

# Confession and Revival

by J. Edwin Orr

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*Confession is a crucial aspect of revival, and it involves expressing our fault to God and others, seeking forgiveness and reconciliation, and being delivered from sin.*

**Duration:** 12:44

**Scripture:** Psalm 139:23, 1 John 1:9

**Topics:** "Confession"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the importance of confession in the context of revival. He emphasizes that confession should be genuine and not turn into a mere exhibition of sins. The preacher advises that confession should be made to God for secret sins, privately to those who have been hurt by our actions, and openly for sins committed publicly. He also highlights the biblical example of Peter confessing Jesus as the Christ, emphasizing the role of the Holy Spirit in revealing the truth. The sermon concludes with a call to pray for revival and seek deliverance through the prayers of righteous believers.

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## Transcript

But now the other doctrine that was emphasized in the Revival, do you remember I quoted Evan Roberts' four points? You must confess any known sin to God and put any wrong done to man right. And the third, the final point was you must confess your faith in Christ publicly. Confession became a doctrine of the Revival.

Now this is a touchy subject because some movements have gone astray at the point of confession. Sometimes confession can break down into sheer exhibitionism. But if there's Revival, there will be confession of sin among God's people, without a doubt.

I've always given the advice, let the circle of the sin be the circle of the confession. If you have sinned secretly and no one in the world knows about it except God, tell God. But if you sin privately and someone else has been hurt by the thing or by your example, put it right privately as well.

And if you sin openly, let everyone who knows about it know that you've put things right. That I give as sound advice. You see, some people think that because confession occurs in Revival that confession is the work of the Holy Spirit.

Confession is not the work of the Holy Spirit. Conviction is the work of the Holy Spirit and confession is our response to it. And our response will be governed by our temperament and circumstances and example and pressure and the like.

I think it was Sidney Powell of Tremont Temple in Boston told me that he had a deacon in his congregation who was what he called a sourpuss. Do you know what I mean by a sourpuss? He disagreed with everything. He gave the pastor a bad time.

Now the Oxford group movement, the Bookman movement, came to Boston and this deacon went to a house party of the Oxford group. His theology was already orthodox. So that their emphasis on putting things right helped him.

He was a transformed man. In fact, when he said to the pastor, pastor I'd like to give my testimony, the pastor said we're all waiting to hear it. The church was packed, the deacon got up and gave his testimony, he said you know what a sourpuss I was.

He said I don't know how the pastor and the rest of you put up with me, but he said thanks be to God my life has changed. A lot of people said amen. Then he said the first thing the Holy Spirit convicted me of was, and he mentioned some adolescent sex aberration.

His wife was in the meeting, but she was so ashamed she never raised her eyes from the floor. People were shocked. He shook hands with people, the two of them came to church next Sunday morning, but his wife was so embarrassed.

Then they left the church and then they left Boston. Now my point is this, I have no doubt that the Holy Spirit brings conviction in a private matter regarding the sex life, but I don't think the Holy Spirit told him to tell two thousand eight hundred people those private details, so there are limits. Now what does the word confession mean? What does it mean to confess? It comes from three roots, ek, homo, logos, out of the same word.

Isn't that a strange thing? Logos, word, homo, same, ek, out of. You'll understand it better when you remember what the Lord Jesus said. Who do men say that I am? Someone said, some say you're a prophet.

Another disciple said, some say you're Elijah returned. But who do you say I am? Peter spoke up and said, you are the Christ, the Son of the living God. And the Lord Jesus immediately commended him.

He said, flesh and blood did not reveal that to you. You didn't pick that up from someone. It was revealed to you from heaven.

The Holy Spirit told him what to say. We call that the confession of Peter. He expressed outwardly what the Holy Spirit had shown him inwardly about the deity of Christ.

We talk about confessing Christ in baptism, confessing Christ in the right hand of fellowship, and so on. That's what the word confess means. Now negatively, to confess sin means to express outwardly what the Holy Spirit has shown you inwardly about it.

In other words, to acknowledge your fault. Now I can't stress this too hard. There was a book published by Zondervan some years ago called Love is Now, by a young man that I knew in Campus Crusade, but he

left Campus Crusade over this very issue.

The book has got some excellent material, but he had a chapter called Obsession with Confession. And I immediately thought it would be a treatment of this difficulty I've just mentioned to you. Too much confession.

But instead of that, he taught that all you need to do is to admit that it's wrong and thank God you're a Christian, you're forgiven. Some kids in Covina got a hold of this and said, isn't that wonderful, you can shack up for the weekend so long as you admit that it's wrong, it's okay. That broke up their youth fellowship.

Someone told me on the East Coast that my friend has changed his mind about this. I wish he had changed the publication too, because that book did harm at that point. I was talking to Professor Julius Menti, this great Greek expert in Florida in December, and I raised this question with him again, just to confirm my own impression.

