

Ellen White
Acceptable Confession

ST March 16, 1888 White Acceptable Confession --

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“He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.” { ST March 16, 1888, par. 1 }

The **conditions of obtaining mercy of God are simple and just and reasonable. The Lord does not require us to do some grievous thing, in order that we may have the forgiveness of sin.** We need not take long and wearisome pilgrimages, or perform painful penances to commend our souls to the God of Heaven, or to expiate our transgression; but **he that confesseth and forsaketh his sin shall have mercy.** This is a precious promise given to fallen man to encourage him to trust in the God of love, and to seek for eternal life in his kingdom. { ST March 16, 1888, par. 2 }

We read that **Daniel**, the prophet of God, was a man “greatly beloved” of Heaven. He held a high position in the courts of Babylon, and served and honored God alike in prosperity or trial; and yet **he humbled himself and confessed his sin, and the sin of his people. With deep sorrow of heart he acknowledged: “We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled,** even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments; neither have we hearkened unto thy servants the prophets, which spake in thy name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land. O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day; to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and unto all Israel, that are near, and that are far off, through all the countries whither thou hast driven them, because of their trespass that they have trespassed against thee.” { ST March 16, 1888, par. 3 }

Daniel did not seek to excuse himself or his people before God; but in humility and contrition of soul he confessed the full extent and demerit of their transgressions, and vindicated God’s dealings as just toward a nation that had set at naught his requirements and would not profit by his entreaties. { ST March 16, 1888, par. 4 }

There is great need today of just such sincere heart-felt repentance and confession. **Those who have not humbled their souls before God in acknowledging their guilt, have not yet fulfilled the first condition of acceptance. If we have not experienced that repentance not to be repented of, and have not confessed our sin with true humiliation of soul and brokenness of spirit, abhorring our iniquity, we have never sought truly for the forgiveness of sin; and if we have never sought, we have never found the peace of God.** The only reason why we may not have remission of sins that are past, is that we are not willing to humble our proud hearts, and comply with the conditions of the word of truth. There is explicit instruction given concerning this matter. **Confession of sin, whether public or private, should be heart-felt and freely expressed. It is not to be urged from the sinner. It is not to be made in a flippant and careless way, or forced from those who have no realizing sense of the abhorrent character of sin. The confession that is mingled with tears and sorrow, that is the**

outpouring of the inmost soul, finds its way to the God of infinite pity. Says the psalmist, “The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.” { ST March 16, 1888, par. 5 }

There are too many confessions like Pharaoh when he was suffering the judgments of God. He acknowledged his sin, to escape further punishment, but returned to his defiance of Heaven as soon as the plagues were stayed. **Balaam’s confession** was of a similar character. Terrified by the angel standing in his pathway with drawn sword, he **acknowledged his guilt, lest he should lose his life. There was no genuine repentance for sin, no contrition, no conversion of purpose, no abhorrence of evil, and no worth or virtue in his confession. Judas Iscariot,** after betraying his Lord, returned to the priests, **exclaiming, “I have sinned** in that I have betrayed the innocent blood.” But his confession was not of such a character as would commend him to the mercy of God. **It was forced from his guilty soul by an awful sense of condemnation,** and a fearful looking for of judgment. The consequences that were to result to him, drew forth this acknowledgement of his great sin. **There was no deep, heart-breaking grief in his soul that he had delivered the Son of God to be mocked, scourged, and crucified,** that he had betrayed the holy One of Israel into the hands of wicked and unscrupulous men. His confession was only prompted by a selfish and darkened heart. { ST March 16, 1888, par. 6 }

After **Adam and Eve** had partaken of the forbidden fruit, they were filled with a sense of shame and terror. **At first their only thought was, how to excuse their sin before God, and escape the dreaded sentence of death.** When the Lord inquired concerning their sin, Adam replied, laying the guilt partly upon God, and partly upon his companion: “The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.” The woman put the blame upon the serpent, saying, “The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.” Why did you make the serpent? Why did you suffer him to come into Eden? These were the questions implied in her excuse for her sin, thus charging God with the responsibility of their fall. **The spirit of self-justification originated in the father of lies, and has been exhibited by all the sons and daughters of Adam. Confessions of this order are not inspired by the divine Spirit, and will not be acceptable before Heaven. True repentance will lead men to bear their guilt themselves, and acknowledge it without deception or hypocrisy.** Like the poor publican, not lifting up so much as their eyes unto heaven, they will smite upon their breast and cry, “God be merciful to me a sinner,” and those who do acknowledge their guilt, will be justified; for Jesus will plead his blood in behalf of the repentant soul. { ST March 16, 1888, par. 7 }

