

MESSAGE TRANSCRIPTS

Series: Basics: Practices of Believers

Pt 2 Confession

Tim Armstrong, Senior Pastor

Weekend 08.16-17.08

We're going jump right into our study this morning. I want to take you back to the passage we were studying last week in II Peter, chapter 3, verse 18. We're not going to spend a lot of time here...just a few moments. I always find it interesting when an author of the Bible, especially one who has multiple letters, comes to the conclusion of what they are writing and that is the case here. Peter has written two letters that are in scripture. We now come to the second letter, the last chapter and the last verse. Now I always find this interesting because here you can zero in and you can really find out what was really stirring in the heart of the author...in the last few moments they penned their last letter. And you can see that here very clearly with Peter. If you remember last week, we talked about some of the grammatical...grammatical elements of this passage and the word grow is a command. It is an imperative. So here we see really what Peter wants for us. He wants us to grow in our spiritual lives. That it is part of the process that we must engage in, in growing in Christ. And he tells us by way of a command, grow. And he says, "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen." So we see that he tells us to grow. Ok, how are we to grow? He says three things: Number one, we grow in grace, we grow in knowledge and then we grow glorifying God. And what is the goal? What is the ultimate goal that we might know him. Now he said that this is the pathway and we talked about the idea of growth being basic to the entire spiritual journey. But that there was one fundamental element that by far and away really is the master concept of all scripture and that is the idea of glorifying God. That we grow in grace, we grow in knowledge and we grow in glorifying God but that we cannot grow in grace or knowledge if we don't attempt to glorify God. And we said this is a master concept throughout all of scripture, that we are called in all aspects of our lives to seek to glorify God. Paul said it in I Corinthians this way: He said, whether you eat or drink, in other words the most minute thing or whatever you do, do all to glorify God. Now we said that this concept is the concept that scripture calls worship—that worship is not just really we did as a congregation a moment ago. That's a part of worship but really all of our life is an act of worship and that is the most basic, fundamental understanding of what it means to follow Christ. That we ought to be people who are glorifying him in all aspects of our life.

Now the question that we have to deal with this morning is what happens when we don't glorify God. What happens when God isn't glorified by our lives? What happens when we glorify ourselves over glorifying God? And to answer a question with a question, what always stands in the way of us glorifying God? The answer to that is our sin, our personal sin. And so today, what we're going to do, is we're going to look at what we do when we fall, when we sin. We're going to look and learn about this concept—the second basic element of the Christian life called confession. What is confession? Last week we looked at worship, glorifying God with our whole life. This week, we're going to look at confession and that we can glorify God by confessing our sins. Now we need to understand what it is, why we need it and how to do it. So let's look first at what it is. What is confession? Well, if we put it on a continuum, you might understand it in one of two ways. If you grew up in the church, maybe even a more legalistic church, you might

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understand confession as something you have to plead, you have to beg before God to receive. It's the process of receiving forgiveness through pleading, and begging and this contrite spirit and certainly there is an element of being contrite in our confession. But maybe you think this is idea that I must throw myself on the alter of God and...this sense...this pleading that must go forth before I can receive his forgiveness. That's one end of the spectrum. The other end is what is called sacramentalism. And if you came out of a traditional...something like Catholicism...you might've seen confession as linked to penitence. There's something that you must physically do to receive God's forgiveness—to appease God. Well, that's kind of both sides of the spectrum. And neither really give us a good picture of the biblical concept of confession. So let's...let's understand what the Bible says about this concept.

Now to understand it, we first have to understand the definition of sin. We're only going to spend a moment here cause this is review for many of you. But the definition of sin simply means to miss the mark. That's what it means. It's an archery term. It means you've missed the bull's-eye. There is a sense of the bull's-eye is perfection and anything shy of the bull's-eye is missing the mark that's in perfection. Now in scripture, anything outside of perfection in a relationship with God is seen by God as cosmic treason. It's seen as an affront to God's nature and so that's why sin is so egregious to God. Therefore, he says, we must come to him in confession. Now confession...the word itself...get this...simply means to speak the same. That's what it means. The simple definition of confession is just to speak the same. The word is **humologeō**. It's two Greek words that make up one word. Logeo which we...from which we get the word logeos which means to speak and humo or homo which is...you've heard of homogeneous or homogenized...it means basically it is the same—to bring to the same. So you put these two words together and it means to speak the same. So to confess...now watch this...is not necessarily to beg for forgiveness. It's not the idea of penitence. It is to say the same thing about your sin that God says about it. It is to agree with God. It is to speak the same—that you have missed the mark. That's what the essence of confession is...is in a biblical context...in the biblical understanding. That's what it is. And you say, all right, well, why do I need it? Or more importantly, why does God require it?

