CONFESSION (LESSON 3)

Meister Johannes Eckart, "God is bound to act, to pour Himself into thee as soon as He shall find thee ready" (in Parker & St Johns, *Prayer Can Change Your Life*, p220). One of the ways in which we prepare ourselves to "be ready" is through confession.

Let’s begin by looking at what the Bible teaches us about the relationship between sin and our ____________ with God:

- Psalm 66:18, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not _________." (note: there is a difference between habitual/unrepentant sin and stumbling/repentant sin).
- Isaiah 59:2, "Your iniquities have _________ between you and your God, and your sin has hid His face so that He will not hear..."
- Psalm 139:23, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."
- 1 John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to _________ us from all unrighteousness."
- 2 Chronicles 7:14, "If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves, and pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from Heaven, and _________ forgive their sin and heal their land" (emphasis added).

As well, note that confession must be ____________-- or it is not only in vain, it is also insulting to God

- Psalm 109:7, "Iest his prayer [the prayer of a wicked man] become sin."
- Psalm 80:4, "...how long will you be angry against the prayer of your people...?"
- Psalm 102:17, "[You] do not despise the prayer of the destitute..."
- Psalm 81:5, "The haters of the Lord would pretend submission to Him, but their fate would endure forever..." (the context is that these people hear the word of the Lord-- then walk in their own way...)

How might we, then, better understand the Psalmist declaration that "the fool has said in his heart that there is no God" (emphasis added)?
What is confession?

• "Confess" in Greek (the language of the New Testament) means:
  • to ____________ with God (in the general sense-- such as a "public confession of faith"), and
  • to ____________ my guilt (note the personal ownership of the guilt)

• Both aspects above are __________. Before we confess something as sin (and own it), we must agree with God that it is wrong. We must stand in alignment with Him on the issue. However, many people do the first without taking on the second...

  • In Exodus 8:8 we see Pharaoh beg Moses, "Entreat the Lord, that He may take away the frogs from me..."
  
  • Spurgeon notes, "A fatal flaw is manifest in Pharaoh’s prayer. It contains no confession of sin. He says not, 'I have rebelled against the Lord: entreat that I may find forgiveness.' Nothing of the kind. he loves his sin as much as ever... a prayer without penitence is a prayer without _____________. If no tear has fallen upon it, it is withered. There must be confession of sin before God, or our prayer is faulty."

  • In other words, there can be false __________, false __________, even false ______________ (as we elude to in a moment).

  • "When we confess our sins we are ______________ with God concerning the sin in our lives, as revealed through His word by the Holy Spirit" (Dick Eastman, The Hour that Changes the World, p45).

• This is the part of prayer in which we should truly focus on ______________ (typically, we focus on ourselves when asking for requests-- and during all other parts of prayer. When it comes time to declare sins and bring them into the light, we often show God the sins of other people. In this part of prayer, we are actually taking our own sins to Him!

Confession is a matter of the heart

• D.L. Moody called confession a "personal debate betwixt ourselves and our hearts." And, he added, "commune-- or hold a serious communication and clear intelligence and acquaintance-- with your own hearts" (in Prevailing Prayer, pp36-37).

• The heart is the seat of action, as Jesus repeatedly says...
• "Out of the heart" come all evils (Mark 7:20-21).

• The essence of the Sermon on the Mount is that murder, adultery, and other sins begin in the ____________, before we see the fruits of them (see Matthew 5:21f.).

• Good trees bear good fruit and bad trees bear bad fruit (i.e., what we see is a result of what is inside of the tree-- the outside reveals the internal nature of the tree-- just like the ____________ reveals the man) (Matthew 7:17-20).

• People who worship God without involving their ___________ in the process are going through the motions, simply worshiping Him in ____________ (see Isaiah 29:13, and Mark 7:7, which is a quotation of Isaiah).

• "People should think less about what they ought to do and more about what to do and more about what they ought to be. If only their being were good, their works would shine forth brightly" (Parker & St.Johns, Prayer Can Change Your Life, p209).

• "My prayer life will never rise above my ________ life in Jesus" (Eastman, p46).

Confession is ____________...

• According to Scripture, no effective prayer can happen where sin maintains its ugly grip. In fact, when we continually find ourselves in the same sin, we should see if we are truly Christians (1 John 1:6-8). This is why Paul repeatedly tells the church to ____________ itself-- particularly at the communion table when contemplating the body and blood of Jesus (1 Corinthians 11:28, 2 Corinthians 13:5).

• "This period of our devotions must contain a moment of ____________. It is not God's intention that we should writhe under it, or linger in it. But specific and sincere confession of our sin is no joyous exercise; and self-contempt, however statutory, is not pleasant. But let evil in conduct, thought, or motive be brought into the open, fully, without excuse, and under proper names. It is of no use, after all, to pose before God" (E.M. Blaiklock, The Positive Power of Prayer, p43).