It is no degradation for man to bow down before his Maker and confess his sins and plead for forgiveness through the merits of a crucified and risen Saviour. **It is noble to acknowledge your wrong before Him whom you have wounded by transgression and rebellion. It lifts you up before men and angels, for “he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.”** But **he who kneels before fallen man, and opens in confession the secret thoughts and imaginations of his heart, is dishonoring himself** by debasing his manhood, and degrading every noble instinct of his soul. In unfolding the sins of his life to a priest corrupted with wine and licentiousness, his standard of character is lowered, and he is defiled in consequence. His thought of God is degraded to the likeness of sinful humanity; for the priest stands as a representative of God. It is this degrading confession

of man to fallen man, that accounts for much of the increasing evil which is defiling the world, and fitting it for the final destruction. { ST March 16, 1888, par. 8 }

There are confessions that the Lord has bidden us to make to one another, but they are of an entirely different order. If you have wronged your brother by word or deed, you are to “first be reconciled to thy brother,” before your worship will be acceptable to Heaven. Says the apostle: “Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed.” This scripture has been interpreted to sustain the practice of going to the priest for absolution, but it has no such application. **Confess your sins to God who only can forgive them, and your faults one to another. If you have given offense to your friend or neighbor, you are to acknowledge your wrong, and it is his duty to freely forgive you. Then you are to seek the forgiveness of God, because the brother whom you wounded is the property of God, and in injuring him you sinned against his Creator and Redeemer.** The case is not brought before the priest at all, but before the only true mediator, our great High Priest, who “was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin,” and who is “touched with the feeling of our infirmities,” and is able to cleanse from every stain of iniquity. { ST March 16, 1888, par. 9 }

When David sinned against Uriah and his wife, he pleaded before God for forgiveness. He declares: “**Against thee, thee only have I sinned,** and done this evil in thy sight.” All wrong done to others reaches back from the injured one to God. Therefore David seeks for pardon, not from a priest, but from the Creator of man. He prays: “Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness; according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.” { ST March 16, 1888, par. 10 }

True confession is always of a specific character, and acknowledges particular sins. They may be of such a nature as only to be brought before God; they may be wrongs that should be confessed before individuals who have suffered injury through them; or they may be of a general kind that should be made known in the congregation of the people. But all confession should be definite, and to the point, acknowledging the very sins of which you have been reproved by the Spirit of God. { ST March 16, 1888, par. 11 }

When Israel was oppressed by the Ammonites, the chosen people made a plea before God that **illustrates the definite character of true confession:** “And the children of Israel cried unto the Lord, saying, We have sinned against thee, both because we have forsaken our God, and also served Baalim. And the Lord said unto the children of Israel, Did not I deliver you from the Egyptians, and from the Amorites, from the children of Ammon, and from the Philistines? ... Yet ye have forsaken me, and served other gods; wherefore I will deliver you no more. Go and cry unto the gods which ye have chosen; let them deliver you in the time of your tribulation. And the children of Israel said, ... We have sinned; do thou unto us whatsoever seemeth good unto thee; deliver us only, we pray thee, this day.” **Then they began to act in harmony with their confessions and prayers. “They put away the strange gods from among them, and served the Lord.”** And the Lord’s great heart of love was grieved, “was grieved for the misery of Israel.” { ST March 16, 1888, par. 12 }

Confession will not be acceptable to God without sincere repentance and reformation. There must be decided changes in the life; everything offensive to God

must be put away. This will be the result of genuine sorrow for sin. Says Paul, speaking of the work of repentance: **“Ye sorrowed after a godly sort; what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter.”** { ST March 16, 1888, par. 13 }

In the **days of Samuel, the Israelites wandered** from God. They were suffering the consequences of sin, for they had lost their faith in God, lost their discernment of his power and wisdom to rule the nation, lost their confidence in his ability to defend and vindicate his cause. They turned from the great Ruler of the universe, and desired to be governed as were the nations around them. **Before they found peace they made this definite confession: “We have added unto all our sins this evil, to ask us a king.”** The very sin of which they were convicted, had to be confessed. Their ingratitude pressed their souls and severed them from God. { ST March 16, 1888, par. 14 }

When sin has deadened the moral perceptions, the wrong-doer does not discern the defects of his character, nor realize the enormity of the evil he has committed; and unless he yields to the convicting power of the Holy Spirit, he remains in partial blindness to his sin. His confessions are not sincere and in earnest. To every acknowledgment of his guilt, he adds an apology in excuse of his course, declaring that, if it had not been for certain circumstances, he would not have done this or that, for which he is reproved. **But the examples in God’s word of genuine repentance and humiliation reveal a spirit of confession in which there is no excuse for sin, nor attempts at self-justification.** { ST March 16, 1888, par. 15 }

Paul did not seek to shield himself; he paints his sin in the darkest shades, aggravating rather than lessening his guilt. He said: “Many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities.” He did not hesitate to declare that “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.” { ST March 16, 1888, par. 16 }

The humble and broken heart, subdued by genuine repentance, will appreciate something of the love of God, and the cost of Calvary; and as a son confesses to a loving father, so will the truly penitent bring all his sins before God. And it is written, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” { ST March 16, 1888, par. 17 }

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