

Teaching Series: The Glory of Righteousness

Title: Session 16 – What to Do When We Sinned

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Confession of Sins

Objections to the One-Time Confession of Sins

Some might say, “But what about what Isaiah said in chapter 59 verse 2 that our sins put a separation wall between us and God, that they hide His face from us and that He will not hear us? Doesn’t that mean that we come out of fellowship with God and that we need to confess our sins to Him in order for Him to hear us again?” No, it doesn’t. Isaiah lived before the cross, Jesus had not paid for his sins yet, and Isaiah was not a new creation in Christ. Indeed, during his time and during the Old Covenant period, people’s sins created a separation wall between them and God, and God didn’t hear them until they humbled themselves before God, and brought the animal sacrifices for atonement. However, Christ is our eternal sacrifice that has cleansed us from all sin once and for all. So, in the New Testament, our sinful deeds don’t put a separation wall between us and God anymore. God doesn’t hide His face from us, and He always hears us, no matter what we did wrong.

”But what about Proverbs 28:13, where King Solomon says:

Proverbs 28:13 (NKJV)

¹³ He who covers his sins will not prosper, but *whoever confesses* and forsakes them will have mercy.”?

The same explanation given for Isaiah’s case is relevant here as well. King Solomon needed the mercy of God and his prosperity depended on his obedience to the Law, because he was walking in darkness. His sins had not been removed yet. All the people of the Old Testament relied on the mercy of God for their blessing and prosperity. Until Christ would come, God overlooked temporarily their sins when they obeyed the Law or brought the animal sacrifices. However, in the New Testament, the new creation has become prosperity (2 Corinthians 8:9) without any qualification, because of Christ’s righteousness, and believers have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places (Ephesians 1:3). ***Believers in Christ don’t have sins to cover or confess anymore, because they were all taken away at the cross.***

“But what about King David when he lamented in Psalm 32:1-5 and Psalm 38:18 about his sins and confessed them? Shouldn’t we follow his example?” Let’s read those passages.

Psalm 32:1–5 (NKJV)

¹ Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.

² Blessed is the man to whom the LORD doesn’t impute iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit.

³ When I kept silent, my bones grew old through my groaning all the day long.

⁴ For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; My vitality was turned into the drought of summer.

⁵ **I acknowledged my sin** to You, and my iniquity I haven’t hidden. I said, “**I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,**” and You forgave the iniquity of my sin.

Psalm 38:18 (NASB95)

¹⁸ For **I confess my iniquity**; I am full of anxiety because of my sin.

If we look carefully at the first two verses of Psalm 32, we will notice that King David prophesied by the Spirit about the time when people’s transgressions will be forgiven and the Lord will not impute iniquity to them anymore. He rejoiced looking ahead at the days we are living now. However, in his time, he had to confess his sins to the Lord to receive mercy and he probably confessed more in the hope of saving his son from the death punishment. And even though King David confessed his sins many times and asked for forgiveness from God, his confession and tears were not the ones which atoned for his sin. David still had to bring sacrifices to atone for his sins according to the Law.

Finally, “what about the Lord’s prayer from Luke 11:2-4 or Matthew 6:9-13, where Jesus tells us to ask the Father to forgive our sins? Isn’t He telling us to confess our sins to God?” Let’s read the Lord’s prayer passage in Luke:

Luke 11:2–4 (NKJV)

² So He said to them, “When you pray, say: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

³ Give us day by day our daily bread.

⁴ **And forgive us our sins**, for we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.”

If we take a close look at the Lord’s prayer in the light of the Gospel, we will quickly notice that the Lord’s prayer is an Old Testament prayer and not a New Testament one. First, we need to realize that the disciples who asked Jesus to teach them how to pray were Jews, accustomed with the Law and the Torah. Second, Jesus hadn’t died yet on the cross in order to establish a prayer model according to the new creation era and He couldn’t disclose yet the plan God had through the cross, otherwise the devil would

have never crucified Him. At that moment in time, Jesus was still in the Old Testament period. The transition from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant had not been made yet. For example, He said in verse 2 to pray that God's Kingdom would come on earth. That was the longing and the prayer of all Old Testament prophets, that the Kingdom of God would come. This was supposed to happen when Messiah would come. At that point in time, this kind of prayer made sense because the Kingdom had not come yet. However, we see later in Romans 14:17, as well as in other places, that Jesus brought the Kingdom on earth, especially after the cross, although not in its full visible manifestation yet:

Mark 1:14–15 (NKJV)

¹⁴ Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, **preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God**,
¹⁵ and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and **the kingdom of God is at hand**. Repent, and believe in the gospel."

