

Confession: Giving Glory to God

by David Guzik

Giving glory to God requires a commitment to prayer, humility, and confession, and is essential for individual and community victory.

Duration: 57:18

Scripture: Joshua 7:1, 2 Chronicles 7:14, Matthew 6:33, Acts 19:17, Acts 19:20, Ephesians 4:25, James 5:16

Topics: "Repentance", "Sanctification"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the story of Achan and the defeat of the Israelites at the battle of Ai. He highlights how Achan's sin not only led to their defeat but also caused Joshua to experience discouragement and question God. The speaker then shares a powerful anecdote about a time of confession of sin at Columbia Bible College, emphasizing the importance of acknowledging and repenting from our sins. The sermon concludes by reminding listeners of the miraculous entry of the Israelites into the Promised Land and the fall of Jericho.

Transcript

Open up your Bibles to Joshua chapter 7. This morning we spoke about the glory of God occasioned by that amazing incident in 1st Samuel chapter 6 where these two milk cows that had never been yoked and were separated from their calves were hitched up to a cart and upon that cart was the Ark of the Covenant and the Philistines thought well, we don't want to necessarily repent if it's not absolutely necessary. So let's see whether it was the Lord who sent these plagues or whether it was chance and God really glorified himself through those cows. The Israelites weren't really making themselves available for the glory of the Lord.

The Philistines were resisting the glory of God and so God found somebody to give him glory. I think every Christian has a heart, has a concern for giving glory to God and what I want to talk to you about tonight is a way to give glory to God that you might not have thought about before. Joshua chapter 7 beginning at verse 1 But the children of Israel committed a trespass concerning or regarding the accursed things for Achan the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah of the tribe of Judah took of the accursed things so that the anger of the Lord burned against the children of Israel.

The children of Israel had had a magnificent entry into the promised land. They were on the eastern side of the River Jordan and God brought them over the River Jordan in a miraculous way. The waters of the Jordan River parted as it were, wasn't exactly like the same thing as the parting of the Red Sea but it was

similar and they crossed over the River Jordan which was at its flood stage.

It was an absolute miracle and when they came over the Jordan River, the first thing that they did was they came and they attacked the city of Jericho. And you probably know something about the fall of the city of Jericho, how Joshua and the armies of Israel were commanded to circle the city and just worship God as they circled for seven days and then on the seventh day, I believe they circled seven times and then at the end of that time, they all blew trumpets and the walls of the city of Jericho, which was a highly fortified city, the walls collapsed of their own accord, the hand of the Lord touching them and they fell down and then of course the Israelites went in and conquered. Now God promised that he would give the city of Jericho unto the Israelites but he commanded them strictly saying this first city, which by the way was the mightiest city in the land of Canaan.

This first city, this mightiest city, all the plunder, all the spoil, all the booty from battle belongs to me, says the Lord. Therefore, I don't want anybody to take anything. You see a coin lying down on the ground of Jericho, you don't take it and put it in your pocket.

You take it and I would suppose perhaps they would give it to their officer, the army troop would, and the officer would put it in a common collection area and they wouldn't even give it unto the Lord in the temple or the tabernacle rather. They would destroy everything that they captured from the city of Jericho. The idea behind that sounds strange to us.

We think what a waste, you know, why not put it to a good purpose? But it was a very extreme way of declaring the bounty or the plunder from this city is going to be no good to anybody except God. So we're going to destroy it. Then no man can ever benefit from it.

And that's what they were commanded to do with the spoils of the city of Jericho. Now, they were not commanded to do that with the spoils of the other cities that they conquered, but Jericho was to be that way. Well, if we notice here in verse 1, it says the children of Israel committed a trespass regarding the accursed things.

In other words, all the spoil, all the plunder from the city of Jericho was to be regarded as accursed and therefore destroyed. But not everybody respected this. There was one man, a man named Achan, who profited, he took some of the spoil, he took some of the splendor from the city of Jericho.

It says he took of the accursed things. So the anger of the Lord burned against the children of Israel. Now Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is beside Beth-Avon, which is on the east side of Bethel, and spoke to them saying, Go up and spy out the country.

So the men went up and spied out Ai. Then they returned to Joshua and said to him, Do not let all the people go up, but let about two or three thousand men go up and attack Ai. Do not worry all the people there, for the people of Ai are few.

So about three thousand men went up from there from the people of Ai, from the people, but they fled before the men of Ai. And the men of Ai struck down about 36 men, for they chased them from before the gate as far as Shavarim and struck them down on the descent. Therefore the hearts of the people melted and became like water.

