

13

Why Confess?

[Nehemiah 9:1-38](#)

If God has forgiven me of my sins, do I have to keep confessing them and asking Him for forgiveness?

The Bible says that when Jesus died on the cross, He was a sacrifice in my place so that God could forgive my sins. The Bible also says that all I have to do is acknowledge or confess my sins and receive the gift of forgiveness and eternal life by putting my trust in Jesus.

So if I have done that, why would I need to confess my sins anymore?

Also, doesn't God know everything, including my sins? So why would I need to confess them to Him?

If God knows everything, including my sins, why would I need to confess my sins to Him?

We will try to answer that in a bit. But first, let us look at **Nehemiah 9:1-38** and look in as the people of Jerusalem offer a prayer of confession to God.

Jerusalem Stands and Confesses

1 Now on the twenty-fourth day of this month the children of Israel were assembled with fasting, in sackcloth, and with dust on their heads. 2 Then those of Israelite lineage separated themselves from all foreigners; and they stood and confessed their sins and the iniquities of their fathers.

Sackcloth and ashes were used as an outward sign of one's inward condition. They were used in Old Testament times as a symbol of debasement, mourning, and/or repentance. Someone wanting to show his repentant heart would often wear sackcloth, sit in ashes, and put ashes on top of his head. Sackcloth was a coarse material usually made of black goat's hair, making it quite uncomfortable to wear. The ashes signified desolation and ruin.

This chapter is summarized in verse two in that the people were confessing the sins of the fathers as well as their own. This was no cursory confession time. **Verse 3** says that they first listened to the Word of God for a fourth of the day and then they confessed for another fourth of the day.

3 And they stood up in their place and read from the Book of the Law of the Lord their God for one-fourth of the day; and for another fourth they confessed and worshiped the Lord their God.

Confession and worship are linked here. As we worship God and acknowledge Who He is and how great and holy and awesome He is along with His other attributes, we are driven to understand even more clearly where we fall short in sin. Thus we are compelled to confess our sins to Him.

Prayer is for our benefit to shape in us the right perspective of who we are and Whose we are

A good place to start in our worship of God is acknowledging that He has created us and thus is worthy and due our obedience and worship. The priests stood up and said,

3 "...Stand up and bless the Lord your God forever and ever! Blessed be Your glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise! 6 You alone are the Lord; You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and everything on it, the seas and all that is in them, and You preserve them all. The host of heaven worships You."

Review and Remember What God Has Done

From **verse 7** to the end of the chapter the people recite and remember how God had interacted with them through history. They begin with how God chose Abraham and his descendants and promised to make them a great nation from which the Messiah would come.

7 "You are the Lord God, Who chose Abram, And brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans, And gave him the name Abraham; 8 You found his heart faithful before You, and made a covenant with him to give the land..."

Verses 9-19 retell how God had heard their cries in Egypt; He delivered them; and provided for them in the desert. By recounting this they were reminding themselves that God is faithful and will provide.

Then the people confess that their ancestors, even after all the miraculous and gracious things God had done, hardened their hearts and sinned against God.

16 "But they and our fathers acted proudly, hardened their necks, and did not heed Your commandments. 17 They refused to obey, and they were not mindful of Your wonders that You did among them. But they hardened their necks, and in their rebellion they appointed a leader to return to their bondage..."

But they also know that God is merciful and the people worship Him because of His willingness to forgive.

17... But You are God, ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, abundant in kindness, and did not forsake them.

In **verses 19-25** the people recount how God had provided for their needs while the people of Israel wandered in the desert for 40 years after their slavery in Egypt. They also acknowledge that God brought them into the Promised Land and provided for them vineyards, orchards, olive groves and much more.

25 And they took strong cities and a rich land, and possessed houses full of all goods, cisterns already dug, vineyards, olive groves, and fruit trees in abundance. So they ate and were filled and grew fat, and delighted themselves in Your great goodness.

In **verses 26-30** they tell of the horrible cyclical nature of sin during the times of the Judges. The people would have peace; they would forget God; God would send an oppressor to get their attention; the people repented; God would deliver... Rinse, Repeat. This happened over and over again. Yet the people recognize that God was patient and merciful over and over again.

31 Nevertheless in Your great mercy You did not utterly consume them nor forsake them; for You are God, gracious and merciful.

They confess they have sinned:

33...But we have done wickedly. 34 Neither our kings nor our princes, our priests nor our fathers, have kept Your law, nor heeded Your commandments and Your testimonies, with which You testified against them.

And they close with a covenant with God that they will obey Him.

So why do we need to confess our sins?

Back to the question at the beginning: If my sins are already forgiven by God and He knows everything already, why would I need to confess my sins ever again?

The Bible describes our relationship with God in two different kinds of terms regarding relationship: There is the legal relationship and the family relationship.

We owe a debt that we cannot pay. We have fallen short of God's holiness and perfection. And the payment for that is separation from God for all eternity. (Rom. 6:23) But Jesus paid the debt for us. And when we accept that payment for us that legal debt has been paid. And the Bible says that we are adopted into the family of God. Legally we are His children at that point.

No matter how good or how bad I am, that legal transaction is binding because it depends on God and not me. So I am legally His child.

However, as His child I can do things that strain that relationship. For example, I have an adopted son, Angel. Legal adoption would make him my son. He could disobey me, thumb his nose at me and say he didn't love me but wanted to do things his way. He would not cease to be my son legally, but our familial relationship would certainly be strained.

In order to restore that broken family relationship he could come to me and ask me for forgiveness. I would forgive him and then our family relationship would be restored. Still, no matter what, he never would cease to legally be my son.

We should keep short accounts with God and others, not because our eternal destiny depends on it, but because our family relationship with God depends on it.

In the same way, if we are a child of God by virtue of His legal adoption of us through the blood of His Son, Jesus, we can still hurt our family relationship with God when we sin. But we can restore that relationship through confession and a faithful Heavenly Father will forgive us of our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness as **1 John 1:9** says:

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

APPLICATION

So regularly we should keep short accounts with our Heavenly Father and others, not because our eternal destiny depends on it, but because our family relationship with God depends on it and because it is what is best for us and others.

SENATE STUDY-Tue 7:30am: Sen. Hancock's office
HOUSE STUDY-Wed 8:30-10am (Devotional 9-9:25am): Rm 1W.14
& Wed 11:30am or Lunch Adjournment: **Austin Club**
CAPITOL COMMUNITY STUDY-Thu Noon: Reagan Bldg JHR 140

