

The Purpose and Practice of Confession

- I. There is great danger in sin.
 - A. *Proverbs 14:12, "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death."*
 - B. In the moment, sin seems fine, but if we let it run its course, it doesn't end somewhere fine
 - C. To give a few dramatic examples:
 1. That extra glass of wine at the restaurant might seem like no big deal... until you get in a DUI or accidentally hurt someone
 2. That casual relationship with pornography might seem like it's not hurting anyone, but it's destroying your marriage and propagating sexual exploitation, trafficking, and slavery across the world
 3. Marching in a Pro-Hamas rally might seem hip and harmless as a college student... until you watch the world repeat history spiral into genocide
 - D. Although the impact of sin in the moment isn't always catastrophic, it is like drinking poison, eventually leading to your demise... There is great danger in sin.
 - E. But sin doesn't just impact you. It impacts you, your family, and your community
 1. Story of Achan in the Bible (community, family, self)
 2. David and Bathsheba (community, family, self)
 3. Rehoboam (community, family, self) There is great danger in sin.
 - F. Beyond that the danger of unconfessed, hidden sin is catastrophic specifically on your prayer life:
 1. *Psalm 66:18, "If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would NOT have listened to my prayer."*
 2. *1 Peter 3:7, "Husbands... be considerate as you live with your wives... so that nothing will hinder your prayers."*
 3. *Isaiah 59:1-2, "The LORD's arm is not too weak to save you, nor is his ear too deaf to hear you call. It's your sins that have cut you off from God. Because of your sins, he has turned away and will not listen anymore."*
 - G. It doesn't matter which way you cut it, sin has real consequences, and hidden sin - sin that you don't want to deal with comes with severe warnings
 - H. There is great danger in sin.
 - I. Jesus doesn't talk a lot about confession, but he does talk about repentance. He commands: *Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near! Repent and believe!*
 1. **Repentance:** Repentance is a deep sorrow for sin, accompanied by a sincere desire to turn away from sinful behavior and turn to God. It involves a change of mind and heart, leading to a change in actions.
 - a) I was walking this way → I want to walk that way
 - b) I was fighting → I surrender
 2. **Confession:** Confession is the verbal acknowledgment (in prayer, not to a priest) of your sin before God. It involves openly admitting wrongdoing, expressing remorse, and seeking forgiveness. Confession is specific and falls under the umbrella of repentance

a) Gospel examples: Prodigal Son // Zaccheus // Peter

II. What is the **purpose of confession**?

A. Psalm 32:1–2, Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man against whom the LORD counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit.

1. Our reality in Christ.

B. If God forgives us on the cross, do I need to confess? Didn't I already do that? Let's think about the first line in the Lord's Prayer, "Our Father in heaven, hallowed (holy) be your name..."

C. Confession restores a fractured relationship with Our Father

1. God has gone to great lengths so that you can call him Father
2. It says in John 5 that the Jews wanted to kill Jesus b/c he called God his Father, but b/c of Jesus' work on the cross now you are encouraged to call him Father. We take that for granted.

3. Why confess? Restores a fractured relationship with Our Father

4. Sin creates a separation between humans and God. Jesus bridges that gap, and confession repairs relational cracks

5. Think of it this way: When you and your spouse fight, your relationship is strained

a) It doesn't mean you are divorced → just b/c you argue doesn't mean you're divorced

b) But the relationship is under tension

c) If you have an unhealthy marriage you ignore that tension

d) If you have a healthy marriage, you seek reconciliation

(1) You refuse to go to bed angry

(2) You talk through what happened

(3) You apologize sincerely and make restitution as needed

(4) You don't hold forgiveness over your spouse as leverage

e) Confession, apologizing, within a marriage, is about helping your relationship to be the healthiest it can possibly be

6. It is the same way in your relationship with God

a) Salvation is like getting married

b) Just because you sin doesn't mean that you are getting divorced

c) When I was new to the faith I thought I had to be born again every day, like if I didn't ask him to save me and then I died I wouldn't be safe in his hands

(1) That's not true, and I know that now.

d) Confession cleanses my conscience, and it allows me to maintain a right and healthy relationship with God

e) My salvation is secure in Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection, but that doesn't mean that my relationship with God is always healthy!

D. Confession rightly establishes my humble place before our God

1. God is "Our Father" but he is also holy and seated in heaven.

2. What does that mean? He is other, entirely unique → the Uncreated One, the Creator of All Things who alone lives in unapproachable light
3. God exists in this paradoxical tension of being an intimate Father and an unapproachable Creator
 - a) Yet b/c of the cross and the finished work of Christ we can boldly approach him and ask for a glass of water
4. Confession is an act of humility. It reminds us who God is (holy) and who we are without his gifted righteousness (not holy).
5. It reminds us that we are entirely at his mercy and dependent on his grace.
6. It reminds us that if we do not stand b/c of his grace, we will not stand at all.
7. Confession puts your pride in check! And a refusal to confess is often, if not always, rooted in pride.