Then Joshua tore his clothes and fell to the earth on his face before the Ark of the Lord until evening. Both he and the elders of Israel and they put dust on their heads. And Joshua said, Alas, Lord God, why have

you brought this people over the Jordan at all to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites to destroy us? Oh, that we had been content and dwelt on the other side of the Jordan.

Oh, Lord, what shall I say when Israel turns its back before its enemies for the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land will hear of it and surround us and cut off our name from the earth. Then what will you do for your great name? Well, what happened here is simple enough. They had the next city to conquer.

Jericho was crossed off the list. The next city on the list was a small city, the city of Ai. Compared to Jericho, Ai was nothing.

It was a small city. It didn't have the mighty defenses and the impressive army that the city of Jericho had. And once you've conquered Jericho, Ai seems like a walk in the park.

Well, they went out and they battled against the city of Ai and they got beat. Now, we might say they didn't get beat that bad. I mean, losing 36 men out of many thousands in the army of Israel doesn't seem to be that high of a casualty rate.

But when you consider that the Israelites now felt that perhaps momentum was against them, they felt everything turned on this one battle. You see, either God was for them or God was against them. If God was for them, they shouldn't lose any of their battles.

If God was against them, they could not win any of their battles. And this is what distressed them so much. I want you to take a look at some of the characteristics here of Israel's defeat at the city of Ai.

And you might say, wait a minute, David, I thought we were talking about giving glory to God. Hold on. We'll get to that.

But look at some of the reasons for defeat. And I think that these are common reasons for defeat. Whenever there is defeat among God's people, you will find these three characteristics.

First of all, anywhere from verse 1 to verse 6, which describes going on the other side of the Jordan after the battle of Jericho and the battle against Ai in verses 1 through 6, excuse me, 1 through 5, I should say. Does it in any place mention prayer? No. Joshua didn't pray.

The people didn't pray. The leaders didn't pray. Israel was defeated, number one, because of prayerlessness.

Friends, we just have to get right down to it. Prayerlessness is a great cause of defeat among God's people. Whenever a great work of God is happening now, I think you can have a great work of man without prayer.

You can have a great work that seems impressive in the eyes of men. But if it is a work of God, it will be accompanied by great prayer. Absolutely.

And so when there is no prayer, when there is prayerlessness among God's people, you will find defeat among God's people. It's that simple. But that's not the only reason.

Secondly, we see that there was a good deal of overconfidence among the people of Israel. Did you notice that? They said, well, listen, do not let all the people go up. I'm reading from verse 3. But let about two or

three thousand men go up and attack Ai.

Do not worry all the people there for the people, they are a few. Right. Overconfidence.

After all, Jericho is done. This city is nothing compared to Jericho. We can defeat the city of Ai with one hand tied behind our back.

Well, when Christians live their Christian life with a sense of overconfidence, with a sense of inflated spiritual ego, with a sense of exaggeration, if nothing else, just to themselves about their own standing with the Lord, you will find defeat among God's people. But thirdly, and this may be the most obvious point. Is they were defeated not only because of prayerlessness, not only because of overconfidence, but they were defeated because there was sin in their midst and it was the sin of Achan.

I want you to consider that just for a moment. This one man's sin resulted in the defeat of the people of Israel at the Battle of Ai. And not only that, it sends Joshua into what we would say is almost a shocking episode of discouragement.

This doesn't sound like the Joshua I know in the Bible, tearing his clothes before God, saying, Lord, oh, it would have been better if we never crossed over the River Jordan. Why have you done this to us? God, you were a little bit surprised to see this from such a godly man like Joshua. But even though Joshua was a great man, he was but a man.

And, you know, we know that even great men of God are liable to things like this. So in any regard, we see that there was prayerlessness. We see that there was overconfidence.

We see that there was sin in their midst and we see that it brought the leader into discouragement. Joshua, that is. Now, take a look at verse 10 where they begin to deal with the sin, you could almost say that in verses six through nine, the first two issues were dealt with.

Josh was praying now, isn't he? He wasn't praying before, but now he's praying. And the issue of overconfidence was dealt with, wasn't it? They were overconfident before. They're not overconfident now.

And so those two things are dealt with. But what about the third issue of sin? Look at it right here, verse 10. So the Lord said to Joshua, get up.

Why do you lie thus on your face? Isn't that great? What do you what are you on your face praying to me about? You know, Joshua, there's a time to pray and there's a time to act. And, you know, we should always pray, but when it's time to act, it's time to act. And sometimes we can avoid acting by prayer.

