

CONFESSION OF SINS

I John 1:9

INTRODUCTION:

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. The clear teaching concerning the confessing of sins by Christians is one of the most neglected doctrines of this hour. Such confession is taught in the Scriptures. Why should we then be ignorant and prejudiced.

There are two main objections in the minds of those who are critical of the confession of sins. One, a protest against the public confession of sin - better dealt with in private. Second, a denial that neither public or private confession of sin is necessary.

The objections to both of these may be met by Scripture -- the necessity of the confession of sins, to parties concerned. Many times it attributes the unwillingness of the person to put right serious matters regarding adjustments.

I purpose today to set at rest in your mind the uneasiness about it. Let the circle of the offense committed be the circle of the confession made.

In other words, secret sins should always be secretly confessed. Private sins should be privately confessed. Open sins should be openly confessed. Sins between the individual soul and God alone are defined as secret sins.

There are some however who prefer to pay somebody else to do their confessing.

There are others who like to confess to a priest and let him do the confessing for them. The same is true when people want to pay a pastor to do their witnessing for them.

Bishop Steven Neill told of Oxford students that had never understood the meaning of the cross until he heard an Indian Christian evangelist tell the story of the prodigal son in a market place in South India. The evangelist pointed out that when the prodigal revolted against the husk of the swine, he was sorry for himself. But scarcely did he understand the cost of forgiveness. Even as he walked his weary way home, repeating to himself, I have sinned against Heaven and in thy sight. He did not understand the seriousness of his offense. Even when his father rushed out to meet him during the welcome-home banquet, he did not fully understand. It was not until some days afterwards that the prodigal noticed that his father's hair had turned white, in his absence. Then he appreciated the cost of forgiveness.

To be as practical, and at the same time as down to earth as I possibly can, in helping you this morning to understand your confession of sins. So that even a child might understand this important matter - so important to God and to you. I am going to take and use some very specific things and conditions. I want to talk to you about specific confession. Responsible confession. How to make it thorough. The private confession. The open confession. Now we get on with it.

→ I. Specific Confession 7

Charles Finney, a most scholarly Presbyterian evangelist many years ago wrote --

a revival of religion may be expected. When Christians begin to confess their sins to one another. At other times, they confess in a general matter as though they are only half in earnest. They may do it in eloquent language. But it does not mean anything. But when there is an ingenious breakdown and a pouring out of the heart in confession of sin, the flood gates will soon burst open, and salvation will soon flow over the place.

This principal of a specific confession is clearly taught by Jonathan Goforth, he was a Canadian, a leader of a great movement in Korea. It can be found in the records that in every awakening, in every generation, and every country that has experienced the moving of the spirit. Confession of sins must be specific and not general.

At the convention this week, a young man from Richmond who had been enrolled in the university there, had been on drugs, had peddled drugs, and eventually was living out in the country, and had been on a four day trip finally came to the place he said that I must go to suicide or to prayer. I decided, he said, to go to prayer and God came in. He confessed how that he had poured out his sins to God and how God had changed his life.

Lev. 5:5 - Clearly teaches and it shall be when he shall be guilty in one of these things that he shall confess that he has sinned in that thing.

It costs nothing for a church member to admit in a prayer meeting or in a church meeting, that I am not what I ought to be.

It costs no more to say I ought to be a better Christian."

It does cost something to say I have been a trouble maker in my church."

It costs something to say I have had bitterness of heart towards certain
leaders to whom I should definitely apologize."

It reminds me of the story which I heard of a church in which they brought in for one service a talking horse. They advertised this meeting that they had a horse that could talk. And would be present in church. So they brought the horse in that Sunday and the man in charge asked the horse how many commandments there were. And the horse stomped out ten times on the floor. The second question was how many apostles were there in the New Testament. And the horse stomped his foot twelve times. And then the third question the man asked the horse, how many hypocrites are there in this church. And he said the horse went into a dance.

Now while this is true in the human heart, these attitudes towards sin which can be described as general, but all acts of sin are particular and should be confessed in a particular way.

A sinner might be overwhelmed by so many specific convictions of sin, that he does not know where to begin. He should begin with his besetting sin, about which he will feel most convicted.

The exhortation to confess our sin is clearly progressing, if we keep on Confessing our sins.

II. Responsible Confession

We have touched briefly on specific confession - now we come to make this a responsible confession. Let me illustrate it with Joshua 7:19 (Achan) a soldier in Joshua's army disobeyed military orders and divine commands by looting silver and gold and clothes. Divine blessing was withdrawn. The armies of Israel tasted defeat at the hands of a small enemy force. Now by lots, they located the man who had sinned. And here is what the verse says.

My son, give I pray thee, glory to the Lord God of Israel. And make confession unto him, and tell me what thou hast done. Hide it not from me.

Confession was first due to God against whom the sin had been committed. But it next became due to persons affected by the sin. For the blessing of God had been withheld on account of one sinner. Achan made a responsible confession.

