

Entrust Biblical Masculinity Lesson 11: Masculinity & Secret Sins 3/23/23

Introduction:

1. None of us are above a fall.

The list of guys who have allowed themselves to succumb to secret sin is long, not short.

It seems like more and more men are falling in secret sin; far more than any of us would like to see.

As mere men, we ought not move past this too quickly. We may not be currently battling a sin from which another fell. However, external circumstances can change quickly, subjecting us to unprecedented weakness and temptation. If caught off guard, compromise becomes a short step away. We are no better than any of the fallen.

It's good for men to be a bit afraid of ourselves and our remaining sin. In ancient times, the skilled watchman had a healthy suspicion of the enemy, and consequently, did not let down his guard.

Similarly, the healthy Christian has a suspicion of himself; his flesh; understanding that his pride is the enemy.

1 Corinthians 10:12 Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall.

The man who thinks this can't happen to him is the one who is most in danger.

2. Every man must choose the suffering of refusing to compromise on Scripture, or the suffering of regret resulting from compromise.

This side of heaven, we will always be faced with temptation. Always. Our Lord taught us to pray against it (Matt 6:13).

We need to be on guard against Satan's temptations:

1 Peter 5:8-9 Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. ⁹ But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world.

And we need to be on guard against your own pride and self-deception:

1 Corinthians 10:12 Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall.

Facing temptation is painful. The resistance against giving in. The battle waging inside us between the Spirit and the flesh. The things we need to do to resist.

There is pain in temptation. But there is a greater pain when you give in.

➤ The Scripture suggests this:

- Better to suffer from the scourging of temptation now, than to suffer from the scourging of having given in to temptation later.
- It's far better for a man to suffering from Satan's attacks for **not** compromising on the word of God, than to suffer from Satan's attacks in which we did compromise.
- Either way, a man is going to suffer. It's just a matter of which kind of suffering he will choose: the pain of refusing to compromise on the word of God, or, the pain of regret for compromising on the word.
- No man will be able to escape both. Every man will be forced to choose one or the other.

3. **Hidden sins are only hidden for a time.**

Perhaps the most deceptive thought a man ever has is this: "I can keep this under wraps."

Numbers 32:23 But if you will not do so, behold, you have sinned against the Lord, and be sure your sin will find you out.

Hebrews 4:13 And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.

1 Timothy 5:24–25 The sins of some men are quite evident, going before them to judgment; for others, their sins follow after. ²⁵ Likewise also, deeds that are good are quite evident, and those which are otherwise cannot be concealed.

With every act of secret disobedient, you are planting seeds in a garden, which, with time, will grow into a rotten plant that everyone will see.

You cannot scatter thorn seeds and hope that a beautiful strawberry patch will result

Douglas Wilson: “God has promised to publicize things we would rather keep secret.”¹

John MacArthur would often say to the seminary students: “God will cover what we uncover and uncover what we cover.”

4. **Secret sins usually lead to unintended and unexpected fall-out cost.**

A secret sin committed that was intended to be isolated often leads to additional, fall-out costs that were not intended.

The plan to commit hidden sins often results in out-in-the-open unplanned consequences.

When the seeds of secret sin (even small ones) are planted, they will not remain a tidy, hidden domesticated plant.

Secret sin does things like offer itself as an attractive, relevant, and harmless little kitten. What it does not tell you is, as soon as you receive it, it quickly morphs into an untamable, rabies-infested tiger.

Remember Achan’s sin in Joshua 7

Joshua 7:20–21 So Achan answered Joshua and said, “Truly, I have sinned against the LORD, the God of Israel, and this is what I did: ²¹ when I saw among the spoil a beautiful mantle from Shinar and two hundred shekels of silver and a bar of gold fifty shekels in weight, then I coveted them and took them; and behold, they are concealed in the earth inside my tent with the silver underneath it.”

¹ Douglas Wilson, *Future Men: Raising Boys to Fight Giants*, 54.

A few things to notice :

- i. The progression of Achan's temptation and secret sin
 1. Achan's heart was already compromised long before he entered Jericho after the Lord overthrew the city
 2. He was already in a state of spiritual compromise
- ii. The consequences of Achan's secret sin
 1. After being faced with temptation, Achan **did** intend to take the mantle, the silver, and gold.
 2. However, he did **not** intend the consequences of his secret sin: 36 Israelite soldiers killed in battle (Jos 7:5) and his entire family executed (Jos 7:24-25).
- iii. A secret sin committed that *was* intended often leads to additional, fall-out costs that *were not* intended.

David planned to commit the secret sin of adultery with Bathsheba. He did not, however, plan to have Uriah killed.

A man clicks on the pop-up or that article. He did not plan to become enslaved to internet pornography.

