

# Confession

Memory Verse: “He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy” (Proverbs 28:13).

“The confession that is the outpouring of the inmost soul finds its way to the God of infinite pity.”—[Steps to Christ, p. 38](#).

**Suggested Reading: Steps to Christ, chapter 4, pp. 37-41. (At the bottom of this page)**

## 1. God's Mercy

Sun, Jul 19

**a. When convicted of sin, what are we to do? Proverbs 28:13; James 5:16.**

### Proverbs 28:13

He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.

### James 5:16

Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

“The conditions of obtaining mercy of God are simple and just and reasonable. The Lord does not require us to do some grievous thing in order that we may have the forgiveness of sin. We need not make long and wearisome pilgrimages, or perform painful penances, to commend our souls to the God of heaven or to expiate our transgression; but he that confesseth and forsaketh his sin shall have mercy.”—[Steps to Christ, p. 37](#).

**b. What attitude does this require in us? Proverbs 15:33; 19:23; Psalm 34:18.**

### Proverbs 15:33

The fear of the LORD is the instruction of wisdom; and before honour is humility.

**Proverbs 19:23**

The fear of the LORD tendeth to life: and he that hath it shall abide satisfied; he shall not be visited with evil.

**Psalm 34:18**

The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.

“Those who have not humbled their souls before God in acknowledging their guilt, have not yet fulfilled the first condition of acceptance. If we have not experienced that repentance which is not to be repented of, and have not with true humiliation of soul and brokenness of spirit confessed our sins, abhorring our iniquity, we have never truly sought for the forgiveness of sin; and if we have never sought, we have never found the peace of God. The only reason why we do not have remission of sins that are past is that we are not willing to humble our hearts and comply with the conditions of the word of truth. Explicit instruction is given concerning this matter. Confession of sin, whether public or private, should be heartfelt and freely expressed.”—[Ibid.](#), pp. 37, 38.

**2. Confessing and Forgiving**

Mon, Jul 20

**a. When we have offended another, whom have we also offended? Psalm 51:4.****Psalm 51:4**

Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.

“The apostle says, ‘Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that we may be healed.’ James 5:16. Confess your sins to God, who only can forgive them, and your faults to one another. If you have given offense to your friend or neighbor, you are to acknowledge your wrong, and it is his duty freely to forgive you. Then you are to seek the forgiveness of God, because the brother you have wounded is the property of God, and in injuring him you sinned against his Creator and Redeemer.”—[Steps to Christ](#), p. 37.

**b. Why must we forgive others? Matthew 6:14, 15; Ephesians 4:32.****Matthew 6:14, 15**

For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you:  
**15** But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

**Ephesians 4:32**

And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

“He who is unforgiving cuts off the very channel through which alone he can receive mercy from God. We should not think that unless those who have injured us confess the wrong we are justified in withholding from them our forgiveness. It is their part, no doubt, to humble their hearts by repentance and confession; but we are to have a spirit of compassion toward those who have trespassed against us, whether or not they confess their faults. However sorely they may have wounded us, we are not to cherish our grievances and sympathize with ourselves over our injuries; but as we hope to be pardoned for our offenses against God we are to pardon all who have done evil to us.”—[Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing, pp. 113, 114.](#)

### **c. What should teach us our duty toward humanity? 1 Peter 4:8; Romans 13:8.**

#### **1 Peter 4:8**

And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.

#### **Romans 13:8**

Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.

“Let Christ, the divine Life, dwell in you and through you reveal the heaven-born love that will inspire hope in the hopeless and bring heaven's peace to the sin-stricken heart. As we come to God, this is the condition which meets us at the threshold, that, receiving mercy from Him, we yield ourselves to reveal His grace to others.”—[Ibid., pp. 114, 115.](#)

“The inhumanity of man toward man is our greatest sin. Many think that they are representing the justice of God while they wholly fail of representing His tenderness and His great love. Often the ones whom they meet with sternness and severity are under the stress of temptation. Satan is wrestling with these souls, and harsh, unsympathetic words discourage them and cause them to fall a prey to the tempter's power.”—[The Ministry of Healing, p. 163.](#)

## **3. Specific and Sincere**

Tue, Jul 21

### **a. What sins must be confessed publicly while others are confessed to God alone? Psalm 32:5; Matthew 5:23, 24.**

#### **Psalm 32:5**

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. Selah.

