

**“Of Repentance unto Life” part 11, WCF 15.6.1, The Nature and Duty of Private Confession**

2021.08.22 Sabbath School Lesson

Hopewell ARPC, Culleoka, TN

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WCF 15.6 (TPH p928)

**VI. As every man is bound to make private confession of his sins to God, praying for the pardon thereof;<sup>(l)</sup> upon which, and the forsaking of them, he shall find mercy.<sup>(m)</sup>** so, he that scandalizeth his brother, or the Church of Christ, ought to be willing, by a private or public confession, and sorrow for his sin, to declare his repentance to those that are offended,<sup>(n)</sup> who are thereupon to be reconciled to him, and in love to receive him.<sup>(o)</sup>

<sup>(l)</sup> Ps. 51:4, 5, 7, 9, 14; Ps. 32:5, 6.

<sup>(m)</sup> Prov. 28:13; I John 1:9.

<sup>(n)</sup> James 5:16; Luke 17:3, 4; Joshua 7:19; Ps. 51 throughout.

<sup>(o)</sup> II Cor. 2:8.

**Ps 51:1** Have mercy upon me, O God,  
According to Your lovingkindness;  
According to the multitude of Your tender mercies,  
Blot out my transgressions.  
2 Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,  
And cleanse me from my sin.  
3 For I acknowledge my transgressions,  
And my sin is always before me.  
4 Against You, You only, have I sinned,  
And done this evil in Your sight—  
That You may be found just when You speak,  
And blameless when You judge.  
5 Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity,  
And in sin my mother conceived me.  
6 Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts,  
And in the hidden part You will make me to know wisdom.

▫The primary offended One in our sins is God, v4

▫When we confess to God, we should confess that the reason we sin is because we are sinners, v5

▫Our confession must go past wallowing in the sorrow of guilt to pleading God’s willingness (v1) and ability (v7) to pardon, asking that He would do so (v9, 14)

**Ps 32:1** Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven,  
Whose sin is covered.  
2 Blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity,  
And in whose spirit there is no deceit.  
3 When I kept silent, my bones grew old  
Through my groaning all the day long.  
4 For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me;  
My vitality was turned into the drought of summer.

▫Not everyone is a blessed one whose transgression is forgiven, sin covered, iniquity remitted, v1–2a

▫Part of God’s saving work is bringing us to the point of confessing our sins, v2b–4

▫The confession to which God responds with forgiveness is the opposite of the deceit in v2b. It includes acknowledgement (v5a), exposing (v5b), and expressing (v5c)

▫By the Spirit, David presents this prayer as an example (v6a)

▫The opportunity for confessing sin will expire (v6b)

▫The judgment of the flood was also an example, pointing to what the forgiven sinner escapes (v6c–d)

**Prov 28:13** He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy.

▫Confessing and forsaking sin receives mercy

**1John 1:8** If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. <sup>9</sup> If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness

▫Because God has promised forgiveness to those whom He brings to repentance, and because God has perfectly satisfied for the guilt of those whom He brings to repentance, when He gives us that part of our repentance in which we confess our sins, we can know that the faithfulness and justice of God are working together to guarantee both our forgiveness of sin and our cleansing from all unrighteousness.

7 Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;  
Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.  
8 Make me hear joy and gladness,  
That the bones You have broken may rejoice.  
9 Hide Your face from my sins,  
And blot out all my iniquities.  
10 Create in me a clean heart, O God,  
And renew a steadfast spirit within me.  
11 Do not cast me away from Your presence,  
And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.  
12 Restore to me the joy of Your salvation,  
And uphold me by Your generous Spirit.  
13 Then I will teach transgressors Your ways,  
And sinners shall be converted to You.  
14 Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God,  
The God of my salvation,  
And my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness.

5 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.

Selah

6 For this cause everyone who is godly shall pray to You  
In a time when You may be found;  
Surely in a flood of great waters  
They shall not come near him.

Selah

**(The following is a machine-generated transcription. Please be aware of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording referenced above)**

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Our father in heaven. How great is our guilt and our sin before you. But we thank you that it is before you who are merciful to sinners and that in our repentance, you turn our eyes towards yourself and you open our hearts and our mouths to confess to a God, whom we know to be merciful.

And with whom we can be sure of that mercy. So we pray, as we study some of these things from your word and the confession that we have as a summary of your word that your spirit would not allow us to do. So unfeelingly unmoved unmovably but that he would write on our hearts, the truth and lift up our hearts to you that we might again, be sure of that mercy in Christ Jesus.