• Scripture is even identified as "pain" wielding instrument:
  • The word of God is a ____________ (Jeremiah 23:29).
  • The word of God is a ____________ (Jeremiah 20:9).
  • The word of God is a ____________ (Ephesians 6:17).
• The word of God is a __________ - ______________sword (Hebrews 4:12).

• "If confession works healing to the wound incurred in the heart... just as a surgeon lances a boil to permit the infection to drain and to heal from the inside, so confession opens the sore, drains the poison, and heals from within" (Lindsell, When You Pray, p42).

• "The Holy Spirit works best through a clean vessel, and ____________ begins the process of cleansing" (Eastman, 48).

Are you ready? Can you possibly move forward without confession?

• "Before you pray for a change in circumstances, you should pray for a change in _______________" (John Allan Lavender, Why Prayers are Unanswered, p18).

Consider:

• Are you spiritually ready to pray for the lost?

• Are you spiritually ready to carry the _____________ you desire to carry?

• Are you spiritually _________ for the task God has laid before you?

• Rather than moving to those other things (and skipping confession, as we most often do), we need to remember that prayer is primarily about relationship with God, anyway...

• And we must step back to see what it is that most hinders that (sin), because unchecked sin in our lives will cause an _________________ to the things of God... and, suddenly, we find ourselves more tolerant that we might have ever imagined of the very things that are insults to the holiness of God.

• Those who were used by God in mighty ways in the Scripture were aware of their own shortcomings.

  • Isaiah (Isaiah 6:1) was close enough to God to be transported into His throne room-- yet declared, "I am undone!"

  • Daniel was so honorable that "no fault was found in him" by his rivals (Daniel 6:4), yet he routinely spent much time confessing his own sins to God (Daniel 9:20-21).

  • In fact, the closer you get to God, the ___________ _____________ you will be aware of your own sin/ shortcomings, as we see in the life of Paul:
Early in Paul's ministry, he considered himself to be the "least of the ____________" (1 Corinthians 15:9).

Later, he counted himself as the "least of the _____________."

Finally, at the end of his ministry, he concluded that he was the "chief of all _______________" (1 Timothy 1:15).

Which sins do we need to confess? And what happens when we do?

Throughout the Bible we see at least four broad categories of sin. Working through the following categories will help you examine yourself, as the Scripture encourages...

- Sins of _____________ (when you "commit" a sin by doing something wrong).
  
  Note, the Bible is harsh on sin-- "He who sins is of the devil" (1 John 3:8);
  
  "Sin is witchcraft" (1 Samuel 15:22), etc.

- Sins of _____________ (when you "omit" or do not do something that you should have done).
  
  James says, "To him who knows to do good and does not do it... to him it is sin..."

- Sins of our ___________, our ______________... for instance, bitterness, etc.
  
  Notice in 1 Peter 3:7 that we see husbands prayers can be hindered because of how they interact with their wives.

- _____________/___________ sins (that we may not even know about).
  
  This is what David prays for God to reveal in Psalms 139:23-24, when he asks God to search him and see if there is any sin in him.
  
  It is what David asks in Psalm 90:8... when looking for "secret sins."

What the Bible promises that God does when we confess our sin:

- He _______________ the stain of it (Isaiah 1:15-18).
• He _____________ about it (Jeremiah 31:33-34).

• He _____________ it as far as the east is from the west (Psalm 103:12) (note the context of this verse is the "fear of the Lord").

• He _____________ it into the depths of the sea (Micah 7:18-19).

• He is faithful and just to _____________ it (1 John 1:9).

Other verses to consult:

• Psalm 51 is David's confession and repentance and restoration after committing adultery, murder, and lying.

• Psalm 110:3 is one of the many verses in Psalms that speaks of the "beauty of holiness."

A final image:

• Cleansing the temple

• Concerning the restoration and revival of the temple during the time of Hezekiah, we read, "And the priests went into the inner part of the house of the Lord, to cleanse it, and brought out all _______________ that was found in the temple of the Lord into the court of the house of the Lord" (2 Chronicles 29:16). Now, the Bible tells us that "you" are the temple of the Lord (1 Corinthians 6:19). Confession is when we do the same with our souls...

_____________________________________________________________________

**STUDY QUESTIONS**

Why do you think people skip straight to confession (instead of praising first, for instance), or completely skip it (rather than allowing it to fall naturally in its place)?

List the four broad areas of sin discussed in this lesson. Under each of the four categories, list the sins with which you struggle, placing them where they go.

Write four of the Bible verses that mean the most to you, which we discussed in this lesson. Describe each- and what it means- in 2 or 3 sentences.

Spend some time praying through your sins, confessing them an applying God’s promises of cleansing and forgiveness in those words of yours.