### **Matthew 5:23, 24**

Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; **24** Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.

“True confession is always of a specific character, and acknowledges particular sins. They may be of such a nature as to be brought before God only; they may be wrongs that should be confessed to individuals who have suffered injury through them; or they may be of a public character, and should then be as publicly confessed. But all confession should be definite and to the point, acknowledging the very sins of which you are guilty.”—[Steps to Christ, p. 38](#).

“Sin of a private character is to be confessed to Christ, the only mediator between God and man. . . . Every sin is an offense against God, and is to be confessed to Him through Christ. Every open sin should be as openly confessed.”—[Gospel Workers, p. 216](#).

### **b. What is the purpose of true confession? 1 Samuel 12:19.**

#### **1 Samuel 12:19**

And all the people said unto Samuel, Pray for thy servants unto the LORD thy God, that we die not: for we have added unto all our sins this evil, to ask us a king.

“In the days of Samuel the Israelites wandered from God. They were suffering the consequences of sin; for they had lost their faith in God, lost their discernment of His power and wisdom to rule the nation, lost their confidence in His ability to defend and vindicate His cause. They turned from the great Ruler of the universe and desired to be governed as were the nations around them. Before they found peace they made this definite confession: ‘We have added unto all our sins this evil, to ask us a king.’ 1 Samuel 12:19. The very sin of which they were convicted had to be confessed.”—[Steps to Christ, pp. 38, 39](#).

### **c. What practical action should follow confession? Isaiah 1:16, 17; Ezekiel 33:15.**

#### **Isaiah 1:16, 17**

Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; **17** Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.

#### **Ezekiel 33:15**

If the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he had robbed, walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity; he shall surely live, he shall not die.

“Confession will not be acceptable to God without sincere repentance and reformation. There must be decided changes in the life; everything offensive to God must be put away. This will be the result of genuine sorrow for sin.”—*Ibid.*, p. 39.

“Every converted soul will, like Zacchaeus, signalize the entrance of Christ into his heart by an abandonment of the unrighteous practices that have marked his life. Like the chief publican, he will give proof of his sincerity by making restitution.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 556.

#### 4. Danger of Self-Justification

Wed, Jul 22

**a. When the Lord asked Adam and Eve about their sin, how did they imply that it was not really their fault? Genesis 3:12, 13.**

##### **Genesis 3:12, 13**

And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat. 13 And the LORD God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.

“Adam could neither deny nor excuse his sin; but instead of manifesting penitence, he endeavored to cast the blame upon his wife, and thus upon God Himself: ‘The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.’”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 57. [Author’s italics.]

“After Adam and Eve had eaten of the forbidden fruit, they were filled with a sense of shame and terror. At first their only thought was how to excuse their sin and escape the dreaded sentence of death. When the Lord inquired concerning their sin Adam replied, laying the guilt partly upon God and partly upon his companion. ‘The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.’ The woman put the blame upon the serpent, saying, ‘The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.’ Genesis 3:12, 13. Why did You make the serpent? Why did You suffer him to come into Eden? These were the questions implied in her excuse for her sin, thus charging God with the responsibility of their fall.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 40.

**b. Why does self-justification make confession ineffectual? Job 9:20; Luke 16:15.**

##### **Job 9:20**

If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me: if I say, I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse.

##### **Luke 16:15**

And he said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.

“The spirit of self-justification originated in the father of lies and has been exhibited by all the sons and daughters of Adam. Confessions of this order are not inspired by the divine Spirit and will not be acceptable to God. True repentance will lead a man to bear his guilt himself and acknowledge it without deception or hypocrisy.”—[Ibid., p. 40](#).