In whom we ask it, he men. So we come to the last section of Westminster Confession 15 and we're just going to use how there's kind of four sections there footnoted, LM in and O, we're just going to cover sections one and two, L and M, but I'll read the whole, you guess.

It's an extended sentence. Although, it looks like a paragraph as every man is bound to make private confession of his sins. To God praying for the pardon thereof upon which and the forsaking of them, he shall find mercy. So he that scandalizes scandalize with his brother or the church of Christ ought to be willing by a private or public confession and sorrow for his sin to declare his repentance, to those that are offended, who are there upon to be reconciled to him and in love to receive him.

So you actually have to go into the part that that's great out that we're saving. Hopefully for next week if we get through the bold portion this week to get a nice little definition of what they are calling confession and these they say about private or public confession and so forth in to declare his repentance to those who are offended.

Well that's declaring if they've just if you scandalized someone or send against someone privately, then the repentance the declaration or of that repentance is private. If you have scanned allies or send against church Christ publicly, then the declaration of that repentance is public. But what we have in our section today is that as we are turning from our sins to God, a part of that is the declaration of our turning unto God or the declaration unto God of our turning.

That's what we call confession telling God that we see the hatefulness and grief of our sin, telling God that we see his mercy to us in Christ telling God that we are purposed and resolved unto unto new obedience as we lay hold of him. So confession is that telling part of our repentance.

And so the part we have today is as every man has been to make private confession of his sins to God, praying for the pardon of, and will look at two very familiar, psalms or sections from two very familiar. Psalms and that part confess making private confession of sins to God and praying for pardon of those sins, psalm 51 and Psalm 32.

And then upon which and the forsaking of them, he shall find mercy and they're just including that forsaking of them which is part of repentance and to life as we've seen in the rest of the the chapter. And that's that's just an indication of the truthfulness of the confession or the confessing rather but the main point in that second line that's footnoted.

M, is that he shall find? Mercy. Praise God. So the first part then as every man is bound to make private confession of his sins to God, praying for the pardon, their of, you're almost surprised that they don't say every sinner or every ordinary man. Why?

Sorry. Okay. I'm surprised because not, every man is a sinner, there's one, right? The Lord Jesus. And and they do it times in the can in our confession and catechisms distinguish. They'll say ordinary, man, or mere man, or descending by ordinary generation to make sure we guard that for Christ.

This one of the wonderful things in the psalm, as you think about the full but sinless, humanity of our Lord Jesus, in the Psalms, and so many psalms, but, you know, particularly ones like this one and 32 and, and 130 where as Jesus learns these prayers and songs in his childhood.

He's learning how badly. We need him, he's coming into his identity as the righteous one, who must atone for our sin. So David's praying for this full and free forgiveness. And you know, just like there are many things that we read in this algebra that we can't, really pray and sing apart from Christ deal with me according to my righteousness.

Oh Lord. Right. How many of, you know, we cannot? Yeah, samely desire. That apart from the righteousness of Christ. Can't it for us and it gets flipped for. For Jesus is sake. So, as every man, every singer sinful man is bound to make private confession of his sins to God, praying for the pardon thereof.

And we see that because God has given us, not just the whole Bible for use in prayer. And the Lord's Prayer is the special form of prayer to teach us. But he's given us a whole book of prayers, and it's the largest book of the Bible and it's the most quoted book of the Old Testament in the New Testament.

And as the most prophecies of Christ in it, so when we read things like Psalm 32, psalm 51, psalm 130, one of the things we need to be thinking, is this is how God wants me to pray that when Jesus summarizes it and very short form. Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors that part of part of understanding, how to pray forgive us.

Our debts is learning to pray in the manner of Psalm. 32, is learning to pray in the manner of Psalm. 51 learning to pray in the manner of Psalm 130 and children. Perhaps the, the Lord has already brought you at some point in your life, to one of those moments where you're really grieved with your sin and overwhelmed with your sin.

And you you lack words for crying out to God for forgiveness. Well, he's given you words and he's given you words that you can use directly and he's giving you words that teach you particular, things that you can understand and expand into more words before him So that especially is why, when they come to footnote every man has been to make private confession of since to God praying for the pardon their of they go to God's prayer book and probably the two most famous, perhaps 130 along with them of the prayers for forgiveness.

In God's prayer book. They have selected, especially verse four verse five or seven verse nine numbers 14. So, we'll pay careful attention to those when we're, when we're gleaning, what we learn from those particular verses, but I think it's helpful for us to hear the whole song at least up until that point have mercy upon me.

