

# Confession - Concluded

by Harmon A. Baldwin

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of confession and repentance in attaining Christian perfection and leaving no sin unrepented of.*

**Scripture:** Psalm 32:5, Psalm 51:10, Proverbs 28:13, Mark 1:15, Acts 3:19, 2 Corinthians 7:10, Hebrews 10:22, James 5:16, 1 John 1:7, 1 John 1:9

**Topics:** "Repentance", "Confession"

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## Description

Harmon A. Baldwin emphasizes the importance of confession, highlighting that while public and private confession can be beneficial, God will provide a way for honest seekers even when such opportunities are not available. He encourages individuals to pour out their hearts to God, who is always ready to listen and help, even when there is no human ear to hear. Baldwin stresses the significance of deep repentance, urging believers to confess their sins and seek God's forgiveness and cleansing, emphasizing the need to forsake all inward and outward sins to attain Christian perfection.

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## Transcript

4. This line of confession, wherever practicable, will greatly help; but where it is not practicable, still there is a way through. We have spent much time on public and private confession in order to make the subject clear. So many errors have been taught and practiced in connection with this matter that honest people are justly afraid of going too far. But that some have erred is no reason why we should likewise err in flying to the opposite extreme. While we have much confidence in public and private confession as help, yet where there is no opportunity to make such confession, God himself will supply every deficiency and take the honest seeker through just as quickly and clearly without it. Fasten your faith, then, to Almighty God, and you will find it as a nail driven in a sure place. God only knows the heart, and to him alone is confession of heart conditions absolutely due, except as honesty demands adjustment with others where possible. David said, "Against thee, and thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight."

It may be that you will only have an opportunity to simply state your need in public congregation, and that you have no friend to whom you can unburden your soul. The pent-up feelings of your heart are longing for utterance, but you have "no man like minded" who will listen to your tale of woe. You ask, "What shall I do?" We answer, God is always listening for people in your condition to speak to him. But you want some human ear to hear. God will supply every deficiency. Tell him all. His time is not so taken up with governing the universe that he has no time for you. Wait for God in humble prayer, open your heart to him,

until he melts it all down at his feet, then pour out your inward sins and your soul's great needs to him. Let your confession go as deep as it may; keep pressing your case persistently; there is no doubt that it will strike deeper and deeper, and your hatred for sin will increase from time to time.

The length of time will depend greatly on the persis-tendency with which you urge your suit before God. Indifferent prayers will bring no satisfying answers; while importunity will bring direct and speedy answers. Make no excuse for your lack of earnestness. It is not your duties and cares but your slothful heart that causes you to be thus careless. It will not take God long to finish the work, if you follow quickly in every ray of light.

The following advice of the holy Fletcher's Christian Perfection may help you at this point, and is worthy of being studied carefully on your knees:

You will have this humble and thankful disposition, if you let your repentance cast deeper roots. For, if Christian perfection implies a forsaking of all inward as well as outward sin, and, if true repentance is a grace 'whereby we forsake sin,' it follows that, to attain Christian perfection, we must so follow our Lord's evangelical precept, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand,' as to leave no sin, no indwelling sin, unrepented of, and, of consequence, unforsaken. He whose heart is full of indwelling sin has no more truly repented of indwelling sin than the man, whose mouth is defiled with filthy talking and jesting, has truly repented of ribaldry. The deeper our sorrow for, and detestation of indwelling sin are, the more penitently do we confess 'the plague of our heart:' and, when we properly confess it, we inherit the blessing promised in these words: 'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.'

To promote this deep repentance, consider how many spiritual evils still haunt your breast. Look into the inward 'chamber of imagery,' where assuming self love, surrounded by a multitude of vain thoughts, foolish desires, and wild imaginations, keeps her court. Grieve that your heart, which should be all flesh, is yet partly stone; that your soul, that should be only a temple for the Holy Ghost, is yet so frequently turned into a den of thieves, a hole for the cockatrice, a nest for a brood of spiritual vipers, for the remains of envy, jealousy, fretfulness, anger, pride, impatience, peevishness, formality, sloth, prejudice, bigotry, carnal confidence, evil shame, self-righteousness, tormenting fears, uncharitable suspicions, idolatrous love, and I know not how many of the evils which form the retinue of hypocrisy and unbelief. Through grace detect these evils, by a close attention to what passes in your heart at all times, but especially in an hour of temptation. By frequent and deep confession drag out all these abominations. These sins, which would not have Christ to reign alone over you, bring before him; place them in the light of his countenance; and, if you do it in faith, that light and warmth of his love will kill them, as the light and heat of the sun kill the worms which the plow turns up to the open air in a dry summer's day.