“We should not try to lessen our guilt by excusing sin. We must accept God’s estimate of sin, and that is heavy indeed. Calvary alone can reveal the terrible enormity of sin. If we had to bear our own guilt, it would crush us. But the sinless One has taken our place; though undeserving, He has borne our iniquity. ‘If we confess our sins,’ God ‘is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.’ 1 John 1:9. Glorious truth!—just to His own law, and yet the Justifier of all that believe in Jesus. ‘Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He retaineth not His anger forever, because He delighteth in mercy.’ Micah 7:18.”—[Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing, p. 116](#).

## 5. Open Confession

Thu, Jul 23

### a. How did Paul humbly and specifically acknowledge his sin? Acts 26:10, 11.

#### Acts 26:10, 11

Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. 11 And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities.

“The examples in God’s word of genuine repentance and humiliation reveal a spirit of confession in which there is no excuse for sin or attempt at self-justification. Paul did not seek to shield himself; he paints his sin in its darkest hue, not attempting to lessen his guilt. [Acts 26:10, 11 quoted].”—[Steps to Christ, p. 41](#).

### b. What did Paul declare in his first epistle to Timothy? 1 Timothy 1:15.

#### 1 Timothy 1:15

This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.

“In ourselves we can see nothing but weakness, nothing to recommend us to God, and Satan tells us that it is of no use; we cannot remedy our defects of character. When we try to come to God, the enemy will whisper, It is of no use for you to pray; did not you do that evil thing? Have you not sinned against God and violated your own conscience? But we may tell the enemy that ‘the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.’ 1 John 1:7. When we feel that we have sinned and cannot pray, it is then the time to pray. Ashamed we may be and deeply humbled, but we must pray and believe. [1 Timothy 1:15 quoted]. Forgiveness . . . is a gift unto us, having in the spotless righteousness of Christ its foundation for bestowal.”—[Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing](#), pp. 115, 116.

### **c. If we confess our sins, what has God promised? 1 John 1:9.**

#### **1 John 1:9**

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

“The humble and broken heart, subdued by genuine repentance, will appreciate something of the love of God and the cost of Calvary; and as a son confesses to a loving father, so will the truly penitent bring all his sins before God. And it is written, [1 John 1:9, quoted].”—[Steps to Christ](#), p. 41.

#### **Personal Review Questions**

Fri, Jul 24

1. When we faithfully confess our sins to God, how do we stand before Him?
2. In what circumstances must some confessions be made to other people, and why?
3. Why is it important that confession be specific?
4. Describe the danger of self-justification.
5. What is the result of humble confession?

**Suggested Reading: Steps to Christ, chapter 4, pp. 37-41.**

#### **Chapter 4—Confession**

“He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.” Proverbs 28:13.

The conditions of obtaining mercy of God are simple and just and reasonable. The Lord does not require us to do some grievous thing in order that we may have the forgiveness of sin. We need not make long and wearisome pilgrimages, or perform painful penances, to commend our souls to the God of heaven or to expiate our

transgression; but he that confesseth and forsaketh his sin shall have mercy. (SC 37.2)

The apostle says, “Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed.” James 5:16. Confess your sins to God, who only can forgive them, and your faults to one another. If you have given offense to your friend or neighbor, you are to acknowledge your wrong, and it is his duty freely to forgive you. Then you are to seek the forgiveness of God, because the brother you have wounded is the property of God, and in injuring him you sinned against his Creator and Redeemer. The case is brought before the only true Mediator, our great High Priest, who “was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin,” and who is “touched with the feeling of our infirmities,” and is able to cleanse from every stain of iniquity. Hebrews 4:15. (SC 37.3)

