

Bedford Bulletin

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"God made us alive..." *Together with Christ*
Ephesians 2:5

"...for your heart is not right in the sight of God" (Acts 8:21)

We've all heard the preacher extend the invitation to alien sinners: Believe, Repent, Confess, and be Baptized for the remission of sin. We've also heard preachers extend the invitation to erring Christians who have publicly sinned to come forward and publicly acknowledge their sin. In the New Testament we have authority.

Consider the following scriptures and their public nature. In James 5:16 we read, *"Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, [b]fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much."* When James said, *"Confess your trespasses to one another..."* (Jas. 5:16), the word he used in this text is [ἐξομολογέω] pronounced "ex-om-ol-og-eh'-o" which is defined as, "a public acknowledgement or confession of sins" (Vine's Word Studies). Thayer's says, "forth from the heart, freely, or publicly, openly" as in Phil. 2:11, *"and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father"*. Same as in Acts 19:18 *"And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds"*, and in Rev. 3:5, *"He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels."* Our hearts should belong to God and when a child of God sins in such a way that many know of it, it is public, they then should have the courage and humility to publicly acknowledge openly and freely confess their sins. With certainty private offenses, can be kept private, but James directs that we correct all manner of sin and for good reason in the case of public sin for it brings reproach upon the church and shame upon its Head.

John writes, *"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). The word "confess" here is [ὁμολογέω] pronounced "hom-ol-og-eh'-o" and means, "to confess, i. e. to admit or declare oneself guilty of what one is accused of" (Thayer.) Vine says of the word, "to declare openly by way of speaking out freely, such confession being the effect of deep conviction of facts" as used by Jesus, *"Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven"* (Matt. 10:32). Thayer and Vine are in agreement giving near identical definitions. Note clearly

Knowing & Doing God's Will

Proverbs 11:14

that whether the sin is public or private, we are to confess it to God and promises He will cleanse us of it. As David said to Jehovah, "...*Cleanse me from secret faults*" (Psa. 19:12) Concerning the verb "hom-ol-og-eh'-o", previously mentioned from 1 John 1:9. The verb is first person, plural, present tense, subjunctive mood, and active voice (The Analytical Greek Lexicon, p. 289). Thus, the action considered in "*confess*" is continuous. Therefore, unless we are to assert that all private sins are required to be always publicly confessed, we must admit that there is a difference between the action of confessing or handling private and public sin.

Public confession of public sin can be soundly established by necessary inference. Indisputably the scriptures teach fellowship is to be limited and controlled in cases of unrepented sin. Is a brother walking in the light, (1 John 1:7)? This can only be determined by observation. Paul wrote, "*Reject a divisive man after the first and second [a]dmonition, knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned*" (Tit. 3:10). This necessarily demands knowledge of another's sin before refection, which is impossible if his sin was strictly private. In the case of the man who had, "*his father's wife*" (1 Cor. 5:1) it was obvious that the church knew of it. What if he privately repented, and prayed to God? How would the church know he had repented? Immorality must be judged, and in this case the church, not the individual was commanded to "*put away from yourselves the evil person*" (1 Cor. 5:13), and equally commanded to restore such (2 Cor. 2:7; Gal. 6:1). The case presented in 1 Corinthians is one scriptural establishment of public confession of public sin.

There are stumbling blocks that would hinder and even prevent some from repenting and confessing sin. **Lack of Desire:** Jesus said, "*If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority*" (John 7:17). This is to say that one must have the will, the desire to correct a public sin or a sin which has become public. Lacking the will keeps many from making themselves right with God (John 7:17). **Anger, Bitterness and Resentfulness:** When any or all of these are in a man's heart a spirit of plain rebellion to God's law of restoration becomes seemingly overpowering. But note I said, "seemingly", because the fact is, "*I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me*" (Phil. 4:13). **Then There is Pride!** Christians are not strangers to brethren who are hindered from progressing spiritually because of extreme pride. Too often, brethren have had the choice of



TODAY WE CHOOSE TO REJOICE

Acts 26:18

"to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me."

repenting and publicly acknowledging sin or being withdrawn from, only to respond with the ambiguous confession, "If I have sinned, I am sorry." I know of one brother who after such a case was instructed that he would have to be more direct, clear and to the point concerning his confession, who then said: "Forgive me please of my sins", only to later say, "We're all guilty of sin (Rom. 3:23)". Then after the church confronted him a third time he confessed publicly, "Please forgive me of all sins I have knowingly and

unknowingly committed.” Refusing to address the sin for which he publicly committed, he again later insisted that the sin charged against him was not a sin. Can you imagine such? I can tell you that as a result of this proud, stubborn man, and some defending members, that the church was spiritually crippled. Only later after I had been there did I learn that congregation has had a history of preachers who came and left.

