

TRUTH

“. . . Your word is truth” (John 17:17)

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CONFESSING SINS VERSUS REPENTING OF SINS

At first glance, perhaps the title above seems confusing. After all, is not confessing sin synonymous with repentance? The answer to that question is both “yes” and “no.” While repentance, in many cases, does involve confession of sin, it is incorrect to equate these two concepts; understanding the difference in them is the focus of this article.

We would do well first to define the terms under consideration. When studying the Bible terms “confess” and “repent,” what do we find?

- The Greek word rendered “confess” (or some form of the word) is *homologeō*, meaning “to say the same thing as another, i.e. to agree with, assent” (*Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*). To confess sin means one admits the truth of the accusation; it is to speak the same as God, who calls such “sin.”
- Repentance in the New Testament is translated from three separate Greek words. The word *metamelomai* simply means to regret or change one’s mind; it is distinguished in New Testament usage from the other two words. The second word is *metanoēō* and means to rethink or reconsider (carrying the idea of feeling moral compunction). The third word is *metanoia*, meaning a change of mind that results in a practical reformation of one’s life (definitions are paraphrased from Thayer’s lexicon).

Putting the above thoughts together, confession is merely an acknowledgement of one’s actions and may or may not be conjoined with regret and reformation, while biblical repentance (*metanoēō* and *metanoia*) is regret that causes a change of mind and leads to a reformation of one’s life and conduct. **Mere confession is not equal to biblical repentance.**

A brief case study of two Bible characters helps to see the difference in confession of sin and repentance of sin. Simon Peter and Judas Iscariot were both apostles of Jesus (Matthew 10:1-4), and both believed and obeyed Jesus for some time, teaching and working miracles in Jesus’ name (Matthew 10:5-8; Mark 6:13). Both apostles also faltered, as Judas betrayed Jesus (Matthew 26:47-50) and Peter denied Jesus (Matthew 26:69-75). Both of these men had opportunity to

repent and be restored, but this is where their similarities end. While Peter was restored, Judas was ruined. Judas “*was remorseful and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, ‘I have sinned by betraying innocent blood’*” (Matthew 27:3,4). He then “*departed, and went and hanged himself*” (Matthew 27:5), choosing to “*go to his own place*” (Acts 1:25 – literally, “to the place of his own choosing”). Peter, on the other hand, having “*wept bitterly*” (Matthew 26:75) after denying the Lord, returned to Jesus and was restored (John 21:15-19). The difference in these two disciples of Jesus is that one **repented**, while the other merely **reported**; such is the difference in merely confessing sins versus biblical repentance.

Repentance is more than just sorrow over sin and/or confessing sin(s). A thief, when caught, might confess, “Yeah, I did it!” yet have zero regret. Judas confessed his sin and was sorrowful, but he did not take the necessary **action** to repent and be restored to faithful service. Even now, multitudes are sorrowful over their sin, but at the same time, they are unwilling to surrender their will to the Savior’s in repentance to **do what they need to do** in order to be right in God’s sight. No wonder 2 Corinthians 7:10 says, “*For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death*” (emphasis added is mine, ccd).

Though repentance involves regret/sorrow over sin (2 Corinthians 7:10), as well as confession of sin (1 John 1:9), it also involves forsaking sin, as seen in Jesus’ statement that the people of Nineveh “*repented at the preaching of Jonah*” (Matthew 12:41), which involved their ceasing from sin (compare Jonah 3:5-10). Repentance involves “*fruits worthy of repentance*” (Matthew 3:8). Repentance means dying to sin and self and being raised up with Christ to “*walk in newness of life*” (Romans 6:3,4).

The difference between confessing sins and repenting of sins is often the difference between “*godly sorrow*” and “*the sorrow of the world.*” And, it is still true that the God of heaven “*commands all men everywhere to repent*” (Acts 17:30)!