Oh God, according to your loving, kindness, according to the multitude of your tender mercies. Notice that he he speaks about things about dwells upon the character of God first. He's going to do a lot of thinking about and talking about his own character, but he dwells upon God's first, at least in this, in this case, wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.

Now, this is not where the word iniquity comes from children, but it's the way that the, that I learned the meaning of the word sanded to me, like inky, like a great big blot on my record. And that is actually what iniquity is. So, and he says, wash me thoroughly from my iniquity watch that.

That stain out. That I can't get out and cleanse me from my sin For, I acknowledge my transgressions. And my sin is always, before me Against you, you only have, I sinned and done this evil in your sight that you may be found. Just when you speak and blameless, when you judge behold, I was brought forth in iniquity and in sin, my mother conceived.

Me. Behold you desire truth in the inward parts and in the hidden part you will make me to know. Wisdom purge me with his up and I shall be clean. Does it being a branch that they use? Not so much for laundering things. All though that is possible. But especially when blood was being applied, blood from the sacrifices was being splattered onto the altar, or on to something else.

In that set of sacrifices that God gave his people to do with the toning sacrifices, looking forward to the application of the blood of Jesus. And you can hear that David understands that, right? He, he doesn't just say, oh, well, when we go to where the, the altar is, we didn't have the temple yet and there's some questions to other.

He went up to the timer because the ark was not at the tabernacle at the, at the time, of his incident with Basheban Uriah. But he knows that the hiss up is talking about the application of another attempt and another blood. So he's crying out to God. Purge me with his and I shall be clean.

He's asking to be cleansed by the blood of Jesus wash me and I shall be wider than snow kids. If you get blood splattered on you, do you get white on you? No right. But yeah, it's usually red. So when he says purge me with his up and I shall be clean.

Watch me. And I will be wider than snow. He's showing that. He understands that those sacrifices were about another blood and another cleansing the blood of Jesus for the cleansing of his sin. Make me here joy and gladness that the bones. You have broken, may rejoice, hide your face from my sins and block out all my iniquities create in me.

A clean heart. Oh God and renew. A steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from your presence. Do not take your holy spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and uphold me by your generous spirit. Then I will teach transgressors, your ways, and sinners will be shall be converted to you deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed.

Oh God, the god of my salvation. And my tongue shall sing aloud of your righteousness? Well, I think, if we went through the whole passage, as has been our manner with a bunch of these passages in which we're trying to get it into context, we would be several of these half an hour classes doing so.

So we'll just have having read it and heard I think probably the the bulk or the just of this portion of the psalm will just look at the port. The particular verses that they highlighted as proof texts of making private confession of sins to go on and praying for the pardon.

Their of the first one is verse 4. He says against you, you only have I sinned, so David's talking to God, but he's sinned against a lot of people. Hasn't he? He said greatly against Basheba. He said greatly against his servants, the servants in his health, who dropped all those hints?

Who is this is what she's the wife of you, Uriah and who tried to restrain him. And yet, he's in a position of great authority, and steamrolling. Then you can imagine what a servant in his house who had a good conscience. The torture of what David was doing and sorting through before, God, what he needs to say, what he needs to do.

That's not a small thing that David did to them. Of course the, you know, one of the biggest was Uriah, he sinned against Joe at making Joe Evan instrument of murder. He sends against his entire army whom he should have been out there leading and has them do a week and foolish maneuver because I has to be really, really bad to get urea killed.

You get to the end of second Samuel. You find out that your riah was one of the mighty men. So in order to get him off, you really had to put some some of your men under a horrible situation as far as about. So David has sinned, greatly against a great many men.

But the first person that we always need to declare our sin to is God, because our sin against God is so great, that by comparison sin against any man, is almost not even to be considered and the greatness of our sins against men include the fact that those men are made in the image of God.

But first and foremost, he has to deal with his sin against God. He says against you, you only have I sinned and done this evil in your sight. He's not discounting his sins against others but he's owning the infinity of a sin against the glory of God again recently in in preaching and teaching.

We've been in Romans chapter three and we've seen, you know, at first that a bunch of us memorized when, when we were younger, some of you are younger. But for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. And maybe you have been almost as foolish as your your your current teacher who for the first.

However, many times. I heard that verse I thought of the glory of God as something I had just missed it. Yeah, the way we use the word fallen short but in the context of Romans, it's talking about the infinity of our sin, isn't it? Because that's reaching back into chapter 1 and saying, we did not glorify him or give.