Luke 17:20–21 (NKJV)

²⁰ Now when He was asked by the Pharisees **when the kingdom of God would come**, He answered them and said, "The kingdom of God does not come with observation;
²¹ nor will they say, 'See here!' or 'See there!' For indeed, **the kingdom of God is within you.**"

Romans 14:17 (NKJV)

¹⁷ for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but **righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit**.

Then in Luke 11:3, Jesus told His disciples to ask the Father for the daily bread. However, we see later in Ephesians 1:3 and 2 Peter 1:3 that God has already blessed believers with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places and everything pertaining to life and godliness. At the end of the prayer, Jesus instructs the disciples to ask the Father to deliver them from the evil one. That made sense before the cross, because all people were in the domain of darkness and under the authority of the devil and they needed God to intervene and help them. However, later, Colossians 1:13 says that believers have been transferred from the domain of darkness into the Kingdom of His beloved Son. Moreover, Ephesians 2:6 and 1:20-23 shows that believers have the same rank and authority of the right hand of the Father as Jesus Christ, and their authority in Christ is far above all rule, authority, power and lordship. The new creations don't need to pray for deliverance from the evil one, because they have already been delivered from him.

Similarly, the prayer for forgiveness of sins, conditioned by their forgiveness of others was an Old Testament prayer. In the Old Testament, the people of God had to repeatedly bring sacrifices and ask for forgiveness of their sins. However, even this Old Testament prayer of asking for forgiveness of sins was not a confession of individual specific sins, but a general one of all sins. The Greek word used here is again *Hamartia*, in plural form, depicting the totality of all sin in the life of that person as nature or deeds, and

not as specific known sinful actions.

After all this teaching about confession of sins, you might be wondering yourself: “So what am I supposed to do then when I sin? Should I confess my sin to God or not? How do I continue to relate to Him?”

What to Do When We Sinned

If we are honest with ourselves, most of the times, we don't feel condemned about every little sin that we did or about sins that we are not aware of, like Martin Luther. Usually, there are specific sins that the devil or our conscience bring to our minds and condemn us with, sinful behaviors and attitudes that we've probably repeated many times and were unable yet to overcome. Those are the times when we feel the need to say something to God about our sins before we can move on. On one hand, we feel condemned about those sins and unworthy to approach God. On the other hand, we know that all our sins have been removed forever, and this creates a real conflict inside of us. This inner conflict is also fueled by the fact that we still live in a fallen world, where forgiveness of someone depends on the other person apologizing first and making the first step towards reconciliation. Our minds are programmed to think that way and to transfer by analogy the same kind of interaction to the relationship between God and us.

Before I provide a practical solution to this inner conflict and to the question about what to do when we sin, we need to be aware of one thing. ***Any form of confession of sins and any type of forgiveness plea to God for our sins will not forgive those sins in that moment in time, neither will they justify us or maintain us justified.*** They will not make us more worthy to receive blessings from God or minister to others, nor will it maintain our salvation intact, as if our salvation was in jeopardy before. Yes, the salvation of our soul and body are progressive, but the salvation of our spirit is a one-time deal that lasts for eternity. We don't confess a sin to God to be forgiven. God has already forgiven all our sins, and they were removed forever. Acknowledging before God the known wrong that we did, with which our conscience condemns us, will only cleanse our conscience and help our mind get over it. It will help us relate to God again in sincerity with all our heart. In other words, it will help us to forgive ourselves in our mind, it will appease our conscience, and it will enable us to relate to God openly and fearless again. We should absolutely do that if our mind and conscience bother us and we cannot get over it just through the Word of God. We should say “I am sorry” to God if there is something specific that we feel condemned about, for the sake of our conscience, so that our conscience would not become dull, hardened, and insensitive. However, we should

not stay there and focus on our sin for too long. We need to immediately focus our attention to the truth of the Word of God about our sins and start thanking Him and praising Him for what He has done. We should begin declaring what the Word of God says about our new identity in Christ, and not lounge any longer in the accuser's condemnation. This is part of cleansing our conscience of sins with the water of the Word.

