

Soteriology
Lesson 16
The Principle of Confession

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Repentance. Let me just say again that when they are mentioned together faith always follows repentance. And secondly is that repentance has to precede faith. Why? Because you can't express confidence in God's word until your mind is changed. So that's interesting from the standpoint of salvation, if you don't repent then how in the world would you believe what God says? And repentance, according to the Bible, results from the preaching of the word, which is interesting.

In Matthew 12 related to this, Matthew 12:41, it says, "The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and, behold, a greater than Jonah is here." So, how do people repent? Well, because they've heard the word, they repent and believe what God says.

Now a lot of people say to me, "Well, these sound like they are kind of simultaneous." Yeah, I think so. As a matter of fact, it seems to me that there is an aspect of repentance that is crucial to the whole issue of salvation and is our next doctrine—Confession of Sin.

You see, there isn't any true repentance without confession of sin. What we're going to deal with, in terms of confession, might seem awfully detailed and heavy to you. But in another way, we've gotten confused in this generation about what confession is.

Turn to 1 John chapter 1, beginning at verse 5, down to chapter 2:2.

5 This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

6 If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth:

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

8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

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

10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

[Chapter 2]

1 My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:

2 And he is the propitiation [or the mercy seat] for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

Now this is a very important paragraph in 1 John. The theme of 1 John probably is fellowship. We know in 1 John 1:3,

3 That which we have seen and heard [namely Jesus] declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.

4 And these things write we unto you that your joy may be full.

Fullness of joy will be found out when you know you have fellowship with God. What he's talking about is being born again, being saved. Fellowship is that which we share in common. That which we share in common is His life! "The life" (1 John 1:2) "was manifested; the Word of life," end of verse 1. The life of the Lord Jesus! We share that in common when we become Christians. So if you say that you have this life of the Lord in you and that you have fellowship, you share it with other believers, but your lifestyle is in the darkness, then you're lying and the truth isn't in you.

Now this is heavy duty stuff. First of all, notice in verses 6, 8, and 10, it all begins the same way: “If we say.” In Greek that’s a probability statement, meaning in English maybe it’s true and maybe it’s not. So we have here a claim and actually by what the verses say, it’s a false claim.

Now in verse 6, you have the false claim that your position is in Christ. You have fellowship with Him. You share His life. It’s a false claim. But you say that you have true position in Christ.

In verse 8, the issue is the presence of sin. You say that you have no sin. He’s dealing with depravity. There isn’t any sin in you. Well, you’re deceived!

And the third issue deals with the practice of sin when he uses a verb. If you say that you have not sinned. We all sin! But that presents a problem. What are we to do with our sin?

Going back over it again, we have the following solutions to the problem. Verse 7, “If you walk in the light as He is in the light” —that is you really are saved—then you have fellowship one with another. Well, what’s the key that deals with the sin problem? “And the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.” That’s how you become a Christian, trusting His salvation for you.

And in verse 8 the cure to that, to the person who thinks he doesn’t have a sin nature, is to understand that you must admit that you do. “If you confess your sins, He’s faithful and just to forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” And if you say you’ve never sinned, an act of sin, you’re making Him a liar because He says you do.

He doesn’t want you to sin, but chapter 2, 1 and 2 says if you do, you’ve got an advocate, a defense attorney pleading your case, who is the propitiation, the mercy seat for your sins. He will forgive you. He’s paid for it. What’s the key to unlock this whole thing? Well, it’s a verse that many Christians have memorized, “If we confess our sins...”

If I would ask you, “Do you have to confess your sins in order to be a Christian? Yes, you do. You say, “Well, you just have to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. It’s all taken care of.”

No. He said, “If you confess your sins, He’s faithful and just to forgive you.” Is it possible that the gospel we present is so cheap now, so tolerant that we don’t ever bring up the sin issue? Do we have to acknowledge that we’re sinners? Of course! Why have a Savior if you don’t have any sin?

