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*Transforming Lives Through Intercessory
Prayer And Fasting*

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THE CONFESSION OF SIN

The confession of sin is the most neglected area in the prayer lives of believers. This neglect comes in many forms. Some believers ignore the need to confess their sins. Others do not take the time to examine their lives and honestly deal with the sin in their lives. And, many believers use the well-worn, but empty and meaningless cliché, "Forgive me of my many sins."

Confessing sin should be an integral part of your prayer life. It is crucial to a healthy, mature prayer life. It also affects the intimacy of your relationship with God. It is essential to being useful in serving God. In this article, we will explore the basics of confessing sin.

What Is The Confession of Sin?

In order to practice the confession of sin, you need a basic understanding of what it means to "confess" your sins. The word "confess" means "to agree with or to say the same thing as." Confessing your sin means that you are saying the same thing as God does about your sin. It means to

acknowledge that what you have thought, said, or done is truly sinful before God. You agree with God that you have sinned against Him and that your sin is an offense against Him (**Jeremiah 3:13; Psalm 51:3-4**). Confessing sin means that you acknowledge to God that your thought, word, or action is sin and that it is an offense against Him. It is to come to God and openly admit to Him that you have sinned against Him (**Psalm 32:5**). Confessing sin is an acknowledgment to God that one has sinned. It is not coming to God to argue with Him about the rightness or wrongness of your thought, word, or action. It is not coming to God in order to justify what you have thought, said, or done. It is the honest and open acknowledgment that you have sinned against God. It is the admission that you have willfully rebelled against God and His Word.

However confessing your sin is more than an acknowledgment of your sin before God. It is also assuming God's attitude about the sin. It means feeling the way that God feels about your sin. It is developing a healthy hatred of the sin and seeing it as an abominable offense to a holy God. You have to reject the sin because it is an offense and an abomination to God, no matter how small or great you think it is. Confessing sin means that you assume God's feeling toward the sin.

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When you acknowledge your sin to God and assume His attitude about it, this leads you to repentance. Repentance is more than feeling sorry for your sin or the consequences of your sin. It is a sorrow that results from realizing that you have sinned against your God. This sorrow drives you to deal with the sin. Repentance requires a radical change. It involves the deliberate commitment to root out that particular sin from your life. It is taking the necessary steps to deal with the sin that you commit. Because God hates the sin, it grieves you that you have committed it against Him. By acknowledging your sin to God and assuming His attitude about the sin, it motivates you to remove that sin from your life. Repentance results from the true acknowledgment of your sin and assuming God's attitude about it.

In summary, the confession of sin consists of three distinct parts: acknowledgment, assumption, and repentance. All three elements appear when there is the heartfelt confession of sin (**Psalm 51**). Confession of sin is not merely mouthing the words, "I have sinned." An individual can say these words and not be sincere and not receive God's forgiveness and restoration (**Exodus 9:27; Matthew 27:4**). Confession of sin demands an acknowledgment, an honest admission of guilt before God for particular sins. It calls for an assuming of God's attitude toward the sin. It then leads to the commitment to deal with the sin. If you acknowledge the sin to God and assume His attitude toward it, you will then be moved to root that sin out of your life.

Why Should A Believer Confess His Sin?

The Bible reveals many reasons why you should confess your sins. *The first and most basic reason is that this is God's demand of you.* This is revealed in **1 John 1:9**. This letter is written to Christians. It reveals what God's desire for His people is. God wants His people to confess their sins to Him. He has promised to be faithful to

forgive and cleanse the believer who confesses his sin.

Second, sin robs the believer of intimacy and fellowship with God. God is holy (**Isaiah 6:3-5, 57:15**). He hates sin. He is absolutely opposed to sin. When a believer cherishes or refuses to deal with sin in his life, it creates a barrier to experiencing intimacy and fellowship with God. God cannot and will not enter into deep and intimate fellowship with a believer who tolerates and cherishes sin. The believer will experience God's displeasure and chastisement for this (**Isaiah 59:2; Hebrews 12:7-11**).

Next, it is a disgrace to Jesus Christ for a believer to cherish and tolerate sin in his life. Jesus Christ died on the cross to make believers holy (**2 Corinthians 5:21; Titus 2:14**). He suffered, bled, and died on the cross to turn sinners into redeemed, holy believers. He died and was raised again not only to save sinners, but to make them holy. He died to save believers "from" their sin, not "in" their sin (**Matthew 1:21**). How can a believer disgrace Christ and His work on the cross by cherishing and tolerating sin? How could a believer cherish and tolerate what brought such suffering and agony to Jesus Christ

Third, unconfessed sin grieves the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:30). The Spirit who lives inside of the believer is the "Holy" Spirit. He hates sin and is utterly opposed to it. When a believer tolerates and cherishes unconfessed sin in his life, this grieves the Holy Spirit. He will not bless and work in the believer's life in this situation. The believer is robbed of the vital and necessary power of the Holy Spirit. The believer is left weak and lacks power for service.