Why does God require that we be people whose practice of spiritual discipline of confession? Well, to answer that question, I want to take you out of the New Testament into the Old Testament to the sixth book of the Old Testament—the book of Joshua. And I want to just relay a story to you to give you a concept of confession and its importance in the eyes of God. We're going to turn to Joshua, chapter 7. Now let me give you a little background in the Old Testament so you know...where we are up to this point in the Bible. The first five books are called the **Penitence**. It was written by Moses. It gives us the beginning story of the people of God. And you might remember some of the events—God adopts people, the Israelite people, the least of them, to make them his own. They sin against God. They are taken into captivity to Egypt. There's a time where they are going through great trials as slaves. And then they're finally released and that's

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where the parting of the Red Sea and many events take place. And they're wandering around the desert and they're waiting to enter into the promised land. But there's a problem right at the juncture where they're ready to cross in. Moses becomes aggravated and rather than following God's command, he strikes a rock in anger. And so God puts him in timeout...basically that's what we're seeing in the scripture. I do this with my four year-old son, Jack. Jack throws a fit; I say you cannot treat me that way...you cannot act that way so I put him in timeout. Well, God puts Moses and all the people of that generation in a type of timeout. He says, listen, you cannot treat me that way. I am a holy God. Because you've treated me this way, you are not allowed to go into the promised land. Moses, you and your generation, will not be able to crossover. Instead, the next generation will. And so Moses and that generation dies and the next generation that is led by Joshua has the opportunity to cross into the promised land. And this is really a great event because God now says to Joshua: Listen, I want you to be strong, I want you to be very courageous. You're going to be fighting battles. I want you to clean the land of all the pagan influence—this is your land. And so he enters into the first battle—the battle of Jericho. And you remember that from your biblical history? What happens in Jericho? They come up against this great force that's encamped in this fortified city; they can't get in. And so what does God tell Joshua to do. He says I want you to walk around...I want you to march around the city seven times and the walls will fall and you'll be able to go in. Now interestingly enough, several months ago, I was reading actually a magazine called "Biblical Archeology" on the city of Jericho of how they have recently dug down to the surface, the base layer of the ancient city of Jericho...and they have found this walled city. Now Jericho has actually been an archeological project for many, many years. It was discovered years ago but they've been working through the strata, the different layers. They came down to the base layer and the archeologist found something very interesting about the wall. The wall unlike other cities did not crumble in on itself, was not broken down, but appears to have splayed outward as if they fell on their own outward. And for secular archeologists, they can't figure out how this happened. This is unheard of but for biblical archeologists, they look in and they say, well, of course, we understand what happened. God told Joshua to march around the city seven times, he did and the walls fell outward. The people march in, have a great victory over the city of Jericho. And what we see here is that God says the very first thing what I want you to do from this point forward is every time you capture a city, I don't want you to take anything out. I want you to destroy it all. I want you to destroy the gold, the silver, their clothing, everything. God says, I don't want you to have any remnant of pagan society left and so they go in and they just utterly destroy the city and its contents and its people. They are the hand of judgment of God. Now interesting...one person in that group, a man named Achan, couldn't resist. And he saw the gold, he saw the silver, he saw the clothing and he stole it. He took it back to his tent and he hid it in the sand under his tent. Now he'd no idea the repercussions of that particular choice. The next battle was the city of Ai. And because of Achan's sin, they lost. They were defeated at the battle of Ai. Joshua goes to God and says: God, what happened? I thought that this was our land. I thought this was something that you'd promised that we're going to be able to defeat these people. What happened? God tells

