

#3 - Forgiveness and Confession

by J. Edwin Orr

God forgives sins on the basis of the cross, through the blood of Christ, and the condition is repentance expressed in conversion.

Scripture: Leviticus 5:5, Matthew 6:14-15, Matthew 18:15-17, Acts 3:19, Romans 5:8, Ephesians 1:7, Colossians 1:14, James 5:16, 1 John 1:6-7, 1 John 1:9

Topics: "Confession", "Forgiveness"

Description

J. Edwin Orr addresses the critical doctrines of forgiveness and confession, emphasizing that true forgiveness requires a price to be paid, as illustrated through personal anecdotes. He explains that while God forgives sins through the sacrifice of Christ, believers must also confess their sins to restore fellowship with God. Orr highlights that forgiveness is conditional upon repentance and that unconfessed sin can lead to a broken relationship with God. He encourages believers to be specific in their confessions and to seek restoration in their relationships with others. Ultimately, he calls for a return to the cross as the foundation of forgiveness and the necessity of maintaining fellowship with God through confession.

Transcript

Tonight, I want to deal with a forgotten doctrine, but I want to begin with one that is not forgotten...to introduce it. I was chaplain of the Hollywood Christian Group at one time. One of the members was Roy Rogers. He used to bring his cowboy friends. One of them came to me and said rather bluntly, "How does God forgive sins?" I answered with a word of scripture, "In Christ we have redemption, through His blood the forgiveness of our sins, according to the riches of His grace."

"Hmmm. What you're trying to tell me is Jesus died for me." I said, "Yes." He said, "I don't believe that. How could anyone die for me? Look," he said, "the Los Angeles police are holding a man for murder. Supposing I felt sorry for the guy and I go to the police and said, 'Would you let me take his place?' Would they let me take his place? They would not. They would say you didn't commit the crime...you have no right to take the punishment. You've heard of Sirhan Sirhan...he is in jail for the murder of Robert Kennedy."

Just you try going to the police and say, "Will you let me take his place." He said, "It wouldn't be right." I said "You have raised the doctrine of the Atonement. It is a difficult doctrine to explain. In theological seminary we have at least 13 theories of the Atonement to consider." You might say, well what is your view? I believe the atonement is greater than every theory of it. I said, "I don't know that I could explain the

doctrine to you, but perhaps I could illustrate.

When I was a boy, about seven, I used to play ball out back. Across the lot from our house was the house of a man named Albert Mann. And his house was in the way. Every time we hit the ball hard, we were sure to break one of his windows. One day I hit the ball hard and there was that clatter of glass. I didn't stop running until I got home. My longer legged sister got home ahead of me and told mother what I had done. I didn't mind that...most boys of seven have learned how to manage mamma.

But my father was in the kitchen! He should have been at work, but I didn't even stop to inquire why he wasn't at work. I made it to the back door...I felt that what I needed most was a little fresh air and exercise. But my father grabbed me by the wrist and said, "You're coming with me, young man." I said, "but that man will hit me." He said, "You're coming with me!" I went very reluctantly. My father knocked the old fashioned knocker. Mr. Mann came to the door. He still looked aggrieved.

My father said, "This is the boy that broke your window." Mr. Mann didn't waste any time with me, but he said to my dad, "Look here Mr. Orr, I'm not unreasonable. I know that kids can't help breaking windows. I broke windows when I was a boy. But why is it that every time there is a window broken in this neighborhood, it has to be my window?" Now, I could have explained that to him, but I felt a little nervous. So, he went on scolding, "I am willing to forgive the kids, but somebody has to pay for it...somebody has to pay for it... somebody has to pay for it.

My father paid for it...and I was forgiven. And I learned the first principle of forgiveness: When you are forgiven, someone must pay. Twenty years later, an Irish friend borrowed some money from me...100 pounds...500 dollars in those days. He promised to pay back five dollars a week for two years. I said, "I won't charge you interest. Skip Easter week and Christmas week. The other 50 weeks, you'll pay me back five dollars." He promised. He never paid a penny. He used to come to my birthday parties and wish me many happy returns of the day.

And I would say, "When are you going to return the cash?" But he didn't. After bearing him a grudge for a couple of years, I forgave him. But which of two of us suffered, the sinner or the sinned against? Not the sinner, he went free. I could have taken him to court. I could have sued him...and then he would have suffered. What would he have suffered? Well, he owed me, but instead of that; I forgave him and I suffered...I am still five hundred dollars short; no matter what way you look at it.

