

# The Confession of Sins

By Conrad Barrett

Sin can be described as being a transgression against the laws of God. That transgression may be directed against God, or against one's own self or against other human beings. It could be directed elsewhere. It usually starts with a thought and sometimes such thoughts can be simple and may even appear to be innocent at first. Cultivation and implementation of sinful thoughts is the process by which sin is actually executed.

Some sins are never manifested in the commission of an overt act but lie active in the secrecy of a well-composed heart. In such a status only God and the individual who conceals such sin may be fully aware of what is actually resident in such privacy. We can all be sure, however, that God is fully aware of anything and everything, both good and bad, which resides in all hearts. Nothing is kept from His all seeing eye.

Jesus used the sin of adultery to illustrate secret sin. In Matthew 5:28 He teaches that one can commit such a sin as well as other sins without engaging in the actual act. Such sins are of the heart. In Matthew 15:19 Jesus expands this subject further. Here, He addresses the heart by saying that "out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies."

"Missing the mark" is another common definition of sin. Missing the mark is like aiming at something, but missing. No doubt many of us have experienced such difficulty. Some Christians seem to have a great problem in this area. Planning to do something, but never getting it done is a common problem for us all. The Bible says, "Him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not to him it is sin." (James 4:17)

In a spiritual sense, however, a failure to do some unimportant thing may have no sin consequence. The sin of omission is committed when we know there is a definite need and we know we can help resolve the difficulty, but instead, choose to ignore it. The Bible is simply conveying here that when we have opportunity to do good, we ought to do so. (Galatians 6:10)

Some sins are committed when one carries out sinister acts for someone else. There have been many instances in which evil men and women have influenced others to sin for them. In such a case both parties become sinners. All of us must give an accounting to God and regardless of how sin is conceived or committed, the sinner must ultimately answer to God.

In whatever way we sin whether expressed or concealed, it separates us from fellowship with God and before fellowship can be restored, one must make proper confession of sin. The Bible provides us with guidelines as to how we are to confess sin and if those guidelines are followed, the repentant person can find peace with God and will not need to

worry about future problems resulting from confessing to unnecessary people and in some cases to the wrong people.

Sin should be confessed to Jesus Christ! "If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9) Forgiveness of sins is dependent upon a sincere confession and confession is predicated upon a desire to be forgiven. In the above verse we are instructed that "if" we confess our sins He is faithful and just not only to forgive our sin but to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. It is clear that such a confession and cleansing is a result of a dialogue between Christ and the penitent person. While others may be helpful in assisting the penitent person, such as praying or counseling, ultimately true repentance and forgiveness come as a result of a direct and personal encounter with Jesus Christ. Additionally, 1 Timothy 2:5 teaches us, "For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." In most instances we should do our confessing only to Jesus Christ. The sinner will do well to put all past sins in the forgiving hands of Jesus Christ.

The Apostle Paul tells us in Romans 10:10, "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." This epitomizes the Gospel's directive. Since all of us have sinned and come short of the glory of God, then all of us need to be cleansed of our sin. We, then, should confess to others that Christ is our Savior and Lord.

A transgression against another person requires a wise and proper confession and disposition of that transgression. Such disposition need not involve anyone other than the persons who are parties to such an act. Christians do from time to time commit transgressions against others. We should not! But, it does happen. When transgression is committed whether verbal or by some other act, we need to be punctual to ask for forgiveness and if we have damaged that person, Christian or non-Christian, we should make every effort possible to restore whatever we have damaged. The Bible is very clear on this subject.

Sometimes the person being transgressed against may be slow in forgiving. If such be the case, the person or transgressor who has apologized properly and sincerely and who has made every effort possible to restore one's name or property, then the transgressor should commit to God alone any failure to receive forgiveness from the one who has been transgressed against. In such an instance the transgressor has followed the Biblical teaching and is not spiritually required to do more. The corporate church should seldom be involved in settling such problems between its members or when its members do wrong. It's only when such problems cannot be settled otherwise that the church should intervene and that should be done when the involved parties ask for such intervention. Jesus taught us well on this subject. When we trespass against others, we should be punctual to follow the prayer our Lord gave us to pray: "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us."

True confession and the forgiveness of sin is the heart of New Testament teaching. It also is called getting right with God. The Old Testament epitomized it in the Ten Commandments. Exodus 20 gives us our first orientation to them. The first four relate to God and man. The last six relate man to man. In the New Testament, Jesus brought all ten to two points: Love God completely and love your neighbor as yourself. Happy living is the result of confessing our sins to Jesus Christ, confessing Him to others as Savior and Lord and then by doing what is scripturally right toward others. It is wonderful to know "if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." It is also refreshing to know that God has provided a way for us to forgive each other whenever we do trespass.

If your heart is not free because of guilt associated with unconfessed sin, ask Jesus Christ to help you today by forgiving you and He will. Then if you need to settle something with someone else, ask our Lord for help in getting it settled. He will help.

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