If we asked who should make a public confession that answer is any and all sins which are of a public nature should be publicly corrected. Those who lay out of services; the immoral; the factious individual; the gossiper, etc., need to publicly acknowledge their sins to be right in the brethren's sight and in God's sight (Heb. 10:25-26; 1 Cor. 5; Tit. 3:10-11; 1 Tim. 5:13).

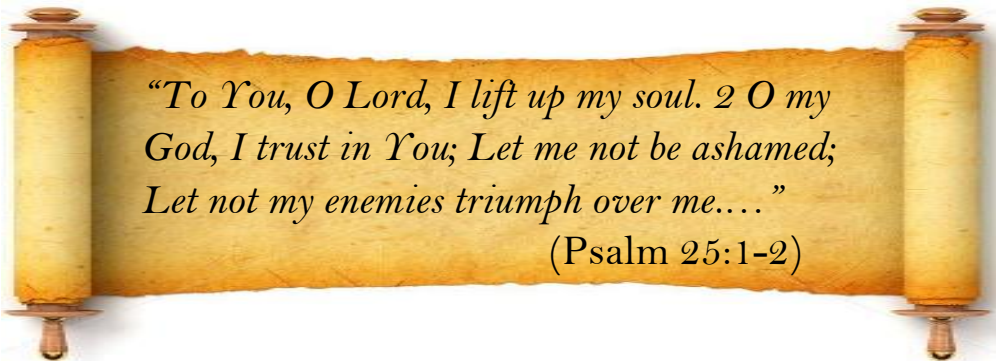
Most in today's society lack accountability which is directly in opposition to God's law. A church fails when erring brethren aren't held accountable for their sins. Some member will quit attending services for an extended period of time, others will be guilty of drinking, lying, cursing, fraud, etc., then just show up as though nothing had happened expecting to be used in some capacity and treated like the faithful brethren. These kinds of brethren need to be told in no uncertain terms that their hearts are not right in the sight of God (Acts 8:21), and that they need to repent and confess to God and the church for such open sins. Then and only then can they be used.

I have heard the argument: There is nothing in the Bible about brethren coming before the church or assembly and making a confession of public sins...confession of sins should be made just to God. I myself never read the verse saying, “the erring had to come to the front pew during an assembly to make a confession.” But God said, “*Confess your trespasses to one another*” and coming forward before the church during an invitation song is one way that this command can be obeyed.

Consider the powerful and lasting merits of confession. Most important is that God's command is obeyed. Secondly, when a child of God confesses publicly it shows his heart sensitive to sin, and spiritual growth results from the sorrow (2 Cor. 7:8-12). This is the opposite of rebellion which if left unchecked, so hardens a heart that the word of God has no longer any place there. Thirdly, openness concerning sin opens the door to let support from brethren in. Lastly, A great spiritual wall between us and the Devil is erected and shored up each time we openly make known our sins. This wall keeps him out and makes it less likely that we'll commit the same sins again. Have you sinned publicly, then confess it publicly?

Such power God gives to us in that when one repents the church is to completely receive him, completely forgive him and completely restore him, just like God does. How awesome is that!

As always, in Love
Dave Scarpino

A scroll with text on it, featuring a yellowish parchment texture and wooden rollers at the ends.

*“To You, O Lord, I lift up my soul. 2 O my
God, I trust in You; Let me not be ashamed;
Let not my enemies triumph over me....”*

(Psalm 25:1-2)

Our faithful Creator is worthy to be praised in this assembly. All praise to Him who reigns above in majesty supreme! He gave His Son to die, for all mankind, that He might redeem all. Our blessed Redeemer suffered and died for our sins and is now risen and sitting at the right hand of God as Head of the church. Let us offer the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, knowing that He is the author of eternal salvation to all those who obey Him. (Hebrews 5:8-9) ***“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!”*** (Isaiah 6:3)

Times of Our Services

Sunday Morning Bible Study	9:00 AM
Sunday Morning Worship	9:50 AM
Sunday Evening Worship	6:00 PM
Wednesday Evening Bible Study	7:30 PM

What Must I Do to Be Saved?

1. Hear the gospel-----John 6:45; Romans 10:17
2. Believe the gospel-----John 8:24; Hebrews 11:6
3. Repent of sins -----Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30
4. Confess Christ-----Matthew 10:32; Romans 10:10
5. Be baptized-----Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38
6. Remain faithful unto and until death-----Revelation 2:10; Matthew 10:22