Unconfessed sin provides the devil an opportunity to work in your life (Ephesians 4:27). Unconfessed sin gives the devil a foothold in your life. When an enemy attacks a nation, it wants to get a foothold from which to operate. By gaining a foothold somewhere in the land, the enemy has a place to work from within the nation. The enemy can then strike deeper into the nation and can gain more ground. The same is true in the spiritual

realm. Unconfessed sin gives the devil a foothold in your life. It gives him a place from which he and his demons can operate. He can strike deeper into your life through this foothold. It gives him the opportunity do greater damage in your life and to attack others through you and your sin.

When you confess your sin, it enables you to be forgiving toward others (Matthew 18:21-35). When you confess your sins to God, you receive His forgiveness. You experience His mercy and grace. This makes you willing to forgive others. How can you withhold forgiveness from others when God has so freely forgiven you (**Ephesians 4:32**)? Confessing your sin makes your heart tender and willing to forgive others. Added to this, when you truly confess your sin to God, it shows you how greatly you have rebelled against Him and offended Him. This makes the offenses done against you by others seem insignificant when compared to what you have done before God. When your eyes have been opened to the enormity of your offenses against God, the injuries that others have done to you will seem small. **True confession of sin is an excellent barrier against a spirit of unforgiveness.**

Confession of sin is a way that you glorify God's perfection. By confessing your sin, you are declaring that you are not holy and that you have fallen short of God's standard. You are declaring that God is absolutely holy and righteous. You are stating that His Word is righteous and perfect. Confessing sin is a way that you can praise God. You can glorify His perfection by declaring your sin to Him and the fact that you have fallen short of His holiness and His perfection.

Finally, when you confess sin, you receive a new awareness of the mercy and the grace of God (Lamentations 3:21-24). When you confess your sin, God is faithful to forgive you and to cleanse you. His mercy and grace flows into your life cleansing your conscience and filling your heart with peace. You are enabled to come into His presence with confidence. You can pray freely and without guilt. Confession of sin brings fresh awareness of God's mercy and grace in your life.

The Bible is clear: a believer must confess his sin to God. This is God's desire for you as a believer. This is essential for your growth and usefulness as a Christian. It is a necessity for you enjoying intimate fellowship with God.

How Do I Confess My Sin?

In order to grow and mature in the confession of sin, there are some basic guidelines that you need to keep in mind. *First, you need to confess sins daily.* As soon as the Holy Spirit convicts you, you need to deal with that sin immediately. The Bible states in **Ephesians 4:26** that a believer is not to let the sun go down on his anger. The general principle of this verse is that you are not to let the sun go down on your sin. You should not develop a complacent attitude about dealing with sin. Sin is something that must be dealt with on a daily basis. At the end of the day, you should ask the Holy Spirit to reveal any unconfessed sin that you are clinging to or that you are refusing to deal with. As He reveals this, confess it to God and commit to deal with this sin. You need to develop a daily diligence in dealing with sin.

Next, you need to confess your sins specifically. You need to declare your specific sins to God. Many believers simply say, "Lord, forgive me of my many sins" or at least, one of the various versions of this infamous phrase. However, this is simply an attempt to throw all your sins onto a pile without so much as looking at them and say, "God, please cover the whole dirty heap."

Unfortunately, this approach to confession is a colossal copout. It is actually an attempt to get out of dealing with one's sin before God. When you lump all your sins together and confess them "en masse", it's not painful or embarrassing. But, if you take those sins out of the pile one by one and call them by name, it's a whole new ballgame.

When you are serious about specifically confessing your sin, it will make a radical change in your life. When you are totally honest and specific about your sins, something happens. About the fourth or fifth day that you have to call yourself an adulterer, a liar, a greedy person, a gossip, a manipulator, or whatever, you will say to yourself, "I'm tired of having to admit this to God. With God's grace and power, I'm going to root this out of my life." When you specifically confess your sin to God, it moves you to deal with the sin and root it out of your life.

Finally, you need to confess your sins intentionally. You ought to confess your sins with a view to rooting them out of your life. True confession of sins should lead you to attack and root them out of your life. It is useless to acknowledge your sin before God without a commitment to deal with that sin. It is an abomination to acknowledge a sin before God while at the same time, planning to commit that same sin again. You may confess a sin and then commit it again. Yet, the key is confessing it to God and renewing your commitment to root it out of your life. It is renewing your commitment to war against that sin. The confession of sins without a commitment to utterly destroy these things out of your life is empty and meaningless.

How Do I Accept God's Forgiveness?

Many believers struggle to accept God's forgiveness. Perhaps you are one of those believers. You confess your sin by acknowledging it to God as sin and you assume His attitude toward it. You work to root the sin out of your life. Yet, you still feel guilty. You still wonder if God has truly forgiven you of the sin that you have committed. The good news is that you do not have to carry that guilt around and you can rest in God's cleansing and restoration. There are steps that you can take to deal with this problem.