Nor plead that you can do nothing; for, by the help of Christ, who is always ready to assist the helpless, ye can solemnly say upon your knees what ye have probably said in an airy manner to your professing friends. If ye ever acknowledged to them that your heart is deceitful, prone to leave undone the things ye ought to do, and ready to do what ye ought to leave undone, ye can undoubtedly make the same confession to God. Complain to him who can help you, as ye have done to those who cannot. Lament, as you are able, the darkness of your mind, the stiffness of your will, the dullness or exorbitancy of your affections; and importunately entreat the God of all grace to 'renew a right spirit within' you. If ye 'sorrow after this godly sort, what carefulness will be' wrought in you! 'what indignation! what fear! what vehement desire! what zeal! yea, what revenge!' Ye will then sing in faith what the imperfectionists sing in unbelief:

Oh, how I hate these lusts of mine,  
That crucified my God;  
These sins that pierced and nailed His flesh  
Fast to the fatal wood!  
'Yes, my Redeemer, they shall die,'  
My heart has so decreed;  
Nor will I spare those guilty things  
That made my Savior bleed.  
'While with a melting, broken heart  
My murdered Lord I view,  
I'll raise revenge against my sins,  
And slay the murderers, too!'

He also adds this wonderful prayer which should assist you in bringing your suit before God:

How long, Lord, shall my soul, thy spiritual temple, be a den of thieves, or a house of merchandise? How long shall profane thoughts profane it, as the buyers and sellers profaned the temple made with human hands? How long shall evil tempers lodge within me? How long shall unbelief, formality, hypocrisy, envy, hankering after sensual pleasures, indifference to spiritual delights, and backwardness to painful or ignominious duty, harbor there? How long shall these sheep and doves, yea, these goats and serpents, defile my breast, which should be as pure as the Holy of Holies? How long shall they hinder me from being one of the worshipers whom thou seekest; one of those who worship thee in spirit and in truth? O help me to take away these cages of unclean birds! Suddenly come to thy temple! Turn out all that offends the eye of thy purity, and destroy all that keeps me out of the rest which remains for thy Christian people: so shall I keep a spiritual Sabbath, a Christian jubilee to the God of my life: so shall I witness my share in the 'oil of joy,' with which thou anointest perfect Christians above their fellow-believers. I stand in need of that oil, Lord. My lamp burns dim: sometimes it seems to be even gone out, as that of the foolish virgins: it is more like smoking flax than a burning and shining light. O quench it not! Raise it to a flame! Thou knowest that I do believe in thee. The trembling hand of my faith holds thee; and though I have ten thousand times grieved thy pardoning love, thine everlasting arm is still under me to redeem my life from destruction; while thy right hand is over me, to crown me with mercies and loving-kindness.

But, alas! I am neither sufficiently thankful for thy present mercies, nor sufficiently athirst for thy future favors. Hence I feel an aching void in my soul, being conscious that I have not attained the heights of grace described in thy word, and enjoyed by thy holiest servants. Their deep experiences, the diligence and ardor with which they did thy will, the patience and fortitude with which they endured the cross, reproach me, and convince me of my manifold wants. I want 'power from on high;' I want the penetrating, lasting unction of the Holy One; I want to have my vessel, my capacious heart, full of the oil which makes the countenances of wise virgins cheerful; I want a lamp of heavenly illumination, and a fire of divine love,

burning day and night in my breast, as the typical lamps did in the temple, and the sacred fire on the altar; I want a full application of the blood which cleanses from all sin, and a strong faith in thy sanctifying word -- a faith by which thou mayest dwell in my heart, as the unwavering hope of glory, and the fixed object of my love; I want the internal oracle -- thy still small voice together with Urim and Thummim, the new name, 'which none knoweth but he that receiveth it;' in a word, Lord, I want a plenitude of thy Spirit, the full promise of the Father, and the rivers which flow from the inmost soul of the believers who have gone on to the perfection of thy dispensation. I do believe that thou canst and wilt thus 'baptize me with the Holy Ghost and fire:' help my unbelief: confirm and increase my faith with regard to this important baptism.

Lord, I have need to be thus baptized of thee, and I am straitened till this baptism is accomplished. By thy baptism of tears in the manger, of water in Jordan, of sweat in Gethsemane, of blood, and fire and vapor of smoke, and flaming wrath on Calvary, baptize, O baptize my soul, and make a full end of the original sin. \* \* \* \* I am tired of forms, professions, and orthodox notions, so far as they are not pipes or channels to convey life, light and love to my dead, dark, and stony heart. Neither the plain letter of thy gospel, nor the sweet foretastes and transient illuminations of thy Spirit, can satisfy the large desires of my faith. Give me thine abiding Spirit, that he may continually shed abroad thy love in my soul. Come,

O Lord, with that blessed Spirit! come, thou and thy Father in that Holy Comforter! come to make your abode with me; or I shall go meekly mourning to my grave! Blessed mourning! Lord, increase it! I had rather wait in tears for thy fullness than wantonly waste the fragments of thy spiritual bounties, or feed with Laodicean contentment upon the tainted manna of my former experiences. Righteous Father, I hunger and thirst after thy righteousness!

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