

True Confession and Repentance

1 John 1:5-10 and 2 Corinthians 7:10

Intro

Researcher Christian Smith's book, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers*, concludes that many young adults have a faith characterized by "moralistic, therapeutic deism." According to this view of God, if we live good lives and if we're kind to others, then God will provide "therapeutic benefits" to us like self-esteem and happiness. Other than that, God is not involved much in our world.

But Smith also found that many people who prayed lacked any sense of repentance or adoration. Smith writes, "This is not a religion of repentance from sin." Again, Smith concludes that this "distant God" is "not demanding ... because his job is to solve problems and make people feel good. There is nothing here to evoke repentance. (Source: Adapted from Tim Keller, *Prayer*, Dutton, 2014, page 294)

Today I want to talk about true confession and repentance. Confession and repentance are the first steps in getting right with God and in maintaining healthy spiritual growth.

True Confession

In 1 John 1:9 we read, "*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*"

Confession is a New Testament Greek word which means "*to agree with God*" and also "*to admit my fault and guilt*". Basically confession is to say about my sin what God says about it.

It is to disclose the sin and wrong in my life. It is to acknowledge the truth about myself.

Confession is a heartfelt recognition of what we really are. It is important to God because it indicates that we take our sins seriously.

Our prayer life and our personal life in Christ is very much linked together.

Our prayer life will never rise above our personal life in Christ. If my personal private life is influenced too much by personal sin my prayer life and my communion with God suffers. According to Scripture there can be no effective prayer life where sin maintains its grip in the life of the believer.

That is why confession is so crucial in prayer. It clears the conscience and opens the heart to God. God is most concerned about "*truth in the innermost being*" (Psalm 51:6), and this is the essence of confession.

Confession helps us:

- To come to God for His forgiveness.
- To humble our hearts before God.
- To come to that place of repentance, of forsaking and abandoning sin in our lives.

For some, confession can be difficult because the individual has to come to a place where he or she needs to change. Often an inner battle begins, between the flesh and the Spirit (Gal. 5:17).

The admission of our sin gives the Lord access into our hearts by His Spirit to remove those barriers to an effective Christian life and prayer life.

Confession brings healing to our soul and spirit. It's like lancing or cutting a boil to permit the infection to drain and to heal from the inside. Confession opens the infection, drains the poison, and heals from within.

Confession is a time of cleansing. As we confess our sin God cleanses our heart. In confession we too are reconciled to God in a fresh living relationship. We need to examine our recent activities to discover areas where we have sinned or failed the Lord.

We need to pray as David prayed in Psalm 139:23-24, *“Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”*

After confession we need to move on to repentance. Repentance always follows confession. The two are so crucial in restoring our relationship and communion with God.

True Repentance

Without repentance we will never be able to be right with God. We will never have peace with the Lord and be restored into a rightful relationship with Him.

For a non-believer repentance is crucial. He or she will never be truly saved unless they repent of their sin and forsake their sin.

Jesus said to the lost, *“But unless you repent, you too will all perish”* (Luke 13:3).

To the unbelieving the Apostle Peter said, *“The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance”* (2 Peter 3:9).

Also in Ezekiel 18:32 God said, *“For I take no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Sovereign LORD. Repent and live!”*

Fruit of salvation is repentance

“Produce fruit in keeping with repentance” (Matt. 3:8)

A true Christian will always be willing to repent of their sin and wrong doing.

It is the mark of a true follower of Christ. If one truly loves Christ and knows they have sinned against Him then they will want to repent and be reconciled in a rightful relationship with the Lord.

Jesus said, *“By their fruit you shall know them”* (Matt. 7:20); and one of the most important fruits is repentance. So produce fruit in keeping with repentance.

To Repent is to Feel Sorrow

The Greek word for repentance is: *“metanoeo”*, or *“metanoia”* (it is used 34 times in New Testament), it means having remorse, guilt and a heartfelt sorrow for sin. It is sensing sorrow for grieving God and causing Him pain. Our sin and evil acts hurt God. In Genesis 6:5-6 we read, *“The Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time. The Lord was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain.”*

Repentance is feeling godly sorrow for our sin. *“Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death”* (2 Corinthians 7:10).

Worldly sorrow: is self pity of getting caught; of despair, and of wounded pride. This worldly sorrow has no transforming, redeeming capability. It only produces guilt, shame, anguish, despair, depression, and hopelessness. This was the case with Judas Iscariot.

The difference between Peter and Judas was “godly sorrow” and “worldly sorrow”

- Godly sorrow: Peter wept bitterly in repentance (Luke 22:62) after he denied the Lord 3 times and he changed.
- Worldly sorrow: Judas said, “*I have sinned for I have betrayed innocent blood*” (Matthew 27:4), but he didn’t really repent. Judas hung himself with worldly sorrow.

Listen precious ones, true repentance hates the sin we have committed, and not merely the penalty. It hates the sin most of all because it has discovered and experienced God’s love – not wanting to grieve Him nor cause His heart pain.

Repentance is a Change in Attitude and Conduct

Another Greek word for repentance is: “*epistrepho*” and “*apostrepho*” which means to turn back, to turn away from. It is a change of attitude and a change in conduct.

In Scripture we find the phrase “turn from wicked ways” which is repentance (2 Chron. 7:14). In Isaiah 55:7 we read, “*Let the wicked forsake his ways and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon*”. This is the true meaning of repentance. It is to forsake and abandon sin and turn to God.

Repentance leads to the need of forgiveness and cleansing from sin (Psalm 51:2).

Repentance has a double aspect; it looks upon things past with a weeping eye, and upon the future with a watchful eye.

The Blessing and Joy of Sins Forgiven

When we confess and repent we can rejoice that we are free from our sin and God keeps no record of it. “*I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more*” (Isaiah 43:25).

Psalm 32:1-2 “*Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit.*”

There is rejoicing in Heaven

Heaven rejoices over those who repent. The 3 parables in Luke 15 all teach of heaven’s jubilation when people repent. Jesus said, “*I tell you in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent*” (Luke 15:7). Also we read “*...there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents*” (Luke 15:10).

In the story of the Prodigal son we read that the father was waiting for his son to return.

“*But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him*” (Luke 15:20).

Later on the father put on a feast for his lost son. There was celebration and joy! That’s what happens in heaven when a person repents.

This is a beautiful picture of God. We bring joy to His heart when we return to Him and repent.

Like the prodigal’s father, God is waiting for us to come back. But He is waiting with big wide-open arms and ready to embrace us and restore us to rightful relationship with Him.

That’s what confession and repentance does! It brings joy to God and to us!

Rejoice that your sins are forgiven! God does not hold our sins against us. We are free. Amen!!