Thanks, although we knew that he has got and that it is against the infinite glory of God that we have sinned. And that is the greatness of the wrath. That is displayed against all the unrighteousness of men and each of our specific unrighteousness. And that's what be David is owning before God.

And so the first person we need to declare a repenting unto is God, and making this private confession against you and you only, you only have ascend and done this evil in your sight that you may be found. Just when you speak and blameless, when you judge, the next one is verse five behold.

I was brought forth in iniquity and in sin. My mother conceived. Me David's, basically saying I sin because I'm a sinner and that's what I have been. Since I came into existence, one of our temptations when talking to one another is or confessing sin to one another and it's a it's a temptation.

When you're confessing sin against God is to say, well, you know, God, I'm I'm ordinarily. Not so bad. I'm really quite naturally, good. I just slipped up here. That's a lie. We sin because we're sinners. And that is part of confessing your sins unto God. Not just confessing that you have sinned but that you that you are a sinner, this is why.

And and part of the, the psalm he is asking God to make him to know wisdom in the hidden part and diverse six or to create in him. A clean heart beginning of verse 10.

Then in verse 7 he says purge me with his up and I shall be clean wash me and I shall be wider than snow. So we already kind of pointed out when we were starting to do the reading and verse one that he recognized what God is like especially the love of God and the multitude of God's mercies, he moves from God's willingness to forgive and cleanse in verse one, to God's ability and verse seven purge me with his hip and I shall be clean.

Wash me. And I shall be wider than snow. One of the things that many mommies are are good at and I'm not picking on your mommy. If she's not good at it, children is getting stains out of clothing. Some of us husbands and now grown children are amazed at the almost scientific miracles that are mothers performed growing up or that our wives perform now in getting stains out.

And yet, there's always that stain that, you know, there's there's too much oil or something with two strong a pigment or whatever it is, where are mothers or wives ability to cleanse. A stain is overcome by our ability to create the stain. God's ability exceeds ours, in every case he is always infinitely, more able to cleanse the stain than we are to create the stain.

And that's what David is laying. Hold of in verse 7, he prays for the pardon of his sin. He says, purge me with his wash me, but he's praying. First and foremost to God, not only because his sin is against God. But because what those Pharisees said, sitting around Jesus, when they let the paralytic down through the roof

and Jesus says, your sins are forgiven, he's all their faith and said, your sins are forgiven the who could forgive sins, but God alone, they're exactly right.

That's the point. Jesus is making about himself that here in that. Stuffed house is the God of Psalm 51 verse 7, having taken flesh on himself and he can forgive sin. And so he is the first one to whom we can fast. Not only because our sin is against him, but because he is willing verse one, to forgive us of our sins.

And he was able verse seven to forgive us of our sin. So we are to pray to him for, pardon, we're to pray. Purge me, we are to pray. Wash me moving down to verse 9. We are to pray, hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.

So we plead verse 14 as well. Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed. Oh God, the God of my salvation. And my tongue shall sing aloud of your righteousness. And so you see how all of those things. And you know, it's interesting that they picked just those five verses when we get to when we get to the section, marked letter N next week, you'll notice that they just said, Psalm 51, the whole song, psalm 51 throughout, it feels like that where we are now but they picked those five for us particularly to highlight.

And Psalm 32 blessed. Is he who's transgression is forgiven? His sin is covered. Blessed, is the man to him, y'all who he does not impute iniquity. And in his 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. Say law, I acknowledged my sin to you and my iniquity. I have not hidden. I said I will confess my transgressions to you always and you forgave the iniquity of my sins, a law for this cause everyone who is godly, shall pray to you.

In a time when you may be found surely in a flood of great waters, they shall not come near him. Now one of the things that we have noted in versus one and two and since this is one of the congregations favorite psalms we've been over this, a bunch, praise God.

But one of the things that we often notice and versus one and two is what do we contribute to our forgiveness our neediness of being forgiven, right? We we contribute transgression. God contributes forgiving, we contribute sin, he contributes covering it, we contribute iniquity, he can he contributes? Not imputing it to us.

So blessed to say. Okay, how do you get blessed blessing well by the grace and mercy of God alone blessed is he who's transgression is forgiven, his sin is covered. Blessed is the man whom you always does not impute iniquity. So that's what we usually focus on. But one of the things to notice here is the implication, is that not?

Everyone is forgiven, not. Everyone is covered. There are those who will have their iniquity imputed to them and what a horror that will be and so this isn't just a psalm in that teaches us about how God gives blessing only by free grace and mercy. It's also a good study in.

