

## How to Be Right and Stay Right with God

Lately, I have witnessed the renewal of wedding vows for some couples in our church and they have been sweet, precious times. One of the couples requested that we include a formal time in the ceremony of renewal that articulates their personal rededication of their lives to Jesus Christ. So as I began to think about how we could word this, the thought came to me that this would be something I should give a little more detail of explanation to for anyone who would say to me, "Pastor, would you frame into words a prayer that I could say to the Lord that would define my intent to be dedicated to Him?"

Let me say at the outset, dedication to the Lord is accomplished in the heart the moment we have a willingness to be right with Him. Closeness and intimacy with God is obtained immediately after true repentance. The next few paragraphs will help formulate in our mind all that is happening to bring us into right fellowship with God. These next words will also be preventative work that keeps us from a backslidden condition and assures us a perpetual walk with the Lord.

The main points of the summary will be the prayer, the comments underneath will serve as simple ramification and hopefully insight:

Prayer: "Lord, today I agree to take Your side in every issue of life, I will agree with You that sin, and my sin in particular is offensive to You. I will not defend it but I will stand against it as I stand for You and Your righteousness."

Insight: With the lexical help of Thayers I have listed all the meanings and shades of meaning that encompass the word: "confess" as found in I John 1:9. Please observe: Greek: *homologeō*: (1) to say the same thing as another, i.e. to agree with, assent (2) to concede (3) not to refuse, to promise (4) not to deny (5) to confess (6) declare (7) to confess, i.e. to admit or declare one's self guilty of what one is accused of (8) to profess (9) to declare openly, speak out freely (10) to profess one's self the worshipper of one (11) to praise, celebrate. We can see why confessing our sins is so important; when we truly confess, we cover a lot of ground! I want you to note out of the list of eleven, the two first definitions say, "to say the same thing as another (in this case it is God) and to agree or assent." Rightness begins with God by realizing that sin separates and confession joins. *"But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear"* (Isaiah 59:2). *"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me"* (Psalm 66:18). Now watch what happens when we agree or say the same thing God does about the sins we have committed against Him: *"Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit"* (Psalm 51:9,10,12). *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"* (I John 1:9).

Prayer: "Lord, I commit myself to honor You. Live Your life through me. May I, with Your help, honor You in my personal conduct, in my home, in my work, and in Your church."

Insight: God declared emphatically: *"...for them that honour me I will honour..."* (I Samuel 2:30). To honor God means to acknowledge God's right to great respect and awe as well as any expression of such respect. It means to hold God in the highest esteem, with full intention of giving my life over to Him for my good and His glory. *"...That in all things he might have the preeminence"* (Colossians 1:18). This provides the atmosphere of obedience.

Prayer: "Lord, I will make restitution when necessary."

Insight: *"Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift"* (Matthew 5:23, 24). Nothing can harm a family experience, work place, or peace in a church more

than unresolved conflict. If my wrong-doing has hurt someone else, I need to tell them I am sorry and commit to that person, through God's power and the indwelling Christ, the wrong-doing is over. *"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me"* (Philippians 4:13). The word restore in English comes to us from a Latin root: *restitutio*, *re*, again + *statuere*, to set up. It means to set up again. Rightness with God sets us up again for his blessing and sets us up again in sweet fellowship with those we love.

Prayer: "Lord, I resolve that You shall be my Master and I will be dedicated to Your will, from this point onward until my life is finished."

Insight: This settles it! Repeatedly we find in the New Testament these words: *"Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ..."* (Romans 1:1); *"James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ..."* (James 1:1); *"Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ..."* (II Peter 1:1); *"Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ..."* (Jude 1). We see the word these men who were closest to Jesus defined themselves as the old world "bond-slave." We need to see the humility of those who follow Jesus as His disciples in making Him Master and Ruler over their lives! The Word of God says, *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God"* (Romans 12:1,2). Two activities in the Christian's life will assure him or her that their bodies are presented to God and their minds are renewed. First, you will assure this dedication by Bible reading and study: *"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom..."* (Colossians 3:16). *"Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee"* (Psalm 119:11). Secondly, you will assure this dedication by the activity of prayer: Jesus said, *"...men ought always to pray, and not to faint"* (Luke 18:1). In response to this command we should say, *"...but I give myself unto prayer"* (Psalm 109:4). ). The Psalmist understood he could not make it in this world without God and so made that bold declaration. We never find that our Lord taught men to preach or administrate, but we do find in Matthew 6 and Luke 11, He did teach his followers how to pray. We cannot live in the "holy place" with God and not be holy. These are two simple activities to help keep us right with God. Our Lord said to the church at Ephesus, *"Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works..."* (Revelation 2:4,5). I hear our Lord saying, "Do the important first things that brought you close to me." There is nothing like the first works of prayer and Bible reading to bring us back into fellowship with God and keep us there.

- Pastor Pope -

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