

Prayer and confession of sin

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One of the most important conditions of intercession is that the intercessor's life should be pure. He must confess all conscious sin and break away from it. Prayer is hindered by any form of sin. It is important that we approach God with a pure heart. In this chapter there is a list of sins mentioned in Scripture. Look at the list prayerfully and ask the Holy Spirit to make you sensitive to the sins in your life that you have to confess before the Lord. It is also important to confess all sins from your past completely. Divide your life into pre-school, primary school, high school, post-school, your married life, etc., and ask the Holy Spirit to make you aware of any sin committed during those periods that you have not already confessed. Draw up a list of these sins and confess them before the Lord one by one. If the Lord leads you in such a way, you can pray about these sins with another Christian in order to bring these things to the light with someone else (Jas.5:16).

Conversion is used in two different ways in the Bible. In the first place, conversion means that someone accepts Jesus Christ as his Redeemer and turns to God. Secondly, the Bible speaks about the conversion of the believer which can be classified as continuous conversion. The person who accepts Jesus as Deliverer has to confess all his sins as the Holy Spirit convicts and guides him. The believer confesses only sin he has not yet confessed before the Lord, e.g. things that happened today or yesterday. It is possible that the Holy Spirit can convict a believer of a sin from the past that has not been confessed before.

The following principles can be used for the confession of sins:

Sin committed between you and the Lord alone, is confessed between you and the Lord alone.

If you have sinned against somebody else, you have to confess it to that person, ask his/her forgiveness and confess it to the Lord as well.

Restitution should be made where you have done someone harm, for instance by stealing from someone, or hostility between you and someone else. In other words you must set the record straight, return the stolen goods, and confess your share in the matter.

Sin committed against a group should be confessed before the group and also before the Lord.

Confession should be made carefully so that further injustice is not done. For instance, it is foolish to confess bad thoughts about someone to that person. That way you will do more damage than good. The purpose of confession is to bring forth healing and not further separation. If someone knows that you have gossiped about him, confess it. If he does not know about it, do not tell him about it because it only causes harm. If the Lord leads you, pray with another trustworthy believer about the matter.

Martin Luther said that when I confess my sin before the Lord, it brings forgiveness, but if I confess it to another believer, it brings forth deliverance from that sin. Jas.5:16 says that we must confess our sins to each other. Confession to another believer is strongly recommended, but don't become legalistic about it.

If you do not experience any deliverance when you confess your sins before the Lord, pray with another believer about it. It would be advisable though, to pray with a spiritual leader in the case of sensitive sins (for instance sexual sins).

Beware of introspection, i.e. always looking for sin in your life. It is the task of the Holy Spirit to convict us of sin. It says in Jn.16:8: "When He comes, He will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgement." Trust Him to show you the wrong things in your life and confess that specific sin.

Sins from which one must repent:

Abuse - 2 Tim.3:2

Adultery - 1 Cor.6:10

Anger - Eph.4:26

Arrogance - Rm.1:30

Bad temper - Mk.14:71

Bad thoughts - Mk.7:21

Bitterness - Eph.4:31

Blasphemy - 2 Tim.3:2

Boasting - Jas.4:16

Brawling - Eph.4:31

Brutality - 2 Tim.3:3

Cheating - Mk.7:22

Conceit - 2 Tim.3:3

Cowardice - Ac.13:13

Criticism - Rm.14:13

Cursing - Eph.4:29

Debauchery - Ga.5:19

Despondency - Nm.21:4

Disobedience - Rm.1:30

Divination - 2 Ki.1:16

Doubt - Mt.14:31

Drunkenness - Ga.5:21

Egotism - 2 Tim.3:2

Enmity - Ga.5:19-21

Evil desires - Col.3:5

Factions - Ga.5:19-21

Falseness - Pr.16:30

Fear - Re.21:8

Foolishness - Mk.7:22

Fornication - Mk.7:21; Re.21:8

Gambling - Tit.1:7

God-haters - Rm.1:30
Gossip - Rm.1:30
Covetousness - Jas.4:2; Col.3:5
Greed - 2 Tim.3:2
Heartlessness - Rm. 1:31
Hate - 1 Jn.3:15
Homosexuality - 1 Cor.6:9
Idolatry - Ga.5:19
Ignorance - Is.5:13
Impatience - Nm.21:4
Jealousy - 1 Cor.3:3
Judging others - Rom.14:13
Laziness - 2 Tim.2:15;1 Cor.9:27
Licentiousness - Mk.7:22
Lovelessness - Rm.1:31
Lying - Re.21:8; Col.3:9
Malice - Eph.4:31
Mockery (to mock) - Ps.1:1
Murder - Re.21:8
Murmuring - Ex.16:2
Overeating - Pr.23:20
Popularity (desire for) - 2 Tim.4:10
Prayerlessness - Mk.14:37-38
Prejudice - Rm. 14:13
Pride - Lk.1:51
Quarrelsomeness - Tit.1:7
Quick-tempered - Tit.1:7
Rebellion - 1 Sa.15:23
Recklessness - 2 Tim.3:4
Resisting the Holy Spirit - Ac.7:51
Sabbath-breaking - Is.58:13
Selfishness - Jas.3:16
Self-righteousness - Php.3:9
Self-will - Lk.22:23; Tit.1:7;1 Sa.15:23
Sexual immorality Ga.5:19-21
Sinful passions - Ga.5:24
Slander - 1 Pe.2:1
Sorcery - Re.21:8
Spitefulness - Rm 1:29
Stealing - Eph.4:28
Strife - Rm.1:29
Swearing - Gn.25:33
Swindling - Gn.25:31-33
Trampling upon Jesus' blood - Heb.10:29
Traitorous - 2 Tim.3:4

