

They Confessed their Sins

I. Introduction:

- A. This evening we're going to deal with a word which is commonly emphasized in some denominations, but probably not mentioned enough among fundamental Baptists.
1. For some it is an intricate part of their doctrine of salvation.
 2. But for those whose salvation is based on grace, this Biblical precept is often ignored.
 3. Even though it is crucial for good fellowship with the Saviour.
 4. *"And the seed of Israel separated themselves from all strangers, and stood and **CONFESSED** their sins, and the **iniquities** of their fathers."*
- B. Forty-four times the words "confess," "confessed" and "confession" are found in the Bible.
1. They come from two Hebrew words and two Greek words.
 2. Two of those references are here in our text.
 3. The two Hebrew words are closely related, and a part of their root means – "to throw open one's arms."
 4. Picture a guilty man standing before his judge spreading his arms apart & exposing his heart in surrender.
 5. The Greek words are "exomologeō" and "homologeō" – both containing the Greek for "word."
 6. The idea is to "speak out" – and in "homologeō" there is the idea of "speaking out with an agreement."
 7. Agreeing with God about sin is a part of repentance.
 8. Sadly, some people are willing to confess their sins, but not to repent and renounce their sins.
 9. Some people are willing to confess their sins to a priest, but unlike the people in our scripture, they are unwilling to confess their sins to God.
- C. Those forty-four references speak about **two different kinds** of "confessions."
1. When they are rendered down to their very bones, they are admissions – acknowledgments.
 2. You might say that one is positive and one is negative.

II. Let's start with the positive.

- A. We have begun a study of our church "Statement of Faith" – the major doctrines upon which our church is built
1. There are many churches which call that statement their "**Confession of Faith**."
 2. The meaning is basically the same.
- B. A "confession" is an acknowledgment.
1. This meaning is clearly seen in **Matthew 10**.
 - a. The Lord Jesus said in **verse 32** – "*Whosoever therefore shall **CONFESS** me before men, him will I **CONFESS** also before my Father which is in heaven.*"
 - b. And in the next verse we see a contrast – "*But whosoever shall **DENY** me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in Heaven.*"
 - c. The opposite of a confession is a denial.
 2. Based on Jesus' words, have you acknowledged Christ Jesus to be your Lord and Saviour?
 3. The end result of your denial is Christ's denial of you before God the Father.
 4. And Jesus repeated this idea on several occasions.
 5. For example there is **Luke 12:8** – "*Also I say unto you, Whosoever shall **CONFESS** me before men, him shall the Son of man also **CONFESS** before the angels of God.*"
 6. This isn't a confession of sin, but a public admission that I am a servant of the King of kings.
- C. Austin slightly grazed this subject last Sunday when he referred to **Romans 10**. You remember the passage.
1. **Verse 9** – "*That if thou shalt **CONFESS** with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth **CONFESSION** is made unto salvation.*"
 2. Again, this isn't referring to confession of sin to God, but to the confession, or acknowledgment, that Jesus Christ is a person's Lord and Saviour.

3. This kind of confession is evidence – or at the very least a testimony – of a person’s salvation.
4. Not only must we confess that Jesus is the Son of God, but we must believe, know and confess that the Son of God died for my sins on the cross of Calvary.

- D. **Philippians** takes this same word in a slightly different direction, but it still refers to an acknowledgment.
1. The Son of God became a man – He became incarnate – and obedient unto death – *“even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: a. That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; b. And that every tongue should **CONFESS** that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”*
 2. Every single human being – atheist to Hindu and Muslim – everyone will one day confess and acknowledge that Christ Jesus is the Son of God and the Judge of Heaven and Earth.
 3. One day the unbeliever will acknowledge that he blew it by not surrendering to the Christ the Saviour.
- E. But this is not how Nehemiah was using this word here in his 9th chapter.

III. The repenting people of Israel were confessing their sins before God.

- A. It was still an acknowledgment, but it wasn’t a positive declaration of faith in God.
1. It was a negative declaration that they and their fathers had sinned against the Lord.
 - a. And it didn’t stop with a weak and useless *“Oh, I did it and got caught.”*
 - b. This confession was a part of their whole-hearted repentance before the omniscient and holy God.
 2. *“Now in the twenty and fourth day of this month the children of Israel were assembled with fasting, and with sackclothes, and earth upon them. a. And the seed of Israel separated themselves from all strangers, and stood and **CONFESSED** their sins, and the iniquities of their fathers. b. And they stood up in their place, and read in the book of the law of the LORD their God one fourth part of the day; and another fourth part they **CONFESSED**, and worshipped the LORD their God.”*
 3. Keep in mind that these services – and this spiritual surrender – had been going on for over 3 weeks.
 4. This was genuine repentance and these people were digging deep into their hearts and into their history.
 5. Can we even imagine what it was to confess sins for 3 or 4 hours?
 6. Here are grounds for unprecedented revival.
- B. Was that in contrast to the confession of Achan, the sinner of Jericho?
1. We read, *“And Joshua said unto Achan, My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the LORD God of Israel, and make **CONFESSION** unto him; and tell me now what thou hast done; hide it not from me. a. And Achan answered Joshua, and said, Indeed I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done. b. And Joshua, and all Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah, and the silver, and the garment, and the wedge of gold, and his sons, and his daughters, and his oxen, and his asses, and his sheep, and his tent, and all that he had: and they brought them unto the valley of Achor. c. And Joshua said, Why hast thou troubled us? the LORD shall trouble thee this day. And all Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire, after they had stoned them with stones.”*
 2. I may be wrong, but Achan just might be an illustration of a man with his hand caught in the cookie jar, confessing his sin because there was no alternative.
 - a. What do you think of the confession of Achan? Was it genuine?
 - b. Was he repentant? Was he forgiven and saved? I really don’t know.
 3. I would like to believe that he was fully repentant, but he might be only a picture of empty words.
 4. God’s commands about confession involve the heart and they involve faith.