First, keep believing the promises of God. You must trust what God says. God has promised cleansing, forgiveness, and restoration to those who will confess their sins to Him. Read, study, meditate on, and believe passages such as **Micah 7:18-19, Isaiah 38:17, 1 John 1:9** and **Psalm 103:12**. Ask God to increase your faith concerning His forgiveness as you read and study these verses. You must take God at His Word. You must believe that what He has declared is true in your life since you confessed your sins to Him.

Next, you need to focus more on the cleansing power of the blood of Jesus Christ than your sin. Which is more powerful--your sin or the blood of Jesus Christ? The blood of Jesus Christ can wash away and cleanse you of any sin (**1 Peter 1:18-19**). When guilt begins to weigh you down, you must look to Jesus Christ and the cleansing power of His blood. This is your only hope and the only way to victory over guilt. Christ's death on the cross sufficiently paid the debt of your sin. When you confess your sin to God, trust that the work of Christ and His blood have completely dealt with your sin. Claim the cleansing power of His blood!

You may also need to ask God for grace to deal with the consequences of your sin. Many times the guilt that a believer feels over sin is connected to the consequences of his sin. God does forgive sin, cleanse the believer, and restore him to intimate fellowship and usefulness. However, God does allow a believer to suffer the consequences of his sin (**compare Psalm 51 with 2 Samuel 12:7-14**). The consequences are a constant reminder of the sin. This constant reminder can trigger guilt in the believer's life. If this is the case in your life, call on God to give you the grace and the power that you need to deal with the consequences your sin. Also, plead with Him to give you the assurance that you have been cleansed of the sin and restored to fellowship even though you are still suffering the consequences.

Finally, you need to ask God to give you discernment concerning the guilt. It could be that you have not completely dealt with the sin. Or it could be an attack of Satan in your life. Satan

wants you to feel guilty, condemned, and hopeless. Ask God to give you the discernment to know the difference between the accusing voice of Satan (**Revelation 12:10**) and the convicting voice of the Holy Spirit (**John 16:7-10**). The Holy Spirit convicts, but Satan condemns. The Holy Spirit shows you your sin, how it is an offense to God and abominable in His sight. Yet, He also points you to Christ, confession, and repentance. Satan shows you your sin and points to the fact that there is no hope of forgiveness, cleansing, or restoration. Ask God to help you know the difference in your life.

I want to challenge you to make a commitment to be diligent in confessing and dealing with your sin. It is crucial for experiencing intimate fellowship with God. It is necessary for your growth and usefulness as a Christian. It is key to having power in prayer. Will you make this commitment now? The following is a prayer of commitment for this. Please pray this from the heart or you can write your own. Make the commitment to be diligent in confessing and dealing with your sin.

"Holy and righteous God, Merciful Father, You are the Perfect God. You are holy and pure. There is not taint of imperfection in you. You hate sin and are utterly opposed to it. Create in me a holy hatred of sin. Cause me to feel the way about sin as You do. Grant me the power to be diligent in confessing and dealing with my sin. I want to be holy! O God, make me holy! Amen.

Pursuing Holiness

Striving to live a holy life should be the pursuit of every Christian. In fact, it is what characterizes those who have been born-again (**Hebrews 12:14; 1 John 3:9**). The Bible teaches that a Christian longs to be holy and pursues this with determined effort.

Pursuing holiness is intimately connected to the confession of sin. Confession is the fountain while pursuing holiness is the stream. Confession

of sin leads to the pursuit of holiness. When you confess your sin, you are identifying the problem. When you pursue holiness, you are striving to eliminate the problem.

Pursuing holiness means that a believer is striving to remove what is sinful from his life. It is removing from one's thinking, feeling, and acting what is not pleasing in the sight of God. Yet, it does not stop with this. It is also replacing the characteristics and attitudes that God wants you to have. You root out the sin in order to replace it with godly characteristics, attitudes, and behavior.

How does a dentist deal with a cavity? First, he drills into the tooth removing the disease and the decay. He has to remove this for the tooth to recover and become healthy again. Yet, he does not stop there. It is not enough to remove the disease and the decay. He has to place medicine and a filling in the tooth where the disease and the decay were. This deals with the decay and strengthens the tooth. It also protects it from future disease and decay.

It is the same in the spiritual realm. You must strive to remove sinful attitudes, words, and actions from your life. These things must be attacked and attacked until you destroy them out of your life. Yet, this is not enough. You must be seeking to cultivate godly characteristics and actions in your life. You must root out the sin and replace it with the godly characteristics that God wants you to have in your life.

Your pursuit of holiness must be intentional. You must strive with all your might to deal with the sin in your life and to cultivate godly character. This is something that you have to be committed to on a daily basis. It will take a determined effort on your part. God has purposed to make you holy (**Romans 8:29; Ephesians 1:4**). God will work in your life to accomplish His purpose of making you holy (**Philippians 2:13**). Yet, you must strive with all your might to grow in holiness. You must make every effort to pursue holiness (**Hebrews 12:14**).