And that taught me the second principle of forgiveness: When you forgive, the one that forgives...is the one that suffers. Has that sunken in? If somebody in the meeting came up and punched John Cramp in the nose, I couldn't say, "I forgive you." I am not the one that suffered. He would have to say, "I forgive you." The one that forgives is the one that suffers. And suddenly, I realized that I am not only given an illustration of Atonement, but of the deity of Christ. Moses couldn't have died for me, nor Joshua, nor Peter, nor Paul, nor Mary the mother of Jesus.

It had to be Christ! Because God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. So, we are forgiven on the basis of the cross. I sometimes ask my audiences on what basis does God forgive the sins of the sinner? Somebody will shout, "Love." Well, that is not the answer. God loved us, but He expressed His love through Christ on the cross. That's the basis. I was speaking once in the mayor's parlor in Los Angeles, and a lawyer came to me. He said, "I don't get this. If God makes the rules, can't God bend the rules...and just forgive me?"

I said, "He couldn't do that and be God. God must be just as well as loving. Now, it has just struck me now, that is one of the troubles with the legal profession...they are always thinking about bending the rules. Some one gets into a jam, and they want a smart lawyer to get them off. But God cannot trifle with evil. So, I said to the lawyer, "Doesn't law teach us, if you smash up my car, I can sue you and get all the damages?" "Yes, but there are other cases," he said. "You could slander me and I could forgive you."

And I said, "Yes. That is quite true. But in forgiving you, I have forgiven what your slander cost me. Because if I didn't forgive you, I could sue you for slander, and you might have to pay ten or twenty thousand dollars." You'd be amazed how many people in a Christian country don't realize that the basic doctrine is that Christ died for us. Remember I quoted it on Sunday morning, "The Lord Jesus said, "It behooves Christ thus to suffer, that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations beginning at Jerusalem."

How does God forgive our sins? On the basis of the cross. Now the second question is equally as simple...is there any condition attached? Well, remember I told you about Mickey Cohen sitting in the Hollywood Christian Group meeting, in front of my wife? He never truly was converted. He made a profession, but then he reneged on it and said, "If it means changing my lifestyle, I want nothing to do with it." Now, suppose Mickey Cohen were here tonight, he is dead and gone now, but suppose he were here tonight, and he asked the question, "How does God forgive sins?"

I would say, "In Christ through redemption through His blood." And he said, "Well, how much do I have to pay to be forgiven?" "What do you mean?" "Well, if you can arrange for me to be forgiven, I can make a very substantial donation to the church." I said, "There is no price. We are forgiven freely." "Well, is there any catch to it?" I say, "What do you mean by catch?" "Well, am I supposed to do anything?" I said, "Well, yes. Repent and be converted, that your sins might be blotted out."

And what does the word repent mean? Change your attitude. What does convert mean? Turn. Change and turn. And he wasn't willing to do that. So, when I ask the question, what is the condition of forgiveness: the condition is repentance expressed in conversion. If a man says I will not change my attitude, and I will not turn...do you think God forgives him? No. Then God says you don't get forgiveness. It is a conditional forgiveness. Now, keep those two elementary points in your mind.

An unbeliever, a sinner, is forgiven on the basis of the cross. What does God require him to do? Change his attitude and turn to God. That leads to putting his trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, I am going to ask a question, I take it most people here tonight are believers already. If you are converted, how does God forgive the sins of a believer? Do you admit that you have committed sins since the day of your conversion? Sometimes, I am afraid to ask that question. One time, at the Church of the Open Door in LA, I asked that question rhetorically, and one man stood up and said, "Mr.

Orr, for 14 years I haven't committed any sin what so ever." What would you tell a man like that? Of course, the Irish are never at a loss for something to say, so I said, "Are you married?" He said, "What has that to do with it? Marriage isn't a sin." I said, "No. Of course, it is not. Are you married?" He said, "Yes." "Is your wife here?" He said, "That is my wife standing over there." I called her over and I said, "Madam, I don't want to be too personal, but it's just to clear up a point.

Would you agree with your husband that for 14 years he hasn't committed any kind of sin what so ever?" She said, "No, sir." I left them arguing. I sometimes do meet these sinlessly perfect people. Now, if anyone was sinlessly perfect that would be so extraordinary that everyone would notice it, but nobody seems to

notice it, except the person making the claim. So, will you agree with me, since the day of your conversion, you have missed the mark, you have fallen short, you have disobeyed, you have transgressed.

Then, I am going to ask you, how does God forgive that sin. Now, as good Baptists, now there maybe other denominations here equally evangelical, you believe what I just said. That God forgives us on the basis of the cross and the price is repent and be converted. But can you give a quick answer to how does God forgive the sins of the believer? A girl came to me at Mt. Herman conference grounds near San Francisco. She said to me, "Mr. Orr, I don't understand your teaching. I was converted 10 years ago.