And God said, no, you're not going to do this, Joshua, there's something to deal with. Besides, I think Joshua is being confronted with something here that is often common to us. Don't you have the sense in verses six through nine that Joshua is pretty much blaming the Lord? You know, God, what's up with you, God? Come on now, Lord.

God is grabbing Joshua by the lapels and saying, what's up with you, Joshua? Don't act like it's my problem here. There's a problem with you. Well, what is it? He's going to tell him, verse 11.

Israel has sinned and they have also transgressed my covenant, which I commanded them, where they have even taken some of the accursed things and have both stolen and deceived. And they put it also put it among their own stuff. Therefore, the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, but turn

their backs before their enemies because they have become doomed to destruction.

Neither will I be with you anymore unless you destroy the accursed from among you. Get up, sanctify the people and say, sanctify yourselves for tomorrow, because thus says the Lord God of Israel. There is an accursed thing in your midst, O Israel.

You cannot stand before your enemies until you take away the accursed thing from among you. In the morning, therefore, you shall be brought according to your tribes. It shall be that the tribe which the Lord takes shall come according to the families.

The family which the Lord takes shall come by households and the household which the Lord takes shall come man by man. Then it shall be that he who is taken with the accursed thing shall be burned with fire. He and all that he is because he has transgressed the covenant of the Lord and because he's done a disgraceful thing in Israel.

The Joshua rose early in the morning and brought Israel by their tribes and the tribe of Judah was taken. Presumably they cast lots or use the Urim and Thummim. But in some way they determined that here stands all the tribes of Israel.

Which tribe is it, Lord? And in some way or another, God revealed to them that it was the tribe of Judah. What's next? Verse 17, and he brought the clan of Judah and he took the family of the Zerahites and he brought out the family of the Zerahites man by man and Zabdi was taken. So here's the whole tribe of Judah.

Well, which family, which division in this tribe is it? Well, it's the family of the Zerahites. It's one segment of the people of Judah. Well, among the group of the Zerahites, there's several different groups.

Which is it among these? And God says it's the people of Zerah or Zabdi, the son of Zerah. Verse 19. Excuse me, verse 18.

Then he brought his household man by man and Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah of the tribe of Judah was taken. Joshua said to Achan, my son, I beg you, give glory to the Lord God of Israel. And make confession to him and tell me now what you have done.

Do not hide it from me. And Achan answered Joshua and said, indeed, I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel. And this is what I have done.

When I saw among the spoils a beautiful Babylonian garment, 200 shekels of silver and a wedge of gold weighing 50 shekels, I coveted them and took them. And there they are hidden in the earth in the midst of my tent with the silver under it. Can we observe a few things about Achan's sin here? First of all, it was secret.

Nobody knew. Achan thought he got away with it. You can imagine how Achan felt.

Here he is, part of the army going through the city of Jericho. And maybe he burst in upon a room where some soldiers from the city of Jericho had fled into. And as Achan goes in, perhaps in very brave battle, he slays those enemy soldiers and a spear flings right by his head and he narrowly escapes it.

And in brilliant battle, it might have been a spectacular thing to watch. Achan slays these enemy soldiers and his heart is beating and there's perspiration going around everywhere and his head is spinning just a

little bit. But then something catches his eye.

Look at that suit. Why, that that's Babylonian styling. That's that's that's an Armani among among, you know, the clothes of the day.

And he's thinking, man, wouldn't I look stylish in that? Just just think of me walking around wearing that people would say something. I'd get some respect wearing that people would notice. And man, I just laid my life on the line.

What God has preserved my life. He must have preserved my life for this very reason, because he wants to provide this Babylonian suit of clothes for me. And as he goes over into that closet, he takes that Babylonian suit.

Well, what's behind this? Well, there's riches. God, you've revealed this to me. There's money.

There's precious metals here. I'll say, oh, God, thank you. You're so good, God.

And he puts it in his bag and he looks outside the room and when nobody saw him, everybody else is busy with the battle in other places. And so he takes it and he takes it home. And well, we have reason to believe that his family knew what was going on, especially because he hid it under the tent.

And so it was probably evident to them. But, you know, he shows it secretly to his wife and to his children. Be very quiet about this.

Let's not let anybody know. And they keep it all very secret. And as Akin goes to bed that night, his heart is beating.

But he thinks through very carefully. He says, I didn't get caught. I got away with it.

The sin was secret. Secondly, Akin's sin was small. Well, think about in the big scheme of things, what's the big deal? I mean, how big is it? It's not like he murdered a man.

