



Standing Tall Against the Fear of Skeletons in the Closet

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Introduction:

This morning we will be looking at standing tall against the fear of skeletons in the closet. Dr. Tom Seigel lent us a skeleton this morning so we have a visual throughout this message. This is a very real fear – the fear of someone finding something out about us that we are ashamed for them to know. So often there is guilt associated with this fear as well. The term “skeletons in the closet” originates from one of the tales of Blue Beard who was a pirate. Before he went on one of his trips, he gave all the keys of the home to his wife and told her she had access to the entire house, except for the closet at the end of a long corridor. Curiosity got the best of her, and one day she unlocked the door, only to find stuffed in there, all the dead bodies of Blue Beards former wives.

There are two common threads in most of our fears – a loss of control over our circumstances and a loss of hope. Isn't that the reason people are afraid of being found out? Their destiny is in control of others – and they don't have hope that if someone finds out their secret, things will ever be the same. Isn't that why many people are afraid to fly? Their destiny is in control of others and if something goes wrong, there's little chance of survival. Isn't that why people are afraid of getting Alzheimer's disease? We would have no control over our lives, and there is no chance of getting better.

Here's a story that illustrates these two threads. Two explorers were on a safari when suddenly a ferocious lion jumped in front of them. “*Keep calm,*” one explorer whispered. “*Remember what we read in that book on wild animals? If you stand perfectly still and look the lion in the eye, he will turn and run.*” “*Sure,*” replied his friend. “*You've read the book, and I've read the book. But has the lion read the book?*”

This week I read about Sir Arthur Doyle, the creator of the famed fictitious detective Sherlock Holmes. He once played a terrible practical joke, by mailing an unsigned letter to 12 prominent men. The letter simply said, “All is discovered. Flee at once!” Within 48 hours all of them had left the country—GUILTY!

What a terrible trick to play. The men who received this letter thought that someone had discovered the skeleton in the closet.

Guilt is closely related to fear, and we will do almost anything when it comes to guilt. That is why while the possibility of feeling guilty may not stop us from doing something wrong, but once we have done something wrong, we will do almost anything to avoid being found out.

Guilt can weaken and destroy. It can produce depression which hangs over our head. It can make us feel unclean, soiled and worthless. Guilt can even produce physical illness. It did so to King David. After David sinned, he writes this in Psalm 32:3 – “my bones grow old through my groaning all day long.”

In looking at this fear this morning, we are going to consider some incidents from the life of King David. He was King of Israel. God had placed him in that position. He was the youngest of several boys, skilled in being a shepherd and a musician playing his harp. He was strong and without fear when it came to skills of protecting and fighting. Yet David did things out of fear and guilt that show us the wrong way to deal with sin.

There is only one way to get rid of the penalty of our sin and the guilt of it and that is through confession and repentance.

When we do something that is against God's word or against His law, generally we don't want anyone to know about it. What I'm about to say may be a scary thought to someone this morning, but if you weren't aware of it, God sees and knows everything. In spite of that knowledge, God loves and is tender and compassionate.

He knows we are but dust. He knows what we are guilty of and the fear that it brings to our hearts.

I love the story of five-year-old Johnny, who was asked by his mother to go into the pantry closet to get a can of soup. He didn't want to go in, saying, "*It's dark in there and I'm scared.*" His mother tried to encourage him by saying, "*Don't be afraid, Johnny, Jesus will be in there with you.*" When Johnny opened the door and saw how dark it was, he stuck his hand in and said, "*Jesus, if you're in there, would you hand me a can of tomato soup?*"

Let's look this morning at some choices that King David made, which caused him some guilt and fear and how he responded.

Text: II SAMUEL 11-12

I. We hide in fear because:

- A. We are afraid of God's response to our guilt or sin.

David knew the law. There was no way he could not have known that he was flirting with lust. He had to know that what he was doing was wrong when he inquired about Bathsheba.