And all my sins, past, present and future, were forgiven. Right?" I said, "Right." "Well," she said, "I cheated in the examinations at Berkeley last year. But I don't let that worry me, because that was forgiven 10 years ago. I said to her, "Are you going to cheat in the next examinations?" She was honest. "Well," she said, "I hope it won't be necessary." "But" I said, "If you get behind with your work or you date too much and don't do your homework, you're prepared to cheat?"

"Well, are my sins forgiven or are they not?" I said, "Are you telling me that the forgiveness of God is a license to sin?" And by the way, there is a word for that in theology. I don't know if you care to remember it or not, but it is the word antinomianism. Anti- against. Nomus- the law. In other words, I am a Christian, but it doesn't matter how I behave, I am bound for heaven. She said, "Are my sins forgiven or are they not?" Well, I said, "What do you make of the verse of scripture that says, "IF we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."" She said, "That is the unbeliever, obviously."

I said, "Quite the contrary. The first epistle of John was written to believers." Do I need to prove this to you? "Behold what love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God, beloved," and he uses the pronoun we. That is an inclusive pronoun that means you and me. He wrote as a believer...to believers. I said, "The first epistle of John was not written to people to tell them how to become saved. It was written to people who are saved"...or if there happens to be a good Methodist here...who are being saved.

Yes, that (verb) tense is in the scripture: we have been saved, we are being saved, we shall be saved...all three tenses are used of salvation. So, I said, "What do you make of that verse?" She said, "That is the unbeliever." I said, "Not at all." How can I illustrate this? If the pastor asks me to speak to the teenagers on love, courtship and marriage... I could tell them quite a story. I was in Lapland, near the North Pole, when I proposed to the girl I finally married. She was in Africa.

I proposed by cable. And she turned me down. But I sent another cable gram to say I was coming anyway. So, I went down and proposed to her everyday until she married me to get rid of me. (laughter) I could tell you quite a story and I could talk to the teenagers about how to find the right girl or how to find the right fellow. But if the pastor asked me to speak to the young marrieds, I wouldn't speak on how to find the right girl. I take it they are happily married. The first epistle of John was not written to tell us how to be saved, it was written to people who are saved.

You say, well, what is it written about? It is written about maintaining fellowship with God. The word fellowship occurs all the way through. The girl said, when I quoted that verse, "Are you trying to tell me my salvation depends upon my confessing?" I said, "Now, I see where you are misled. It wasn't written about salvation...it was written about fellowship." So perhaps you remember the verses, do you...? "This is the message we have heard from Christ and proclaim to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.

God cannot approve of sin....anywhere. If Mr. Gorbachev tells a lie in Moscow, the holiness of God abhors that untruth. But if a good old Baptist in Dallas tells a lie, God doesn't like it one bit better. He doesn't say, "Look at that liar over there, and look at this sweet little believer who fibs now and again." Oh, no. A lie is a lie. God disapproves of sin. Now, the next verse (1 John 1:6) says, "If we say that we have fellowship with Him, while we walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth:" We are out of fellowship with Him.

Let me quote you the most modern translation of this particular verse. "If we say that we have fellowship with Him, while we walk in darkness, we lie, and do not live according to the truth:" When a believer does something he knows to be wrong, he grieves the spirit of God and breaks fellowship with God. I remember when one of my sons was a tiny little boy, he was rude to his mother at (the) table. I said to him sharply, "Leave the table. Go to the bedroom and don't you come back until you are ready to say you are sorry to your mother."

Off he went...a little too cheerfully I thought. About 3 minutes later he came back again rather cockily and said, "Well, everybody, I'm sorry now." I said, "Tell you momma." But he wouldn't. I said, "Tell you mother if you're sorry." He wouldn't. Have you ever seen a four year old get stubborn? I said, "Go back to the bedroom. You're not sorry, you're just hungry." He went back to the bedroom, but it doesn't really take a four year old long to repent. They aren't filled up with pride or anything like that.

So, he came back, another five minutes later. He went straight to his mother and said, "Mom, I'm sorry I was a naughty boy." I said, "Now, you can go on with your meal." Instead of climbing on his stool, he climbed on her lap. She reached for his plate and brought it over, and they had turnabout the way mothers and children sometimes do. Fellowship was restored. Now, while he was in the bedroom...he was still my son. He was still in my house and he was still in my care, but he was out of fellowship with me.

If he had come to me in the middle of that little encounter and said, "Daddy what are you going to give me for Christmas?" I would have said, "Get away from here." He was out of fellowship. When you grieve God you are out of fellowship, but you are still in His house and still in His care. There are lots of people that say, "Yes, I do believe in the Lord Jesus. I know I am a Christian, but I am miserable." Why are you miserable? you can generally trace it back to some act of disobedience.