It's not like he he was unfaithful to his wife. This is theft. He took something.

He took something that was going to be destroyed anyway. In the big scheme of things, Akin could have done a lot worse. He could have stole a lot more.

He could have murdered him. As I said, all in all, the sin is pretty small. Think about that for a moment.

It was a secret sin. It seemed to be a small sin. And at the same time, there's a very sobering statement in verse 11.

See how that verse starts, the first three words, Israel has sinned. Well, no, wait a minute. I thought it was Akin who sinned.

What are you talking about, God? The nation sinned when this one man sinned? As far as God was concerned, yes. It was Israel's sin. It wasn't just Akin's.

It was Israel's. Let me read you a couple of paragraphs from Alan Redpath speaking in his great, great commentary on the book of Joshua, Victorious Christian Living. I recommend that to anyone.

Just a couple of paragraphs from this very passage. Just I trust that the Holy Spirit is going to write this lesson deeply on your hearts, where one member of a local fellowship is guilty before God of sin. The verdict from heaven is my people have sinned.

When one man steps out of blessing and does something contrary to God's will, the verdict of the all searching eye of our master is my people have sinned. No individual Christian can sin without affecting the whole church. No child of God can grow cold in his spiritual life without lowering the temperature of everybody else around him.

The whole victory of the whole community depends on the victorious life of every individual church member. Let no Christian ever think that because he's not doing some specific task for the Lord, he does not matter. Let nobody imagine that he can be lost in a crowd and be forgotten.

Let me say that the testimony of your church in its community and throughout the world depends on the victorious life of every man and woman on your church rolls. That's heavy, isn't it? But it's a valid development of this principle right here, my friends. In verse 11, God didn't say one man sinned.

He didn't say Achan sinned, he said Israel sinned. So we see that Achan's sin was secret. We see that it was small.

We see that it was really Israel's sin. And we really see that it affected the whole nation in a bad way. This one man's sin hindered the whole nation.

Now, take a look again at verse 19, Joshua's great charge to Achan. We read there. So Joshua said to Achan, my son, I beg you, give glory to the Lord God of Israel and make confession to him and tell me now what you have done.

Do not hide it from me. You know, we don't often think of it, but our confession of sin is an important way that we give glory to God. I don't know about you, but for the most part, I would rather glorify God in just about any other way.

Can't we sing some worship songs? Can't we have a prayer meeting? Can't we say praise the Lord and hallelujah. And all of those are valid ways to glorify God. But even though we would often rather glorify God in just about any other way, Joshua's words still stand.

He called on Achan to make an open confession of sin. And in so doing, he told Achan that he would give glory to the Lord God of Israel. Now, this isn't the only place in scriptures where the idea of giving glory to God and confessing sin are linked together.

For example, in First Samuel, chapter six, a passage that we just looked at together this morning, it says, therefore, you shall make images of your tumors and images of your wrath that ravaged the land and you shall give glory to the God of Israel. Perhaps he will lighten his hand from you, from your gods and from your land. When the Philistines intended to repent before the God of Israel, knowing that they had disgraced and dishonored the God of Israel by mistreating the Ark of the Covenant when they were describing their confession and repentance of this sin, they described it as giving glory to the Lord.

There's another passage in Malachi, chapter two, where God rebukes sinful priests and he says, if you will not hear and if you will not take it to heart to give glory to my name, says the Lord of hosts, I will send a curse upon you and I will curse your blessings. In other words, God's inviting them to glorify himself, God

is saying glorify me by the confession of your sin. And that might be a head scratcher for you, you might be wondering, how does my confession of sin glorify God? It doesn't really seem to fit, does it? Well, actually, it does, because when we confess our sins, we glorify God because we show, first of all, that we recognize the omniscience of God.

Oh, isn't this what Aiken failed to do? Aiken failed to realize that even though he seemed to get away from it, get away with it from the whole nation of Israel. And don't you think that the commanders of Israel had to be on guard for this happening in their midst? There they are overrunning the city of Jericho. And don't you think it happened more than once that an officer in the army of Israel had to go to an enlisted man, just a private and say, hey, put that back.

Don't even think about putting that in your pocket. Come on now, let's go. And so they were on the lookout for it.

Yet Aiken escaped detection. He thought that his sin was kept secret. But what he didn't do is he didn't glorify God in recognizing that God sees it all.

That God is omniscient. And when we confess our sin, we're giving glory to God because we're saying, God, you see it anyway. What, like this is secret to you, God? How can I pretend that it's some big secret when God in heaven sees it? That's one way it glorifies God.