In 1949, ethel College in Minn., they had a revival - but it did not start until after sin had been confessed in a responsible way. They were having noonday prayer meetings of the students in behalf of their unconverted fellows. The President of the group did not attend many of the meetings. He was pre-occupied with his wife who was in the hospital with their first born. Someone told the leader of the group in the revival that the President of that group had only been married five months. And this bothered the other students. And of course public confession of pre-marital relationship seemed unnecessary. But he should have confessed this in leading the group. But once he confessed his sin - there were those who were ready to re-nominate him for the job. He never did confess his fault and the judgement of God was unavoidable and revival could not come.

→ III. Thorough Confession 7

Proverbs 28:13 - I think clears this up for us. "He that covereth his sin shall not prosper, but who so confesseth and forsaketh them, shall have mercy."

Once the conviction of sin has been quenched, there is a tendency of the sinner to cover or to bury anything that remains unpleasant in his memory.

Now the work of the Holy Spirit is to reveal such things. It is a good way to illustrate this -- when you are going through Customs - the Customs Officer inspects your baggage. And on a trip when we were coming back from Cuba some years ago a lady in the group appeared to be trying to smuggle through all sorts of things for her relatives. And the Customs Officer began to search all her bags. Bringing to light all sorts of things that had been hidden, forgotten, or both. So it is with conviction.

The Proverbs link confessing and forsaking.

Some confessions are not thorough - they are too general. They are not made for the persons concerned. They neglect completely the necessary restitution. Or they make no provision for a different course of conduct in which this sin is forsaken.

It is not enough to announce that one has cheated. He ought to make restitution. He ought to seek the teacher concern.

It is not enough to admit that one has been a thief - the stolen goods should be taken back.

It is not enough to confess that one has been malicious -- the malicious falsehoods or slanders ought to be confessed to the person wronged.

It is like going to a Christian endeavor consecration meeting. And everybody saying (we were failures.) And (Christ is not a failure.)

So long as I am not specific and have made no real attempt to break the power of the besetting sin - I will get nowhere.

You remember Joshua said, I know what I am going to do. I know what my house is going to do - we are going to serve the Lord. Now some of the people immediately said, we will serve him too. Joshua said, no you won't - you have said that before.

And it was not long before you were dancing before a golden calf.

So it ought to be thorough consecration. And the deep conviction of your hearts ought to be confessed. This is not something that you have to think up If you have to think this up today - then you might as well forget it.

IV. Private Confession 7

As we climb the ladder here from specific, to being responsible, and to making it a thorough confession - now we want to consider the matter of private confession. Matt. 23:4 - the confession made by an individual to and individual is distinct and

is different from other confession. It is clear that Jesus said in this text, "so if you are bringing your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother and then come and offer your gift.

Most Christians display a preference for confession in secret before God even concerning matters which involve other people.

To confess to God, seems to them, to be the easiest way out. If offenders were really conscious of the presence of God, even secret confessions of private sin would have effect. But what this text says, most offenders merely commune with themselves instead of making contact with God.

In the words of Jesus it is clear that sin involving another person should be confessed to that person. He refers to the Hebrew sacrifice, an offering accompanied by a direct confession of sin, to God - for willful or inadvertent transgression. It is underlined then that it is not enough to confess the sin to God alone, but to any person hurt thereby it.

Now a person can be hurt in various ways. Someone may offend another person directly, as in stealing from him. Lying about him. Or striking him. In such a case the weight of the confession falls upon the offender. And a simple private confession may be made.

Two people may agree together to commit sin or to participate in sin. The offender first convicted should confess his guilt to the other. Denounce the deed and trust his confession to awakening a sense of guilt in another person. Then carefully proceed to make right any wrong that they have afflicted upon a third person.

For example, two students together may break school discipline. I think the convicted student should first confess his guilt to his fellow offender. Telling him that he intends to confess to the authorities his part only in the wrong.

Then there are sins against sexual purity. When more are involved. In fornication here, defined as unchastity between unmarried man or woman - the convicted person should renounce the sin in his partner and make sure that the temptation is never repeated.

I think in the matter of adultery - between married persons - the convicted person should urge the other to get this matter made right.

And this should be done to avoid unnecessary damage to marriage and to those involved.

A sinner may offend someone who is not a party to the act by consent. To use offensive language requires an apology to all parties.

This same thing applies when a person loses his temper, to all those who witness it - he needs to confess that he has been a bad example.

Now one might think that the initiative belongs to the sinner rather than to the offended. I think certainly the responsibility for confession is to sinners. But in matters involving two Christians, the initiative in reconciliation belongs to the

more spiritual - even the offended.

If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault. Between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. If he refuses to listen to the church, let him be to you as a heathen."
Matt. 18:15-17.

⇒ V. Open Confession

Now we have talked about specific confession, being responsible with that confession and thorough with it, and then we noted private confession. But at this point, let us deal for a moment with open confession.

There is definite exhortation with open confession in the Scripture. Now no limits are mentioned. But there are prohibitions as to whether or not it is going to be insincere, or vicious, or profane confession. Common sense tells us that descriptive details of schemes, of cheating, or of impure acts would prove to be temptations to others should never be mentioned.

