

CONCERNING CONFESSION

By Danny Boggs

It's not easy to admit when we are wrong. But if we can get comfortable with confessing our sins to God, James 5:16 might still unnerve us: "Confess your sins to one another . . ." When should you confess your sins to other people?

If people know you have sinned against them, confessing your sin to them is the right thing to do. Jesus said so in Matthew 5:23-24. Here someone knows that you have done something sinful to him, and you know that he feels that way. What should you do? Admit that you have done it and seek forgiveness from him. God doesn't even want your worship until you try your best to work it out.

In Matthew 18:15-17 Jesus painted a scenario that begins with one person wronging another. Imagine yourself being the wrongdoer. If your brother tells you your fault, what should you do? Confess! If you won't do it, Jesus wants him to bring another person or two. What should you do? It shouldn't have gotten to that point. But if it does, confess! Never let yourself stay on the wrong end of this situation.

Some people try to pantomime the Bible's requirements by coming in front of the whole church and admitting to an unspecified sin against

an unnamed person instead of owning up to it personally with the one who was wronged. Still others will go to the other person and say something like, "If I have sinned . . . I am sorry." Neither measures up to the Biblical description of confession.

Even if your sin was not aimed at people, confessing to them can be the right thing to do. The wanderer in James 5:19-20 may be slighting God specifically and fellow Christians only collaterally. When concerned brethren help you come to your senses about your broken relationship with God, you'll realize how you broke it with your brethren, too. You'll want to confess your sin to them.

Should you ever confess your sins to people who don't know about them? If people are being hurt unawares or will eventually be hurt by what you have done, they need to hear it from you. We can put fellow Christians into more difficult situations by leaving them in the dark. What if someone who is not a Christian tells one of your fellow Christians about your sin before you do? You would want your brother or sister to be able to tell that person about your repentance and God's forgiveness

One purpose of confession is to

make sure that absolutely everyone who knows about the sin knows about the repentance. This can call for confession to the whole church. It helps with the harm done by your influence. It helps to keep other people from thinking, "Well, if she can get away with it, I can get away with it." Your sin was bad enough. If it becomes the springboard for someone else's sin, it's even worse. (Matthew 18:6.)

Some Christians try to manage their sin. It doesn't work. Repentance is the need, but it's hard. "Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another." Why? "That you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working." (James 5:16.) Such confession gives a caring Christian the opportunity to help bear a burden. (Galatians 6:1-2.) By confessing specific sins to fellow Christians, you can strengthen your will to do right. The one who hears the confession might say, "I've been there. Here's something the Bible says that can help. Here's what I did about it. Let's tackle it together."

Confess your sins to the people they hurt and to the people who will be helped.

— Neosho, MO

CHRISTIANS AND SANCTIFICATION

By Milton Smith

The word "sanctification" means simply "set apart for holy use." We should take note that the use of an object (or a life) is what is changed. Obedience to God's law is necessary to sanctification, and sanctification itself is necessary to serving God. Sanctification was regularly emphasized and taught in the Old Testament. For example, Jehovah set the Sabbath day apart as holy for His people. Moses wrote in Deuteronomy 5:15, "Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out from there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the Lord your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day." (Deuteronomy 5:15.) This was a special day set apart by God to be kept holy by the children of Israel. Other examples of sanctification in the

Old Testament involved such things as the tabernacle, certain vessels, the priesthood, etc.

We also have clear examples of sanctification in the New Testament. Christ, Himself, was sanctified. (John 10:36; 17:19.) The apostles were sanctified by God. (John 17:15-17.) In other words, these men specially called by Christ were "set apart for holy use" in a special way for a particular work. Paul tells us in Ephesians 5:25-27 that the church is sanctified by God. This means that all Christians are set apart for holy use by God. But we might wonder; how can mere human beings be sanctified? Of course, our sanctification would be quite different from the sanctification of Jesus Christ.

Today, Christians are sanctified by obedience to the truth and by being washed free of the guilt of sin through

the blood of Christ. Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 6:11 that God's children have been washed, sanctified, and justified. Peter tells us in 1 Peter 1:2 that we are "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ . . ." Being sanctified by God should send a very clear message to God's people: we should show dramatic change in behavior and life once we are set apart for God's service! When we are born again into the family of God, we are expected to walk "worthy of this calling." (2 Thessalonians 1:11.)

Today, if you are a Christian, walk and live like you are somebody special - because you are!

— Tulsa, OK

Old Paths

Vol. 47, No. 7 July 2023

"ask for the old paths" (Jer. 6:16)

URGENT AND IMMEDIATE!
Due to ongoing theft of our mail
at the church building,
please begin directing all
correspondence/contributions for
OLD PATHS to my home
address: 830 W. Fargo Drive,
Broken Arrow, OK 74012.
Thank you for your ongoing
and much-needed support!

"I'LL GO AS FAR AS I CAN"

By Bobby Key

The preacher of the gospel should not be overcome with material things. He must not lose sight of spiritual values. It is unwise to turn aside after things that perish while neglecting the great things that will outlive him.