To confess doesn't mean just to agree, as the author of that book said. It means to express, not to agree. The illustration that he gave in his book was that he was driving from Detroit to Toledo, and I'm quoting his words, feasting his mind on wrong thoughts.

Now, without speculating too much what kind of wrong thoughts they could have been, I began to think, well, what was his treatment of them? He said, well, he suddenly realized, I'm a Christian and I'm forgiven. Where was the repentance? This is what we call antinomianism, and it's quite popular today. There are three kinds of antinomianism among evangelical Christians.

First of all, there's Calvinistic antinomianism. I'm one of the Lord's elect, so it doesn't matter what I do, I'm going to heaven anyway. Then there's Wesleyan antinomianism.

I'm sanctified, so what I do couldn't possibly be wrong. And then there's Pentecostal antinomianism. I still speak in tongues, so things can't be too bad.

Those are different forms of antinomianism. But the fact is that if we're convicted of sin, we should put things right with the party's concern, first with God, but then with anyone else. Now, I just want to give you in conclusion four verses.

Leviticus 5 and 5 teaches the necessity of specific confession. He shall confess that he has sinned in that thing. We commit specific sins, we should make specific confessions.

In other words, we don't get up and say, oh Lord, if I've done something wrong, please forgive me. That's not a confession. If you're not sure what you've done wrong, you can pray, search me, oh God, and know my heart, try me and know my thoughts, see if there be any wicked way in me, then lead me in the way everlasting.

Proverbs 28, 13 teaches the necessity of thorough confession. He who covers his sins shall not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsaketh them shall have mercy. You must have done with the sin that you confess.

Matthew 5, 23, 24 deals with private confession. So if you're 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? It actually takes you back to Leviticus 5 and 5. In Old Testament days, when a believer wanted to get right with God, he brought a lamb or a dove, he laid his hand upon the head of the offering, and he confessed that he had sinned in that thing. Today we have only the Lamb of God. So when you're saying, Lord, forgive me for Jesus' sake, if you remember your brother has something against you, go and put it right with him first.

Is it more important to be right with God or with man? I would say with God. With whom should we put things right first? The Lord Jesus says with man. Why? Well, God knows whether or not you've sinned.

Your brother doesn't know until you tell him. God knows whether or not you've repented. Your brother doesn't know until you've said so.

So the Lord says, I'll wait. And then public confession, James 5.16, Therefore confess your faults one to another and pray for one another that you may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of the righteous availeth much.

Well, that sounds like an open invitation for general confession. No, let's take the verse as it applies. It doesn't say one to one other, it says among yourselves.

It says, Therefore confess your shortcomings, the word is *tas armatias*, your shortcomings among yourselves, and pray for one another that you may be delivered. That's the Greek. What's your object? To be delivered.

What's your method? Get people to pray for you. Why? Because the prayers of those who are right with God can help a lot. Then how much should you confess? Just confess enough to get them to pray for you.

In other words, if it's bad temper, you get up in the prayer meeting and say, please pray for me. My bad temper is such a hindrance to my testimony. You don't need to say you had a row with your wife this morning, put that right with her.

You don't even tell the choir. So keep it in mind. It must be put right privately, but there's always a place for asking for prayer.

And that's what marks revival. In all the great revivals, Christians confess their faults. They repent of them.

They ask the prayers of their friends. But then they're delivered. And once they're delivered, they don't need to be dug up again.

There are some Christian movements who practice re-confessing faults. There are some who even go around testifying to their confession. But I think it's extremely unwise.

If God has forgiven and forgotten, why should we keep the thing alive? You know that the Apostle Paul did confess that he was the chief of sinners, but he didn't go over the whole thing again. Some people do that. It's a well-known thing in psychology.

A lot of people enjoy doing this. They get some kind of satisfaction out of it. But it's not at all necessary.

Now don't misunderstand. I heard Robert doing, the skibble evangelist, talking to a drunkard, an alcoholic. And he said, well I was an alcoholic.

The man said, I can't believe it. Oh yes, he said, I was on a perpetual pub crawl. But that wasn't re-confessing, that was testimony, and there was a difference there.

So I think there are rules. We can tie it all together by the verses that were key verses in the Welsh Revival. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

If you don't take that in, put it in the negative. If we do not confess our sins, you may be sure he will withhold forgiveness and we will remain out of fellowship. Search me, O God, and know my heart.

Try me and know my thoughts. See if there be any grieving way in me, then lead me in the way everlasting. Lord, we pray Thee for our nation.

We pray Thee for our state. We pray Thee for this great metropolitan area. We pray Thee for Pasadena and we pray Thee for this congregation.

Lord, wilt Thou not revive us again that Thy people may rejoice in Thee? Lord, help us to learn the lesson. It's not by might nor by power. It's not by organization or chain of command, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord.

Lord, teach us to pray for revival. Now may grace, mercy, and peace from Father, Son, and Spirit be our portion now and always. Amen.

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