



SPIRITUAL RHYTHMS: CONFESSION AND REPENTANCE

Scraps and Further Resources

PROVERBS 28:13

Whoever conceals their sins does not prosper,
but the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy.

1 JOHN 1:9-10

⁸ If we claim to be without 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 purify us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰ If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us.

We're confessing to the One who *died for us* ... who is no stranger to our predicament... we confess to one another to remind one another of the gospel... to spur one another on...

Some traditional churches... have a moment of confession and absolution every week...

RICH VILLODAS QUOTE

"Followers of Christ establish our moral credibility in the world by routinely and fearlessly confessing and repenting of sin. And we lose our credibility by refusing to name our sins. This is the paradox of faith. To confess our sins doesn't mean obsessing over our mistakes. To confess our sins—especially together in a community—is an act of solidarity. It's a practice reminding us that we are all on equal footing, all in need of grace; that we all have sinned and have been sinned against; that we are in the same broken family. Every Sunday in our worship at New Life Fellowship Church, we take a moment to recall the previous week in the silence of our hearts. We name our failures and shortcomings and then confess aloud a prayer that ties us together in our weaknesses. Whenever the Lenten season comes around, we observe Ash Wednesday. It's the annual reminder that we are far more weak, frail, broken, and

marked by sin than we think. It's also the reminder that God is far more gracious, merciful, present, and loving than we can believe. This practice of confession in our worship gatherings frees us to confess our sins the other six days of the week. When we scold our children in ways that harm them, confession forms in us the humility to ask for their pardon. When after a heated exchange with someone that leads to wounding words, we limit sin's power by confessing our carelessness and requesting grace from the person. That is how the world moves toward wholeness—not by our covering up our sins and mistakes, but by lovingly acknowledging them before God and one another. This is the starting point for a good and beautiful and kind life.”¹

SAINT & SINNER THEME

Inward, we know the sinner part...

Outward, we want people to think the saint part...

Without an understanding of sin, we can't truly look within...

HENRI NOUWEN QUOTE - on confession and transparency to one another

“You must decide for yourself to whom and when you give access to your interior life. For years you have permitted others to walk in and out of your life according to their needs and desires. Thus you were no longer master in your own house, and you felt increasingly used. So, too, you quickly became tired, irritated, angry, and resentful.

Think of a medieval castle surrounded by a moat. The drawbridge is the only access to the interior of the castle. The lord of the castle must have the power to decide when to draw the bridge and when to let it down. Without such power, he can become the victim of enemies, strangers, and wanderers. He will never feel at peace in his own castle. It is important for you to control your own drawbridge. There must be times when you keep your bridge drawn and have the opportunity to be alone or only with those to whom you feel close. Never allow yourself to become public property, where anyone can walk in and out at will. You might think that you are being generous in giving access to anyone who wants to enter or leave, but you will soon find yourself losing your soul. When you claim for yourself the power over your drawbridge, you will discover new joy and peace in your heart and find yourself able to share that joy and peace with others.”²

MARTIN LUTHER QUOTE

“When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, ‘Repent’ (Mt 4:17), he willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance.” (Thesis 1)

¹ Villodas, *Good and Beautiful and Kind*.

² Nouwen, *The Inner Voice of Love Publisher*, 84–85.

THOUGHTS

Toxic shame –

The stories I hear...

The podcasts I listen to (consult)

The manipulative practices...

These are not value statements – you are not these things... you are LOVED by God... and pursued by Him... and NEED him...

Myths

God can't forgive me

God can't love me

GEOFF HOLSCLAW QUOTE

"I often hear ex-evangelicals / progressives offer reminders that 'God loves you' even if you didn't pray or read your Bible today (or if you stopped altogether forever). But...while it is true that God loves you, your experience of and transformation by God's love will be minimal without prayer, Bible study, and of course, the loving service of others.

It is difficult...

- to awaken to the loving gaze of God,*
- to grow into the overflow of God's love,*
- to rest in the presence of peaceful love...*

without some kind of attention and intention toward God in study, prayer, meditation, and contemplation, and yes, loving service of others.

The action of love toward others can't be a substitute for prayerful study and meditation of God's love—for how will the selfish self-loves that corrupt our love for others be unearthed? How will our disordered loves be ordered with a standard to judge them against? How will God lovingly train us to love others except by seeing how God loves us?

All this happens, in part, in prayer and study

I understand the sentiment to free people from the weight of legalistic practices that create shame (or pride).

But I bet the same people saying that 'God loves you even when you don't pray' still training their children to brush their teeth and shower, and send them to school.

Because basic hygiene and education are important.

So, it is true that prayer and Bible reading don't earn you God's love. But those practices will help eliminate the odors of our sin so that the fragrance of the gospel will breeze through our broken world better."

