

Be Honest with God—Part II

We have a choice, to confess before the Lord, or not, but there are two things that occur if confession does occur. All believers, John included, must acknowledge our sin before God, in order to experience Jesus' cleansing work.

Agreement with God in Mutual understanding of Guilt Before Him—And the idea behind the word “confess” is that this is an admission to the truthfulness of one's guilt before a judge. In this word “confession”, is also the idea of “agreement” with God, regarding our sin. This is important, since the flesh will always want to justify our sin (ex. Genesis 3:11b-12).

Taking Responsibility—While it's true that confession before God means “saying the same thing” as God says about sin, there's more than just a simple agreement with the Truthfulness of God's point of view. **Public or private?**--We're talking about personal confession to God here. Look at the case of Simon a sorcerer in Samaria in Acts 18. We see a man who was craving power, and who was practicing magic. But then he met Philip, and we read in verse ¹³ **Now even Simon himself believed; and after being baptized, he continued on with Philip, and as he observed signs and great miracles taking place, he was repeatedly amazed.** He had a lot to learn about being a Christian, (Acts 8:18-24). But, we also see that he acknowledged his sin just as soon as it was brought to his attention. He confessed, and agreed with God's Word through the Apostle Peter that he needed a heart correction.

How sin is confessed

To God through prayer – In giving the model prayer, Jesus said that part of what we are to pray is this: ***“And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors”*** (Matthew 6:12). This is the *primary* way in which we are to confess sins. Confessing sins to God through prayer is *always* necessary.

To the one sinned against – Jesus talked about this in the Sermon on the Mount: ***“Therefore if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering”*** (Matthew 5:23-24). If we have sinned against someone, we have the responsibility to go to that person and make things right.

To a trusted individual – In the case of a sin that is handled between two brethren and the one in sin repents, no one else necessarily needs to know about it (Matthew 18:15). ***“Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much”*** (James 5:16). James was certainly talking about confessing sins to one another, and this model encourages us to engage others in prayer with us, agreeing together regarding the need for victory in this area.

How to confess

Be Specific--John's point is that we are to confess known sins. We admit to God that we have transgressed specific commands. In order to be effective in our confession to God, we must be specific. Being specific about it helps us understand that God forgives us. This allows Him to help us, while we acknowledge that it is HIM helping us, and not our own strength.

Accompany confession with sorrow – Paul told the brethren in Corinth, ***“I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to the point of repentance; for you were***

made sorrowful according to the will of God, so that you might not suffer loss in anything through us. For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death” (2 Corinthians 7:9-10). We are to mourn over sin, and we will be led to repentance.

Indicate that you have repented of the sin. Repentance means not only to acknowledge sin, but to repent, or turn away from it and toward God.

Be willing to help others, if they come to you--We have a responsibility to “*bear one another’s burdens*” (Galatians 6:2).

He is Faithful and Just-We can confess with certainty of forgiveness because God is faithful to keep His promises. We know this because God is both faithful and just. God is faithful to us in keeping His promise to forgive our sins on the basis of what Jesus has done. Eph 1:7 **7 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our wrongdoings, according to the riches of His grace.** His justice is faithfully carried out.

To forgive our sin and to cleanse us from every unrighteousness-It is because of God’s character of justice and forgiveness that we, as believers, receive these two promises from God to the believer who comes to honestly confess our sins. God has released us from a moral obligation or debt. God pardons us by releasing us from that debt. This same term is used by Jesus when He taught the disciples to pray, “Forgive me of my debts as I have forgiven my debtors” (Matt 6:12). Even so, that release does not set aside God’s just character in that Jesus’ death (His “blood” in v. 7) is the basis of that release. We are forgiven because Jesus took our guilt upon Himself and paid the full price for its punishment. It is on the basis of His completed work on the cross that a believer experiences not only the positional forgiveness (justification), but also daily forgiveness (sanctification), which is John’s focus here. It’s about the change that this agreement with God that we have sinned, the repentance for the sin, and the confession of the sin makes in our heart that is important in terms of our relationship in cooperation with the Holy Spirit’s sanctifying work in us that’s in view here. And when we cooperate with this process, God cleanses us, makes us morally pure. So, agree with God that your sins are sins. Then take responsibility for your sin, acknowledging them. Then repent of the sin, turning away from it, and turning toward God to follow Him in the light, just as He is in the light. Then confess to God, asking for forgiveness, knowing that you already have it in Christ, and can trust God to forgive you, and cleanse you from all unrighteousness.