

**"MASKS: What are you hiding behind?"**

**MASK= something that serves to conceal, hide or disguise**

**You may be saying or thinking "I'm not wearing a mask...I'm not hiding anything." Maybe you are, maybe you're not. That is between you and God.**

**Read 2 Samuel 11 some time and learn about David. He is a man whose life is filled with sin, rebellion, hypocrisy and corruption. Yet later he turns his life around and writes many of the Psalms like Ps 32.**

**David tried to hide his sins until the prophet Nathan calls David out. David tried to cover it up and mask his sins by lying, denying, etc. Yet he is called a "man after God's own heart".**

**-based on this we are all "after God's own heart!" If a man after God's own heart is hiding behind masks of sin, how many of us are?**

**I have never seen facebook, twitter, my space, etc because I have been incarcerated 38 plus years, but I know many of you have. Now we do have tablets so let us use these as an example.**

**Do we put things on our tablet that put our best face or even our false face or our masks forward with smooth words, outright lies, make ourselves desirable, or even just fool our own families much less strangers?**

**There are some who won't leave our dorms without make-up. Should we even say glitter---it is exclusive gold around here☺ just joking but do we use it as a mask? Do we want people to comment on or see our glitter instead of our behaviors, faithless choices, or faults which we all have?**

**Is there a gap between who you are and what you do? What gets in the way of us listening to the Spirit? What makes us short-sighted?**

**Romans 12:2 (The Message) Take your everyday life—your sleeping, eating, working, and walking around life—and place it before the Lord as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is best things**

**you can do for Him. Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking.**

**I make excuses how about you? An excuse is a reason stuffed with a lie!!**

**David wrote Ps 32 and others after he seduced Bathsheba, wife of his loyal soldier, then had his soldier killed, tried to keep her pregnancy a secret, the child died, etc.**

**Do we really think we do things in secret against God? Betray a friend, cover up our sins with lies, and smile while we know we have cheated, lied, and made choices we know are wrong?**

**James 4:17 (The Message) In fact, if you know the right thing to do and don't do it, that, for you, is evil!**

**Proverbs 18:20—"A man's moral self shall be filled with the fruit of his mouth, and with the consequences of his words he must be satisfied whether good or evil."**

**If we read Ps 32 and many other psalms, we see David's story ends in God's infinite mercy and forgiveness but only because he truly repented, confessed his sins and turned his life around making Godly choices. He did not get it all right but his heart was right.**

**Paul, who wrote 2/3 of the NT teaches salvation by grace through faith... Eph. 2:8 (NIV) "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith..."**

**David wrote his psalms when sins were covered by animal blood sacrifices. Today our sins are no longer simply covered but removed forever. The Hebrew word for forgiven—"naw-saw" means lifted off. The guilt we hide behind must be lifted off our souls.**

**Take Halloween for instance-- dress up, get candy, etc. Kids and adults hide who they are in fun and ready to trick people, scare people, and get some candy.**

**Are we sitting here in church today doing the same thing behind our masks tricking people? If we want to make a difference in this**

**world we have to be faithful, don't cheat, and don't speak one message and live another. Sometimes, people watch the way we act more than listen to what we say.**

**Take a deep breath, we are about to read Galatians 5:19-21 (NIV)**

**The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality; impurity and; debauchery, idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions, and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.**

**Gal. 5: 19-21 (THE MESSAGE) It is obvious what kind of life develops out of trying to get your own way all the time: repetitive, loveless, cheap sex; a stinking accumulation of mental and emotional garbage; frenzied and joyless grabs for happiness; trinket gods; magic show religion; paranoid loneliness' cutthroat competition; all-consuming yet never satisfied wants; a brutal temper; an impotence to love or be loved; divided homes and divided lives; small-minded and lopsided pursuits; the vicious habit of depersonalizing everyone into a rival; uncontrolled and uncontrollable addictions; ugly communities and more. If you use your freedom this way, you will not inherit the kingdom of God.**

**Are we hiding behind some of these?**

**Immorality is the English word for the Greek word "porneia" which also pornography comes from. Do we prostitute ourselves so people will like us, love us, give us material things, and make us fit in? Do we have sexual relationships with more than one, or just because it is the thing to do? Sex with people we don't know really? Sex with people we don't even like?**

**Sorcery is occult, witchcraft, magic, tarot cards, etc. Many pagan practices require these but not if we are Christians.**

**I have had conversations with people about these saying they can do both. Here are verses concerning this: Lev. 19:26-27, 31, 20:6**

**Deut. 13:1-5; 18:9-12 Rev. 21:8; 22:15 I Chronicles 10:13-14**

**Ex. 7:10-12,22 and 22:18 Ezek. 13:18**

**Read Acts 8 about Simon the wizard and Acts 19:11-20 about witches coming out of the woodwork**

**Let's move on- strife, jealousy, and many other things come out as anger most of the time, are we stuck in a mask of bitterness, jealousy, anger, envy?**

