

**Skeletons in Your Closet?**

How do you get them out? Memory is highly efficient in remembering wrong. Although it forgets unpleasant and worthless things (like the last time you tripped over, or missed what you aiming for) it NEVER forgets unrighted sin. Much mental illness today can be traced to guilt never wiped from the mind by confession, restitution and forgiveness. Shock, drugs, and other medical and psychiatric treatment tries to take such guilty memories from the minds, but God's method is the only effective one – FACE each wrong with its full load of guilt – but don't HOLD it! Bring it out into the open before the Lord Jesus, confess it to Him and to those "others" involved – then receive healing forgiveness. Now this will not be easy (and that goes especially with the "others" involved part). But, re-read the results of a clear conscience just outlined. Do you NEED these to live as God wants you to? Do you want to live a normal, happy, guilt free life? Then you need to do this, and gain a clear conscience. To confess your wrong will kill your pride stone dead. It is going to hurt, make no mistake! But try to go on in peace without getting that past of yours right and you'll never make it. Take a deep breath – ask the Lord for some intestinal fortitude – READY?

**Getting Started**

Go get a paper and pencil. Next, go find a place where you can be truly alone – where no one will interrupt. If possible, go out into the country somewhere, or lock yourself in some quiet room where you can meet God. This is a special moment – make a special time and place for it. Spend a little time at first, just quietly WAITING in His Presence. Don't say anything. Wait there in the stillness until you begin to feel His Presence. As you sense His Holiness, you may start to feel your own worthlessness, but this is good preparation.

Now – ask Him to start digging! Ask the Lord to search your memories and to bring to your mind unconfessed past sin. As they come to your mind, do not give in to the temptation to ignore them and look for something else. Admit them one by one as God shows them to you, and most importantly, - write them down! (Ugh! Surely not – someone might find the paper and...) Write them down, all of them, on the paper!

And they will come, one by sordid one, drifting reluctantly through the fog of your consciousness, the things you have run away from for a long, long time. Strangely enough, you will find yourself remembering a lot more of the unforgiven past than you ever had thought possible. Write them all down, using if you like, the following spiritual diagnosis sheets. After re-reading your list, add any others that come to your mind.

Go over it a third time and you will find still others connected with these. You will remember this way now things you didn't think you would remember in eternity. Go over the list slowly, thoroughly and carefully – just as if you were about to die and stand before the Judgement Bar of God Himself.

Let God furrow your heart and break up all the hardness that has formed from unconfessed sin. If tears begin to come, let them. "Godly sorrow works repentance." And tears may soften your heart for God to work with it.

2 Cor. 7:10; Ps. 38:10; 34:6, 18; 51:17; 147:3; Eccles. 7:3; Prov. 15:13; Ezek. 34:16; Lk. 4:18

**Surgery Needed?**

If the Holy Spirit shows us sin, we must go back to the place where the Lord first met us. It is the cross again. We see the Lord Jesus once crucified - for that sin - bearing our penalty.

A line of blood trickles down from its splintered base. The sight should shock and grieve us; we see the awfulness of God's judgment. This is not the law, representing God armed with holy wrath and determined to punish the sinner without hope or help. Rather, it is LOVE demonstrated in the infinite cost God is willing to pay and the sacrifice He is willing to make in order to save us from sin. It is the most terribly beautiful picture of the Gospel, showing God's hatred for sin and heartbreak over man's selfishness. Our sin nails Him to the cross all over again. We tear open His wounds and make His redemption a mockery. Well might "heaven put on the robes of mourning and Hell hold a jubilee." All God's care and love - and dare we still sin?

Walk out into the light of reality. Drop your self-deceit and face this sin for what it really is. Turn from it, from your heart. Take sides against it with God; purpose in your heart *never* to go back into that sin again.

"Oh God, You know my foolishness, and my sin is not hid from You...for Your Name's sake, pardon my iniquity, for it is great...If you, Lord, would mark iniquities, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared." (Ps. 69:5; 25:11; 130:3-4)

Will you do this now? Will you go to your gracious and loving Father as a little child and humbly ask His forgiveness?