One is a hireling who preaches simply for what he can get out of it from a financial standpoint. I am afraid for the preacher who is forever seeking better and more comfortable quarters, bigger and better churches, and bigger and better salaries.

It is true that the laborer is worthy of his hire, but the servant of the crucified Master ought not to be a seeker after luxury.

Preachers of today have it so much better than those of yesterday. Over a century ago, brother James A. Harding said to a young man, a student in the old Potter Bible School in Bowling Green, Kentucky, "Frank, I want you to hitch up the carriage and drive me to the depot. I must leave for a Meeting." When this young man stopped in front of the Harding home a little later, Mrs. Harding was inquiring how her husband expected to buy a ticket without money. That good servant was heard to reply, "I'll go as far as I can." The trip into Bowling Green was made without further word of ticket or money.

Soon after entering the little city, a man waved for the carriage to stop, explaining that for some time he had desired to have fellowship with Harding in spreading the gospel of Christ, and handed him a twenty dollar bill. At the depot he purchased his ticket, turned to Frank, and placing every bit of the change in his hand, instructed that it be given to his wife.

Harding then boarded the train and continued his journey to some favored place to tell of Him who said, "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you." (Matthew 6:33.)

INSTANT PLEASURE OR LASTING TREASURE?

By Danny Tunnell

Have you ever heard someone say, "I don't want to wait, I want it now!?" That same sentiment is found in the Bible. Esau sold his birthright for some stew. He was hungry and he had to have it now! (Genesis 25:29-34.)

King David saw a beautiful woman taking a bath. He thought, "I want her now!" Even though she was another man's wife, David had to have her now! (2 Samuel 11:1-5.) Later, David confessed his sin and repented, but even sin that is forgiven can have negative consequences in this life.

David's actions may have influenced his son Absalom. He felt the same way about the throne that David felt about taking Bathsheba. Absalom said, in effect, "I don't want to wait for my father to die, so I can then have a chance of inheriting the throne. I want to be king now!" So he led a rebellion against his father. (2 Samuel 15.)

The prodigal son asked for his inheritance. "I want it now!" He got what he wanted, and wasted it all in riotous living. (Luke 15:11-13.)

The things written in the Bible were written for our learning. (Romans 15:4.)

Multitudes today seek instant pleasure instead of true happiness. If we do things God's way, then Psalms 16:11 becomes our reality. In God's presence is fullness of joy; at His right hand are pleasures forevermore. Not just pleasures that last for a moment, but forever!

Some seek instant wealth instead of true wealth. It's okay to have material wealth, if we get it honestly. But some want it badly, and they want it now! They are willing to lie, steal, and cheat to get it. The lay up treasures on earth, and none in heaven. (Matthew 6:19,20.)

Some want "instant knowledge" of God and His word without spending the time needed to acquire it. Jesus said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God." (Matthew 4:4.) Psalm 1:2 talks about delighting in the law of the Lord and meditating on it day and night. Joshua 1:8 says, "This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth; but you shall meditate therein day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written therein; for then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success."

Things of lasting value take time and effort to acquire.

Jesus said, "Abide in Me, and I in you." (John 15:4.) "Abide in Me" means to live in Him, as He lives in us. It is not to just visit with Jesus on Sundays for a little while. To abide in Jesus is to live with Jesus, totally immersed in Jesus and His word daily.

To "walk in faith" (2 Corinthians 5:7) is not something we do for a couple of hours on Sunday. Faith is living trust in a living God. It's relationship and fellowship. It's not just a choice you make on Sunday, as important as that is, but is a choice you make every day.

— Miami, OK

THOUGHTS ON THINKING

By Dalton Key

Quick! What are you thinking about this very instant?

Those experts who spend their days investigating matters of the mind have estimated that fifty-thousand thoughts pass through the human brain each day.

You just might be a thinker after all!

Sir Isaac Newton was once asked how he had discovered the law of gravity. "By thinking about it," he replied.

In a sense, I suppose we are what we eat; in some fashion, we may be said to be what we wear; but in truth, the most accurate appraisal of the human condition is this: we are what we think.

In the inspired words of Solomon's wisdom, "As he thinks in his heart, so is he." (Proverbs 23:7.) And again, "Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." (Proverbs 4:23.)

What we think determines our course of conduct, our strength of character, and yes, even the quality of our speech. Jesus taught, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things." (Matthew 12:34,35.) You need to clean up your language? You desire that your words be more encouraging and less negative? Go to work on your thoughts!

Is it any wonder why the apostle Paul exhorts us to think on things true and honest and just and pure and lovely; things virtuous, praiseworthy, and of good report? (Philippians 4:8.) He was simply paying tribute to an obvious truth which so many of us too-often forget: we are what we think!

Now what were you thinking about?

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God . . . Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion." (Romans 12:1,2,16.)

EDITORIAL . . .

OF TIME AND LIFE

By Dalton Key

Time is fundamental to this life, so much so that it has been described by many physicists as life's fourth dimension. Benjamin Franklin had a less scientific take on the matter when he sagely advised, "Dost thou love life? Then do not squander time, for that is the stuff life is made of."