Scripture tells us this - **James 1:13-15** - When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; ¹⁴but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. ¹⁵Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

God is not pleased with sin. In fact sin is a barrier in our relationship with God. If we sin, we have a high priest, one who makes intercessions for us. We will experience the consequences of sin, but God will forgive us and not hold the penalty for it against us if we confess it to Him.

1 John 2:1 - My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense, Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.

Even our thoughts are known to Him. So if you fall into the trap of temptation and sin, don't hide it. Bring it into the light of the truth of God's word and expose it.

- B. We are afraid of disappointing others.

In the story of King David, we find out that there were some things he hid. David hid his lust. He hid his act of adultery. He hid the knowledge of Bathsheba's pregnancy. He hid his act of placing Uriah at risk and ultimately Uriah's death.

If David had been accountable to someone, and admitted his wrong lust to start with, things would have been different. He was afraid of disappointing others. Often we find it hard to face the truth that our heart is above all else deceitful and desperately wicked.

Now the issue becomes more complex because sin was not repented of and confessed.

Bathsheba came at his invitation and David slept with her and she got pregnant.

Then David felt he had to hide that sin, by bringing her husband, Uriah, home from the battlefield. He reasoned that Uriah would sleep with his wife, and then people would think that Bathsheba was pregnant because Uriah had slept with her. When Uriah didn't

sleep with his wife, David felt it was necessary to come up with another plan to keep his sin covered. He told Joab to put Uriah at the place in battle where the fight was the strongest and then withdraw. David figured in that way Uriah would die and he could legally take Bathsheba to be his wife. How cruel to make Uriah carry orders to Joab that would end his life.

Joab did as he was told. Uriah was killed in battle and Bathsheba mourned for the loss of her husband. After the time of mourning was over (v.27-28), David brought her to his house and she became his wife. She bore him a son. *But the thing David had done displeased the LORD.*

When Nathan the prophet came to David and confronted him with his sin, David repented and confessed his sin (II SAM 12:13).

David was condemned to die, because under the law the punishment for adultery and murder was death. Nathan told David that the Lord had taken away his sin. David would not die but his son would.

What a scheme. It seemed like it worked, but all along I am sure David was afraid of what would happen if someone found out what he had done.

Fear can keep us from enjoying the blessings in our lives. Fear can exaggerate the size of problems. A German proverb says, "*Fear makes the wolf bigger than he is.*" Fear can affect our ability to function. Fear can immobilize us. Those who saw the movie, **Saving Private Ryan**, will remember the one soldier, who was so overcome by fear, that he couldn't fire a gun that would have saved the lives of his fellow soldiers. Fear can cause us to do things that are harmful to ourselves or are displeasing to God. Fear of failing a course can lead a student to cheat on a test. Fear of change can lead people to attack those who advocate doing things differently. Fear of being found guilty can lead people to shred documents or to commit suicide.

II. How to stand tall against fear of skeletons

A. Admit they are there – be honest about them. Proverbs 20:27 – we have a conscience; we can't hide from ourselves.

Psalm 32:3-5 - When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. ⁴For day

and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer. ⁵Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD," and you forgave the guilt of my sin.

B. Accept responsibility for them.

Psalm 51:3 - For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me.

C. Ask God to forgive you of the past.

1 John 1:9 - If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

Proverbs 28:13 - He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy.

What does God want to do with my guilt?

1. Forgive me instantly – **Isaiah 55:7**. Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon.
2. Forgive me completely – **Col. 2:13-14**. When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, ¹⁴having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; He took it away, nailing it to the cross.
3. Forgive me repeatedly – **Hebrews 7:25**. Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.
4. Forgive me freely – **Ephesians 1:7**. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace.

D. Be accountable to others by confession.

James 5:16 - Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.

Conclusion:

If you are hiding something, no doubt you are struggling with fear. Anything in your life that you are trying to hide from God or others is probably wrong. Bring it into the light. Admit it, accept responsibility for it, and ask God to forgive you of it. By doing this, you will stand tall against the fear of someone finding skeletons in the closet, and most of all you will have a clear conscience between you and God.