Here are three forms of the word confess. It’s used 26 times, 10 times in John’s writings. Interestingly, it’s used with salvation verses that you probably well know. Romans 10:9. “Thou shalt confess with thy mouth.” It’s the same thing in 1 John 1:9, “If we confess our sins.” In Romans 10:9, you’re confessing the deity of Christ. In 1 John 1:9 you are confessing that you have sin—that you’ve sinned against God. It’s agreeing with God about your sin. Interesting, it’s the opposite of denial but we’ll talk about that here in just a moment.

Then we have a noun form: confession. And it has a lot of interesting usages as well. Our confession that Jesus is the high priest of our confession, Hebrews 3:1. And 1 Timothy 6 has an interesting application of the word, confession. 1 Timothy 6:12-13,

12 Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession [confession] before many witnesses.

13 And I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession.

So even Jesus confessed in front of Pilate, but he didn’t have sin in His life.

Confession. We have another word, if you can look at that *exomologeō*. The word *ex* or out of, it also appears several times. For instance, in Philippians 2:11, it says that “Every knee shall bow and every tongue confess [meaning the mouth actually says something; it comes out of your mouth] that Jesus is Lord, [that will be] to the glory of God the Father.”

In the Old Testament Greek, taking Hebrew and putting it into Greek, the Septuagint, it means, to either praise God or to confess sins. Either one of them! It’s used in legal matters in

ancient times—agreements, contracts, court proceedings. And what it refers to is witnessing to the truth or it is an admission of guilt, which is witnessing to the truth as well. It's used in making a promise or giving an oath.

Josephus said, "Confession of sin preserves one from God's judgment." And that was a Jew who was a traitor to the Jews and had gone on to the Roman side and wrote up the wars of the Jews with the Romans in a fascinating book that many of you probably have read things out of and he's the one who said this. In other words, at his time that New Testament usage was well known.

Four Facts about Confession

Confession acknowledges God's glory

Romans 14:11 • Romans 15:9 • Joshua 7:19-26

Confession agrees with certain facts

Romans 10:9-10

Confession accepts rather than denies truth

Matthew 10:32-33 • 1 John 2:22-23

Confession admits sin and guilt

Psalm 32:5 • Proverbs 28:13 • Ezra 10:1 • Mark 1:5 • 1 John 1:9

So, what are we talking about? Here are four major facts that you know from the Bible. Confession acknowledges God's glory. In Romans 14:11 we have a quotation from Isaiah. It says, "For it is written, as I live saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me and every tongue shall confess to God"—will acknowledge who God is. In Romans 15:9, "And that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy; as it is written, 'For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name.'" Here it means to glorify God, to acknowledge, to confess that

God is who the Bible says He is and he'll do it in the front of pagans as well. That's how strong is your commitment to it. It acknowledges God's glory.

Go over to Joshua chapter 7. You have an interesting problem here, the story of Achan. Remember that they had stolen some items. When God told them not to take anything, to destroy it all, Achan had hid them. And God's judgment came upon Israel and they had to have a little searching-out process to find out who was guilty. In Joshua 7:19, Joshua said unto Achan, "My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession unto Him; and tell me now what thou hast done; hide it not from me." You see, when you confess, when you agree, when you acknowledge who God is and what He says, you give glory to God. Confession always acknowledges God's glory.

In Romans 3:23, we have a definition of sin. "For all have sinned and [what?] come short of [what?] the glory of God." Isn't that interesting? So confession of sin, definitely gives glory to God because you're agreeing that God is right about what you have done wrong. And that glorifies God that you will admit that God's right and you're wrong.

Now secondly, it does agree with certain facts. Like Romans 10:9, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in thine heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved." So in this case, it means you agree with certain facts. In the case of sin, you agree with the facts of the Bible about the sin, and you acknowledge that God's right and you're wrong.

Third, confession accepts something or someone rather than denying it. It's the opposite of denial. Turn to Matthew 10:32-33. Jesus said this:

32 Whosoever therefore shall confess [that's our same word in 1 John 1:9] me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven.

33 But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.

Obviously, confession is the opposite of denial.