How could we not agree? Is not life in the flesh composed, comprised of increments of time?

Enough wasted time amounts to a wasted life. Someone has written, "Time and opportunities go hand in hand. Lost wealth may be replaced by industry, lost knowledge by study, lost health by temperance, but lost time is gone forever. Don't kill time . . . it has no resurrection."

What really counts is not the number of hours we put in, but rather what we put into those hours! Many a slothful soul has worked twice as long to do one-half the work a more diligent worker will accomplish in short order.

That said, our concern should not be with the wasted hours and neglected opportunities of the past; we should rather focus our attention upon the here and now, upon what we should be doing and could be doing today.

Scripture places a hefty premium on the present. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." (2 Corinthians 6:2.) "But exhort one another daily, while it is called today, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." (Hebrews 3:13.) "Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time." (Colossians 4:5.)

We must resolve to begin living each day to the fullest, as our days of flesh are by no means unlimited. "So teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom." (Psalm 90:12.) We must do all we can, with all we have, for as long as we are able.

"Live life, then, with a due sense of responsibility, not as men who do not know the meaning and purpose of life but as those who do. Make the best use of your time, despite all the difficulties of these days." (Ephesians 5:15,16, Phillips.)

**LET'S ALL DO WHAT WE CAN!**

By Richard Dent

In the gospel account of Mark, we read about a man who was a paralytic. (Mark 2:3-12.) This man was unable to come to Jesus by himself so he required assistance from others. Fortunately, he had some friends who were able to help him. The Bible attests to this man's faith and determination to see Jesus. His friends picked up the bed on which he was lying and carried him to the house. Not just one or two men could have brought the paralytic to Jesus. It took all four friends carrying their corner to get the job done.

But wait! The story becomes even more intriguing as we find that there were so many people in the house that the four men could not get their stricken friend inside. In Mark 2:4, we find that his friends lifted the paralytic, bed and all, to the top of the roof of the house and then lowered him into the room where Jesus was preaching.

Jesus was impressed with the men's faith and said to the paralytic, "Sons, your sins are forgiven you." (Mark 2:5.) What a great story of faith and persistence! The man immediately arose and took up his bed as Jesus directed him to do and went out from the presence of them all. Then they glorified God saying, "We never saw anything like this before." (Mark 2:11-12.)

Friend, do you know that there are many in any given community who will never find the truth or hear the words of Jesus about salvation without our help? If any of those four friends had dropped his corner of the bed, the paralytic man could not have found Jesus. As a Christian, have you dropped your corner or are you carrying it to the best of your ability to serve in the vineyard of our Lord?

Every member is need to shoulder

the responsibility for helping the Lord's work progress as it should. We need Bible School teachers. We need parents that set a faithful example for their children to follow. We need men who will dependably serve in a number of ways such as leading public prayers or leading songs in worship. We need men who will aspire to serve as elders and deacons in the Lord's work. Let us all do our best to carry our corner.

— Liberal, KS

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." (1 Corinthians 15:58.)

"Whatever your hands finds to do, do it with your might." (Ecclesiastes 9:10.)

Take A Chill Pill!

By Joe Slater

A crow spied a big tube of bologna on the ground. He greedily consumed the entire chub. Then he rested on the pump handle of an old well. A few minutes later he tried to fly away. As he removed his weight, the pump handle quickly sprang up and hit him. The crow fell dead to the ground. The moral of the story: Don't fly off the handle when you're full of baloney!

Six Old Testament passages by five different authors affirm that God is "slow to anger." Does this mean God is never angry? By no means! Numerous texts in both testaments speak of God's wrath. But God doesn't "fly off the handle." Ask the money changers in the Temple if Jesus ever became angry! But again, Jesus wasn't a hothead.

Are you soon angry? Do you need to "take a chill pill"? That's not to say your anger is never justified, but if God is slow to anger, shouldn't you imitate Him?

Some think explosive anger shows

how tough they are. Quite the opposite, it demonstrates weakness. "He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city." (Proverbs 16:32.) "Outbursts of wrath" are works of the flesh while "self-control" manifests the fruit of the Spirit. (Galatians 5:20,23.)

In his matchless treatment of love, Paul wrote that love "is not (easily) provoked." (1 Corinthians 13:5.) We have borrowed his word for provoked – "paroxysm" (a sudden, violent expression of emotion).

Christian love requires being slow to anger.

Whether you're at home, at school, at work, at church, or somewhere else, be slow to anger. You'll be better for it because you'll be like God

— Justin, TX

"Be angry, and do not sin: do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil . . . Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you,

with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you." (Ephesians 4:26-27,31-32.)

Old Paths

830 W. Fargo Drive,
Broken Arrow, OK. 74012

On a nonprofit basis.
Published monthly and
supported by Churches of Christ
and individuals.

Dalton Key Editor

"Subscription Free;

Prayers Requested;

Contributions Appreciated."