Unbelief - Re.1:29
Uncleanness - Ga.5:19
Unfaithfulness - Rm. 1:31
Unforgiveness - Mt.18:35
Ungratefulness - 2 Tim.3:2; Lk.17:17-18
Unholiness - 2 Tim.3:2
Unrighteousness - Rm. 1:29
Unwholesome - talk Eph.4:29
Vengeance - Rm.12:19
Violence - Rm.1:30
Witchcraft - Ga.5:19-21
Worldly ambition - 2 Sa.15:1-4
Worldliness - Jas.4:4
Worldly pleasures - 2 Tim.3:4

Sometimes a lack of peace will remain even after you have confessed your sins. You can then apply the following principles in an effort to find the reason for the lack of peace:

In the first place: It is possible that you have not confessed everything in connection with a certain matter, (that you have not acknowledged that you alone are guilty), or that you have not forgiven, or that you have not been honest with God about your sins.

Secondly: When you have asked God to forgive and cleanse you on grounds of 1 Jn.1:9, remember also that Heb.10:22 says He will also cleanse you from an unclean or guilty conscience. Satan often accuses us after God has cleansed our mind from any thoughts in connection with that sin, with the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness"* (1 Jn.1:9). *"Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water"* (Heb.10:22).

Thirdly: It is of course also possible that you do not really want to break with that specific sin. Go on your knees again and confess your reluctance and if necessary, ask the Lord to make you willing to do His will which is to break with that sin. Do not hide sinful thoughts in your heart. Confess them and ask the Lord to erase every wrong thought or image that remains in connection with your sins, with His blood.

In the fourth place: Satan can still attack and try to rob you of your inner peace. Jas.4:7 has good advice: *"Submit yourselves, then to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you."* The verse consists of three parts. Firstly, submit yourself to God. Then resist the devil. When you have done these two things, the devil will flee from you. To submit to God means to remove everything that comes between you and Him. Make sure that you have confessed all sin, that you are not wilfully hanging on to sin. Then make sure that you ask the Lord to cleanse you from a bad conscience. As soon as you have done all these things, you can resist the Evil One in the Name of the Lord Jesus and command him not to trouble you anymore. Do not wonder whether the Lord has really forgiven you. Resist all doubt and unbelief on the grounds that God is faithful and because He said that He will forgive our sins if we confess them.

In the fifth place: If you have followed all the above mentioned principles and still do not have

peace of heart, do not rely on your feelings of uneasiness, but look to Jesus and acknowledge that He has conquered Satan on the cross and that He has redeemed and cleansed you with His blood (Col.2:13-15). Then look at God's promises and believe them, rather than your own unreliable feelings. Our forgiveness comes from God. Peace in our hearts is additional. Make the promises of God's forgiveness your own, through faith. *"When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having cancelled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; He took it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross"* (Col.2:13-15).

What happens to my sins when I confess them?

They are removed completely, as far as the East from the West. "As far as the East is from the West, so far has He removed our transgressions from us" (Ps.103:12).

God casts them where He cannot see them. *"You have put all my sins behind Your back"* (Is.38:17).

God does not make us accountable for our sins. "Speak tenderly to Jerusalem and proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed, that her sin has been paid for" (Is.40:2). "...that

God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And He has committed to us the message of reconciliation" (2 Cor.5:19).

God covers our sins to make them invisible. "Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered" (Ps.32:2). "You forgave the iniquity of your people and covered all their sins" (Ps.85:2).

God forgives our sins. "Nathan replied: the Lord has taken away our sin. You are not going to die" (2 Sa.12:13). "He forgives all my sins and heals all my diseases" (Ps.103:3).

God hurls our sins into the depth of the sea. "...and hurls all our iniquities into the depths of the sea" (Mic.7:19).

God wipes our sins away from the face of the earth. "I have swept away your offenses like a cloud, your sins like the morning mist. Return to Me, for I have redeemed you" (Is.44:22).

Through Jesus Christ we are reconciled to God. "We implore you on Christ's behalf; be reconciled to God" (2 Cor.5:20). "He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins and not only for ours, but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 Jn.2:2).

God cleanses us from the stains of sin. "Come now, let us reason together says the Lord. Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool" (Is.1:18). "To Him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood..." (Re.1:5).

Jesus, the Lamb of God, bore our sins. "...and He will bear their iniquities" (Is.53:11). "And John said: 'Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world!'" (Jn.1:29). Jesus became sin for us. "God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Cor.5:21).

Jesus frees us from the bondage of sin. "Jesus replied: 'I tell you the truth, everyone who sins, is a slave to sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed'" (Jn.8:34-36). "But now that you have been set us free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness and the result is eternal life" (Rm.6:22).

God forgets our sins. "I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake and remembers your sins no more" (Is.43:25). "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more" (Jer.31:34).

They will search for our sins, but will not find them. "'In those days, at that time,' declares the Lord, 'search will be made for Israel's guilt, but there will be none and for the sins of Judah, but none will be found, for I will forgive the remnant I spare'" (Jer.50:20).

The Holy Spirit reassures us that our sins are forgiven. "The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children" (Rm.8:16).