Turn to 1 John 2:22-23. Here again you can see that confession means you accept something rather than denying it. If you're going to confess your sin, then you accept the fact that it is sin and that God's right, you're wrong. In 1 John 2:22 it says,

22 Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ [Messiah]? He is antichrist that denieth the Father and the Son.

23 Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: but he that acknowledgeth [or confesseth] the Son hath the Father also.

That's the same word as confess your sin in 1 John 1:9. So here we have the deity of Christ is the issue. The opposite of confessing He is who He claimed and that He's the Messiah is denying it. Confession is the opposite of denial. How do you know when somebody's not confessing their sin? They deny that it happened when it really did.

And number four, confession always admits sin and guilt. You don't run away from that. You admit that you are guilty before God. There are lots of passages. I like Ezra where he's pouring out his heart in behalf of his people before God. In Ezra 10:1 it says, "Now when Ezra had prayed, and when he had confessed, weeping casting himself down before the house of God...." Wow! A lot of us, we just try to sweep it under the rug or redefine it.

In Proverbs 28:13 it says, "Whoever confesses and forsakes his sin, will find compassion, but if you try to cover it, you will not prosper." So what's the opposite of confessing your sin? It's trying to cover it up.

If you confess your sin, God will forgive you. So why do people not feel forgiven? Well lots of reasons. But one reason will be because they are trying to cover up their sin instead of

confessing it. And that's why God won't release the burden of it from them because in fact, they've never confessed and forsaken their sin. They've been trying to cover it up. Wow!

“If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us...” (cf. 1 John 1:9). Even in that Mark passage that we read earlier where John the Baptist preached a baptism of repentance, It says in verse 5, “There went out unto him all the land of Judea...they of Jerusalem were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins.” So apparently, repentance and confessing of sin is very close.

Confession admits that you're wrong. God's right. You're guilty for what you have done. And that's a part of repentance, but it also means that you'll stop doing it. That's why Proverbs 28:13 says, “If you confess and forsake your sin, you'll find compassion from the Lord.”

So what does it mean to confess? These are certain facts about them. We've put together seven things about confession. Let's take a look at them.

What does it mean to confess? Well, what it means is that you ask your attorney to defend you and you don't speak. Just let him to all the talking. Don't ever admit anything. Isn't it interesting how we have come in our legal proceedings to do that? All in the name of protecting the innocent and what we're really doing is protecting the guilty! Wouldn't it be great to have a court trial where the guy said, “I did it and I deserve your judgment. We don't need any attorneys.” People don't do that, do they?

Seven Characteristics of Confession

- 1 There's no denial of the presence or practice of sin.
- 2 The truth is told regarding what you have done.
- 3 There's admission that you were wrong and God is right.
- 4 There's humility before God and admission of unworthiness.
- 5 There's admission of your guilt before God.
- 6 There's recognition Jesus is your only defense before God.
- 7 There's reliance upon God's faithfulness for forgiveness of sin.

What is confession? First, it means that you don't deny the presence or practice of sin in your life. 1 John 1:8 and 10, what we just read, "If you say you have no sin, the presence of sin is not in your life, you are deceiving yourself." The Bible says, "The truth is not in you." If you confess your sin, it's the opposite. You understand your depravity and also the practice of sin. If you say you have not sinned, once again, you are making the Lord a liar, because He says we do.

So apparently the church is filled with sinners. Amen? When you come to Christ it doesn't solve the problem, or does it? How do you explain the fact that we're forgiven and yet we sin as believers? If you're already forgiven, then why confess? Because God wants you to agree with Him, it gives glory to Him. And you were designed to give glory to God. So God wants you to glorify Him.

So admit that you're a sinner. "Did you lie?"

"Well, you need to understand the circumstances of how that happened."

"Why do I need to understand that? Did you lie?"

"Well, you know, when you see the motive behind it..."

“Why, did you lie?”

“Well, you know, some people might say that, but I mean there are others...”

“Did you lie?”

“Well, it’s a white lie.”

“White? There are different colors?” It’s interesting, isn’t it?