- C. In studying this word throughout the Old Testament I saw a pattern.
1. For example, in **Leviticus 5:5**, after listing a number of different sins, God said, *“And it shall be, when he shall be guilty in one of these things, that he shall **CONFESS** that he hath sinned in that thing: and he shall bring his trespass offering unto the Lord for his sin... and the priest shall make an atonement for him as touching his sin.”*
 - a. In **Leviticus 5** we see – sin – confession – sacrifice – and atonement.
 - b. We see confession being a part of repentance.
 2. Later in **Leviticus 26:40** – God says, *“If they shall **CONFESS** their iniquity, and the iniquity of their fathers, with their trespass which they trespassed against me, and that also they have walked contrary unto me.. Then will I remember my covenant... “*
 3. In this case the pattern is – sin – confession – and the application of God's gracious covenant.
- D. *“In the first year of Darius, the son of Ahasuerus... king over the realm of the Chaldeans.”* after Daniel had been studying his Bible, he was confronted with Jeremiah's prophecy that after 70 years of captivity Judah would return home.
1. He wanted to know more, so in **Daniel 9:3** – *“I set my face unto the Lord God to seek by prayer and supplications with fasting, and sackcloth and ashes.*
 2. *And I prayed unto the LORD my God, & made my **CONFESSION**, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments...”*
 3. Then later in the chapter, *“whiles I was speaking, and praying, and **CONFESSING** my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the LORD my God...”* Gabriel arrived with answers to his questions.
 4. In this case we learn that before we can understand the things of God, we need to acknowledge and confess what we know to be true of ourselves – we are sinners.
 5. Here we see – sin – confession – gracious revelation.
- E. In the New Testament we are told that John the Baptist would immerse only those who were willing to confess their sins.
1. Since John was not omniscient, he wasn't able to accurately read people's hearts.
 2. There may have been religious people coming down from Jerusalem who wanted to be able to say that they had identified with John in baptism.
 3. But he wanted nothing to do with hypocrites.
 4. The process was not perfect, but if those people were willing to confess their sins, giving some evidence of repentance, John was willing to immerse them.
- F. Another important New Testament verse in regard to this subject is **1 John 1:9**.
1. It is important because it reminds the Christian that he needs to live in an attitude of repentance and recognition of sin.
 2. *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”*
 3. If we want the blessings of fellowship with God, answered prayer, power to serve the Lord and the ability to understand the word of God, we need to learn to confess our sins before Him.
- G. Two of the great scriptures using this word come to us from **Psalms 32:5** and **Proverbs 28:13**.
1. They don't need any comment from me.
 2. David said, *“I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will **CONFESS** my transgressions unto the LORD – and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.”*
 3. Would he have enjoyed God's forgiveness, if he had not acknowledged his sin?
 4. Then David's son added, *“He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.”*

5. And again, *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”*

IV. Conclusion:

- A. What is confession? Throughout the Bible, in both original languages, the word speaks of the admission and acknowledgment of something.
 1. Here in **Nehemiah** it involves an admission of sin.
 2. The people were throwing open their arms in virtual surrender to the Lord.
 3. From the Word of God, they had been learning about their transgressions of God’s law, and the Holy Spirit was bringing their sins and the sins of their fathers before them.
 4. They were confessing their sins.

- B. For the person being saved from the guilt of his sins, not only is that kind of confession necessary, but there is also the added necessity of acknowledging the Christ Jesus as his personal Lord and Saviour.
 1. *“That if thou shalt **CONFESS** with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.*
 2. *For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth **CONFESSION** is made unto salvation.”*

- C. For the person who is a child of God, confession of sin is a part of maintaining proper fellowship with the Lord.

- D. And with that I will close with one other reference.
 1. The last time the word *“confess”* is used in the Bible, it come from the lips of the Lord Jesus.
 2. **Revelation 3:5** – *“He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but **I WILL CONFESS** his name before my Father, and before his angels.”*
 3. Remember **verse 32** from **Matthew 10** – *“Whosoever therefore shall **CONFESS** me before men, him will I **CONFESS** also before my Father which is in heaven.”*