



“Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit,” Psalm 32:12.

Confession of Sin

Lesson Aim: To lead all who believe to rejoice in the blessed experience of confession and forgiveness of sin.

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Topic: Sin: Forgiveness of.

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness,” I John 1:9.

Sin is the terrible malady which is the source of all of man's trouble, sickness, defeat, guilt, and helplessness. **Forgiveness** is the gracious act of God by which He removes sin and declares the cleansed sinner justified. **Confession** is the acknowledgement of guilt, the admission of need, and the request for help. **Reconciliation** is the blessed peace enjoyed by one who is forgiven and restored to fellowship with God. Each of those is included in today's study. The aim of the lesson is “to lead all who believe to rejoice in the blessed experience of confession and forgiveness of sin.”

Confession of sin brings forgiveness of sin, but it opens the door to much more than that. The forgiven sinner enters into a blessed condition. His guilt is removed. He receives assurance of acceptance with God. He enjoys the privilege of answered prayer. He shares communion with the Holy Spirit. He enjoys “eternal life”—the life of eternity experienced in the world of time.

“Who can forgive sins but God only?” Mark 2:7. None! God has reserved that act of grace for Himself. He said, **“I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins,”** Isaiah 43:25. Today's study deals with “Confession of Sin.” It sets forth guidelines by which you may confess and know forgiveness.

I. CONFESS ALL SIN

Confession of sin does not mean enumeration of sins. God does not require that the penitent believer name every sin which he has committed. Such would be impossible since psychologists say that man forgets almost ninety percent of the unpleasant things which happen in his life. God has the record of one's sins. He does not need men to recount them before Him. He wants an acknowledgement that they have sinned, not a listing of what they have done.

God wants one to be honest about his sins. Man has a tendency to justify himself—to excuse in himself what he would condemn in others. He has a tendency to pass over some areas of his sin. David set a good example in his confession of sins, as recorded in Psalm 51.

A. Confess sins of rebellion. David prayed, “. . . blot out my transgressions . . . for I acknowledge my transgressions,” verses 1, 3. Sins of transgression are those of rebellion, revolt, and, trespass. They are an open and daring defection against God. Such sins carry an element of willfulness and stubborn resolve to evil within them. The sin of transgression may be pictured by a clenched fist raised against the known will of God. It is a defiance of His holy will.

Surely no one could commit such a sin, would he? Oh, yes! In fact, much sin falls into that category. All men have committed the sin of transgression. **“Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law,”** I John 3:4. That makes you a transgressor! Have you ever committed a sin knowing that the thing was wrong before you did it? Then you need to confess the sin of transgression. Do not delay. Confess it quickly.

B. Confess sins of crookedness. David prayed, **“Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity . . . blot out all mine iniquities,”** verses 2, 9. Iniquity refers to sins of vanity or crookedness. It results from the twisted disposition in depraved man that causes in him a leaning toward sin. It is that quality which causes every person to turn to sin when he comes to the age of responsibility.

Are sins of iniquity serious? They are very serious! Jesus was “. . . bruised for our iniquities . . . and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all,” Isaiah 53:5-6. The Apostle Paul spoke of Jesus, **“Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works,”** Titus 2:14.

Confess those sins which arise from a weakness within. They are

included in the scope of grace. Be done with them forever as they are taken away and their stain cleansed by the God of grace.

C. Confess sins of failure. God announced, “. . . **all have sinned and come short of the glory of God,**” Romans 3:23. That coming short of the mark is called “sin” in Psalm 51. Observe David's confession, “. . . **cleanse me from my sin . . . my sin is ever before me . . . against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight . . . hide thy face from my sins,**” verses 2, 3, 4, 9.

David saw himself coming short of God's standard of righteous conduct. He saw himself fall short by an act of his own will. He failed because he wanted to fail. He did not measure up because he preferred to fall short. It is not the picture of a man's trying to jump a stream of water and doing his best to reach the other side without getting wet. It is rather the picture of a lad who does not try to jump across, but jumps half-heartedly with full intention of playing in the water. Confess to God those sins in which you purposefully got involved.

Confess all sin to God. Sins of rebellion, crookedness, or failure may be forgiven. Forgiveness is dependent upon confession. **“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins . . .”** I John 1:9.

“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile,” Psalm 32:1-2. That blessed man can be you, if you will confess your sins to God and ask His forgiveness.

II. ADMIT PERSONAL GUILT

Confession of sin is not an opportunity to blame someone or something else for one's failures. God does not accept excuses concerning sin. Adam tried to excuse his sin in Eden by saying, **“The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat,”** Genesis 3:12. Eve likewise tried to transfer blame, explaining, **“The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat,”** Genesis 3:13. In spite of the explanations, God held both Adam and Eve personally responsible for their sins. Judgment fell upon them both. There is no excuse for sin.

A. Sin is personal. Read Psalm 51 and observe how a true confession of sin involves a personal admission of guilt. David referred to “my transgression . . . mine iniquity . . . my sin . . .,” verses 1, 2, 3, 4, 9. He made no reference to the involvement of any other. He had sinned. His heart was convicted of guilt. He personally acknowledged his involvement. He sought forgiveness.

Sin is always personal. It matters not how many may be involved with one in an act of sin, when he appears before God, it is not “our sin” but “my sin.” Approach God with a spirit of honest willingness to admit personal responsibility. That is basic to forgiveness.

B. Sin is malevolent. There is an element of willful spite and rebellion against God in all sin. David had become involved with another man's wife, knowing God's law, “**Thou shalt not commit adultery,**” Exodus 20:14. When it appeared that his deed would be found out, he caused her husband to be killed even though he knew God's law said, “**Thou shalt not kill,**” Exodus 20:13. (Read the account in II Samuel 11-12.) Such acts of open rebellion against God's law speak of a spirit of spite toward it. That is the real nature of sin.