When we confess our sins, we glorify God because we show that we recognize God's righteousness. Are you righteous? You're holy. My sin is an offense against your righteousness.

I can't pretend like it never happened. I can't pretend like it can be swept under the rug. God, this is terrible.

I need to confess my sin before you. It recognizes God's righteousness and it gives glory to him. When we confess our sins, we glorify God because we show that we recognize his authority.

We say, God, you have jurisdiction over me. You have every right in the world to tell me do this and don't do that. And when I run afoul of that, I'm wrong and you have authority over me, God.

When we confess our sins, we glorify God because we show that we recognize his righteousness and we show that we recognize his authority over our judgments. We say, oh, Lord, no wonder your chastising hand is upon me. Look at my sin.

I deserve it. God, look at the coldness of my heart. Look at it, Lord.

I deserve it because of my sin. God, God, please restore me. I confess my sin.

I would say a final way that our confession of sin brings glory to God is that through it, we show that we want to be in fellowship with God. But doesn't that glorify him? You know, when you confess your sin, you're saying, God, I want to get this out of the way that you might not feel that that sin that you're holding on to is in the way of your fellowship with God. It is.

The Bible says that God is light and in him is no darkness at all, and if we walk in darkness and say we have fellowship with the light, we're lying and the truth is not in us. To whatever degree you're walking in darkness, to that same degree, you are not walking in the light and you're not in fellowship with God. It glorifies God when we say, oh, Lord, I love you.

I want to have fellowship with you. Isn't it interesting and clear how confessing our sin brings glory to God, you know what it is, it's being real before God, it's saying, Lord, I am going to stop this game of let's pretend. I'm going to get real before you, I'm going to get real before other people.

Now. Did you notice something? That God commanded Aiken to make a public confession of his sin. I mean, if we're all supposed to confess our sin, how do we do this? Is it time to break out the confessional booth and get in there like many of us remember when we were children, you know, forgive me, Father, for I've sinned, it's been X number of months or years or whatever since my last confession.

Well, tell me what's going on, son. I remember that very vividly when I was a child, there's something very mysterious about the confessional. I was always dying to pick up the phone and play around with it in there that the hard of hearing would use to make their confession.

Well, let me explore a few principles of how confession of sin should be made. First of all, confession of sin should be made to the one you've sinned against. Isn't that clear? You say, well, I've sinned against God, so I confess my sin to God.

Very good. But have you also sinned against people? Akin sinned against the entire nation. That's why he had to make an open confession of his sin.

And honestly. The idea of secret confession of sin is not that offensive to us. OK, all right, I'll confess my sin.

Get down on your knees. God, I confess. All right.

I'm sorry. And sometimes it can sound just like those apologies that we hear from our kids. Johnny, say you're sorry.

Sorry. And it's about that much heart that goes into it. I'm going to read you something from J. Edwin Orr.

He speaks a lot and with great power about this principle of confession. And I have to say that. I know these principles, especially when we're going to talk about the dynamic of open and public confession.

I know these much more in principle than I do in practice. I have never really seen the dynamic that J. Edwin Orr talks about that we'll discuss in a little bit. I want to see it very much.

But I don't feel that I can speak to you with authority about it from my own personal experience. I can speak to you about it from the scriptures. But for some of the practical elements, I'm going to yield to a man who did experience this.

And again, so let me read you when he talks about confessing your sins to other people, he says, most Christians display a preference for confession in secret before God, even concerning matters which concern other people. To confess to God seems to them to be the easiest way out. If offenders were really conscious of the presence of God, even secret confession of private sin would have a good effect.

But alas, most offenders merely commune with themselves instead of really making contact with God, who refuses their prayers under certain conditions. In the words of our Lord, it is clear that sin involving another person should be confessed to that person. That's true.

You sinned against the Lord. But did you sin against another person or did you sin against a group of people? Then confession should be made to them. Next, I would say.

That confession should often be public. Not just one on one to a person that you may have sinned against, oftentimes confession should be public. James, chapter five, verse 16, illustrates this principle, it says this, you're probably familiar with this passage, confess your trespasses to one another or your sins to one another and pray for one another that you may be healed.

It's very interesting, A.T. Robertson, the great Greek scholar, says that James 5, 16, there's an odd Greek verb tense in the word confess, and it implies group confession rather than private confession. When he says confess your trespasses to one another, he's not talking about necessarily one on one confession, nor is he talking about stepping in the confessional booth. Actually, this curious Greek verb tense is confession ones to others, not one to one another, but ones to others.

