

Gamma 26

Study 6

Praying Our Confessions: A Study of Psalm 32 Part 2

1. How are we to confess?

Our confession has 4 dimensions:

- We take full responsibility for our sin.
- We change our perspective on the effect of our sin.
- We distinguish between grief and self-pity.
- We change our hiding place.

2. What does "taking full responsibility" in confession involve? Contrasting it with common human tendencies.

Taking full responsibility in confession necessitates explicitly acknowledging one's sin and iniquity, refusing to cover or overlook it, as stated in verse 5.

It involves honest self-examination and admitting personal transgression. This process requires believers to make time to "preach the law to ourselves" to understand God's will and identify specific sins, both of commission (things done) and omission (things left undone).

This contrasts sharply with common human tendencies of making excuses, distorting the truth, blaming others, or bearing the burden of guilt, as Satan loves to do.

Genuine responsibility avoids such deflections, focusing entirely on personal culpability. 1 John 3:20 says, "for whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything," which provides solace when our hearts condemn us due to Satan's accusations.

3. What is "homologos" in confession, and why is this understanding crucial?

The Greek word "homologos" is defined in the context of confession as "to say the same thing" or "to be of the same mind". This understanding is crucial because it means that in confession, a believer must align their perspective with God's, seeing their sin exactly as God sees it.

This involves recognising that all sin, ultimately, is against God - His will, His heart, and His word (Psalm 51:4). It emphasises that sin is a personal offence, not accidental, and shifts the focus from the consequences of the sin to the direct offence against God.

Worldly apologies often focus on self, minimise impact, or shift blame, rather than truly acknowledging the offence against God.

4. Differentiate between "grief" over sin and "self-pity," providing an example from the text to illustrate your point.

Grief over sin is described as a deep, genuine sorrow for having offended God through the sin itself, leading to a changed heart and true repentance.

In contrast, self-pity or remorse is sorrow primarily over the negative consequences of sin, without a genuine desire for heart change.

An example illustrating self-pity is Pharaoh's "repentance" during the plagues. When the locusts brought death, Pharaoh hastily pleaded with Moses and Aaron to "forgive my sin please only this once plead with the Lord your God to remove this death from me". However, once the plague was lifted, Pharaoh's heart remained hardened, and he did not let the people of Israel go, demonstrating that his concern was only for the removal of the immediate threat, not a change of heart.

b) Reflection Question - What is our confession like in light of this understanding?

5. What does the phrase "changing your hiding place" mean in confession?

"Changing your hiding place" means shifting one's refuge from attempting to hide from God or trying to earn forgiveness through personal actions, to running towards God.

b) Where should a believer find their true hiding place?

People often try to hide through actions like Adam and Eve's fig leaves, excessive contrition, self-punishment (such as crying or punching oneself), or even religious rituals like Catholic penance (saying prayers or performing specific deeds to earn forgiveness).

However, such actions misunderstand grace and Christ's finished work. Instead, a believer's true hiding place is found solely in Christ. Forgiveness is received through Christ's righteousness, not through the act of confession itself, which is merely an acknowledgement of sin.

Judas Iscariot's response to his betrayal of Jesus exemplifies a failure to find the true hiding place; instead of seeking Jesus's mercy, he threw away the money and hung himself, believing he could earn forgiveness through self-inflicted punishment.

6. How do we reconcile the tension between "unconditional forgiveness" for believers and the need for ongoing confession?

The biblical truth of unconditional forgiveness for believers in Christ (Romans 8:1 states there is "no condemnation for those who are in Christ") and the apparent conditions for forgiveness (Matthew 6:14-15, 1 John 1:6-10) seem to contradict each other.

It refutes the idea, propagated by some (e.g., Bob George Ministries), that Christians, once saved, no longer need to confess because there is "no sin in the believer".

The resolution lies in understanding that while justification (where past, present, and future sins are forgiven through Christ's imputed righteousness) declares a believer righteous judicially, this leads to a life of ongoing sanctification.

Sanctification is the continuous process of being made more holy, which includes continual repentance and confession as a "way of life". This ongoing confession is crucial for "walking in the light" (1 John 1:7), which signifies maintaining fellowship with God and experiencing ongoing cleansing by Christ's blood.

The source clarifies that while sin's guilt is covered, sin itself is not gone in the believer, and denying its presence means deceiving oneself and making God a liar.

7. How does the "sanctification cycle" contribute to a believer's spiritual growth?

The "sanctification cycle" is a continuous, cyclical process for believers.

It begins with sin, which leads to a loss of peace and joy in the believer's life. This loss prompts confession, which in turn results in forgiveness from God and the restoration of renewed peace and joy.

The cycle then repeats as sin inevitably occurs again.

This ongoing process, despite being potentially painful like divine discipline, is described as the "engine of our growth". Through this continuous acknowledgment of sin and reception of grace, believers are "progressively made more holy".

As seen in Hebrews 12:11, "For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it."

8. How does understanding the depth of one's sin impact a believer's faith, confidence, and joy?

The deeper one understands "the darkness and trouble of your own sin," the greater one will comprehend and appreciate "the great work of Grace in Jesus" that overcomes it.

This profound understanding of both the magnitude of one's sin and the immense grace of Christ leads directly to a more lively faith, increased confidence, and accentuated joy and holiness in the believer's life.

Joe Thorn emphasises that this vibrancy comes not from repenting "so well," but from the consistent process of repenting and grasping the depth of one's depravity alongside the height of God's love. The example of the woman who anointed Jesus' feet (Luke 7) powerfully illustrates this: her deep awareness of her many sins led to a profound love, devotion, and worship born from the immense forgiveness she received, demonstrating that "he who's forgiven little loves little".

If believers do not understand the depth of their sin, they cannot truly grasp the height of God's love, which can lead to a lack of zeal in their spiritual lives.

b) Reflection Question - What about us? How well do we understand the depth of our sins?

9. Why is it that a person who truly understands the gospel can receive criticism about their sin without an "inadequate response"?

That is possible because their identity and forgiveness are firmly rooted in Christ's finished work, not in their own performance or lack of sin. This gospel-centred understanding means they will not resort to common "inadequate responses" such as "blowing up", or "melting down".

Instead, knowing they are already forgiven in Christ, when their sin is pointed out or uncovered, they will run towards God, their true hiding place, rather than hiding, reacting defensively, or feeling insulted or hopeless. They are "safe" for criticism because their security is in Christ, not in maintaining a facade of sinlessness.

10. What is the danger for those who deny the need for continual confession, like the "Bob George Ministries" view?

This view asserts that under grace, believers "need only to accept the finished work of Christ and we are completely forgiven of all our sins forever," leading to the belief that "there is no sin in the believer and there's nothing that we can do that will change the fact we are secure forever and free in Christ to do whatever we like".

The danger is that such individuals may fall into the "trap of sin" and ultimately disappoint God. This perspective contradicts the ongoing process of sanctification, where believers are progressively made holy.

Denying the presence of sin and the need for confession causes them to fail to "walk in the light" and suffer its consequences.

Takeaway

Our Lord Jesus Christ's death and resurrection has completed the work in dealing with the penalty of our sins.

Resting in that and continually running to Him as our hiding places frees us from the burden of carrying the guilt and reacting.

Truly understanding that freedom enables us to truly live for Him.