



Confession and Repentance ~ February 17, 2019

OPEN

How can we know if someone is truly remorseful or simply embarrassed and inconvenienced by an act of wrongdoing? We can't. But God's Word's cuts through our confusion to show confession and repentance as life-giving.

Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!
Psalm 139:23-24

Mature followers of Jesus "must have some basic spiritual practices in place to keep them in a posture of willing surrender to God." ~ Ruth Haley Barton

"The unexamined life is not worth living." ~ Socrates

DIG

[1] In what way was Christ proclaimed?

Verses 1-4

When you hear "confession" or "repentance" it may sound extremely invasive and intimidating. After all, these are actions which compel great self-disclosure. Yet these practices are actually on-ramps to God's profound purposes for our lives as His followers. John proclaimed Christ as the way to live our lives most meaningfully...in two ways:

- In full fellowship - v. 3 confession sets us up for the community we crave
- In full joy - v. 4 repentance sets us up for the freedom/joy we desire

[2] In what way should Christ be practiced?

Verses 5-10

Confession is connected to our lifestyle: "Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness." (II Timothy 2:19) John makes it clear that when it comes to Christian conduct, God is the standard. The metaphor of absolute light relative to darkness debunks two common ideas:

comparison - rationalizing bad behavior because we are "not as bad as..."

consequence - rationalizing bad behavior because we "got away with it"

In light of this dilemma, John outlines the two ways of living...

- Continuing in sin which only leads to self-deception and dis-fellowship
- Confessing our sin which leads to divine cleansing and true fellowship

What is confession?

Theologically, confession reckons with God's truth. It is "the act of acknowledging one's sin or declaring one's faith" (*Concise Dictionary of Christian Theology*, by Millard Erickson, 35). To confess means to agree with God's standard and to admit that we are in the wrong.

Practically, confession opens us to shared brokenness. The challenge becomes the worldly wisdom that is swirling around us. Dallas Willard wrote that "the only sincerity bearable is clever insincerity."

In James 5:16 we read, "Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective."

What is repentance?

Theologically, repentance is "Godly sorrow [regret] for one's sin and a resolve to turn from it." (*Concise Dictionary of Christian Theology*, by Millard Erickson, 143). In Luke 3:3 John the Baptist preached a "baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins" which was a call to turn from sin and be ready to receive Messiah. In fact, in verse 8 he spoke to pseudo-repentance by calling for "fruit in keeping with repentance" instead of their appeal to religious heritage. In Matthew 4:17 Jesus began His ministry calling people to repent.

Practically, repentance opens us to us to shared responsiveness. In Acts 3:19 we read, "Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord." II Corinthians 7:10 tells us, "Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death."

REFLECT

Who is in need of confession and repentance? see James 3:2

Why is it futile to trust in religious rules? see Colossians 2:22-23

How we can trust in the grace of God? see Titus 2:11-14

What does confession/repentance sound like? see Psalm 51:1-13

Take some time to quiet your heart before God, asking the Holy Spirit to point out those areas where confession and repentance is needed in your life.

You might want to listen to [I Repent](#) by Steve Green as you reflect