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him of the events of Achan, leads him to confront him. And this is where we pick up the story in Joshua, chapter 7, verse 19. Follow along as I read: Then Joshua said to Achan, my son, now watch this, give glory to the Lord God of Israel and give praise. Now if you're using the ESV translation or using one the Bibles in the chair back, you'll see that there's little number one above the word praise. If you look down to the bottom, you'll see there is an alternative translation...the translators suggest 'make confession'. So it could read just as easily: My son, give glory to the Lord God of Israel and make confession to him. That's very important; we're going to come back to that in moment. And tell me now what you have done, do not hid it from me. And Achan answered Joshua: Truly I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel and this is what I did. And he goes on to tell him what he did. Now Joshua says to him give glory to God by making confession of sin. What does that tell you? It tells you that we can give glory to God by confessing our sin. That God actually receives the glory when we practice the spiritual discipline of confession. Why? Well look at verse 24: And Joshua and all of Israel were with him and took Achan, the son of Zerah, and the silver, and the cloak and the bar of gold...and notice this...his sons and daughters and his oxen and donkeys and sheep in his tent and all that they had. This is guilt by association. And they brought them up to the valley of Achor and Joshua said, why did you bring trouble on us? The Lord brings trouble on you today. And all of Israel stoned him with stones. And they burned them with fire and stoned them with stones. And they raised over him a great heap of stones that remains to this day. Then the Lord turned from his burning anger. Therefore, to this day, the name of the place is called the valley of Achor. Interesting, isn't? Even though he confessed his sin, there was still punishment that followed. With that in mind, you have to ask the question even of the text, well, God why did you have Achan confess his sin? Why was it necessary for him to confess knowing that he was going to be punished so severely? Well, I don't know if you've ever thought about it this way but it forced Achan to be accountable for what he had done. Confession forced Achan to be accountable for his action but it also did something else. It freed God to act justly. You see, if Achan had not confessed his sin...his sin, God could have looked very capricious before the people, very impulsive before the people. But because he had confessed it, he owned his sin, God was free to act as he will. In fact, Achan...basically said, God, you are holy, I am not; you are righteous, I am not. You are free to do as you will. Now with this story in mind, we have to ask, well, why does God want us to confess our sin? You might be thinking, well, I thought my sins were paid at the cross. Isn't that what we just sang about? Isn't it covered by the blood of Christ? Isn't that sense of what we've...we've learned through the New Testament scripture. Why do I need then to confess my sins. Well, I want you to hang on to that question, hang on to that thought. Because I'm going to show you first how confession works and then I'm going to answer that question. Let me just show you how it works.

How does confession work? There's four parts. Number one; the first part. I have to stop making excuses. Confession begins when we stop making excuses. As long as you're making excuses for your sinfulness, you will not mature spiritually. You will not grow spiritually. The scriptures say this in Romans 3:23: All have sinned and fallen

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short of the glory of God. Interesting, isn't? That it was used that turn of a phrase. That we've fallen short. Of what? The glory of God. Our sin does not glorify God. We have fallen short. We have missed the mark. There's a point when we have to come to the realization of this. Some of you might be wondering about this—sinful? I understand that I do wrong but am I really categorized as sinful? I'm surprised to find in many of the conversations I have...especially with people who are entering in to understanding what it means to follow God that God considers them sinful. Part of that is cultural. We live in a cultural time when we...every...we consider everybody good...you know...they're basically good. You hear that all the time. But the scripture goes contrary to that notion. It says, no, you are not basically good, actually, you are very sinful and that puts you in a category of God's. And you need to stop making excuses about it. Stop winking at it. In other words, listen to me. It means you start realizing that your choices of unrighteousness are very serious in the eyes of God. That if you choose to willfully disobey, disobey what you know would be an outright sin, that is very, very serious in the eyes of God. You...you can...kind of...kind of test yourself on this. If I ask you, it's in your mind's eye, just imagine for a moment...imagine someone in your life who is very divisive...it seems like every time there's a problem, they're right in the middle...maybe it's someone you work with. You think, you know, every time there's a problem, he's right in the middle of it. Or...or think of someone in your life who..who is always lying. Does that mental image come to your mind? Or maybe look at...say this...in mental image...is there someone in my life that I know who's very prideful...just the epitome of pride. Many times, what we'll do, we'll put in our minds this mental image of a person. And we'll think, yes, they characterize divisiveness, or lying, or pride, or whatever. Put it in there. The question is, is there ever a time when your image comes up first? You see, we tend to gloss over our imperfection but God does not. God says, no, you need to understand that you have to stop making excuses for it. I want you to confess it. I want you to see it as I see it. I want you to see it as an affront to my character. And so number one: We stop making excuses.

Number two: I confess my sin as my sin. What do I mean by this? I mean you do exactly what the scriptures say. You speak it back to God. You acknowledge it before your God. God, I see this as sin. I see this activity. I see what I have done. I speak...I agree with you. Now listen. As you do that, you grow spiritually. You know why? Because you faced the reality of what is restricting you from spiritually maturing. You face the reality. You say there are choices in my life that are actually keeping me from spiritually maturing. I love what the writer of Hebrews says in Hebrews, chapter 12. He says: Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud witnesses....what a mental picture that is...let us also lay aside every weight. What is that weight? And the sin which clings so closely. I think the NIV says entangles us. And let us run with endurance the race that is set before us. He says, listen, there is a weight—that weight is your sin. That weight is keeping you from spiritually maturing. This weight is holding you down. You see, when you do this, when you let it go, when you confess it before God, you know what God has promised he would do? Not like he treated Achan. He

