

## Back to the Basics

### SUNDAY 17<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER - Confession

Scripture - 1 John 1:5–10; Romans 10:9–13



Today, we’re tackling an ancient practice of the church called *confession*. Now, I know this word probably means different things to different people depending on what faith tradition you grew up in or around. You may also imagine what you see on TV in police crimes, where the detective finally gets a “confession” from the criminal. Or you may have been brought up in the Catholic faith, where you are required to attend “confession” with the priest to receive repentance.

It’s important that we balance what we’ve seen, heard, or learned through experience with what the bible says. Thankfully in this case, *confession* has some beautiful biblical truth and instruction behind it.

John begins by saying, “If we confess our sins.... The word confess is in the present tense, which means this is something we must continually do. Some people teach that we don’t need to ask for forgiveness because we are already forgiven. But that is not what God’s Word says.

Why is something like confession considered to be a basic part of the Christian faith. Other things may feel more obvious like prayer,

reading the Bible, and attending church. We've come to understand over the centuries that these are the things we "do" as disciples. And there's nothing wrong with praying, reading, and fellowshiping with others. We wouldn't do those things if they weren't important and necessary. But there is something divinely powerful about confession. Confession is, as we are about to learn, both healing and liberating.

## Healing

First, let's talk for a moment about what the word *confession* means. The basic definition of confession is *a formal statement admitting that you are guilty of a crime*. It can also be *an admission or acknowledgment that you have done something that you are ashamed of or embarrassed about*.<sup>1</sup> And in a religious sense, confession is an admission of sins or wrongdoing with a motive to be "absolved" or forgiven.

In summary, *confession* is a personal acknowledgment of wrongdoing or perceived wrong. Oftentimes, it feels good to admit to or own up to things we have done wrong or people we have hurt in the past. You may have heard people say, "*I feel like a weight was lifted off my shoulders,*" after coming clean about something.

And interestingly, this practice of confession has been happening for a long, long time. In Nehemiah *the Israelites had gathered,*

*fasting and wearing sackcloth, with dust on their heads. They stood and confessed their sins and the iniquities of their fathers.*

This is a picture of communal confession happening in the ancient world. In this case, it is the Israelites, the people of God, acknowledging their wrong-doing while worshipping the Lord together. This scene is a beautiful one, as it comes on the heels of a long and difficult time of slavery and captivity by foreign powers like the Babylonians. The Israelites are a broken and scattered people and they're seeking forgiveness and healing through their confession. It takes a good measure of humility to admit you've been wrong, and yet healing comes after humility.

God says in 2 Chronicles 7:14, *“if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.”*

### **Forgiveness and healing. Forgiveness IS healing.**

Confessing our wrongs allows healing to happen, and healing is amazing. Think about a time in your life when you were on either end of confession and healing and think back to how amazing it felt to have “the weight lifted.” Or think for a moment about how amazing it was to extend forgiveness to someone else for something they did. Not to say it's always easy, but more to say it's powerful.

And for one final thought about the healing powers of confession, let's turn together to James 5:16.

*"Therefore, confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective."*

We often move towards confession to find healing and freedom. And it's important to pray with one another through the process. It's important for us to invite God into the process and seek His guidance. Unconfessed sin will enslave you, but Christ came to bring healing and freedom.

### **Liberating**

Confession is not only healing, but also liberating. Confession and forgiveness set you free from past sin and wrongdoing. And isn't it true, don't we kind of already know that being healed has a way of setting us free?

When Jesus began His ministry, the gospels say He came teaching, preaching, and *healing*. God knew we weren't right, we needed a Saviour, and Jesus helped shine a light on our need... He came to set us free.

This is what we heard from 1 John, that the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin. But he goes on to say that if we say we have no sin we are only deceiving ourselves.

It's not a matter of *IF* you have sin and wrongdoing in your life. It's more a matter of *are you bringing it into the light?* Christ works in the light. Forgiveness happens in the light. And forgiveness happens when we confess our sins.

Sin will enslave you. Sin keeps us in the dark, ashamed, hidden, closed inside. No matter what it is, however, big, or small the transgression may seem we can say with full confidence that Christ is able and willing to forgive. But we need to confess our sin and bring our wrongdoing to His feet. Bring it into the light of Christ.

We heard in Romans: *“if we confess Jesus is Lord, believe in our heart that God raised Him from the dead, we will be saved.*

### **Confession is healing. Confession brings freedom.**

You can admit sin without confessing sin, without looking at it from God's vantage point. When you genuinely confess sin, you've been convicted of that sin and you hate it, you're broken over it, and you want to turn from it. You see, real confession does not just try to escape the consequences of sin; it tries to erase the guilt of sin.

If you're going to deal with sin, you must call it what it is. If it's pride, call it pride; if it's lust, call it lust; if it's greed, call it greed. But call it what it is. Then second, confess it when it occurs. We often sin retail and confess wholesale. Many of us wait until we go to bed at night and then say something like this, “Lord, forgive me if

I've sinned." There is no such thing as "IF" – we all sin. And there is no excuse to not to confess.

How many of you have ever confessed a sin but still didn't "feel" forgiven? Always remember this: your forgiveness depends on God's faithfulness, not your feelings. If you admit your fault and turn from it, you can anticipate God's faithfulness. Because He is faithful and just, He will deal rightly and righteously with your sin.

When you confess a sin to God and He forgives you, then you come back and confess that same sin later because you didn't feel forgiven, you insult God. Hear that – you insult God when you continue to go over and over about a sin that He has forgiven and forgotten. Confession isn't easy... it's powerful. It is counted as one of the core pillars of our faith.

But we don't have to go back through every single transgression to be healed. We don't have to enumerate and name everything, especially to a God in heaven who already knows. It's just as effective to simply say, ***I am a sinner. I need forgiveness.***

Confession seeks pardon from God. Pardon accepts guilt.  
Confession admits the wrong and seeks forgiveness.

You may be here this morning, or listening live-stream and realize you have something you need to confess. If there is a specific sin

lingering at the forefront of your mind, you need to bring it to the light. You need to lay that thing at the feet of Jesus.

Whichever group you find yourself a part of today, or if you find yourself feeling free and unburdened, the answer is still the same for all of us. *It's Jesus*. He is the reason we can find freedom, healing, and forgiveness. He is the reason we even have a faith to learn about.

And so, I can only encourage you today to simply bring yourself to Him.

**Confess if you need to.**

**Ask forgiveness if you need to.**

**Pray with the person next to you if you need to.**

**Do whatever you need to do today and trust that He is faithful.**

**Confession is healing. Confession brings freedom.**