A guy becomes a little less intentional about corporate worship and being held accountable in his local church. He does not, however, plan to become arrogant, blind to his own sin, wise in his own eyes, and supposing he was above having someone come alongside of him for reproof; and sees himself as righteous in a matter, though 5 of his regenerate friends say otherwise.

A guy gets involved in a questionable business deal because, he reasons, "It will give opportunity to financially bless his family, others around him in need, and his church." He did not, however, plan for additional biblical compromises and cover-ups to become necessary to make the deal happen.

A man fails to take one of the Lord's commands seriously, justifying it by telling himself, "Well, I'm doing pretty good in other areas of life." He did not, however, plan for his conscience to become imperceptibly

compromised such that he begins to rationalize the disobedience of other commands, which he used to be diligent and humble to obey.

This can happen with, for example, our teenage children also:

A young woman receives a beverage at a party from a nice stranger (“Can I get you something to drink?”), but she did not plan to have the stranger drop roofies into it ahead of time.

A young man takes a pill that his friends on his sports team call, Ritalin (“It just kind of relaxes you and helps you focus”), but he did not plan that the pill was laced with 2 mg of fentanyl.

5. Compromise in one area can weaken us and potentially lead to compromise in another, unexpected area.

For example: If we fear man, and fear people; and are intimidated to be faithful to speak the truth in love. And if we give in there, then that will weaken our resolve on the word of God in other, unexpected areas.

Why? Because is all about the muscles of faith; trust in the word of God; a loyal love to God that refuses to compromise on his word so as to be unfaithful to him.

So, if we begin to rationalize overlooking one of God’s commands in one area, then the rationalize muscle will become stronger.

6. We ought to watch out for a lust for significance in our hearts.

We ought to be content being obscure, nobodies in pastoral ministry.

We have tumbled into dangerous territory when those secret motivations of, “I should be praised. I deserve to be recognized,” creeps in.

Not being recognized for something will never be a threat to your spiritual health and humility. However, recognition and praise might be.

Proverbs 27:21 A man is tested by his praise

Obscurity is not a danger to faithfulness. On the contrary, obscurity may be essential to keeping a man humble, which is a safeguard. We ought to beware of wanting to matter.

On the other hand, some men will fall on the other side. When they are not recognized for something, they will harden their heart, and say, "I don't care." And they will withdraw a bit and their love can grow cold.

7. We should plug into a church that focuses on sound teaching and personal christlikeness.

Paul wrote 1 Timothy to instruct Timothy on what the church he pastored should be like. Much of what he commanded Timothy to do involved this: teaching a lot of Bible and focusing on holiness. For example:

1 Timothy 4:16 Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you.

Therefore, pastors ensure a measure of safety concerning their personal qualification, God's reputation, and usefulness for others' souls when they give themselves to sound character and teaching.

You find an interesting thing if you put all of the NT letters together. About three things are being said to NT churches: 1) Put faith in Christ. Trust in him and his amazing grace. 2) Live lives of great humility and holiness. Crucify your pride. 3) Be ready for the return of Christ.

8. A robust, sound theology of sanctification is central to spiritual longevity.

This is related to the previous point. Another reason that Paul exhorted Timothy to watch out for his own soul and holiness is because it would ensure spiritual and ministerial longevity.

We err if we suppose that one's anemic theology of sanctification is merely incidental to their moral failure. Sowing is not incidental to reaping. We cannot skimp on applying the robust biblical theology of sanctification and expect to be spiritually stable.

A study of Paul is telling when it comes to ministry endurance. If there's one thing we can say about the Apostle of grace, he took a rigorous approach to sanctification.

Though a fairly godly guy, his approach was to fight himself in order to prevent disqualification:

1 Corinthians 9:26–27 Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; 27 but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.

Even as an old, seasoned, and jailed man, he saw himself of needing to avoid spiritual cruise-control:

Philippians 3:12–14 Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. 13 Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

John MacArthur said, “The key to an enduring ministry is sanctification.” And the same is true for enduring spiritual health.

9. As men, we are usually safer erring on the side of self-denial and self-restraint.

The apostle of grace, Paul, said that he disciplined his body.

The natural tendency of the fallen nature is to push its variegated lusts. Especially for younger men, simply by virtue of not being old, our passions are stronger. They have not suffered as many moments of denial and starvation.

The unrestrained flesh will never ask for less gratification, but more. Similarly, our unrestrained flesh will never take less opportunities, but more. So, we do well to take a more restrained approach to our desires, including matters of conscience.

As John Frame writes, “Godliness always involves some sacrifice of personal freedom.”

Many professing Christians will call it legalism. God calls it honorable (2 Tim. 2:21-22).