When you come to confess sin to God, remember that it is totally inexcusable. Remember that each sin has an element of rebellious spite in it. Consider God's willingness to forgive your trespass against Him in the light of your willingness to rebel. In the light of those considerations, confess with the whole heart and vow to be pure henceforth.

C. Sin involves depravity. “**Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me,**” verse 5.

Do not interpret David's words to mean that his mother was an immoral woman nor that his conception was illegitimate. It was not so. Sins are but the expression of sin. A person does according to what he is. He commits sins because he is a sinner. His nature determines his acts. Psalm 51:5-6 is but a confession of a fault in nature which caused the failure in actions. God not only wants the deeds to be right, but He desires truth in the inward parts as well.

Every person is born with a nature weakened toward sin. When he comes to the age of accountability, he chooses to disobey God. That is why each must be saved in order to go to heaven. Admit your depravity, too, and you will find confession of sin much more meaningful and sincere.

III. ACCEPT DIVINE FORGIVENESS

King David was guilty of two very serious sins: adultery and murder. In ancient Israel, each of those carried a death penalty. You have never committed an offense against God or man which was so serious as those committed by David. He received forgiveness. How? In the same way that you may receive forgiveness. Follow step by step through Psalm 51 to see how you, too, may receive forgiveness and cleansing.

A. Grace. The psalm begins with the petition, “**Have mercy upon me,**

O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies . . .” verse 1.

What was the basis of David's plea for forgiveness? It was not based upon personal merit and claims of holiness. The penitent sinner besought God's mercies and lovingkindnesses. The New Testament expression of the truth here demonstrated is, **“For by grace are ye saved through faith: and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works lest any man should boast,”** Ephesians 2:8-9.

David approached God, asking for His grace. He received God's grace in forgiveness. **“We believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they,”** Acts 15:11.

B. Cleansing. **“Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from sin,”** verse 2. Sin should be seen as a contaminating, defiling, and staining thing. Its removal must involve washing and cleansing. Nothing else will suffice. The presence of sin blemishes, and the stain of sin goes very deep. King David prayed, **“Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow,”** verse 7. How blessed it is to have the witness of the Holy Spirit within testifying, **“ . . . ye are washed. . . ye are sanctified . . . ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God,”** I Corinthians 6:11. Approach the presence of God, upon the merits of Jesus' sacrifice at Calvary, and you will hear Him say, **“ . . . thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged,”** Isaiah 6:7. You can be cleansed!

C. Atonement. **“Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean . . .,”** verse 7. Does the statement seem strange to you? How can one possibly be purged with hyssop? The explanation goes back to the use of hyssop in sacrifice, as explained in Exodus 12:22, Leviticus 14:6, and other passages. Hyssop was a little shrub whose leaves were covered with little hairlike bristles. It was used to dip into blood and to sprinkle it in religious rituals because the leaves would hold the liquid so well. To “purge with hyssop” meant to purge with the blood of sacrifice. David's prayer was that God would accept the blood of a sacrifice victim as David's atonement for his sin. In the same way, we accept the sacrifice of Jesus Christ as the atonement for our sins and are forgiven through faith in His blood. **“And almost all things are by the law purged with blood: and without shedding of blood is no remission,”** Hebrews 9:22.

D. Request. Psalm 51 is filled with requests for forgiveness and cleansing. **“Have mercy upon me . . . blot out my transgressions . . . wash me . . . cleanse me . . . purge me . . . hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities,”** verses 1, 2, 7, 9. The wording of the petition

differs, but the petition is the same. Each is the cry of a sin-burdened heart. Each is a petition for forgiveness and cleansing. Each is the petition of a poor sinner of whom Jesus spoke, **“God be merciful to me a sinner,”** Luke 18:13. Each is stated in belief of a promise by the Lord Jesus that if one asks for forgiveness, he will receive it. Ask and you shall receive.

E. Renewal. King David offered three specific petitions as he confessed his sin. (1) He sought an inner renewal: **“Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me,”** verse 10. The petition indicates an awareness of the internal source of his sin. (2) He asked for spiritual enduement: **“Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy Holy Spirit from me,”** verse 11. In a dispensation when God's Spirit came upon and left men (I Samuel 10:6, 8; 16:14) David wanted the continued enduement of God. (3) He wanted the joy of acceptance before God: **“Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit”** verse 12.

Each of those petitions accompany spiritual renewal today. Though the indwelling Holy Spirit does not depart from one upon whom He comes in this dispensation, His power does vary according to one's cleanliness and spiritual receptivity. Inner renewal, spiritual enduement, and joy of acceptance are still the results of revival.

IV. RESOLVE TO SERVE

What follows forgiveness and cleansing? David answered, **“Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee,”** verse 13.

Cleansing should always be followed by renewed service. Service is not the price which one pays for forgiveness. It is the way by which he says “thank you” to God for His grace. The believer dedicates himself to a life of service to God because of the grace of God which has made him free from sin. What kind of service should be rendered unto the Lord for His gift of forgiveness? (1) Testimony to others that they may be forgiven is an appropriate ministry. (2) Leading sinners to faith in Jesus Christ is the end result of the believer's life and work. Is that what you are doing as a “thank offering” for God's mercy and grace to you?

“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile. When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was

heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest me the iniquity of my sin,” Psalm 32:1,5.

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness,” I John 1:9.

Questions

1. What is sin?
2. What is confession of sin?
3. Why does God require confession for forgiveness?