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says I'm going to treat you in grace. I'm going to forgive that sin. That sin was taken care of

at the cross. You see, every sin is egregious. It's hideous. It's like a terrorist act before a holy God but he said...because it has to be punished...I've taken care of that at the cross. And if you are someone who has received Christ, your sin now is covered at the cross. You want to see a great passage that talks about the character of God. You're not going to see it on the side screens and it's not in your notes. You'll have to find it in the Bible you have or in the Bible in the chair back in front of you. Turn to I John 1:9. It's located on page 1,021 in the Bibles in the chair back. And I'm having you go there because I want you to see it with your own eyes. I John, it's toward the back, in fact, if you had found II Peter, chapter 3, the next book is I John so it's really easy to find it. I John, chapter 1:9. I'll give you a moment to find it; I want you to see this. Says if, better translated is since, if or since, we confess our sins, what does it say? He is faithful and just, characteristics of God, to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Do you see what the passage is saying? That because you are a follower of Christ, since you've confessed and since you are practicing confession, he is in the process and continuation of forgiving your sins; that you do not fall under condemnation. So what would we say? Number one: I stop making excuses; number two, I confess my sins.

Number three: I receive God's forgiveness. This is the process of spiritual growth. Now a few moments ago, we were asking the question, why does God want me to confess my sin? Why does God want me to go through this practice? Why should this be built into my spiritual life? Well, let me answer that with scripture. Let me just answer that through a passage found in Colossians. You don't necessarily have to turn; it'll be on the side screens. But just listen carefully. Paul, in a monumental passage, says: And you who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh...which means you were just basically alienated from God—enemies of God...God made you alive together with him having forgiven us all our trespasses by cancelling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. In other words, its demand for punishment...this he set aside nailing it to the...what? what? the cross. Do you realize that your sins, past, present and future, are forgiven? You say, even my future sins are forgiven? Well, sure. Cause it happened at the cross. All our sins were future at the cross. Your sins are past, present, future, forgiven at the cross. You say...well then...why do I need to make a confession to God? Because confession is not about your salvation. Confession is about your spiritual growth. There's only one confession that you make that deals with your salvation. And that is when you confess Jesus Christ as your Lord, as your God. That's the one and only confession...that you...every other confession that you make deals with your spiritual growth. Do you understand that? So that when you come to God and you are making a confession of your sin you are agreeing with him that you need the grace of Christ...you need the covering of his blood, you need the cross. You receive that forgiveness and you move forward spiritually in your journey. You're not held back by that sin. So many times I see people who are just...they're just so overburdened by their sin and, yes, as I said, I think there ought to

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be a sense where emotionally we see the weight of our sin but we can't let it impede us in our relationship with Christ. We confess it for what it is. We don't make excuses about it.

We...we understand that it's our sin but we at the same time receive God's forgiveness. Some of you need to be set free. Some of you really need to understand you are free because of the cross. You will sin in the future but that sin is already covered. Confess it; understand it for what it is, make it your own, and then receive the forgiveness of God and move forward.

Now there's one other step in the process of confession. And again, this is a spiritual maturity step. Number four: I now turn from the practice of that sin. Do you know what this is called? Repentance. Repentance means we turn from our sin and we go another direction. Now let me just say as a side, let me link the two together real quickly. If you are not ready to turn from your sin, you might as well not spend the time confessing it. Because you're not ready to glorify God in that area of your life. You might as well not waste your breath confessing it until you're willing to say, "God, I want you to be glorified more than I am glorified. I want you to have this action; I'm going to turn from it and I'm going to walk in righteousness from this point forward." You see, we stop making excuses, we confess our sins, we receive God's forgiveness, and then we repent. We turn from it.

Now how do I make this practical for you? Well, I think the best...the thing that you can do is somehow, somewhere in the routine of your spiritual life and it might be in the morning when you are preparing for the day and maybe you've spent some time studying his word or spent some time praying, or maybe it's while you're working or while you're driving, maybe it's before you retire at the end of day and you go to bed. There should be a daily time when you evaluate your life. And when you look over it and you say to the Lord, was there something that I have done intentionally or unintentionally that was sinful, that was an affront to you? Was there something that I said? Was there some attitude that I carried? Was there a way that I treated somebody? What was it, God, that was an affront to you? That I might agree with you on this, own it as my own, receive it, the forgiveness that you offer, determine not to do it again and walk in the way of spiritual maturity. That is the process of growth but there's some intentional elements to that where you spend time reviewing and thinking through your life. I'll tell you what'll happen. When you do this consistently, when you do this routinely as a matter of practice, do you know what'll happen? You will grow in your relationship with God. James tells us that as you grow close to God, he grows close to you; he comes close to you. This is the basics. This is the basics of spiritual life where we say we are in a relationship with our Lord. And we're no longer afraid of him; we don't live in terror but we live in grace—the unmerited favor of our God. Even when we fail, he is quick to forgive. You harness this; you will begin walking in spiritual growth.

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