# CONFESSION IS GOOD FOR THE SOUL

# *Godly Sorrow Works Repentance*

The phrase confession is good for the soul is a proverb that advises people to come clean regarding anything that they are guilty of in order to feel better about themselves. Admitting your sins is therapeutic, cleansing your guilty conscience.

But, I have to be honest with you (see, I’m already coming clean). As a boy when I hit my brother Ron, or pushed my sister Dee, I didn’t feel better about myself when my dad or mom made me confess my transgression to them and promise never to do it again. While I was confessing on the outside I was scheming on the inside so that I could do it again without getting caught. While I was saying, “I’m sorry” to their face, I was plotting “I’ll have my pound of flesh” behind their back. My “confession” was not sincere and was definitely not “good for the soul.” I had a sorrow of this world (I was thinking, how could I be so stupid as to get caught), not a godly sorrow.

I am absolutely captivated by Paul’s description of true repentance to the Corinthians. I cannot tell you how many times the text in 2 Corinthians 7:9-11 has held me in rapt attention as I studied it in relation to my own sins. When God calls me to repentance He explains, in detail, what exactly He expects from me. Confession is far more than admitting sin. It is far more than saying “I’m sorry.” It is what Paul describes as a “godly sorrow.” Examine your own confessions as you study it:

*“Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to repentance. For you were made sorry in a godly manner, that you might suffer loss from us in nothing. For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death. For observe this very thing, that you sorrowed in a godly manner: What diligence it produced in you, what clearing of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what vehement desire, what zeal, what vindication! In all things you proved yourselves to be clear in this matter.*

It seems they had been shamed into how they had treated a man he had written about in his first epistle (study I Cor. 5). His sin had not been dealt with, allowing him to openly commit it before the world without any consequences. Paul had “*delivered him to Satan*” in order to shame him and bring about repentance. The church was to follow his lead. They did just that. It seems they responded and dealt with the sinful brother. Thus, “*your sorrow led to repentance*.” They corrected the wrong when they “*sorrowed in a godly manner*” and not like their former “*sorrow of the world*.”

The world sorrows when they are caught doing wrong by regretting that they got caught. In other words, they would do it again if they could get away with it, just like my childhood “kiss and make up” *sorrow* to my brother or sister. Christians must look at repentance with their boots on. What I mean is we must take off our bedtime soft and cozy bunny slippers and lace up our work boots and get busy with “***diligence… clearing yourselves… indignation… fear… vehement desire… zeal… vindication***.” Whew! I’m tired just reading those words. That’s work! And that’s what godly sorrow looks like. If my soul is going to feel good by my confession then I must go to work to do anything and everything to undo what I did. I should leave no stone unturned in bringing about restoration to my wrongs before God or man.

There is a sign I read every time I go into prison to teach the Bible. It says, *“You do the crime, you do the time.”* If you commit a crime you must accept the consequences. In our sins before God we can receive “*grace and mercy in our time of need*” (Heb. 4:16). But that doesn’t mean grace is cheap and that God just waves it off like a doting grandfather to his mischievous grandson (not that I would know about that). Even with grace God requires our “*godly sorrow that* ***works*** *salvation not to be regretted*.” Something hard is required of me. God knows that “*confession is good for the soul*,” but He also knows that saying “I’m sorry” demands diligence, indignation, fear, vehement desire, zeal and vindication.

But let us expand on that thought using David’s repentance in Psalm 32. Confession is not only good for the soul but also for my physical body. David shows us why that’s true.

*Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, Whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity, And in whose spirit there is no deceit. When I kept silent, my bones grew old Through my groaning all the day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; My vitality was turned into the drought of summer. I acknowledged my sin to You, And my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD," And You forgave the iniquity of my sin.*

David was totally stressed out. You can “hear” it in his voice as he writes about those painful days when he refused to confess his sins to God after his adultery with Bathsheba and murder of Uriah.

His bones grew old and his vitality (energy) was like a summer with no rain. He was all dried up inside. The physical stress showed in his entire demeanor. His prayer life had dwindled to nothing.

Have you ever been there? Are you there now? Are you sucked dry of all spiritual energy because of some sin that you refuse to deal with? The stress of guilt can be so overwhelming that you despair of life itself. Do what David did, deal with it. Confess your sins, specifically, not generically, before an all-loving God who longs to restore you to that man of whom it is said, “*Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered*.”

The old saying is true, ***confession is good for the soul***. But it is good not only for the soul, but for the body too. Stress brought on by hiding your sins will break you down from the inside out. To the God-conscious person guilt will eat at you like a gangrene. Such stress leads to immune suppression which leads to cancer, heart disease and other physical issues. Don’t let that happen to you. Deal with it.

It will be like a breath of fresh air when you pray, “*I will confess my transgressions to the Lord*.” You will find forgiveness from a merciful God, and likely healing that no doctor or pharmacist could ever prescribe.

- Rick

P.S. – Ron and Dee, I’m truly sorry for being mean to you. There, I feel better already.

P.S.S. – Happy 70th birthday big sis!