But the point I am making is this...it concerns fellowship...and not salvation. But keep in mind, you remember I mentioned that word antinomianism.... I had a Baptist minister come to our Hollywood group. Now, those converts were converted from a very Corinthian life...liquor, sex, money, popularity...and I heard this minister tell them, "Now, listen. If you should wake up in Las Vegas with a woman in the cabin with you that is not your wife, and a half empty flask of whiskey on the dressing table, don't let it bother you...you are still saved.

I felt like interrupting him. Then I remembered it was my turn to speak next Monday. So, I said, "I would like to begin where our brother left off last week. If you should waken up in Las Vegas with a woman in the cabin with you that is not your wife, and a half empty flask of whiskey on the dressing table, ask yourself, "Could I possibly be saved and live like this?" And immediately a converted actor said, "But David sinned." I said, "Yes, David sinned. A lot of people get a lot of mileage out of that...but David repented.

Saul sinned...and refused to repent...and went to perdition. So, I am not talking about gross sin here. I would say if you were an adulterer or if you make a living by false representation...you should go and talk to someone about whether or not you are truly a Christian. I am speaking about the average Christian who

falls short in these little but important things. We grieve God. What does this verse say? But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with the other.

What does it mean to walk in the light? Walk in the light of conscience...walk in the light of the Word...walk in the light of fellowship....walk in the light of prayer...walk in the light of godly counsel. If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with the other. You say, well what does it really mean to walk in the light? Well, there is an obscure verse of scripture, Ephesians 5:13 But all things that are reproved are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light.

Or a more modern translation, "Light is capable of showing things up for what they really are." That is easy to understand English. "Light is capable of showing things up for what they really are." Sometimes I wake up in the middle of the night and wonder, "Where am I? Is this Toronto or Dallas?" If I were have to go across to the bathroom, I would wonder, what motel am I in? You know, in total darkness, I cant see anything. But switch on the light and I see everything. Light shows you what things are.

Remember I told you that I had a bad temper as a boy? I never called it that, I called it "righteous indignation." But God said to me, its bad temper. Its out of control...and when I admitted it, yes, its bad temper...as saint Andrew is my witness, I put things right. When you walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with the other. Fellowship is restored...but how? The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us. Notice, the present tense...keeps on cleansing us, the Greek says...from all sin.

Then, it says (1 John 1:8-9) 8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Now, could I ask you two more questions...let me recapitulate. On what basis does God forgive the sins of an unbeliever...a sinner? Tell me. On the cross. If Christ didn't die, we couldn't be forgiven. We are forgiven through the blood of Christ.

Then I am going to ask the other question...on what basis does God forgive the sins of a believer that offend Him and break fellowship? The blood of Jesus Christ....the cross. I remember a woman who came up to me with her face lighted up. She said, "You know, I used to sing that hymn "At The Cross, At the Cross where I first saw the Light..." I always used to think the cross was away behind me in my Christian experience. In other words, it was 25 years since I was "at the cross, and the burden of my heart rolled away."

Now I realize every time I say, "Lord, forgive me, for Jesus sake," I am pleading the blood of the cross." Andrew Murray has a book called "The Blood of the Cross." I am going to ask the second question: is there any catch to it, any condition to forgiveness? Now, let's take the unbeliever first. What does God expect an unbeliever to do? He must repent and be converted. That means he must change his attitude and turn. Is there any condition attached to the believer when God forgives him and restores him to fellowship?

Yes, he must repent and confess. Well, why doesn't he need to be converted? Well, you don't have to be converted every Tuesday and Thursday. Or if you sin more often than that, as many people do, you don't have to be converted five times a week. You are converted...that means you've turned...but you must repent and confess. It is as simple as that. Maybe I could put it even more strongly for you. It says, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Put it in the negative... If we do not confess our sins, He will withhold forgiveness. Immediately, your mind jumps ahead and says, you mean I will lose my salvation? We are not discussing salvation. You remain out of fellowship. There are Christians who have been out of fellowship with God for years. They are unhappy, but they still come to church. They try to get worldly...they may go to a bar, but feel miserable. They can't stand it. So, they come back to church and they try to go through the forms, but they have got unconfessed sin in their heart.

They have been out of fellowship because they simply won't put it right for whatever reason...pride or any other reason. So, let's make it very plain. What does a believer need to do to be restored to the joy of salvation? He must repent and make confession. Now, that doesn't end the problem. You say, what does it mean to make confession? The scripture teaches us, if you ask a question "to whom do we confess?"...Well, I remember a young lady came to talk to me at Forest Home in Southern California at a summer conference.