MARK SAYERS

“Those who bow their knee at the foot of the cross admitting the absurdity of their own efforts to be godlike, who confess the chaos and sin within them, now enter into a new way of being—one not driven by striving, agenda, or applause.”³

JOHN GOLDINGAY

Confession doesn't involve going into great emotional outpourings about how sorry we are. It involves acknowledging facts, owning what we have done.”⁴

BISHOP ROBERT BARREN on Mark 1:14-15

“‘Repent.’ The word so often and so misleadingly translated as ‘repent’ is *metanoieite*. This Greek term is based upon two words, *meta* (beyond) and *nous* (mind or spirit), and thus, in its most basic form, it means something like ‘go beyond the mind that you have.’ The English word ‘repent’ has a moralizing overtone, suggesting a change in behavior or action, whereas Jesus’ term seems to be hinting at a change at a far more fundamental level of one’s being. Jesus urges his listeners to change their way of knowing, their way of perceiving and grasping reality, their perspective, their mode of seeing. What Jesus implies is this: the new state of affairs has arrived, the divine and human have met, but the way you customarily see is going to blind you to this novelty. [...] Minds, eyes, ears, senses, perceptions— all have to be opened up, turned around, revitalized. Metanoia, soul transformation, is Jesus’ first recommendation.

But what exactly is the problem with the way we think and see? To give an adequate answer to that question we would have to work our way through the whole of the Bible and the Christian tradition, for the attempt to name and heal spiritual blindness is one of the most basic motifs of our religion. But perhaps a simple answer can be given in these terms: we see and know and perceive with a mind of fear rather than a mind of trust. When we fear, we cling to who we are and what we have; when we are afraid, we see ourselves as the threatened center of a hostile universe, and thus we violently defend ourselves and lash out at potential adversaries. And fear-according to so many of the biblical authors and so many of the mystics and theologians of our tradition – is a function of living our lives at the surface level, a result of forgetting our deepest identity. At the root and ground of our being, at the ‘center’ of who we are, there is what Christianity calls ‘the image and likeness of God.’ This means that at the foundation of our existence, we are one with the divine power that continually creates and sustains the universe; we are held and cherished by the infinite love of God. When we rest in this center and realize its power we know that, in an ultimate sense, we are

³ Sayers, *Facing Leviathan*.

⁴ Goldingay, *Exodus and Leviticus for Everyone*.

safe, or in more classical religious language, ‘saved.’ And therefore we can let go of fear and begin to live in radical trust. But when we lose sight of this rootedness in God, we live exclusively on the tiny island of the ego, and our lives become dominated by fear. Fear is the ‘original sin’ of which the Church Fathers speak; fear is the poison that was injected into human consciousness and human society from the beginning; fear is the debilitating and life-denying element that upsets the ‘chemical balance’ of both psyche and society.⁵

THOUGHTS ON COMMUNION

We don’t say, “oh you sinned, you can’t have communion.”

We say, “you’ve sinned, you NEED communion. I’ve sinned, I NEED communion. We’ve sinned; we NEED communion.”

This gospel is DIFFERENT – this is the biblical gospel – than many world religions; the impetus is on US to reach God... but the Christian Gospel is God has reached down to us...

And the implications for community, friendship, burden-carrying, load-bearing, intimacy → the recipe community deeper than the world has known...

THOUGHTS ON CONFESSION, REPENTANCE, AND FREEDOM

The Christian framework allows us to face the scariest parts of ourselves... because they don’t define us... God’s love defines us... Jesus has died for us... and we can be both saint and sinner...

Our culture has an image problem...

A weight we cannot bear...

Depression rates keep rising...

ROMANS 7:18-25

¹⁸ For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. ¹⁹ For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing.²⁰ Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

²¹ So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. ²² For in my inner being I delight in God’s law; ²³ but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. ²⁴ What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? ²⁵ Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!

⁵ Barron, *Word on Fire Bible*.

Conflicted... about the perfect yellow cake / knows his life is a botched yellow cake... he is both saint and sinner...

Confession – telling the true story

Relatively confident Paul had people in his circles who knew his junk...

Paul self-describes as someone who isn't that eloquent... not that impressive in person...

Paul says God uses the foolish things of the world to shame the wise (he says he's not that impressive)

But for Paul, it doesn't matter because the GRACE of God has covered His sins; and the LOVE of God is where his identity is secure

Confession in community... it's not "you" statements... it's "we statements" ...

Because we're in this together...

TIM KELLER on hell in *Reason for God*⁶

False caricature of God... "too late, you had your chance!"

Losing God's presence totally = hell

Hell → the trajectory of a soul, living a self-absorbed, self-centered life, going on and on forever (I.E. Rich man and Lazarus / Addictions to drugs, alcohol, gambling, porn)

Great Divorce p71-72 – "Hell begins with a grumbling mood, always complaining, always blaming others... but you are still distinct from it. You may even criticize it in yourself and wish you could stop it. But there may come a day when you can no longer. Then there will be no you left to criticize the mood or even to enjoy it, but just the grumble itself, going on forever like a machine. It is not a question of God "sending us" to hell. ***In each of us there is something growing, which will BE Hell unless it is nipped in the bud.***"

"There are only two kinds of people – those who say "Thy will be done" to God or those to whom God in the end says, "Thy will be done." All that are in Hell choose it. Without that self-choice it would be Hell. No soul that seriously and constantly desires joy will ever miss it." p69

⁶ Keller, *The Reason for God*.

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