

Rev. Janet Doyle
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Elmer Presbyterian Church
Scripture Lesson: Romans 8:1-18

Sermon: Confession Is Key

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, German Lutheran pastor and theologian, who worked with the resistance against the Nazis, is known as one of the most prominent Christian martyrs of the last century. He was arrested in 1943 and executed in a concentration camp in April 1945 and wrote several books before his death. In one of his books entitled, *Life Together*, he writes that “he who is alone with his sin is utterly alone. But it is the grace of the gospel, which is so hard for the pious to understand, that confronts us with the truth and says: You are a sinner, a great, desperate sinner; now come as the sinner you are, to the God who loves you.”

I’m sure that most of us agree with Bonhoeffer that the confession of sin, grounded in the gospel, is a key component of our personal spirituality. Every Sunday service part of our worship is coming before God confessing our sins for the week. Confession of our sins is key to understanding God’s grace given to us freely in our Savior Jesus Christ. We have an invitation to confession, then the corporate Prayer of Confession we say together in unison, but also it is an individual prayer of confession and a time of silent confession. It is easier to confess our sins in a corporate setting, but when it comes time to confess in small groups, we are not always so open and honest with others or ourselves.

Confession is difficult. Confession is like surgery. Where there is infection or a growth you need to get rid of it or cut it out and begin the healing process. Where there is sin in our lives we need to get it out. Confession is key to a changed, cleansed life.

Confession is not optional for Christians. Confession is not optional when you want to begin a new life with Christ. “The Christian way,” writes Martin Luther, “essentially consists in acknowledging ourselves to be sinners and in praying for grace.”

God's Grace upon us is "Unmerited divine assistance. It is a gift from God to the people. Grace is generous, free, and totally unexpected and undeserved."

Too many people today don't know what they are doing is sin. It is just the way we act in our culture, in our society. Wrong has become right and children mimic what they see and hear. When you come before God there is a right way to live and a wrong way. There is a narrow gate and a wide gate. There is the way of forgiveness and the way of eternal separation from God.

In Matthew 7:13-14, Jesus tells us, "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it."

Many in the world are on the wide road that leads to destruction by their destructive habits and lives that promote violence and hate and immorality.

Confession of our sins before God also acknowledges our very real need for his sanctifying grace. In Romans 3:23 Paul tells us, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

Jesus teaches us that regular confession should be a vital part of our fellowship with God. Scripture teaches us the importance of community in dealing with our sin. Confession of sin in the presence of others is applying and celebrating the gospel message together.

Confession to one another celebrates the forgiveness of sin and the sanctifying work of God through the cross of Christ. Justification is God's declaration that a sinner is righteous through the work of Jesus Christ, and sanctification is God's transformation of a believer's whole being, that is the mind, will, behaviors, and affections through the work of the Holy Spirit. The cross was a gift from God.

Max Lucado in his book ***He Chose the Nails*** (Study Guide p. 79) talks about "**Positional Sanctification**: Christ's work **FOR** us. We are given a prize not because of what we do but because of who we know. Then he talks about **Progressive Sanctification**: Christ's work **IN** us. We are continuously transformed by God because his work is ongoing in us. It

means we can grow in our faith and understanding of our relationship with God.

The cross is the universal symbol of Christianity. The design couldn't be simpler: one beam represents the width of God's love, and the other represents the height of his holiness. The cross is where God forgave his children without lowering his standards. Because of God's love, the blood of Jesus takes away our sins when we confess them."

We were justified, "made holy, through the sacrifice Christ made in his body once and for all time." (Hebrews 10:10)

1 Corinthians 6:11, Paul tells us, "You were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God." Paul declared we are washed clean, spiritually cleansed and purified by God. We are sanctified; made holy for a purpose and justified, declared not guilty, righteous.

Paul says in 2 Corinthians 3:18, "And the Lord – who is the Spirit – makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image."

Colossians 2:14 says, "Jesus canceled the record that contained the charges against us. He took it and destroyed it by nailing it to Christ's cross."

The Reformer John Calvin wrote, "It is fitting, that, by the confession of our own wretchedness, we show forth the goodness and mercy of our God, among ourselves and before the whole world." (Institutes, III.IV.10)

Everyone in the world can have this free gift from God. Why? Because Jesus has set us free from the law of sin and death, set us free from the only law that could condemn us. We who are in Christ will live eternally. The law cannot give eternal life but Jesus could and did.

Remember last Sunday we talked about Romans 7 and the battle we face of the flesh, of the worldly ways and the evil the world chooses over the ways of God.

Paul is telling those who are forgiven in Christ that "we do not live according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit." We are to have our minds set on what the Spirit desires for our life.

We are not perfect, but as we are led by the Spirit, we think and do the things of God. We were rebellious and disobedient. Paul says in verses 6-8, “The mind of sinful people is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.”

We “are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ.” (Verse 9) “The mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace.” (Verse 6)

This is not what we see happening in the world overall, but God is at work in the world to bring people in religious persecution to believe in his forgiveness because of his nail-pierced hands and feet. People who are imprisoned in their sin have come to their knees in confession and now have the Spirit of God living in them.

In verse 12 Paul says, “Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation.” It is not to live according to the flesh, for if we do that, we will die (verse 13). We are obligated to live according to the Spirit of God. We are called to serve the Spirit, not the flesh. We are commanded to serve God, not self. We are commanded to resist sin.

Whatever we do in obedience to God will have eternal value.

The more we reject sin and the more we obey God, the more we are really alive.

Paul says in Galatians 2:20 “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.”

1 John 2:16-17 says, “For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.”

Un-confessed sin erects a **FENCE** while confessed sin builds a **BRIDGE** between God and others.

“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)

If there is sin in your life that you need to confess to God do so now. If you need to confess to another person, do it today as well and ask for forgiveness. Today is the day to live free from guilt and brokenness.

We don't live a life of sin and then come to church on Sunday asking God for forgiveness and then keep on sinning the next week. God wants our life to be changed. God came for the world to know him.

1 John 2:2-6 says to us, "Jesus is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world. We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands. The one who says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But if anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did."

Confession is difficult but it is key to knowing God and living life in the Spirit.

How can we who have been made right with God not live life in step with the Spirit? New life in Christ is a Happy Day!