What does it look like when God brings someone from their sin into that blessedness and it as part of the mercy of God, that he strips us of our illusions of righteousness. And that's where you, where you really come into in whose spirit is no deceit in, in the second half of verse two there.

So not everyone is a blessed one. His transgression is forgiven part of God's saving work in our lives. Now, God's great saving work. Of course, is what is done in Christ. But in his work and each of his, the lives of those whom he is saving and applying the the righteousness and forgiveness of Christ and applying Christ himself to them, is bringing us to confess our sins, bringing us to repent of our sins, bringing us to faith in Jesus Christ.

So he's, he's noticing the mercy of God in verses three through five verses three through five, are and account of how God brought him to a place and in which he gave up his self-defeat, right? We know the we know the historical facts, if you like stories and almost everyone likes stories, then, as Nathan is going to David and as he starts to tell him about the poor guy and the little land that was in his house like his own daughter.

And then when he drops the hammer you are the man, you know, you know, we remember that David remembers, especially the Lord's dealing with him. Even before that, right? God was working on David's soul. When I kept silent, my bones grew old through my groaning. All the day, long day and night.

Your hand was heavy upon me. My vitality was turned into the drought of summer. So as a mercy of God that he didn't allow David to take his sin lightly. Now, they've chosen especially versus five and six I acknowledged my sin to you my iniquity. I have not hidden.

I said I will confess my transgressions to y'all way so he's giving us a little bit more of the anatomy a little bit more of the the the detailed pieces of what confessing this sin looks like the confession to which God responds with forgiveness. The confession, which God works in us unto as part of his work of bringing us into the state of salvation that can fashion is the opposite of the deceit.

In verse 2. Be, what does God do in you, when he is working in you to make, you know, your sin and a confess it to him? Well he makes you to acknowledge your sin first part of verse 5, I acknowledged my sin to you he makes you to be exposed or stop hiding your sin verse 5b.

So, not only do you recognize it for what it is and see it for what it is. But you say also what it is, I said I will confess. That's also speaking, isn't it my transgressions to y'all way? And then he turns around, he says, and everyone who's godly should do this for this cause everyone who has godly shall pray to you.

David is an example to us as the Holy Spirit by David in the first half of verse 6. So you're coming to God, maybe not for the first time. Maybe you're a believer of many decades and yet you've seen again or need to turn from it again and confess it to him again and you're having trouble while he's giving you recipe.

Verse five acknowledge recognize what it is own. What it is, see it, don't hide it. Don't make excuses and say it to God, just tell him what it is and that it's sinful. And the Lord forgives because not only is David's prayer, an example, but no, as salvation in the flood or deliverance from the flood is an example for this cause everyone who is Godly, shall pray to you.

In a time when you may be found, there is coming the end of our opportunity to confess into God. Surely in a flood of great waters. They shall not come near him. The judgment of the flood was an example pointing to actually a greater judgment from which the forgiven center escapes.

So, every man is bound to make private confession of his sins to God, praying for the pardon, that of just like, David prayed for forgiveness, confessing his sin and asking for forgiveness, everyone of us is to pray first and foremost to God confessing our sin and asking for forgiveness.

So we only got through the first line today, lest you. Listen to those people who tell you that the Westminster confession is this dusty dry. Theological document created to foster a thousand arguments. Consider the practical usefulness to your soul of the first, the just the line that we covered today and the psalms that they're summarizing as every man is bound to make private confession of a sense to God, praying for the pardon, their of, well, we don't have time for questions this time.

If you have questions, you know, give them to me. We can start with questions maybe next week. Let's pray.

Our father in heaven, how we thank you and praise you that you have revealed yourself to us as full of steadfast love and having a multitude of tender mercies we thank you that when we are failing to see you correctly and therefore, hiding from ourselves with deceit, in our hearts, not seeing ourselves correctly.

That you who gave Christ for us, you who give faith that we might be joined to Christ and be counted righteous in him and have our sin atoned for that. You also lay your hand heavy upon us. We ask Lord that you would own us as true children with a real adoption and that you would chase in us as those whom you love.

So that so that we would not be comfortable in any ongoing in. We pray that you would help us to remember that you have given us in the prayer book and your Bible examples of how we are to confess our sin privately to you. And that we are to ask you to pardon them.

Lord. We thank you for the certainties that what you tell us to ask for you do so because you intend to give and have secured it for us in Christ. And so we ask that you would do this for his sake and for the sake of the love and which you gave him to be ours and give yourself to us in him.

So it's in his name, we pray. Amen.