**I know a mask I have worn is hedonist! This means we feel the sole purpose in life is our pleasure. Some even assume there is no life beyond here, no truth beyond today, no purpose beyond our own pleasure, no divine factor—saying things like "who cares, I may be bad but so what?" "What I do is my business"**

**In Romans 1:18-23 we learn that ignoring God leads to a downward spiral. We lose out standards, our purposes in life, our worship and it is evident we enjoy that here.**

**Are we hiding behind a mask of little faith? If we are not sure God answers our prayers, then we are! If we are praying with unforgiveness or hatred in our hearts, we are not approaching God sincerely—the Word says to forgive your brother, come in prayer with no grievances. Mt. 5: 23-24 is one example of this.**

**Something I hide behind is "I'm okay, all is fine" and while I can't share with everyone, I can be honest with God.**

**We love the song "grave clothes" here. Some believers have the maturity to help free us from our grave clothes but there are others we choose to hang around that keep handing them back to us.**

**Some things may seem minor yet envy, lying, addictions lead to separation from relationship with Christ and each other. We put on our "cool masks" thinking we have to sacrifice something we enjoy or like. The irony is we make a lot of sacrifices when we are not in the will of God. Look where we ended up!**

**Do we ask "if I show people the real me, will their arms be open or run away?"**

**When we truly come to Christ, He can turn our masks into the beauty of being a new person in Christ. We don't have to clean ourselves up before coming to Christ. We can't do it anyway? The part we can do is be real, be honest in our confessions, repentance and our hearts. If we love Jesus, He will change us everyday.**

**COME AS YOU ARE—WE ALL NEED THE JESUS MASK REMOVAL SERVICE!!!**

**This may sound crazy as I stand here with a life sentence serve out waiting for my miracle...I am free in Christ, we are free in Christ if we choose it. I thought I had lost everything when the parole board said serve out and I still pray for release just as the poem I wrote that Kelly read, yet I have come to realize that **SOMETIMES GOD MAY PERFORM A MIRACLE ON OUR HEARTS AND MIND BEFORE HE EVER DOES OVER OUR CIRCUMSTANCES!****

**While our masks may hide things from others, they can also mess up our lives. We can't see or feel God when sins are gradually destroying us.**

**Our sin masks have led us to prison, into addictions, abusive relationships, wrong relationships, etc.**

**Some sin masks are so powerful and effective, we sit here right now and doubt God even cares or exists!!**

**Look at the news, heck walk across this yard...it is time to be our real selves and fulfill the purposes for our lives.**

**Don't turn a blind eye to the hurt we cause!**

**Will we leave our masks at the cross today?**

**Will we be a light in this dark place? Will we lay it or at least some of it down and let God work in our lives?**

**It is not what we say on our knees or what we say to people everyday. It is about what we do on our feet, the life we live daily that God wants, people see and we look in the mirror and see ourselves!**

**Proverbs 15:9 (NIV) The Lord detests the way of the wicked, but He loves those who pursue righteousness.**

**THE MESSAGE—a life frittered away disgusts God; He loves those who run straight for the finish line.**

**Perhaps we have old or new wounds. We were abused, our mate cheated, a friend betrayed us...part of us is broken, other part is bitter. Part of us wants to cry and the other part want to fight. All of us have a fire burning and in the flesh it is anger, but in the spirit it is the need for a true Father.**

**We are left with a decision..."Do we put the fire of anger out or heat it up?" Do we get over or get even? Do we release or resent? Do we let our hurts heal or turn them into hate?**

**This may sound harsh, but we are not made of steel, we are made of dust! This life is not crowned with life, it is crowned with death... and we get to choose which death..with Christ or without we have a destination.**

**God's thoughts are not our thoughts, not even in the same neighborhood. We are thinking preserve the body...He wants to save the soul. We dream of raising money...He dreams of raising the dead. We avoid pain...He wants to use pain to bring us closer to Him. We say I want to do some living before I die, have fun...He says die to Him so we can live. We love what rusts...He loves what endures. We rejoice when we have earthly successes...He is happy about our confessions. We show our friends, children the Nike sign and say "be like Mike" and God wants us to point at the cross, a crucified carpenter with bloody lips, torn side, and asks us to "be like Christ."**

**The consequence of sin is not just a bad day; it is a dead soul eventually. The sign of a dead soul is clear...poisoned lips, cursing mouths, feet that walk into violence, and eyes that don't see God.**

**Perhaps your mask is a childhood memory. Will we remain controlled by it? Think about this...spiritual freedom comes from the spirit. Our parents may have given us our genes but God gives us**

**grace. Our parents may be responsible for our bodily scars, but God can take charge of our souls. We may get our looks from our mother but we get out eternity from our Father.**

**If we come to Him without our masks, He will give us what our family did not, what our dysfunctional relationships cannot; stop looking for life in all the wrong things.**

**Proverbs 28:13(NIV) Whoever conceals their sins does not prosper, but the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy.**