She said, "I confessed, but I don't feel forgiven." I said, "I don't know about your circumstances, but I have no doubt about God's Word. He says, if you confess, He will forgive. I believe God will do His part, so maybe you aren't doing it right." "But," she said, "I've confessed and I just don't feel forgiven." "Well," I said, "I don't mean to pry, but what was the offense?" "Well," she said, "I told a lie about my roommate." "And you confessed?" "Yes." "But you don't feel forgiven?"

"No." "Well, what did she say to you?" "Oh," she said, "I didn't confess to her. I confessed to the Lord." "But you told a lie about her. Maybe she wondered who started this lie, this gossip." "But," she said, "I didn't confess to her. I didn't want her to hold it against me." That's wonderful just to think I can put things right by confessing to God, but that isn't enough. There is scriptural teaching on this. By the way, I always give this as a maxim worth remembering...Let the circle of the sin, be the circle of confession.

If you have sinned against God and nobody else knows anything about it, you can put things right by confessing to God. But if you sin privately, or you hurt someone by your sin, put it right with the person concerned. But if you've sinned openly, and other people know about it, put it right as far as it's known. That's the maxim I give. Well, you say, your opinion isn't any better than anyone else's opinion. I would like to establish it from scripture. Leviticus 5:5 He shall confess that he has sinned in that thing.

This referred to a believer in the Old Testament coming to get right with God. It says, He shall confess that he has sinned in that thing. It must be specific. We commit specific sins. We must make specific confessions. Christians aren't inclined to do that. They are more inclined to say, "I need to be a better Christian." Who couldn't say that...Billy Graham would have to say that, wouldn't he? Is there anyone you know who couldn't say, "I need to be a better Christian." That is not being specific enough.

During the revival times in Brazil, we used to see the churches filled at 6:30 in the morning for prayer. It was open prayer. Perhaps, someone would get up and say please prayer for me...and be very specific about what they needed. Or some asked for prayers for other people...one mother got up and said, "My boy has gone to Rio de Janeiro and he hasn't written to me for two years." Somebody got up and prayed for her. One lady got up and said, "Please pray for me. I need to love people more."

I stopped her and I said to her, "Sister, that is not a confession." I need to love people more? Who doesn't need to love people more? I didn't draw attention to her. She sat down. I had rebuked her very gently. The meeting went on, and about 20 minutes later, she got up and said, "Please pray for me. What I should have said is that the Lord has shown me that my tongue has caused a lot of trouble in this congregation."

Her pastor was sitting beside me on the platform. Do you know pastors can talk out of the side of their mouths just like gangsters? The pastor said to me, "Now, she's talking." What did he mean, "now she is talking?" Now she had named the sin. It is so easy to say, "I need to love people more." What she needed to say is, "I've been a trouble maker in this congregation." She was apologizing to the congregation. That is what I mean by being specific. In the republic of Ireland, there is a town called Mullingar(sp?) and there was a man who went to his parish priest and said, "Father, I hear you're going to Dublin tomorrow."

He said, "That's right, Dan. What can I do for you?" He said, "I'd like to confess before you go." "Well," said the priest, "we hold confessions on Saturday night before Mass and Sunday morning, but if this is something special, let's go to the confessional now. So, they walked across to the church. And Dan began. He said, "Father, I want to confess that I stole two bags of potatoes." The priest knew the gossip of the town. He said, "Did you steal those from Mr. Riley?" He said, "How did you know, Father?"

"I was talking to Mr. Riley this morning, but he said some one had broken in and stolen one bag of potatoes." And Dan said, "That's right, Father. But it was so easy, you see, I was going to steal the other one tonight. But seeing as you're going to Dublin, I wanted absolution." No priest would give absolution on such terms. When you confess, you have to have done with those things. "He that covereth his sin shall not prosper. But who so ever confesses and forsaketh them shall have mercy."

I heard an excellent message in New Orleans from Jack Taylor on that very verse. Our tendency is to cover up. I meet old friends who served in World War II. I find it's always true...they remember the happy things about the war...the comradeship, the humorous situations. They tend to forget the unpleasant things. We especially cover up unpleasant things, because we don't like to live with them. We would rather forget. Who ever covers his sins won't prosper. But who ever confesses and forsakes them shall have mercy.

You have to have done with it. So, no good confessing you lost your temper if you intend to lose your temper. I remember a man in Belfast saying to me, "Boy, I apologized! But if he ever says anything like that to me again, I'll punch him right in the nose again!" No, no, you have to have done with it. Now, I don't know what things are like in Garland, Texas, but I have lived in California for 36 years and I find that lots of Christians, who can get along fine with the Lord, can't always get along with each other.

Maybe you don't know anything about that, but personally, I think it is a general problem. Does the scripture say anything about confessing in that respect? Yes. The Lord Jesus says, "If you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift before the altar and go. First be reconciled with your brother...then come and offer your gift." What gift? I always thought it was some farmer coming in from the country with some food stuffs for the pastor...you know, a gift like that.