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 Jn. 1:9)

The LORD is merciful and gracious...He has not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities; For as the heaven is above the earth, so great is His mercy towards them that fear Him; as far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us." (Ps. 103:12)

**Confession**

Confession is humbling yourself and admitting your wrong. Restitution is the willingness to pay back or restore wherever possible. If you are now forgiven before the Lord, are you ready to ask Him for the courage to confess and restore to others you have wronged? Your conscience must be clean before both God *and* man if you want to know true freedom. You

cannot stand for God with a dirty past in the eyes of others; memories of failure in their eyes will drive you deeper into bondage each time you remember them; when you have not asked their forgiveness, your guilt will kill your faith and rob you of direction and purpose. You will not, of course, have to confess every sin to everyone; just the sins committed against the ones you know you have wronged. The RULE: The circle of CONFESSION should only go as far as the circle of COMMITTAL. Those sins against God alone you have left with His loving forgetfulness, (Ps. 103:8-13; Is. 43:25; Jer. 31:34); those against God and man must be put right with *both* God and the person(s) wronged. Restitution should only go as far as you can humanly repay. You will *never* be able to undo all your wrong, but God expects you to do all in your power to restore that which you have taken from others; no more and certainly no less. God asks of you the willingness, if need be, to go to a hundred people to restore a relationship. True, total repentance is to do that which is right up to the full limit of your ability. It concerns only that which is KNOWN and RECOGNIZED to be sin by the repentant one. Often those who see your sincerity may make exceptions to any claims they have to restitution, but you will have to trust your case to the hands of God Who does all things well.

### Getting Right With Others

Name the *basic sin*! You can never really undo the *results* of your sin; no-one can really forgive you for these. However you can always (and *must*!) right the sin *itself*, by *naming it* and asking forgiveness for it. Confess the sin that caused your words or actions; God will show you what it is. What was your *real* wrong? Write it down so you can see it. Are you sure that was what it was?

Make sure the *way* you ask is right. Such half-hearted "confessions" as the ones below show false or incomplete repentance and are usually worse than useless:

- "I'm sorry - but it wasn't all my fault!"
- "Forgive me - *if* I have wronged you..."
- "I was wrong - but *so were you*!"
- "Alright - I'm sorry" or "I apologise."

Full blame must be taken; the sin must be *named*; pride must be crucified.

- Do you know the basic sin you must get right?
- Have you thought through what you are to say?
- Is the time convenient for the other person?
- Can you be alone when you see this person?
- Do you have a truly repentant attitude? If you have trouble getting the proper feelings, think of all the hurt and loss your sin has caused. What did your sin cost Christ? (Lk. 22:39-44; Jn. 15:8-14). The Holy Spirit convicts by recalling from your memory in *detail* all the results of your wrong. Go over your sin in specific detail; never in general. As you think deeply about the effect of your sin, feelings will come equal to your guilt.
- Is the other person in the mood to forgive? If they get angry when you arrive, wait quietly in a repentant manner until their temper is under control. Then acknowledge your sin and ask forgiveness. Pray for help before you go. (Prov. 22:24; Matt. 5:43-48) Don't use words taking the blame off yourself. Don't involve others who may have also sinned; don't try to witness as well, unless specifically asked why you are making this thing right. Don't underestimate *your* guilt or *their* hurt. And don't wait too long to go and get it right!

The *elements* of these three sentences *must* be in any truly effective confession:

1. "God has convicted me of something I did (have been doing) against you..."
  2. "I've been wrong in..." (*Name* the basic sin - envy, pride, stubbornness, etc.)\*
  3. "I know I've wronged you in this, and I want to ask; will you forgive me?"
- \*(The only exception to this is a moral offence; say, "I have not set a decent standard.")

*Excuses* from pride: When it comes to getting right with others, our minds supply many "reasons" why we need not do what we know we *must*. Be *brutally honest* with yourself. Deal with each excuse, *as* an excuse. Determine to do what is right. It's your life!

When you have gone through your list as thoroughly as if you were about to meet God before the throne of Judgment and determined to get right everything you can, you may burn your list and leave your sins forgiven and forgotten for ever! Wrongs may not be wiped out completely from your mind, but they can be exchanged for memories of the joy of forgiveness! Should Satan try to recall a dark past shadow, you will be able to think instead of the bright memory of confession and forgiveness. The word of pardon from those who accept our confession will put wings on our hearts and move us mightily to praise God for His forgiveness.

Many millions are jailed in their own guilt this very day in your world, not knowing what to do or who to turn to. To some, the last road of suicide seems the only possible escape. Minds are snapping from the terrible load of guilt of a filthy past. It is up to you now to put into practice what you know must be done. Your testimony will be a ray of hope to any you come in contact with. Don't just *read* this; in His Name, go and *DO IT*!