Therefore, when there is a sin that bothers us when we try to fellowship with God, the right way to deal with it or to confess it should be something of the following: "Father, I am so sorry for the wrong thing that I did. I acknowledge it's a sin and that, as a new creation in Christ, I should not have done it. I admit that I played with death and I did harm to myself, that I grieved Your Holy Spirit and frustrated Your grace. But I thank You that my sin has already been removed from me and washed away by the blood of Jesus. Thank you that I am still a new creation in Christ, that Your love is unconditional, and that I am free of condemnation forever (Romans 8:1). I am dead to sin and alive to righteousness (Romans 6:11). Sin doesn't have dominion over me anymore, because I am under grace (Romans 6:14). Jesus Christ is my righteousness (2 Corinthians 5:21). I am born of God and I overcome the world (1 John 5:4). I am the light of the world and the salt of the earth (Matthew 5:14). I walk in the light and I will never walk in darkness (1 John 1:5-7). I have been transferred from the domain of darkness into the kingdom of Your beloved Son (Colossians 1:13). Thank you Father that I am accepted in the Beloved and highly favored in Your sight (Ephesians 1:5-7)."

Now, you may ask: "Will not this way of confessing sins soften me towards sin? Will not this give me more license to sin?" No, it will certainly not. It's exactly the opposite: it will give you more freedom from sin. Have you noticed that you still sin without a license if you want to? Paul says in Romans 6:2, "How can we who died to sin continue to live in?" If you were genuinely born again, can you do whatever you want and still remain saved? Yes, of course. But why would you think of doing evil since you repented and came on God's side? Why would you want to sin since you don't have a sinful nature anymore? Actually, a better question is this: If you were genuinely born again and you have the right teaching about who you are in Christ, do you think you will be able to continue to want to sin indefinitely? I don't think so. Can God do whatever He wants? Yes of course. But does that freedom give Him license to sin? Never. His freedom of doing whatever He wants has some boundaries. Could Jesus have done whatever He wanted on earth? Yes, of course. But Has He ever sinned? No. Perhaps, when you hear this message for the first time, you might have the tendency to indulge in your sinful habits at first, especially if you have been for a long time

under many religious rules and under the fear of hell or of losing your salvation. You might still feel like you enjoy certain sins and pleasures, although your spirit has been completely recreated. That happens because your feelings and behaviors are skewed and not fully aligned yet with the desires of your new spirit due to an unrenewed mind. In fact, ***freedom to live for God without any conditions and threats can be a real challenge for many.*** However, this does not mean that this perspective on confession of sins gives you license to sin more. Your sinful actions or habitual sins only reflect what was already in your heart and what needs to be corrected and changed through the renewal of your mind. Your spirit is perfectly holy; it doesn't like to sin. The more you renew your mind to your new identity in Christ, your desires, likes, and feelings will change accordingly, and align themselves to your new identity. Slowly, the love of God will compel you and bring you back from your indulgences and sinful behaviors. But this time you will be a real free person, and you will walk in holiness because you want to and because you truly love God, and not because of constraints and threats of hell.

Going a step further, the Bible's solution to overcoming sinful behaviors is to always remind ourselves about our righteous identity in Christ. This is not to encourage us to sin more or soften us towards the gravity of sin and of its consequences. Rather this reminding is intended to focus our attention on our Savior, Who paid in full at the cross for our sins, and to encourage us to live according to the new creation's identity that Jesus established at the cross. This is what true repentance is all about—turning to the cross and returning to His grace! When you fail, know that you can always talk to God openly about your failure, but do it with a revelation of the weight of the cross and of its victory. See your sins already punished in His body and receive afresh His forgiveness and unmerited favor, so that you can conquer your sins.