No, no, that takes you back to Leviticus 5:5. In the Old Testament Dispensation, when a believer wanted to get right with God, he brought a lamb or a dove. He laid his hand upon on the offering...and that is where it says, He shall confess that he has sinned in that thing. Now, we don't bring a lamb or a dove. We have the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world. Therefore, to put it into New Testament setting...if we come and say, "Lord forgive me for Jesus sake," but we remember that our brother has something against us, go and put it right with him first.

It is a fair question: is it more important to be right with God or with man? I would say with God. But with whom should we put things right with first with God or with man? The Lord Jesus says with man. Why?

God knows whether or not you have sinned...your brother doesn't know until you admit it. God knows whether or not you have repented, but your brother doesn't know until you tell him. So the Lord says if you're (in need to) put it right with him (your brother). I told you about that girl at Forest Home.

She was willing to put it right with the Lord, but wasn't willing to apologize to the person she had hurt. There is clear teaching of scripture...put it right first with the person whom you have wronged. Now, someone might say yes, but suppose it is a church quarrel between believers and it is the other party that has done the wrong. I remember speaking at a Baptist Church in Portland. The Chairman of the Board of Deacons said, "I agree with you heartily. If I do something wrong, I think it is my duty to go and apologize and confess it to him.

But," he said, "by the same token,"...that sounded very like a deacon, deacons always say by the same token... "By the same token, if he does something wrong against me, let him come and apologize to me. And then, I'll forgive him. Am I right?" I said, "No, you are wrong." And he said, "But if I have to go and apologize to him when I do wrong, shouldn't he have to come and apologize to me?" I said, "Well, he should, but if he doesn't do it, the Lord Jesus said (this is Matthew 18:15-17), "If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him, alone."

Why alone? To give him a chance. You don't want to rub his nose in the dirt. Maybe, he would be very glad to apologize because you showed a nice attitude, but if you want to make a big fighting issue of it, he'll get his back up. It says in that scripture, "if he listens to you, then you've won your brother." I remember a very famous preacher came to Hollywood and criticized me from the pulpit. I shrugged my shoulders and I thought, well, what he said isn't true anyway. But then I heard about it six different times (from six different people)!

So, I thought I better do what the scripture says. I phoned up, but he had left town. So, I wrote him a letter. I'd like to say a word of advice. Don't write letters if you can go and see people face to face. Is it a Texas saying to say, You Better Smile When You Say That? People can take things face to face that they won't take in a letter. Letters rankle. However, I wrote him a nice sweet Irish letter. I said, "You ought to have known better. If you had taken the trouble to read my book "Full Surrender", you'd realize I hadn't said anything like that...in fact, the very opposite."

It wasn't a matter of character; it was a matter of doctrinal teaching. I ended the letter by saying, "I don't expect a big shot like you to apologize to a small fry like me, but please allow me to say you were misquoted or misinformed." I got back a letter, graciously apologizing. He said that he had been told that I had said this, but the following night a lady came up to him and said, "Here's Edwin Orr's book, in which he says, in print, the very opposite." He said, "I have learned to take a man's printed word over hearsay.

I withdrew the criticism from the pulpit and said I was quite wrong in what I said last night." "But," he said, "bad news travels twice as fast as good news and you never heard about this." Now, I was convicted. I wrote and apologized to him for not expecting him to apologize to me. Now, the scripture says, "If he listens to you, then you've won your brother." Shortly afterwards he wrote to me and said, "I hear you're going to India. I know how desperately poor the people are there, including the churches.

So, I would like to send you five hundred dollars from our evangelical fund towards your expenses. Had I won my brother? He remained my friend until he died. By the way, that was Dr. Donald Gray Barnhouse of Philadelphia. One of the world's great preachers and he was my friend till he died. Now, the scripture says, go and tell him his fault face to face. Why? Because you want to be friends. But there are some people

don't want to be friends. They enjoy being insulted because they feel better, especially if it wasn't true.

It inflates their ego. Somebody at church says (to Mrs. Johnson), "Oh, did you hear what Mrs. Jones said about you?" "No, what did she say?" "She said, "Thus and so." And out comes an ugly bit of gossip. Now, what does Mrs. Johnson do? Does she go to Mrs. Jones and say, "Mrs. Jones, there must be a misunderstanding." No, no. She meets Mrs. Petersen, and says, "Did you hear what Mrs. Jones said about me?" Mrs. Petersen says, "No. However if you tell me about it, I can pray about it."

