

Paradise Lost and Restored: What is Sin and Confession?

Ricardo Campos, Pastor Grace Chapel, Orange, CA October 5, 2014

I. Introduction

How do we recover from sin? God tells us to confess our sins, but what does He mean? Is it enough to admit our wrongdoing? Does God allow us back into His life after we admit what we did? And what exactly is sin? If I get drunk, is it enough to say, "God, I got drunk," or does He want me to see that there's a much deeper problem that I must confess?

II. What Exactly is Sin and What Makes Us Sin?

What is sin? When God first made you, He made something wonderful, Psalm 139:13-14. He didn't make you a drug addict, a divorcé, an adulterer, someone who struggles with depression or anxiety, or any such thing. Thus, anything that gets in the way of being what God made you, is sin or the result of sin. Why do parents correct their children when they misbehave? Because all those things are contrary to the ideal—not perfection but ideal—that their kids are supposed to be. So it is with God. Therefore, sin is any thought, word, or action that takes you away from being the ideal that God created in you.

God vividly paints this for us in 1 John 1:5-10. He pictures our life with Him as a walk in His light. And as we're walking, His light reveals things (sins) in us that are not supposed to be there, things that detract from the ideal He made. And we have a choice, confess them or deny them. If we confess them, God scrubs us clean of everything that detracts from His ideal. If we deny them, then we get further and further away from our ideal self and further and further away from God's light, the only thing that can reveal our best self.

What makes us sin? We normally think of sin as getting drunk, sleeping with someone who's not our spouse, doing drugs, lying, being jealous, stealing, etc. But is there something else behind the sins we commit? Yes, behind every sin is a false belief. For example, Why do people do drugs? Because they believe that they will never be able to overcome their struggles, that their life will always be miserable and neither they nor God can do anything about it. So they do drugs to escape or ease the pain of their misery.

III. What is Confession and Does It Include Repentance?

What is Confession? God tells us to confess, but what does He mean? If sin is what keeps us from the ideal us that God made and His light is always there to point this out, confession means to agree with what God's light reveals. This is why over and over in 1 John 1:5-10, God shows us that our tendency is to disagree with what His light reveals, 1:6, 8, 10. It is only when we agree with Him that we're truly able to be our ideal selves....He frees us from everything that keeps us from being our best, 1:9.

Does God want us to confess the surface sin or is His light pointing to a deeper problem?

God doesn't just want us to notice the surface sin or its result like depression or anxiety. He wants us to see the deeper issue, the cancer that's driving our sin, that's robbing us of our true self. There's a prophet of God who ended up suffering from deep depression and suicidal thoughts all because he believed something false about himself, God, and his life: Elijah, 1 Kings 17-19.

God feeds Elijah bread and meat with ravens, 17:6. God made the widow's handful of flour and her small amount of oil last for years, 17:14-16. God brings the widow's son back to life, 17:22. God protected Elijah's life from the king's assassins, so he has no fear of the king, 18:7-19, 40. God rains fire down from heaven to consume the sacrifice and everything around it, 18:38. God sends heavy rain and ends the 3 ½ year drought, 18:45 (cf. James 5:17). God gave Elijah superhuman strength to outrun Ahab and his chariot (25 miles), 18:46.

So why, after all these miracles, does Elijah run for his life from queen Jezebel and why does he become deeply depressed and suicidal, 19:3-4? It has to do with the lies Elijah believed—and notice that throughout this God is very compassionate as He shows Elijah the truth, 19:5-8. Elijah believes that if he executed God's plan perfectly, then the people would return to God. But they didn't. This proved to Elijah that he was a failure as a prophet, 19:4. Since a revival didn't happen in Israel after the miracle on Mt. Carmel but they instead want to kill him, Elijah believes that he's the only one left in Israel who's on God's side, 19:10. Since Jezebel threatens to kill him in the next 24hrs, Elijah believes that God is powerless to protect him from Jezebel, 19:10, 14.

But what's the truth? Every time we believe something false about ourselves, God, and/or our lives, we will reap the consequences of sin. Elijah is not the only one on God's side; there are 7,000 others! 19:18. Jezebel may threaten Elijah's life, but she has absolutely no power over him. In fact, God never allowed Elijah to die, 2 Kings 2:1-11, but He did kill Jezebel in a horrific way, 2 Kings 9:30-37. Elijah is not a failed prophet; he did exactly what God told him and he's still God's prophet, 1 Kings 19:15-16.

Does confession include repentance? Is God simply asking us to admit our wrongdoing, is that what confession means? So if I have sex with someone other than my wife, all I have to do is say, "God, I had sex with the harlot down the street." And if I happen to do that again next week, I simply confess it again and thus God and me are OK, right? No! Confession is not simply admitting wrong. It is seeing the sin the way God does, as something that is totally contrary to what He made us. It's a chance to agree with God that we've strayed from our ideal self. But in order to see sin this way, it requires repentance. It means that we regret what we did and do our best to never do it again.

It also helps to understand that our life with God, our walk with Him, is not a state of being, it's an action. We are not **in** fellowship or **out** of fellowship with God. Therefore, confession is not a sin-eraser that magically puts us back **in** fellowship with God the moment we admit something. Our life with God is an action, it's a relationship where we walk side by side with Him, 1 John 1:7. Confession gives us the opportunity to walk with God again. God's our Loving Father not a principal who's disappointed with the latest F on our report card which is erased when we retake the test.

IV. Conclusion

For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are proved right when you speak and justified when you judge.