

Confession

1 John 1:9

1:9⁹If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

A. First, the Christian's confession

1. Real Christians are aware of sin's presence within them, and understand the necessity and benefit of confessing their sins to God on a daily basis

2. 1 John 1:8-10 makes this clear distinction between people that walk in darkness, and those who walk in the light—

a. People that “walk in darkness” *cover* their sins

b. People that “walk in the light” *confess* their sins

3. The Greek word translated “**confess**” means, “to concede”; “to admit”

a. In confession, we don't make excuses for our sins; we admit them to God

b. Robert S. Candlish (1806-1873):

“We open our heart to Him; we are always opening it. We spread out our case before Him; concealing nothing; excusing nothing. We tell Him of all that is sad and distressing in our conflict with indwelling corruption, as well as our failures and shortcomings in our strivings after conformity to His law. We speak to him of sloth and selfishness, of worldliness and carnality, damping our zeal, quenching our love, making us miserably

indifferent to the good work going on around us, and shamefully tolerant of abounding evil.”

c. One of the best examples in the Bible of this is “Psalm 51”—

Psalm 51:1-4

¹Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.

²Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin! ³For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.

⁴Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment.

4. Further, the Greek word translated “confess” means, “to agree”; “to say the same thing”

a. Confession is more than just saying, “I’m sorry.”

b. When we confess sin it means we are saying the same thing about sin that God says about it; we are agreeing with Him about sin

c. We should use “God’s language” in confessing our sins to Him

i. Lots of people have the tendency to “tone down” the truth about their sins in their confessions by not calling them by its real names

ii. Instead of using “God’s language” about sin, such as “sexual immorality”, “perversion”, “bitterness”, “hatred”, “lying”, and “stealing”, they use broad, general, and “tone-it-down” words, such as “mistake” and “all the bad stuff that I did”—

Instead of “I committed adultery”, it’s “I had an affair”

iii. When we agree with God about our sins, it awakens a sense of shame, and heart-felt sorrow for committing it

4. The goal of “confession” is not just to be pardoned from our sins; it is to be restored to a right relationship with God, and enabled to not continue in it

a. Richard Sibbes (1577–1635):

“When the soul desires the forgiveness of sin and not grace to lead a new life, that desire is hypocritical, for a true Christian desires power against sin as well as pardon for it. If we have not sanctifying grace we have not pardoning grace. Christ came by water to regenerate as well as by blood to justify. It should therefore be our continual care and endeavor to grow and increase in grace, because without it we shall never get to heaven; without this endeavor our sacrifices are not accepted; without this, we cannot withstand our enemies nor bear any cross. Without it we cannot go on comfortably in our course. Without this we cannot do anything acceptable and pleasing to God.”

b. Listen again to the words of “Psalm 51”—

Psalm 51:10

¹⁰Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.

B. Second, God’s forgiveness and cleansing

1. First, God responds to our confession with His “[forgiveness](#)”

a. The Greek word translated “[forgive](#)” means, “to cancel a debt” and “to send away”

b. Sins are crimes against God; therefore He alone can forgive sin

c. God demonstrates that He is “faithful” and “just” when He forgives us of the sins we confess to Him

i. He is “faithful”—He will always forgive us of all our sins when we confess them to Him

ii. He is “just” (“righteous”)—He has legal grounds to forgive us on the basis that He punished His righteous Son, Jesus, in our place for all of our sins on the cross (see 1 John 2:1-2)

2. Second, God is at work in us with His “cleansing”

a. This speaks of a daily, on-going cleansing so we can continue, “walking in God’s light”—

1 John 1:7

⁷But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

b. God is not cleansing us so we can continue sinning, but rather to make us more like Him—“God is light, and in him is no darkness at all” (see 1 John 1:5)

3. The goal of God’s forgiving and cleansing us is not to excuse us, but to change us—

Psalm 130:4

⁴...with you there is forgiveness, that you may be feared.

John 8:11

¹¹Jesus said, “Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more.”

C. Application:

1. How often do you confess your sins to God?
2. Confession of sin should be a daily part of “walking in the light”
3. The Bible tells us:

Proverbs 28:13

¹³Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.