So, now Mrs. Petersen learns about it. They are all ganging up on Mrs. Jones. Until Mrs. MacGregor, a Scotswoman says, "When my baby was sick, it was Mrs. Jones who came to help." Now she takes Mrs. Jones side. Now, you have a church feud. All because Mrs. Johnson didn't fulfill the scripture...go and tell them face to face, first. Before you tell anyone else...give them a chance. Then it says, if he won't listen to you, take one or two others with you that every word may be established in the mouth of one or two witnesses.

There are people, for instance, if you go to see them personally, they will twist what you say. So take witnesses. Whom should you take? Your wife and your mother-in-law? No, he might think you are ganging up on him. If I had a quarrel with Billy Graham, and by the way I do not...Billy has been a good friend for 45 years, but if I had a quarrel with Billy Graham and I wanted to be friends, whom should I take? Carl McIntyre? He objects to Billy. Take a couple of his worst enemies?

No, no, Billy wouldn't be very impressed. Let's see...that Shea, he is a sweet old fellow...Billy loves him, too. And I love him. How about Cliff Barrows? Billy let's settle this. That's the way we would do it. Take one or two others with you. If he won't listen to them, it says tell it to the church. I should have consulted the pastor before saying this, but would the pastor advise that you get up and tell it to the church just after the responsive reading? Or would, you say, before the announcements?

It doesn't mean that. The word church there is the word ecclesia (sp?). I would say if you are both members of the choir, surely there is enough spirituality in the choir to find someone who would help you settle the difficulty. If you are both ministers of the gospel, you don't have to consult a lawyer...try and get some ministers in your association or in the ministers fraternal, to settle it for you. And if he won't listen to them, it says treat him like a heathen and a tax collector.

I remember a big Irishman in Toronto saying to me, "That means you give them one, two, three chances to put things right...and if he doesn't then, you can really go to town on him." I said, "No, no, it doesn't say that. Treat him like a heathen. Do you ever eat Chinese food? Some Chinese restaurant owners are Christians, but not a majority of them...perhaps some one who has just come from Taiwan or Hong Kong. And you meet him and he says, "Good morning." And you say, "I only speak to Christians."

No you don't. You speak to heathen, too. If he falls downstairs and breaks a leg, do you say, "Now, which convention do you belong to? American Baptist or Southern Baptist or General Baptist or Regular Baptist or two-seat-in-the-one-spirit- predestinarian Baptist or what?" No! He is your neighbor. I find that if some brother who does you an injury and doesn't treat you right...don't stop being civil to him. Be kind to him. I use to wonder about that verse "by being kind you pour coals of fire on his head."

That sounds like strong retribution doesn't it? It is a figure of speech...it means you make them blush with shame. Treat him like a tax collector. I don't know how you treat tax collectors, but don't try and get your own back on the IRS. Don't try and fight with City Hall unless you are very sure of yourself. I got a letter

from President Roosevelt once...that said you will report for active duty on the December 24th 1942. I was there all right...I wasn't a bit worried...otherwise I would have been AWOL.

The thing is this...treat him as a heathen, treat him as a tax collector...in other words, pay everyone his due, even though he didn't treat you right. Those are the rules that the Lord Jesus gave. But it can all be summed up...every time there has been a great revival, there has been confession of sin. I don't know what Robert Coleman said on Monday night, but I have heard him talk about the Asbury College Revival. I would say half the time in that chapel, the students were confessing their sins...the other half they were rejoicing in forgiveness.

That is a mark of revival. I have heard occasionally a Baptist pastor tell of a local revival in his church...and sometimes it began when two deacons who hadn't spoken to each other for 20 years came up and reconciled. There is confession in revival. What is the scriptural basis for that? "Therefore, confess your faults, one to another, and pray for one another that you maybe delivered." Notice the next phrase. "The effectual fervent prayer of the righteous availeth much." In plain English, the prayers of those who are right with God can help a lot.

You say, wouldn't that lead to a lot of scandal to confess all sorts of things? No, no, let me give this lesson very clearly. You confess, in order to be delivered. That is your object. How much should you confess? It says very plainly, "confess your faults, one to another, and pray for one another..." You confess to get prayer. Therefore, the confession is best stated as a request for prayer. Like a man standing up and saying, "I've lost my temper so often in the business meetings here.

I must confess it to you and ask God to deliver me from bad temper." Then, you can pray for him. Is that what he needs? Yes. But you confess in order to get prayer...in order to be delivered. How much should you confess? Just enough to get prayer. You don't need to confess the details of your sin. You don't need to say, "I had a big row with my wife this morning." That doesn't concern the congregation. Go and put it right with your wife, or husband as the case maybe. God and put it right with someone you had a quarrel with in the church.