-- Chad Dollahite

LESSONS FROM THE LIFE OF KING MANASSEH

Manasseh may not be the first king on the tip of your tongue when you think of the kings of the Northern Kingdom (Israel) and Southern Kingdom (Judah). In fact, if you hear the name Manasseh, your first thought might be to think of the son of Joseph named Manasseh. However, the topic for our discussion will be the man who served as the thirteenth king in the Southern Kingdom of Judah. The Bible records the details for us in 2 Kings 21:1-18 and 2 Chronicles 33:1-20.

He carried the double distinction of having the longest reign of any king in both kingdoms, but also having the worst reign of any king in Judah's history. 2 Kings 21:1 records for us that Manasseh was only twelve years old when he became king! Although he more than likely had a group of advisors who were helping him lead, most of us cannot fathom a person that young serving as king.

As you read both accounts of his life, you will see that it could be summed up in the phrase, “. . . *he did evil in the sight of the Lord . . .*” (2 Kings 21:2). There is very little good that could be said about Manasseh in the majority of the text. When it came to his leadership of the children of Israel, “. . . *Manasseh seduced them to do more evil than the nations whom the Lord had destroyed before the children of Israel*” (2 Kings 21:9). He undid all of the good things that his father, Hezekiah, had done before him.

You have to read the account in 2 Chronicles to see that eventually God punished Manasseh by having the Babylonian army carry him away captive to Babylon (2 Chronicles 33:11). This caused him to rethink his evil choices and pray to God. God heard him and brought him back to Jerusalem, where Manasseh went on to make positive changes before his death. There are many lessons we could learn from the up-and-down life of Manasseh. Let us examine just a few in the space we have left.

1. We see in Manasseh the power of just one person. We often hear the preacher preach about the power of just one person to make a positive difference in the life of others. If each person can teach just one soul about Christ, the effect can carry on and on. However, while Manasseh influenced the people, it was in a negative sense. The Bible says that they paid no attention to God (2 Kings 21:9) and would not listen to Him (2 Chronicles 33:10). We need to realize that even though we are one person, we can have an effect on people. Let us make sure it is a positive one.

2. Sin often takes us farther away from God than we ever can imagine. Manasseh had a good father who obeyed God (2 Kings 18:3). It would seem likely from this positive example that Manasseh did understand what it meant to follow God. However, the spiral of sin carried him down and away from God. He rebuilt altars his father had destroyed, he built altars in the house of the Lord, and he even offered his son as a child sacrifice (2 Kings 21:3-6). He did all of this (and probably more) until the Bible says that he, “. . . *acted more wickedly than all the Amorites who were before him . . .*” (2 Kings 21:11). We must be careful to avoid sin because once we begin to turn away from God, it can create a cycle that takes us further and further away from God.

3. Manasseh helps us understand that no matter how far away we are from God, if we are still living, we can turn to him. Manasseh certainly was the most vile king in the Southern Kingdom. Yet he is given an opportunity to change. Many people today can feel as if they are beyond help and have gone too far in sin to be saved. God's desire is that all men come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9). Paul even writes to Christians and reminds them that they had committed some awful sins, yet they were washed, sanctified, and justified by God (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). As long as there is breath in your lungs and blood in your body, you can change.

4. Before a person can truly change his life and begin serving God, he must have humility. This is an attitude that has always been important. We see that as Manasseh implored God, he, “. . . *humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers*” (2 Chronicles 33:12). Commonly when we discuss what a person must do to be saved under the new covenant, we do not list humility as a requirement. However, we see all throughout the Scriptures that humility needs to be at the heart of any true repentance. As James encourages Christians, “*Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up*” (James 4:10).

Perhaps the worst thing that can be said about Manasseh is that he is the one who caused Judah to be taken into captivity (Jeremiah 15:4). He may have changed his life, but the damage was already done. We might be bad at baking or be a messy person. Those may be negative characteristics to possess. But may no person be able to say that we had a hand in persuading people to do evil and not follow God. All of these are lessons to learn from the life of Manasseh.