It has by implication the plural of it. You see, this also shows that often. The confession I'm talking about, the James passage shows us that the confession needs to be no more than what is necessary to enlist prayer.

It can be enough to say publicly, pray for me, I need victory over my besetting sin. Now, depending on what that besetting sin is, it would oftentimes be wrong to go into greater detail, but saying this much is important to just say, pray for me. I need victory over my besetting sin.

You say, well, what good is that? You didn't tell us what it was. Well, that's not the point. The sin is private.

And so the confession of the specific sin can be private before God. But the declaration of need is important. It keeps us from being less pretend Christians.

It keeps us from acting as if everything is fine when really it isn't. For example. There should be very little, if any, confession of sexual sin among Christians publicly.

Again, let me read to you from J. Edwin or he says almost all sexual transgressions are either secret or private and should be so confessed, in other words, confessed secretly or privately, not publicly. A burden too great to bear may be shared with a pastor or doctor or friend of the same sex. Scripture discourages even the naming of immorality among believers and declares that it is a shame even to speak of things done in secret by the immoral.

So when we're talking about the confession of sin, we need to go to a good principle, that is, if your sin is secret, then confess secretly. You may need to admit publicly that you need the victory, but keep the details to yourself. If your sin is open, it's open sin, or in other words, if the Holy Spirit is convicting you of pride, let's say, friends, that's open.

What you don't think other people see it. Hello, that's open sin. Then you should confess it openly because certainly your brothers and sisters in Christ see it next.

He says, if your sin has been spiritual. Prayerlessness, lovelessness, unbelief, criticism and so forth, then you should confess to the church that you've been a hindrance. Now, once you've noticed about this, though.

Is at the same time James 516 says this confess your trespasses to one another. You know, one of the most interesting things I find about confession of sin, as I've noticed it in the writings of J. Edwin Orr, is that the confessions are almost always addressed to people and not to God. In other words, the idea isn't that you confess your sin to God in the presence of other people who hear.

No, the idea is that you confess your sin before others and ask them to pray for you to help you get it right before God. This is very hard for us to grab ahold of, it's hard for me to grab ahold of. Because I don't think I've ever really seen it in the way that I see it described.

Let me read to you from a book by J. Edwin Orr titled This is the Victory, where he describes a great time of confession of sin at Columbia Bible College among the students there in Georgia when J. Edwin Orr was there. I believe the year was 1935. It was right around.

So let me read this. This will be for a little while. So key into this as I read.

After the singing of the chorus, there was a short silence, I thought that someone might pray, but no one did. So we sang the chorus again. The lovely strains and the chosen words having their effect on all who heard.

Suddenly, the young man stood up and faced the people. I am a hindrance here because of my sin. Oh, pray for me.

He was in tears and his unexpected confession so startled the people who had not seen him come to the front that the majority stopped singing. But the break had come. And one after another, the students rose and confessed the hindrance of their lives, asking prayer, unbelief, lovelessness, criticism, jealousy, deceit, prayerlessness, open sin, secret sin.

All these were confessed in a restrained yet touching manner. I want to confess criticism, said one girl, especially I have sinned in criticizing the faculty. And as I have severely criticized and here she mentioned names, I want to ask publicly for their forgiveness besides asking God's pardon for these sins.

This confession went deep into other hearts. Criticism is my sin, said another young man. I have slandered my own roommate.

I have other sins to pray for me. I have an unruly tongue. I am in bondage to sin.

Pray that God may deliver me. I am guilty in every point. Now, I'm going to go on.

But do you notice this, that these confessions are not addressed to God? It's confessing sin to one another, as James 516 says. And honestly, most of confession of sin that I've seen in public, though it's fine, I'm not saying that it's anything bad about it, but I don't think it's necessarily what James 516 talks about. It's confessing sin to God merely in the presence of other people.

But, you know, it's quite another thing to stand before others and to say, I have been a hindrance to us. Please pray for me. Going on.

A young man stood up, criticism is my sin, although I had not realized it, why I had been criticizing Mr. Orr to the other students before he came. After two and a half hours, I gave an opportunity for those who were compelled to go home, go because of home duties and lateness of the hour. But although it was so late, hundreds waited for the after meeting, including the whole student body.

We prayed first for those who had left, hoping that God's blessing would follow them. Besides students, members of the faculty admitted their great need for the revival, some being quite broke down. I tried to bring the confession to an end several times, but each time unsuccessfully, these things had to be cleared up.

And so the hands of the clock crept on towards midnight, nobody noticing the time. Then we got to prayer. And what a time of prayer we had just before midnight.