But if you have a fault, you confess your fault. By the way, the Greek does say, (I am sorry, I didn't understand what he said in Greek), Their "sins", confess your sins, one to another, and pray to for one another that you may be delivered. You don't need to give detailed confessions. Especially, I would say there are warnings against confessions that lead to temptation. If a young fellow got up and said, "Since I enlisted in the Army, I have suffered a lot of temptation. Would you pray for me that I might be pure?"

Could pray for him? Of course you could. But if the young fellow got up and mentioned some girl that you know, now he had shamed her reputation. He has caused scandal. You don't need to give the details to everyone. Confess to God. Confess to the person you've wronged. But ask for prayer from the congregation. I think this is quite clear. I remember when a pastor of a very big Baptist church invited me for a week of meetings. On Tuesday of that week, he said, "I would like to have lunch with you."

So, we had lunch together. I had a funny feeling he wanted to tell me something, but he never got to the point. So we just enjoyed a good lunch and fellowship together. The next day I had an appointment, but I had to cancel it, because the man had to leave town. So I called the pastor and said, "I told you I was busy today, but I'm free. I enjoyed your company so much yesterday...how about having lunch again?" "Good," he said. "I'll come." Then he told me. He said, "I meant to ask you about this.

It is a very personal thing. He said my wife and I are happily married, but there was a time when we were a little cool towards each other. I made the mistake of telling my secretary and she was very sympathetic. It led just to indiscretion, nothing more." "Well, you might as well tell me. Was it serious?" He said, "I kissed her. Then I realized I was playing with fire." He said, "I quit. She was a good Christian woman. Finally, I said to her, "Look, either I'll resign from the church or you'll resign as secretary.

If you feel that that is what I should do, I'll resign." She said, "No pastor, you do a wonderful work here. I know this wasn't right...I'll resign." Then he said, "We'll give you a letter of recommendation, because you have been a wonderful secretary." He said she went to the other side of the country. "Now," he said, "Should I tell my wife?" So, I said, "Why do you ask me?" He said, "Why hurt her? She doesn't know anything about it." I said, "You've got a point there. But," I said, "you can trust this girl?"

He said, "Yes. I have every reason to believe she is a deeply spiritual girl." I said, "Does anyone else know about it?" He hesitated for just a moment. Then he said, "Nobody knows about it." I said, "Why did you hesitate?" He said, "I'm not trying to deceive you. I sometimes wonder if one of my deacons knows about it." I said, "Why would he know about it?" He said, "He came into the office just after that incident. Whether it was my guilty conscience or not, I often wondered if he saw me kiss the girl."

So I said in the vernacular, "If he knows about it, why hasn't he spilled the beans?" He said, "I know a lot worse about him." So I said, "You're trusting in his discretion. Now, if you know a lot worse about him...supposing he really gets into trouble...and if you or the church take any action, he would get up and say, "If you think the pastor is a saint...now, let me tell you." And the pastor turned white. He said, "I never thought of that. What do you advise me to do?" "I won't advise you to do anything.

I will leave it to your conscience." Next night I was preaching. I don't know what I was preaching on, but it was a revival message. The pastor was sitting in the very back seat. And he knelt there sobbing. The congregation was deeply moved. I noticed one man look as if he was cornered. He got up and he came forward. The next man forward was that deacon. We had a landslide repentance in that church! The next day the pastor called me and he said, "Well...I told her. What a wonderful woman she is.

The first thing she said was, "How did I fail you?" I had to tell her...you didn't fail me, it was my waywardness." He said, "We are so happy, the both of us." Within a month he called me up again to say, "I've been asked to head up one of the biggest departments of our denomination. This has prepared me spiritually for it." If I mentioned his name, some folks here would recognize it. Now, I don't tell anyone what to do about confession. But the scripture does say quite simply, "If any of you lacketh wisdom, let him ask of God who gives liberally to all men and without scolding."

God will guide you. But there is a time for everything...and the best time is when God is moving your heart....in times of revival. What is the sum and substance of this? We talk about revival. You tell me you are praying for revival. The Lord is willing to revive you...willing to bless you with the fullness of His fellowship. But if you have broken fellowship by disobedience, the condition is to repent and confess. The root of the Greek word for confess is "ek homo logos" (sp?). ek- meaning out of, homo- meaning the same, and logos- meaning the word. You say the same word with God...what the Holy Spirit tells you. That becomes your confession. Let us all bow in prayer. The end.

Have you ever broken fellowship with the Lord? What is the worst thing we do when we have broken fellowship? We cannot turn to God so we must depend on ourselves. Our knowledge, our skills and our abilities. And that is when the trouble really gets out of hand. It is a downward spiral. Do you feel like you

have broken your fellowship with God, right now? You know all that is required. Repent and confess.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/j-edwin-orr/3-forgiveness-and-confession/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net