Those who have not humbled their souls before God in acknowledging their guilt, have not yet fulfilled the first condition of acceptance. If we have not experienced that repentance which is not to be repented of, and have not with true humiliation of soul and brokenness of spirit confessed our sins, abhorring our iniquity, we have never truly sought for the forgiveness of sin; and if we have never sought, we have never found the peace of God. The only reason why we do not have remission of sins that are past is that we are not willing to humble our hearts and comply with the conditions of the word of truth. Explicit instruction is given concerning this matter. Confession of sin, whether public or private, should be heartfelt and freely expressed. It is not to be urged from the sinner. It is not to be made in a flippant and careless way, or forced from those who have no realizing sense of the abhorrent character of sin. The confession that is the outpouring of the inmost soul finds its way to the God of infinite pity. The psalmist says, “The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.” Psalm 34:18. (SC 37.4)

True confession is always of a specific character, and acknowledges particular sins. They may be of such a nature as to be brought before God only; they may be wrongs that should be confessed to individuals who have suffered injury through them; or they may be of a public character, and should then be as publicly confessed. But all confession should be definite and to the point, acknowledging the very sins of which you are guilty. (SC 38.1)

In the days of Samuel the Israelites wandered from God. They were suffering the consequences of sin; for they had lost their faith in God, lost their discernment of His power and wisdom to rule the nation, lost their confidence in His ability to defend and vindicate His cause. They turned from the great Ruler of the universe and desired to be governed as were the nations around them. Before they found peace they made this definite confession: “We have added unto all our sins this evil, to ask us a king.” 1 Samuel 12:19. The very sin of which they were convicted had

to be confessed. Their ingratitude oppressed their souls and severed them from God. **(SC 38.2)**

Confession will not be acceptable to God without sincere repentance and reformation. There must be decided changes in the life; everything offensive to God must be put away. This will be the result of genuine sorrow for sin. The work that we have to do on our part is plainly set before us: “Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before Mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.” Isaiah 1:16, 17. “If the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he had robbed, walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity; he shall surely live, he shall not die.” Ezekiel 33:15. Paul says, speaking of the work of repentance: “Ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter.” 2 Corinthians 7:11. **(SC 39.1)**

When sin has deadened the moral perceptions, the wrongdoer does not discern the defects of his character nor realize the enormity of the evil he has committed; and unless he yields to the convicting power of the Holy Spirit he remains in partial blindness to his sin. His confessions are not sincere and in earnest. To every acknowledgment of his guilt he adds an apology in excuse of his course, declaring that if it had not been for certain circumstances he would not have done this or that for which he is reproved. **(SC 40.1)**

After Adam and Eve had eaten of the forbidden fruit, they were filled with a sense of shame and terror. At first their only thought was how to excuse their sin and escape the dreaded sentence of death. When the Lord inquired concerning their sin, Adam replied, laying the guilt partly upon God and partly upon his companion: “The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.” Genesis 3:12. The woman put the blame upon the serpent, saying, “The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.” Genesis 3:13. Genesis 3:12, 13. Why did You make the serpent? Why did You suffer him to come into Eden? These were the questions implied in her excuse for her sin, thus charging God with the responsibility of their fall. The spirit of self-justification originated in the father of lies and has been exhibited by all the sons and daughters of Adam. Confessions of this order are not inspired by the divine Spirit and will not be acceptable to God. True repentance will lead a man to bear his guilt himself and acknowledge it without deception or hypocrisy. Like the poor publican, not lifting up so much as his eyes unto heaven, he will cry, “God be merciful to me a sinner,” (Luke 18:13) and those who do acknowledge their guilt will be justified, for Jesus will plead His blood in behalf of the repentant soul. **(SC 40.2)**

The examples in God's word of genuine repentance and humiliation reveal a spirit of confession in which there is no excuse for sin or attempt at self-justification. Paul did not seek to shield himself; he paints his sin in its darkest hue, not attempting to lessen his guilt. He says, "Many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities." Acts 26:10, 11. He does not hesitate to declare that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." 1 Timothy 1:15. **(SC 41.1)**

The humble and broken heart, subdued by genuine repentance, will appreciate something of the love of God and the cost of Calvary; and as a son confesses to a loving father, so will the truly penitent bring all his sins before God. And it is written, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:9. **(SC 41.2)**