A pastor in a renowned New England church told of a church officer - due to a popular movement asked to make a statement in the congregation. It was humble, it was sincere. But it concerned sexual sin. And it was so distasteful that even the most spiritual hearers could never disassociate the memory of it from that man in later days. Even though they rejoiced in his deliverance from it.

Almost (all) sexual offenses are either secret or private, and should be confessed in secret or in private. If the burden needs to be shared, it could be shared with the pastor. The (Scripture) discourages even the naming of immorality among believers. And says it is a shame even to speak of things done in secret thereby.

I think (open) ^{7:16} confession was practiced during the baptizing of (John) in the Jordan. And following the preaching of Paul in Ephesus - it had limits no doubt. But there was a manifested need for limited open confession.

James 5:16 helps us at this point. Therefore confess your sins to one another and pray for one another that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man has great power in its affects.

Dr. A. T. Robertson said that confession to God already is assumed in this exhortation and that public confession of certain sins to one another in the meetings is greatly helpful in many ways.

I think Christians who are not really acquainted with the Scripture - will note here at the King James version uses the word faults. I think the more ancient manuscripts and the more modern translations use sins. The sense of the (Greek) verb confess implies group confession. So here literally one confesses to others.

(We) make confessions to obtain prayer, to gain spiritual healing. And the Greek word for healing given here is used elsewhere for the healing of the soul as well as a physical sickness.

Now such group confession is not hurtful. For the individual is encouraged thereby to forsake the sin and is helped by the knowledge that sympathetic friends will pray for him. While others in the group are challenged to bring their own problems to the light.

In recent years we have read reports of a few unwise public confessions among people.

Dr. J. J. Wicker, long-time Baptist preacher in the state, and a leader-educator in the state of Virginia went upon a trip abroad. But he was invited in New York City to preach in a church on Sunday. And so in his usual way, he preached and he gave an invitation for anyone who wanted to accept Jesus Christ and to confess his sins to come forward. Now this was not the usual procedure in that church. And a man came forward and then a Deacon came down and said Dr. Wicker - don't take that man in. Dr. Wicker said he's come and he's made a confession of his faith and of his sins. And the Deacon said, well, he's a drunk. He stays drunk all the time. So they called a Deacons meeting right after the service. So immediately following the service that day they had a Deacons meeting. And in the Deacons meeting after church, the men said, why he can't make it. He just never will live up to it. Dr. Wicker said, well, I'll make a bargain with you. They said he wouldn't stay sober a week. He said if he says sober for a month, will you take him in. Oh, they said, sure, we'd be glad to have him. Well, Dr. Wicker was going abroad and he was going to come back in one month and preach at that same church on his way back home. So on Sunday morning, Dr. Wicker said when he arrived at the church - who should meet him on the steps with out stretched hand and a big grin on his face, but that man. And he said, Dr. Wicker, today, I get in. Today I get in! He made a confession of his faith. And he made an open confession and the man did get in. He was accepted and he became an influential member, and for many years was a strong supporter of that church.

~~V~~ VI. Cleansing Confession

From the word of I John 1:9 - if we confess our sins he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

This is where a regenerate church membership comes in. To accept and confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. The disciples measured up to this.

In Richmond, Va., a wife was convicted of her sins. She made an noble confession and was to be baptized. She was all dressed, ready to go. Her husband, Thomas Archibald was not a believer. But he dressed and said that he would ride down to the river with her to see it well done. And at the river's edge, the pastor preached about conversion, and he preached on the need for men to confess their sins. And he preached on the meaning of baptism, of being buried with Christ in believers baptism. And following his sermon he extended an invitation. And Mr. Archibald stepped from the crowd and said, is there any reason that I can't be baptized, along with my wife. You may, said the pastor. They held a meeting of the male members of the church and voted to take him in. And there on the spot, he made this confession of his sins.

It seems that the forgiveness and the cleansing of sins, hindering our fellowship with God, depend upon our confession of the same.

The price of blessing involves the heart-searching of the spirit. And admission of failure. And an immediate confession to God. And then a confession to the persons involved.

The circle of sin committed should be the circle of the confession made.

The Spirit who searches the heart will guide in the confession.

Have you confessed your sins (Are) there sins that need to be confessed and receive attention in your life.

Christmas Evans a Welsh preacher, had one eye. He struggled along for years until he had this experience of confessing his sins. One day, riding along, on his horse. He tied the horse to a tree. And he began to pray. He said, later that experience, I felt like it was wintertime in my heart. I prayed and I confessed. And he said it was like a hard winter freeze break-up.

Is it winter time in your heart. (Is) there some confessing that needs to be done to break up the freeze.

Challenge to Just be a Christian - To Trust Christ for everything & see what happens.

Confess sin

Renounce The world

Live in fellowship with him. Mat 10:32 - Whoever shall confess me before men his will I confess before my father which is in heaven

When Tide is out there are mud flats → comes in submerged in great inflow

No such thing as inactive church members

either gathered or scattered

Coatford said he that is not with me is against me