-- Joel Danley

Jesus — the True Vine

The night before Jesus went to the cross, He told His apostles, *“I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser”* (John 15:1). In that same setting, He also said, *“I am the vine, you are the branches”* (15:5).

Palestine had vineyards galore in Jesus’ day. Many people saw vines every single day. When the Christ told His disciples that He is “the true vine,” what was He saying about Himself? He was affirming that He is the Source and Sustainer of spiritual life.

If there is no vine, there are no grapes . . . No vine, no fruit. Grapes/fruits are dependent on the vine for their nutrition and survival. So it is with the followers of the Christ: we depend on Him. He told the apostles, *“ . . . for without Me, you can do nothing”* (15:5).

Bearing fruit is a key theme of John 15:1-8. In this passage, fruit/bearing fruit is mentioned over and over. Jesus wants us to know that if we are going to be fruitful as a person, that is, in our spiritual lives, that can happen only if we depend on Him.

On the one hand, Jesus made it plain that one who does not bear fruit cannot please Him. *“Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away . . . If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned”* (15:2,6). So, not bearing fruit is not an option!

In the words of Jesus, what is the key to bearing fruit? Answer: abide in Him. *“Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me”* (15:4). Why is it essential to abide in Him? Because He is the True Vine, the source of life.

How does a disciple of Jesus abide in Him? After speaking about abiding in Him to bear fruit, Jesus went on to speak about abiding in His love: *“ . . . abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love”* (15:9,10). What did Jesus do in order to abide in His Father’s love? He kept the Father’s commands. What must we do to abide in Jesus’ love? Keep His commands. As our Lord said, true disciples abide in His word (8:31).

In summary, we abide in Jesus when we abide in His love, and we abide in His love when we abide in His word. We embrace *Him*, but we also embrace His *teaching*. We imitate Him and submit to His will. This is how we bear much fruit for His glory (15:8,16).

Jesus wants us to bear *more* fruit and *much* fruit (15:2,8). If you and I bear spiritual fruit, glory does not go to the branch or fruit, but to the True Vine!

-- Roger D. Campbell

Lessons from 1 John 4:17-21

If the Bible says something only one time, it is still a legitimate, reliable statement. Why? Because it came from the Lord. When we study the Scriptures, we see that our great God also uses repetition in order to emphasize certain matters.

In the book of First John, God’s instruction about love is presented over and over. So, we are not surprised that the focus of our text, 1 John 4:17-21, once again is on love. Here are five facts about love that are set forth in this section:

Love produces boldness – *“Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world”* (4:17). When we properly love God and our fellow man, we know that we are acting in harmony with the Scriptures. This mature love gives us unwavering confidence now and as we contemplate the judgment to come. It is boldness, not arrogance.

Perfect love casts out fear – *“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment”* (4:18). In the immediate context, John writes about (1) preparation for judgment day, (2) loving one another, and (3) loving God. In all of these, when we have mature love, we are not fearful. We are not fearful to face the final judgment, we are not afraid to open our hearts to love one another, and we are not afraid to show love for God by obeying Him, regardless of any consequences we might have to face. If we are fearful, God plainly says, *“But he who fears has not been made perfect in love”* (4:18).

Loving God is the proper response to His love for us – *“We love Him because He first loved us”* (4:19). There is no greater motivation for loving our Creator than the knowledge that He has shown and continues to show amazing love for us. Gratitude for what His love has done for mankind ought to move every single person to love Him in return!

One who claims to love God but does not love his brother in Jesus is not telling the truth – *“If someone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?”* (4:20). Bottom line: loving my brethren is part of my service to God and without it, I cannot please Him.

God commands those who love Him to love their brethren also – God, the Voice of authority says, *“And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also”* (4:21). It is the Lord’s will that His children love one another. Let us embrace this idea and practice it with joy.