You know one of the hardest things to go up to somebody and say, “You know, what I was talking to you about the other day? It was a flat out lie.”

See, we’re always lying. We lie all the time! God says, “Stop doing it.” It doesn’t mean that we weren’t doing it. It means that we have a natural tendency to do it. That’s why He said, “Don’t lie. We’re members of one another” (Ephesians 4:25).

“Well if I don’t lie, they’re going to think I’m worse than what I... Oh, I guess I already am.” Right. See, if you don’t deny the presence of sin, nobody has anywhere to go. You don’t have to keep covering up anymore.

You say, “Well, will you keep lying?”

“No. We stop lying. And we need the power of the Holy Spirit to help us.” But do you understand that we don’t do any good covering it up.

Number Two. You don’t deny the presence and practice of sin if you really confess. And secondly you tell the truth about what you’ve done. Isn’t it interesting that people can lie with silence? You don’t have to speak words to lie.

Turn to Psalm 32. Let’s see what King David had to say about this. There are two wonderful Psalms to read if you really want to minister to your own heart. If you’re struggling with something and you need to confess it, Psalm 32 and Psalm 51 are really good. In Psalm 32:1 it says,

1 Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. [Boy, is that the truth! How happy will you be!]

2 Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile. [You haven't got any hidden motives.]

3 When I kept silent, [You see, you can lie by that.] my bones waxed old through my roaring on the day long. [You're groaning, and your pain inside. And you're trying to keep up the front.]

4 For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer.

5 I acknowledged [I confessed] my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgression unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.

6 For this shall everyone that is godly pray unto thee at a time when thou mayest be found: surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him.

7 Thou art my hiding place; thou shalt preserve me from trouble; thou shalt encompass me about with songs of deliverance.

8 I will instruct thee and teach thee in a way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye.

9 Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which hath no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee.

10 Many sorrows shall be unto the wicked: but he that trusteth in the Lord, [through this confession] mercy shall encompass him about.

11 Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous: and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart.

God will bring the joy back when you confess it.

Now go over to Psalm 51. I think you have much the same point, which we believe David prayed after his sin with Bathsheba.

1 Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.

2 Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.

3 For I acknowledge [I confess] my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me.

4 Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest. [In other words, I'm guilty and I deserve whatever you're going to bring.]

5 Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.

6 Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom.

7 Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

8 Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice. [That's how Psalm 32 ended.]

9 Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities.

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

11 Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me.

12 Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit.

13 Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee.

14 Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness.

15 O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise.

16 For thou desirest not sacrifice; [Those are the attempts of those that don't want to confess. They just want to get busy for the Lord and try to atone.] else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering.

17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O
God, thou wilt not despise.

Back in verse 7 when he said, "Purge me with hyssop," it's like a yucca plant. It was used like a scrub brush when the ceremonial cleansing of the leper took place in Leviticus 14. Hyssop plant was used. The priest would scrub the sore to see if it was infected or malignant or it spread anywhere. Leprosy is like a type of sin. "Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean." Just scrub me! See, what he was talking about was verse 6, "Thou desirest truth in the inward parts."

When you confess your sin, point two, you tell the truth about what you have done.

And number three, as we've already mentioned, you give glory to God. We glorify God again when we admit He's right and we're wrong.

When you confess your sin, number four, you also humble yourself before God. You acknowledge your unworthiness.

Remember in the story of the prodigal son? When he came to himself, he said, "How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare and I am perishing with hunger. I will arise and go to my father. I will confess to him" (cf. Luke 15:17-18). He was in a pigpen. You acknowledge your unworthiness before God.

Remember the parable about prayer in Luke 18:9? Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. And the tax collector would not so much as lift his eyes to look up to God. He beat his breast and said, "God be merciful to me, a sinner."

Have you ever looked into the eyes of somebody you've sinned against and confessed? Sometimes you can hardly look at them. You are so ashamed of what you've done. It's the way it can be between you and the Lord. God wants truth in the inward parts.