E. Confession reminds us of the gospel truth of forgiveness

1. We don't stand before God b/c we are good. We stand before God b/c we've been forgiven.
2. If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you are saved.
3. As confession humbles us, it also reminds us that there is no penance we need to offer, no time period of mourning that we have to endure. We are cleansed!
4. Confession is more for you than it is for God. Confession cleanses our conscience, cleanses us (e.g. John 13, washing hands vs. body), and prunes us that we might be more fruitful for God

F. What is God's purpose in confession?

1. Relational restoration
2. Proper humbling of self and exaltation of God
3. Keeping the gospel front and center

III. What is the **process of confession?** Do I go to a priest? What should I do?

A. Psalm 32:3-4, "For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer."

B. Confess Specifically: You realize you have sinned. This could be minor, like a slip of the tongue, or major, like murdering your best friend.

1. The HS takes the truth of the Word and shows you something sinful in you: sexual immorality, rage, envy, gossip, greed, etc
2. This is a deep sense of remorse and sorrow for sin that leads to a desire to turn away from it and be free.
3. This is what conviction and contrition feel like → you feel cut to the heart, undone b/c of what you did, who you are, your sin
4. This drives you to want to see forgiveness and change
5. It's the weight on your chest that you need to release

C. *Psalm 32:5, "I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,' and you forgave the iniquity of my sin!"*

D. **Confess Honestly:** You openly admit and confess your sins before God, acknowledging your need for His forgiveness and mercy.

1. What flows out of contrition is confession → telling the Lord we are sorry for what we did
2. "Lord, I did this. You are right to point it out. Forgive me!"
3. The result of true confession is forgiveness. As *1 John 1:9, "If we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness."*
4. This is our confidence in Christ

E. *Psalm 32:6–7, Therefore let everyone who is godly offer prayer [of confession] to you at a time when you may be found; surely in the rush of great waters, they shall not reach him. You are a hiding place for me; you preserve me from trouble; you surround me with shouts of deliverance.*

F. **Confess Quickly:** The time is now to confess and move on.

1. I think that we try to hide our sin. We even try to hide from God as if he doesn't see us, he doesn't know
2. The psalmist encourages those who are godly to offer prayers to God "at a time when you may be found." This implies urgency and a recognition that there are opportune moments for seeking God's forgiveness and guidance.
 - a) Opportune before what? Before God shuts himself off to you?
Kinda, sorta, not really
3. Confess to the Lord before you reap what you have sown
4. For those who don't know Jesus, you can't keep putting off thinking about salvation. You don't know how much time you have
5. For those who are forgiven in Christ, but you are living in unrepentant sin, playing with fire → you don't know when you will reap the consequences of your actions w/ traumatic result
6. The urgency in confession is illustrated by the imagery of rushing waters. But the Psalmist says that even in the rush of great waters - which symbolize challenges, troubles, or even the consequences of sin - those who turn to God in prayer will find refuge.

G. **Confess to Trusted Community:** we need our friends to remind us of these realities

H. *Psalm 32:8-10, I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you. Be not like a horse or a mule, without understanding, which must be curbed with bit and bridle, or it will not stay near you. Many are the sorrows of the wicked, but steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the LORD.*

1. The Psalmist here switches to exhorting his fellow worshiper - much like I am doing today

2. Do not be stubborn. Do not wait to reap the whirlwind of sin.
 3. All of us know what it is like to struggle with things, but we have to get ahead of them and be honest with ourselves
 4. We need to confess to the Lord
 5. We need to employ the help of friends and family
 6. We need to fight against this in community (why James says to pray and confess your sins to one another)
 7. This isn't so we know your dirty laundry but so you can be healed
 8. We are all in the same boat, none stands by works - only by faith
- I. *Psalm 32:11, "Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, O righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart."*
- J. **Walk Forward in Grace:** Having confessed our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Now we can walk forward, immediately with no condemnation and no shame
1. God forgives you far quicker than you forgive yourself most often
 2. The Psalmist goes from being a sinful worm to upright in heart and righteous - this is the impact of God's forgiveness!
 3. As God forgives us, we are able to forgive ourselves
 4. As we experience his forgiveness, we grow in great love for God and others!
 5. Still might be "earthly consequences," but righteous in God's eyes
- IV. So, what do we do?
- A. Invite God to speak to you.**
1. *Psalm 139:24, And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!*
- B. Respond to his conviction**
1. *1 John 1:9, "If we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness."*
- C. Walk forward in freedom**

Give people a chance to pray after service without being rushed