

Confessing And Repenting

Is there any connection between confessing sin and repenting of it?

In 1 John 1:9 (NIV) Christians are told, *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins ..."* So, when we confess our sins we are forgiven but what does it mean to confess? Many people say that it is merely admitting that we have sinned. Is this true or is there a deeper meaning?

What does it mean to confess?

Let's imagine that confessing sins is just admitting that we have sinned. So, if I lust and admit it to God then He will forgive me.

If I do the same thing next day He will forgive me again.

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So if I continue to lust day after day and continue to admit it then I will be forgiven every time. Does the Bible really teach this? Can I lust daily, simply admit it, and expect God to forgive me day after day after day for the rest of my life? If so, then I have an open licence to sin so long as I admit to sinning. But the fact is, God will not forgive us if we simply say to Him, "Yes, I did it." To be forgiven, we must confess with a sorrowful heart and be willing to repent, that is, turn away from sin.

Let's look at what it means to repent

Repenting is a change of mind which results in a change in the way we do things. If repenting just meant to change my mind, and not change my ways, then I could slap you and say, "I repent", and then continue to slap you again and again, day after day. And you will have to forgive me every time as I have changed my mind about slapping you, I just haven't changed my ways. Of course this is nonsense. The real meaning of repent is to turn away from sin and stop doing it.

The desire to repent comes from godly sorrow and leads us to salvation as 2 Cor. 7:10 (NIV) tells us, *"Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death."* Jesus explained repentance in Luke 13. In Luke 13:1-5, He was speaking about sin and told the people to repent or perish and then, in Luke 13:6-9, He told a parable in which a tree in the vineyard (a believer) would be cut down if it didn't bear fruit. So, if a believer does not bear fruit (that is, change his ways) by repenting of his sins then he will end up being cut down and put in the fire just like the branch in John 15:6 which says, *"If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned."* Quite clearly, in the parable Jesus is telling us that repentance must result in a change of ways. The tree must bear fruit otherwise it will be cut down.

Repentance is not works because we have to repent to get saved in the first place and that is not considered works. Therefore, living a repentant life after being saved cannot be considered works either.

To sum this up:

- If sins were forgiven by simply saying, "Yes, I did it. I'm a sinner," then we could just say the words and continue sinning day after day without fear of judgment.
- In the same way, if repenting was simply a change of mind, without a change of ways, then we could sin all we like as long as we say in our mind, "I've changed my mind about this sin."

But the truth is, confession without a willingness to repent is worthless just as Pro. 28:13 (ESV) tells us, *"Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses AND forsakes them will obtain mercy."* To obtain mercy we need to both confess and forsake (that is, repent of) our sins. Simply telling God that we have sinned and not changing our ways is a mockery. Gal. 6:7-8 (NIV) tell us: *"Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life."* True confession and repentance will result in eternal life but sowing to please our sinful nature will result in judgment.

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