I intervened with the word. Now, my friends, we've been confessing the great need of our hearts and not one of us here would deny that this confession has been of the Holy Spirit of God. But this is the important point.

If we confess he's faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse, let us accept the cleansing. We must get rid of these sins. We must be delivered from them, accept the cleansing and return.

Thanks for the forgiveness. Here is another point. When God forgives, he forgets our sins.

Now confessed and forgiven will be remembered no more by the Lord. Let us forget about them, too. You have heard remarkable confessions.

Forget them all. I don't want any of you students to say to one another, did you hear what so-and-so confessed? Forget. If God has forgotten, we'll try to forget.

Do you see how glorious that is? How it's a true breaking of people before the Lord, a true work of the spirit of God. Friends, this is no perfunctory, you know, well, you know, I guess I do some bad things, too. This is a deep work of the spirit of God that Edwin or describes.

But he's very accurate in saying that the point of it is not for everybody to feel horrible. The point of it is to be cleansed and to move on. The confession of sin is just a necessary step to that point.

Let me make some more points about confession here. Confession should be specific. When open confession of sin is appropriate, that is more than just the stating of spiritual need or private need, but confessing open sin or sin against the church, when you're going to confess your sin openly, confess it specifically.

To say, if I made any mistakes, I'm sorry, that's no confession of sin at all. You sinned specifically, confess specifically. Again, let me read from J. Edwin or.

It costs nothing for a church member to admit in a prayer meeting, I am not what I ought to be. It costs no more to say I ought to be a better Christian. It costs something to say I have been a troublemaker in this church.

It costs something to say I have had bitterness of heart towards certain leaders to whom I shall definitely apologize. You see the difference. Or in another book goes on to describe how in the 1952 and revival in Brazil, a woman in a crowded church confessed this, please pray for me, I need to love people more.

Or. The leader of the meeting gently told her that is not a confession, sister, anyone could have said that, well, isn't it true who here could not say I need to love people more? Of course we do. That's not confession at all.

Later on in the service, the same woman stood up again and she said, please pray for me. What I should have said is that my sharp tongue has caused a lot of trouble in this church. The pastor leaned over to J. O'Connor and whispered, now she's talking.

You see the difference, it should be specific. Another principle about confession that I would press home to you is that confession should be thorough. Some confessions are not thorough, they're too general, they're not made to the person's concern or they completely neglect what's necessary, and oftentimes that's restitution.

Sometimes we can confess just for psychological relief when we have no intention of following through on that confession. So are you publicly confessing that you've stolen? Then you restore it, you make restitution. Are you publicly confessing that you have spoken maliciously or falsely or slandered other people? Then you should publicly say, I spoke maliciously and falsely and I slandered these people and I'm sorry what I said was wrong.

If we confess with no real intention of battling our sin and putting it away, then our confession is not thorough and it mocks God. No story is told of an Irishman who confessed to his priest in a small village that he had stolen two bags of potatoes. Well, it was a small village and news got around very quickly and the priest had heard from the shopkeeper early in the day that one bag of potatoes had been stolen and so the priest was confused.

He said to the man confessing, he goes, you know, that's funny. I heard that it was only one bag of potatoes stolen from the market and the Irishman replied, well, that's true, but it was so easy that I plan on taking another one tomorrow night. Now, what kind of confession is that? You get the principle, don't you? To confess your sin when you have no sincere interest in putting it away, it's not thorough, it's a mockery if you're not prepared to set it right.

So you confess you're here to confess the sin that you're cheating in your classes at school. Well, are you going to go up to your teacher and say, teacher, I've cheated on these tests. Tell me what I need to do to make it right.

If you're not going to do what's right in regard to your sin and set it right as much as you possibly can, oftentimes you can't do anything to set things right, but whatever you can do, you're going to set it right. Well, then you're not really confessing your sin. Now, what if it's overwhelming? After all, who can confess all of their sin? The idea isn't that you have to make open confession of every single sin, but to be open to the conviction of the Holy Spirit and to be broken before him.

The whole point of it is not so much the confession in itself, but the brokenness and the reality before God. If there seem to be too many things to confess, start with the biggest sin and move down the list as deep conviction stirs you. But friends, let me say this with all emphasis.

By all means, avoid phony confession. Confession without true brokenness or sorrow, if it isn't deeply real, then it isn't any good. This is what I pray for when I read about the great work of revival.

By the way, you should know that according to Dr. J. Edwin Moore. That real, deep, genuine confession of sin has been a feature of every genuine awakening or revival in the last 250 years. But it begins with an overwhelming brokenness.