**THE MESSAGE You can't whitewash your sins and get by with it; you find mercy by admitting and leaving them.**

**If we say we are saved but nothing changes in our lives, something is wrong!!**

**Let us grow up in our behaviors but remain childlike in our attitudes of trusting God.**

**The word says nothing can separate us from the love of God (Romans, 8:38-39) once we stop playing church or pretend in chapel but when we truly are in Christ.**

**Can anything make Him stop loving us? I think we forget some things:**

**He spoke our language, slept on the earth with us, felt our hurts. The maker of sight and sound sneezed, coughed and blew his nose. You wonder if He knows how you feel? Think about Him as a kid in Nazareth—walking to school, the toddler at Mary's table---- that is God spilling His milk. You really question if He loves us enough to take off and get rid of our sin masks? Our answer is on a splintered cross, on a craggy hill, nailed, stabbed, bleeding, covered in spit and soaked with our sins. He died our death and lives our resurrection....that is how much He loves us. Will we live loving Him?**

**[RAP #2] "Take off your mask"**

**I don't like the phrase "jailhouse religion". I believe God can and will use any and all circumstances to bring our hearts to Him. We let God in; develop a deep relationship with Him while incarcerated. Praise Him that He brings goodness to us in here. Please don't let anyone put down what God is doing in your life or be ashamed to praise Him.**

**\*\* I want to be so full of Jesus that if a mosquito bites me, it will fly away singing "There is power in the blood"**

**\*\* Sometimes God allows or even puts Goliaths (problems) in our lives so we can find our David within us. He used a sling and stone, we may be one prayer away from the answer but did we pray?**

**\*\* The Bible should be stored in our hearts not on a shelf!**

### **Sharing Thoughts With You**

**This prison has been my home so long-I've tried to do it well**

**Still pray every day to leave-just when I can't tell.**

**Wish I knew an hour and minute-I could depart**

**I keep faith that leaving-is written on God's heart.**

**This world of prison is a place-I don't want to stay**

**But years keep passing-and hours slip away.**

**38 plus years feel like-a heavy chain**

**Wish I could do some days over-just can't erase the pain**

**Old mistakes try to cast long shadows-even if confessed**

**With all my heart I hang on-I'll be out of here and blessed.**

**I pray I make a difference-here in this prison**

**Know I can if to God-I do listen.**

**Daily walking with Him-keeps me alive**

**May sound crazy but serving out life-with Him I thrive.**

**RAP # 1 "Truth be Told"**

**Lie number one...you're supposed to have it all together**

**Just smile and tell people "never better"**

**Lie number two...everybody's life is perfect except yours**

**Keep your messes, wounds and secrets behind closed doors**

**Truth be told is rarely told now**

**We say we're fine I'm not broken now**

**When it's out of control and you know it**

**Don't know why it's so hard to admit it**

**When being honest is only way to fix it**

**There's not failure no fall no sin He doesn't already know**

**So let the truth be told**

**There's a sign on this door "come as you are"**

**There's doubt cause if we lived like it was true**

**Every Sunday morning there would be a fully packed pew**

**Don't we say the church should look more like a hospital?**

**Safe place for sinner, scared and the prodigal**

**Can I really stand here unashamed?**

**Do I know God's love won't change?**

**Oh God, if really true, let us be bold**

**And let the truth be told**

**RAP #2 "Take off Your Mask"**

Take off your mask...so you can see the right way  
Take off our mask...to face a new day  
Take off your mask...let tears flow from your eyes  
Take off our mask...knowing God will provide  
Take off your mask...know hope is not gone  
Take off your mask...Jesus you can lean on  
Take off your mask...don't give up  
Take off your mask...just look up  
Take off your mask...know you're not alone  
Take off your mask...God's still on the throne  
Take off your mask...you can believe  
Take off your mask...His changes situations suddenly  
Take off your mask...stand in faith and pray  
Take off your mask...He will make a way

**PRAYER**—I pray that the Holy Spirit will give us eyes to see the God who has made a way to forgive us of our sins, remove our sin masks, and that we would see Jesus as the one whose blood makes a way for us to enter God's very presence.

I pray the Holy Spirit will give us eyes to see the God who longs to live with us and provide us a way to live with Him. I pray we would see Jesus as the ultimate whole grain, peace offering who freely gave Himself to bring us into His glorious presence.

I pray the Holy Spirit shows us the God who deals with the penalty of sin and its effects on our conscience and world. I pray we all see and know Jesus is the only one who can truly heal both.

I pray the Holy Spirit would give us eyes to see the God who is always with us to make us Holy through Jesus. I thank Jesus for being the final sacrifice who perfectly obeyed God's commands, wish and will of God., who spilled His blood for us, we can approach God boldly, not because of our goodness or accomplishments, but because we know that Jesus perfectly represents us before God.

Lord, You have been our stronghold throughout our prison time. You have loved us when no one else has. You have heard our desperate pleas time and time again and answered us. You have provided comfort when there wasn't any. We are weak Lord and sometimes doubt where You are. We tell ourselves that you don't care. Feed us Lord and make us strong reminding us of Your blessings when we want to sin. Pick us up when we fall and fill us even when we don't deserve it.