When I spoke out at Chino (prison), all the guys out there... I just love them. They're just great. Had a lot of guys get right with the Lord and some come to Christ. But anyway, one of the guys stood up and he ran up, threw his arms around me. He said, "Man you belong in here."

You're one of us." I mean, he meant well. The guys started laughing. I said, "You're right. Were it not for God's grace, I belong right in here with all of you guys."

Boy, it's easy to get proud, isn't it? Easy. To think you are somehow better.

Number five, you admit your guilt before God. We've gone over this, but there are a lot of passages to teach you that. You are guilty before God. You deserve His judgment.

Then number six, you recognize that Jesus Christ is your only defense. Interesting about people who confess their sins, they know that only the Lord can forgive them. When you see something else, you know that real confession hasn't taken place. Only the Lord can take care of this. He is your advocate, your defense attorney. "He ever lives to make intercession for you" (Hebrews 7:25). Do you ever think about it that Jesus prays for you every day because you do need it? See, the devil's accusing you day and night before God (Revelation 12:10); but the Bible says in Revelation 12:11, "We've overcome him by the blood of the lamb." Jesus is defending you because you do need it!

And number seven, when you really confess, 1 John 1:9, you're relying completely on God's faithfulness and righteousness for your forgiveness and cleansing. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous or just to forgive us our sin and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." How clean are you? What can wash away my sins?...nothing but the blood of Jesus.

Turn to Hebrews 1:3. In speaking about God's Son, "Who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged [cleansed] our sins, He sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high." No one ever sat down on the tabernacle of the temple because the work was never done. But when Jesus finished, He sat down. It's all over. It's finished. It's done. So He isn't going to die again. So if you confess your sin, you're relying on God's faithfulness and cleansing that He's already provided. It was done at the cross. Nothing will be added to it.

I want to be very careful with what I'm going to say. I don't want to be misinterpreted, but I know sometimes it is. So I guess that's why I'm cautioning you before I start. I am not in favor of a lot of the programs that indicate there are steps by which we are cleansed and forgiven. If you will do these twelve steps, you will be forgiven, cleansed, healed. Not all of them are saying that. I know that. And there are certain things about all those programs. We call them "recovery programs." There are certain things that are helpful. Accountability groups and biblical counseling applied to the problems, etc, etc. But there's a subtle teaching in all of this that if you just follow through these steps, you'll clean your act up. But you won't. There's only one thing that can clean your act up, that can cleanse your sin, and that's the blood of Jesus Christ. Nothing else can.

Be careful about thinking that you know what confession is. "Boy, I need to get a priest or a pastor or somebody. I need to really pour this all out, man. Once I pour it all out, I'll be fine." No, you won't. No one is forgiven or cleansed by talk, only by the blood of Jesus Christ. So you see, part of what is wrong in confession is if you're pouring it all out...and believe me, some people have made a fine art of confession. They love to tell the dirty details. See, our ears are not garbage pails and God doesn't want us to listen to all that junk. "It's a shame to speak of those things that are done in secret" (Ephesians 5:12). That's not confession. That's a part of the worldly philosophy that if I can just tell you all the dirty junk and details of how I got into this, then maybe you can help me. You can see why I'm addicted and trapped. No, no, no. No, you're addicted and trapped because you wanted to sin in the first place. And you've got to take responsibility for that. And you've got to understand that only God can forgive you. Only God can. No one else can.

You say, "Wait a minute. The Bible tells us to forgive other people."

"Yes, as He's forgiven us."

Now the reason why I'm to forgive people is because Jesus has forgiven me.

Turn please to Matthew 18:21.

21 Then came Peter to Him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?

22 Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, until seven times: but until seventy times seven.

Some people have concluded, by the way, that the reason he mentioned the seven times is because the Bible teaches that when a righteous man falls, he falls seven times in a day. Is it possible that Peter was thinking that when God said seven times, that that's the total amount of time that a righteous man falls in a day?

Proverbs 24:16, "A just or righteous man falleth seven times and riseth up again." So, was Peter thinking of that when he said, "How often shall I forgive him? Seven times because you said we fall seven times?" But Jesus said, "No. Seventy times seven!" (Matthew 18:22).