-- Roger D. Campbell

THE CHALLENGE TO KEEP FIRST THINGS FIRST IN OUR BUSY LIVES

Many folks look at their lives as, “Every day is busy, busy, busy.” Does that describe your life? Do you feel like your schedule is full and overflowing?

Some people have work-related busyness. Their job is demanding, they may be consumed with work, and at times they feel overwhelmed. The busyness of others is family-oriented. Every family member has a packed schedule and it feels like there is no time to breathe. Good activities are going on, but it is exhausting. Other individuals invest an enormous amount of time in their hobbies or on the internet.

Students are busy. Those in the work force are busy. Retired people often stay busy. A married couple with no kids living with them may have a busy schedule. A married couple with three teenagers have a whole different level of “full” calendar to navigate!

People are “wired” differently. Some are comfortable with no set schedule, just going with the flow and relaxing along the way as much as possible. The personality of others causes them to feel compelled to stay busy doing something.

We have devices that should be able to save us time, and yet, in many cases, we feel like we have less free time than we have ever had, which translates as “super busy.” In the midst our busyness, it can be challenging for a child of God to keep first things first.

What are some Bible instructions or principles that touch on matters related to busyness? In the Lord’s Parable of the Sower, this is how He explained what happens with thorny soil. With such folks, “. . . *the cares of this world, the deceitfulness or riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful*” (Mark 4:18). Common, even wholesome, affairs of life can strangle a follower of Jesus and cause him to be unfruitful.

The Bible teaches that a loyal soldier does not allow himself to become entangled with the affairs of this life (2 Timothy 2:3,4). That is true for earthly soldiers serving their nation, and it is equally true for those who are in the Lord’s army.

Each member of the Lord’s church is admonished, “*Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth*” (Colossians 3:2). We must have our hearts set on spiritual affairs and not allow earthly things, though some of them are extremely important, to distract us. We must not allow earthly busyness to take over our thoughts, plans, and activities.

According to Hebrews 12:1, in order to run with endurance the race that is set before us, we need to lay aside every weight and any sin which might ensnare us. A busy schedule can wear us down and hinder us from running our race with our highest level of energy

and focus.

How does the ill effect of busyness show itself in the life of a Christian? What are some consequences of being too busy that can creep into our lives?

- Little time spent studying the Bible – A disciple of Jesus who falls into this trap cannot continue to grow properly (1 Peter 2:2).
- Little time spent praying – The apostle Paul was an extremely busy person, but he made time to pray. God wants each of us to be vigilant in prayer, too (Colossians 4:2). It is up to us to make it happen!
- Little time spent encouraging, building up, and serving other Christians – Extreme busyness in life can cause a disconnect between us and other saints. God wants us to have an ongoing connection with our brothers and sisters (Hebrews 3:13). We need them and they need us, despite everyone’s busyness.
- Failure to be a part of assemblies and Bible classes of the church – The Lord wants us to put His Cause first (Matthew 6:33). If I am too busy to assemble and study with my brethren, I am *too busy*, period.
- In general, little involvement in spiritual activities – “I am just *so* busy with work now.” “It is crazy how much our family has going on now.” That may be true, but our Lord still wants us to put Him first!

What can we do to prevent busyness from overtaking our lives and hindering our spiritual growth? First, I need to remind myself that the most important thing in my life is to serve and please the Lord, then go to heaven when this life is over. That is *far more important* than anything else in my life.

Second, if I see busyness creeping (or barreling) into my life, I could start keeping a record of how much time I invest in different activities. This is more than an information-gathering task. There also needs to be self-evaluation. Once I collect and analyze the data, I then need to be ready to make adjustments in my choices and schedule, if such changes are needed to protect my service to my risen Lord.

Third, we could appeal to a mature Christian for whom we have great respect to give us their honest appraisal of our situation. Questions for them: Am I *too* busy, or is my busy life just the way it is going to be for most of us in many modern-day societies? Am I in any way neglecting what is most important?

Beware lest what some have dubbed an “everydayathon” destroy your soul. Think about it.

-- Roger D. Campbell

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