a day of reckoning, specifically, in the larger text, it's a day of reckoning for the Jews, who refuse to enter their rest, they refuse the Messiah, there'll be a day of reckoning, a day of accounting for those who continue to reject the gospel of Jesus Christ, and there will be, but now, we can't apply this because in a big sense, there's a big sense in which the believer is also accountable to God, we continue to be accountable to Him, not for our salvation, because, you know, our sins are covered under the blood of Jesus, He paid it all, but that does not mean that we're no longer accountable to Him, through confession and openness to Him, and brokenness and repentance, we're accountable to Him for our sins, and so everything you do, everywhere you go, remember, constantly face to face with God, He sees, He knows, and we answer to Him, we give an account to Him, we're accountable to Him, now, let me ask you, and you need to think of this very seriously, just tonight, while we're on the subject, but tomorrow, as you're living out your day, do you think of yourself as accountable to God for what you do, where you go, what you say, what you're thinking, you should be, you should consider yourself, because you are, do you hold yourself accountable to God every day of your life, accountable for what you do or don't do, answerable for what you say, accountable for what you're thinking, all right, absurdity, visibility, accountability, and one more very quick, and this is kind of the application of it all, sensibility, sensibility, and what I mean is this, in light of the fact that God sees and knows everything, he knows all of your weaknesses, all of your failures, your impure motives, your hateful, hurtful thoughts and words, he knows your wicked intentions, he knows your pride, your secret sins, as well as the open sins, in light of that reality, the only sensible thing to do is to run to God's throne of grace, to come boldly to the throne of grace and obtain and obtain mercy, and obtain, find grace, the grace that you need, that's the whole, what it all comes down to, in light of all these things, the absurdity of trying to hide anything from God, the fact that he sees and knows all things, all the way down to the very core of our being, he knows it all, he can't hide it,

he can't alibi it, he can't soften it, he can't explain it away, you can't use words to make it seem a little bit better than it is,

[ 38 : 36 ] God knows all of it and in light of the fact that you are accountable to him, then the only thing that makes sense, the only sensible thing, is every day, throughout the day, come to his throne of grace, to find mercy, and the grace you need, and the good thing is we can come boldly, I don't mean proudly, but boldly, that is we can come with confidence, confidence that will not be turned away, not for any reason, will not be turned away, not for the seriousness of the sin, not because we maybe have not earned our way there, will not be ever turned away, because that way is made available to us by the blood of the Lord

Jesus Christ, so we can come confidently, and there's no reason not to, and there's every reason to come to his throne. Thank you.