10. Effort should be put towards inviting input from other godly men in our lives who see us regularly.

The godliest men I know; those professors and mentors of mine, are men who surround themselves in their local churches with uncompromising men in intentional community.

It's scary how men often stiff-arm this means of grace. You would think after the trail of pastoral carnage that we would be eagerly welcoming and requesting input from godly men in our lives.

Also, considering Proverbs contains about 30 verses which commend the welcoming and requesting of reproof. Though a man may say he wants to grow in wisdom and godliness, if he fails to request reproof, he deceives himself.

But, like Rehoboam, too many of us forsake the aged and consult with the young men with whom we grew up (1 Kings 12:8). We are looking for affirmation rather than sanctification.

"Listen to counsel and accept discipline, that you may be wise the rest of your days" (Prov. 19:20).

11. Suffering is God's loving safeguard for men.

How greatly most of us need our loving God to drop us on the mat now and then.

For us men, suffering is intended to be God's guardrail of grace. God-sent affliction blesses us with by the purging and preventing of pride (cf. 2 Cor. 12:7). There is a sense in which for us men, suffering is safer.

Puritan George Swinnock wrote, "A sanctified person, like a silver bell, the harder he is smitten, the better he sounds."

12. Growing fearful of God lends to spiritual health.

Our generation has been big on propagating the "Jesus loves me" mantra. And he does. And praise him that he does. Without God's self-initiating love towards me, I would be lost in hell forever. The love of God is our sacred doctrine.

But it is possible to abuse it. There is more to God than "God loves me." There is more to my relationship with God than "God loves me." Not every sin in our lives is exclusively due to a failure to sufficiently ponder how much God loves us. Perhaps some of our sins are attributed to thinking "God loves me" too much.

I wonder if my generation sometimes cries "God loves me" to distract ourselves. Perhaps other attributes of God are not fashionable enough in our day. Like the embarrassing uncle at a family reunion for whom we have to apologize, perhaps we are embarrassed to give necessary attention to God's other attributes. Perhaps

we cloak a repulsion for giving biblical effort to sanctification with “God loves me.”

Psalm 128 is helpful: “How blessed is everyone who fears the LORD, who walks in His ways. ² When you shall eat of the fruit of your hands, you will be happy and it will be well with you” (Ps 128:1-2). One key, then, to living the blessed life is fearing the Lord.

So then, men need to be scared of God. God made a universe (which astronomers currently estimate to be 91-billion light years in diameter) by speaking a few words. God controls the what, where, when, and how of everything at all times, simultaneously.

God knows every leaf in every tree in every forest. God has wiped out a full planet with a flood, during which time he was seated. God executed 185,000 stout Assyrian warriors for bragging. God’s just wrath will result, in part, in a 200-mile long, 4-foot deep river of blood (Rev. 14:20). God must punish one sin against him eternally. God became a man.

There is a sense in which men need to be scared of God. Not scared in an Arminian way, but Calvinistic.

The God of the Bible is a God of unspeakable majesty; so much so, that he rerouted his righteous wrath from his elect Bride to his impeccable Son. By election, redemption, and regeneration, sinners are sealed. Some people were broken off to give way for our election-inclusion. The ethical imperative of God’s love is man’s fear. “Do not become proud, but fear” (Rom. 11:20).

Self-confident independence is dangerous. We might ask Nadab and Abihu their thoughts on men approaching the ministry with a cocksure, cavalier style (Lev. 10:1-3). Life, godliness, and ministry are places of sobriety, not silliness; of holiness, not hip-ness. The position and pressure are too great for anything less.

When we witness pride, we should shudder. Especially our own. Thoughts of sin and abuse of liberties should invoke our trembling. And, trembling before God is a safe, holy place to be (Isa. 66:2). Getting to know the God of the Bible, then, will be our best accountability. May God help us.

More could be said regarding dealing with secret sin.

We all want to persevere in life, godliness and ministry, but it’s not a guarantee. Though the world, the flesh, and the devil are unceasingly against us, God is for us.

By his grace, we can persevere so that at the end of our lives, we may say with seasoned Paul, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith" (2 Tim. 4:7). I really hope that I can say that.

Conclusion:

Through it all, let us never forget the love of God in Christ. Motivated by his love, Christ stepped out of the bliss of heaven, and stepped under the righteous wrath of the Father due us.

1 John 4:10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

For those who put faith in Christ, there is now no condemnation. There is no better news than that.

For those who may find themselves in secret sin, the fabulous news is that there is always a merciful Savior who welcomes sinners to be forever cleansed in his shed blood. By looking in faith to Christ, not our works or tears or pledges, we can rest that we are declared righteous on the basis of His righteous life, substitutionary atoning death, and victorious resurrection.