And some of us are so messed up that we think, "Okay 490, but 491 man!" It just means endless, but you'll never understand this unless you understand what followed the parable.

Matt 18:23-35

23 Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants.

24 And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents. [a lot of money]

25 But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made.

26 The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

27 Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt.

28 But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellowservants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest.

29 And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

30 And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt.

31 So when his fellow servants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done.

32 Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me:

33 Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee?

34 And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him.

35 So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.

Wow! When you realize what God has forgiven you, you have no choice but to forgive others!

And you know what people say to me? Well, what if he doesn't confess?

Turn to Luke 17:1,

1 Jesus said unto His disciples, It is impossible but that offenses will come: [In other words, you're not going to be able to live your whole life without

somebody offending you, or you offending them.] but woe, unto him, through whom they come! [In other words, if you caused it, you're going to experience the consequence of that.]

2 It was better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones.

3 Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; [confront him] and if he repent, forgive him.

4 And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day [there it is again] and seven times in a day he turn again to thee saying, I repent: thou shalt forgive him.

What do we usually say? "Well hey, you did it again! You expect me to forgive him? He repeated it." But God says if he comes back and says, "I repent," you forgive him.

Now let me ask you a question. Is it true repentance if you do it again? I love these things! Could you repent of a sin for a month and could you do it again and then repent of it again for another month and do it again. And if this went on for seven months, should we then say, "Well, the guy hasn't repented?" That's not what Jesus said. Apparently Jesus knows our problems better than we do.

"Oh, I promise man, I'll never do this again."

"Well, fortunately we've got the Bible to hang unto and we're not worried about your promises. Chances are you probably will do something later on. I don't know what you're going to do. But, you know, I just want you to know I forgive you anyway."

"I really won't do it again. I promise you."

"Well, it isn't necessary for you to say that. See, I know you. I read it here in the Bible." Do you think that is what is going around in the Christian world? Oh no! Exact opposite! I've seen marriages split over it because people can't forgive. You know we are very pious in a crisis. You better be careful what you say. Again, learning to forgive is rooted in the grace of our Lord.

“Be ye kind, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ has forgiven you”

(Ephesians 4:32).

“I’ll forgive him when he crawls through the door and kneels before me and begs a little. Then I might forgive him.”

“No, no, no. You forgive him no matter what.”

Boy, we’re a stubborn group, aren’t we? Now if I read my Bible correctly, when you didn’t care anything about Him and you were going your own way and your life was filled with a lot of sinful junk, He still loved you. Aren’t you glad? He was still merciful to you. He still had compassion on you because He’s ever mindful that you are nothing but a clod of dirt. So He still loves you.

See, that Father was looking down the road for that prodigal son all the time. All the time he was out in the pigpen running away from his dad. And when the father got one glimpse of him coming down that road, he didn’t wait for the boy to crawl through the door and beg for forgiveness. The Bible says “He who was not guilty, ran down the road, threw his arms around the boy, repeatedly kissed him.” He said, “This is my son, who was lost. He’s found. Let’s have a party!” (cf. Luke 15).

Are you sure you understand forgiveness? May God help us!

Let’s pray.

Lord, You know how easy it is for us to get arrogant and condemnatory towards others; to be so Pharisaical in our attitudes and to judge people, judge their motives and just absolutely appear to be filled with pride and thinking that this would never happen to us. We can become so self-righteous. Lord, when we think of what You’ve done for us; You bore our sins in Your own body on the tree. You told us that when we go around the world with the gospel, we’re to preach forgiveness of sins. There is hope because You are a faithful God who

will forgive us. The moment we confess our sins You are faithful and just to forgive us. Lord, would you help us to learn how to forgive one another? Teach us Lord, the compassion that You have for people. Help us not to write anybody off no matter how angry or hostile they seem. No matter how far they may be from You, help us Lord, to remember the compassion of Christ.

So we thank You Lord, in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.