In other words, my friends, what I'm talking about tonight, I'm almost thinking in my mind that we should prohibit any confession of sin after I'm done speaking. Because it's not something that I want anybody talked into. It needs to be done out of a deep sense of brokenness.

It's where you can do nothing else. It's like nobody wants to prod you to confess. It's woe to me if I don't.

I am burdened by the darkness of my sin and it didn't seem to be like much before. It was just a Babylonian garment and a few shekels of silver. What's the big deal? But all of a sudden you see, oh, God, my sin has captured me.

My sin has stripped back your work. My sin has affected what you want to do in my life and the lives of other people. My God, I didn't think that this sin was so dark now, but now I can't get away from the sense that it's deeply black before you.

Dear God, help me to put it away. See what I'm talking about? It's not anything that you have to prod people into. It's a deep work by the Spirit of God.

That's what we long for. So, again, by all means, avoid shallow or phony confession. If you sense that your heart is just cold, that's where you begin.

God, won't you give me a brokenness and a conviction over the coldness of my heart? Won't you change that? Now, it's valid to ask the question, won't it get out of hand? And you could see how it would. This is more experiential than perhaps many of us are used to. And we wonder, won't it get out of hand? Won't it just turn into a circus? One person confessing inappropriately, another person confessing phonily, another person just in hysterics.

Well, again, I take the wisdom of J. Edwin Ormes, being initiated with this, uninitiated with this personally. He says that, first of all, he has not seen inappropriate confession of sin because he warns about it. And wherever it is to begin, he stops it.

But secondly, he says that you just be aware of it as you lead the meeting. He tells of a time when a woman was overwrought by deep sorrow for sin and she started to become hysterical. There you are in a room and hearts are breaking and tears are flowing and people are just broken before God and people are confessing their sin.

And one woman just starts flipping out. He saw the danger immediately and he told the woman, quiet sister, turn your eyes on Jesus. You see, when a person starts becoming hysterical in that sense, what's happening? They're becoming inwardly focused.

Yeah, they're focused upon self instead of on Jesus. And they're starting to lose the point of it. Well, she responded to that and the danger of extreme emotion was avoided.

You know, friends, we need to realize that there can be glorious revival without without weirdness, without excess. Matter of fact, what many historians believe was the greatest revival that perhaps we've seen since the Apostolic Church, it happened in 1858 and 1859 in the United States and in Great Britain and all over the world. There was a notable lack of what they might what they call back then extravagance.

Or wildness. It was just an absolute, deep, profound turning of Christians to God and the conversion of sinners. Well, again, real, deep, genuine confession of sin has been a feature of every genuine revival or

spiritual awakening in the past 250 years.

But it isn't anything new. Turn finally to Acts chapter 19. Look at the revival that happened in the city of Ephesus.

Acts chapter 19 will start at verse 17. This became known both to all Jews and Greeks dwelling in Ephesus and fear fell on them all and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified and many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds. Also, many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all and they counted up the value of them and it totaled 50,000 pieces of silver.

So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed. I have to say that on my previous readings of that passage, for some reason it was in my head that these were people coming to Christ. No, you saw that, didn't you? It says it was a work that many who believed came confessing and telling their deeds.

They already had believed. This was Christians getting right with God, confessing and telling their deeds. Wouldn't we love to see a work like that among us? Wouldn't we love to say, as it says in verse 20, so the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed.

Now, let us be honest. There is a work of God going on in our midst. There is no doubt about it.

But I honestly cannot say that in our community, through this congregation, the word of the Lord is growing mightily and prevailing. Oh, a work is being done and we're grateful for it, but I want more. I want the same thing that is said of the church in the book of Acts, in Ephesus, that the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed.

That's revival. That's a time of refreshing from the Lord. This was Christians getting right with God and confession was part of it.

It gave glory to God, just like Joshua told Achan. So that is from my heart to yours. This is what I pray for, for God to bring a deep and profound awareness among us, an absolute fervor for every one of us.

And I pray that God would allow us in our congregation to be right with God and to put away anything that would hinder our walks. And friends, often, I think in many instances, what lacks is an open confession of our sin. Father, we want to give you glory.

We want, Lord, your word to grow mightily and to prevail. And Lord, how vain it is for us to pray that prayer for our entire congregation or for our community or for our nation if it doesn't first grow mightily and prevail in us. Lord, send revival.

Let it begin in me. Transform me, Lord God. I pray that you would touch every heart to pray the same prayer.

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