

# Hartford Bible Students Newsletter

## March 2010

### CONFESSIONS OF TRANSGRESSIONS

In the past few weeks there has been much talk about the public confessions of famous people. Over the past few decades, we seem to be hearing more of these, maybe due to the fact that these transgressions are no longer able to be kept hidden as they used to be. Due to 24-hour news coverage, the internet, cell phones and video cameras, we are living in a day where many secrets are being revealed. Mark 4:22, *“For there is not anything hid that may not be manifested, nor was anything kept hid but that it **may come to light.**”*

Although these incidents are not new to our day but have always been going on, because of the fact that they are being reported with more details, they are having an impact on our society. Those who were role models, whether they be politicians, celebrities, athletes, etc., are falling from the pedestals that they had been placed on.

#### The Bad Result of Public Confessions

The various scandals and hypocrisies that have come to light have bad, as well as good, results. It is bad for society in the sense that sin has a degrading influence. Apostle Paul expresses this principle in 1 Corinthians 5:6: *“Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?”* Leaven, when used in Scripture, is symbolic of sin. When sin is permitted in the church (the body of Christ, represented by a lump of bread), it can lead to moral or doctrinal error elsewhere in the church.

This same principle can be applied to the secular world. The more sin and immoral behavior becomes a common thing, the greater will be society’s degradation. 2 Timothy 3:1-4 describes what is to be expected in the present time: *“But of this be assured: **in the last days** grievous times will set in. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, haughty, profane. They will be disobedient to parents, thankless, irreligious, destitute of natural affection, unforgiving, slanderers. They will have no self-control, but will be brutal, opposed to goodness, treacherous, headstrong, self-important. They will love pleasure instead of loving God.”*

#### The Good Result of Public Confessions

However, there is a good result to the revealing of these transgressions. Apostle Paul expressed a profound truth in Romans 3:23: *“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”* **ALL MANKIND have sinned.**

As we see some of the “heroes” and “role models” of our day stumble and fall, it should make us all realize the need for a savior. Paul says that the purpose of seeing that we each violate God’s

Law is so that “*every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God*” (Rom. 3:19). It is imperative for mankind to recognize that **all are guilty before God; there is no exception.**

### **We Cannot Judge the Hearts of Others**

Contrary to what many today think, it is NOT wrong to judge conduct. **We can and should** judge which conduct is right versus which conduct is wrong. Romans 12:9, “*Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.*” Matthew 7:15, “*Ye shall know them by their fruits.*” However, **we cannot and should not** judge what is in someone’s heart or, in other words, what their motivation is. This is what Jesus meant when he said in Matthew 7:1, “*Judge not, that ye be not judged.*”

### **The Good Effect of True Repentance**

True repentance is desirable in all who sin. We are told in Proverbs 24:16, “*For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again.*” Those who are truly contrite, or repentant, for the errors of their way find themselves in a humbled condition. This humbled, discouraged condition can be very favorable if the person will seek God's help and assistance. God knows that we are sinful humans. He understands the flaws in our characters and our weaknesses. He is very sympathetic to those who wish to return to His favor, and He will help them.

The Apostle Paul addressed some Christians who had repented and were “sorry” for their past conduct. He explains that there is a difference between being “sorry unto repentance,” which is “**godly sorrow,**” versus being sorry you were caught, which is “**the sorrow of the world.**” 2 Corinthians 7:9, 10, “*I now rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye were made **sorry unto repentance**; for ye were **made sorry after a godly sort**, that ye might suffer loss by us in nothing. **For godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation**, which bringeth no regret: but the **sorrow of the world worketh death.**” True repentance always includes reformation of character -- this is godly sorrow.*

### **Do We Need a Priest to Confess Our Sins?**

The Catholic Church teaches that God forgives sin through the Catholic priesthood in the Sacrament of Penance. They say that it is the priest himself who, by reciting the formula of absolution, forgives the sins of the repentant one in God's place.

But is this what Jesus taught? Jesus instructed his disciples in Matthew 6:6, “*But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thine inner chamber, and having shut thy door, pray to thy Father who is in secret, and thy Father who seeth in secret shall recompense thee.*” There is no mention here of a third party (a priest) required to be present.

Christians who have consecrated their lives to God are told in 1 John 2:2, “*If any many sin, we have **an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.**” It is through the ransom sacrifice of Jesus Christ that we have access to God in prayer. We do not need a priest to intercede. When we approach our Heavenly Father, we can “*come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may**

*obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.” (Heb. 4:16) “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” 1 John 1:9*

### **Who Can Receive Forgiveness?**

Forgiveness can only be given through the merit of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is only those who now “abide in Christ” whose sins can be forgiven. (John 15:7) When a Christian dedicates their life to do God’s will and not their own, and accepts Jesus Christ’s ransom sacrifice as a covering for their sins, they can then have their sins covered by his merit. These Christians who have taken this step are on trial for life and death; this is why they need Christ’s merit to cover their imperfections as they strive to be faithful.

For others who have not yet taken this step of full consecration to God, they will have an opportunity in Christ’s kingdom on earth to have Christ’s merit applied to them and repent from their sins. They are not now on trial for life and death. It will be during Christ’s kingdom on earth that they will be on trial.

Our Heavenly Father is merciful and gracious that all sinners repent. Let us have this same attitude of heart with regard to others, and to take comfort that God will be merciful and gracious to all sinners who repent.

*“For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, **to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.**” Isaiah 57:15*

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