

ABC's of SALVATION

by

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CHAPTER ELEVEN

KINDS OF CONFESSIONS

A NUMBER of times during my years of gospel ministry I have seen people make confession of Christ as Saviour, seemingly in all sincerity, and then in a few weeks go back into the old life as if nothing had ever taken place.

I am thinking of a young husband and wife who professed to accept Christ in an evangelistic campaign. They seemed to display real conviction and quite an amount of emotion. They were baptized and came into the fellowship of the church, but never came to another service. On the other hand, I have seen others confess Christ with little outward show of conviction and emotion, yet grow in grace and the knowledge of the Lord and become strong, stalwart servants of the Lord. How may we account for those who fall away so quickly?

In going through the Word of God we find seven people who made confession by saying probably the most difficult words in the language, namely, I have sinned. In a study of these confessions, we believe the keys are found to the soon falling away of some and to the faithfulness of others.

I. Pharaoh

“I HAVE SINNED,” said Pharaoh in Exodus 9:27.

The man who made this humbling confession was the haughty monarch, who, a short while before had said, **“Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go”** (Exodus 5:2). What had changed his attitude? Six judgments had rolled over Egypt each of which had left Pharaoh's heart harder than before.

When the seventh judgment broke, it seemed as if all the pent up furies of the heavens were turned loose. There were hail and fire such as Egypt had never seen— thunders such as Egypt had never heard. It was then that Pharaoh sent for Moses and Aaron and said, *“I have sinned.”*

It was a confession produced by fear.

Its counterpart is seen in the soldier in the battle, the sailor in the tempest, the father and mother at the bedside of a sick child, who, when the crisis is past, return to the old life.

An English Christian physician kept record of men who made confessions on what they thought were their “deathbeds,” and who recovered. He found few who did not go back to the old life of sin after recovery.

I am thinking of a big, husky mechanic, whom I had tried to reach with the gospel of Christ. He was stricken with pneumonia and sent for me. He seemed very anxious to accept Christ as Saviour. As soon as he was able, he came into the fellowship of the church by baptism. He not only soon fell away but became very critical when approached by Christian workers. At the time he made his confession, I was somewhat apprehensive lest it was a case of fear.

II. Balaam

“**I HAVE SINNED,**” said Balaam in Numbers 22:34.

These words were spoken by one of the most peculiar characters who ever strode upon the stage of time, tarried for a few moments, then passed on into oblivion. One day he would stand on a mountain top and speak some of the most profound prophecies found in the Scriptures—the next day he would be consorting with Balak and accepting his gold to curse the people of God.

Who is his counterpart? Is it not the person who makes a noble confession of Christ on Sunday and then consorts with the enemies of Christ during the week?

How often men and women seem to enjoy the preaching of the Word of God on the Lord’s Day, yet seem equally to enjoy the sordid, vile story of evil companions throughout the week. It is one thing to have a “**form of godliness**” but quite another “**to know the power thereof.**”

III. Saul

“**I HAVE SINNED,**” said the first king of Israel in I Samuel 15:24.

Saul had much in common with Balaam. He would have the earmarks of a saint one day and the earmarks of a sinner the next. He was a lying, plotting, murderous man. When “caught with the goods” (I Samuel 15:14) and told by the old prophet that the Lord had rejected him for his disobedience, he made the confession. His confession came too late.

Who is his counterpart? It is not the man who refuses to honor God with his substance, position, or life, then when money is gone, job is in jeopardy, or life hanging in the balance, cries, “**I have sinned?**”

IV. Achan

“**I HAVE SINNED,**” said Achan in Joshua 7:20.

The story is quite familiar. Israel had suffered a terrible defeat at Ai.

Joshua rent his clothes and fell upon his face before the ark of the Lord. God told Joshua to get up and search out the sinner in Israel who had caused the defeat. A search was made and Achan was found to be the guilty man. He had had plenty of time to make confession but did not do so until he was caught. It was confession because of exposure.

One time many years ago when I was in the government banking service, I knew a young businessman who frequented the lobby of the building and traded vile stories with another clerk who loved to roll these morsels under his tongue. This young businessman had a beautiful home, lovely young wife, and small baby.

One day he tarried until the lobby was cleared and the other clerks had left. He came up to my window and with quivering voice and tear filled eyes said, "Mr. Van Gorder, I want you to pray for me."

The shock almost caused me to fall off the chair, for it had seemed to me he had delighted to tell vile stories at a time when I had to listen to them. He started to tell me his difficulty, but I would not allow him to do so—I did not want to know it, for I surmised what it was. He had been leading a double life, and the other party to the crime was about to expose him. As soon as a clever attorney got the matter hushed up, the young businessman quit tarrying around my window and began again to swap his vile stories with the other clerk. It was a repentance based upon fear of exposure.

V. Judas

"**I HAVE SINNED,**" said Judas in Matthew 27:4 as he cast the betrayal money at the feet of the priests and elders. This was the repentance of despair.

For three years this man had followed the Christ. He had heard every discourse; he had witnessed every miracle (see chapter on "Heart Black as Night"). He had trifled too long with his soul's destiny. Some one has written:

There is a line by man unseen,
Which crosses every path,
The boundary line between
God's mercy and God's wrath.

Judas had crossed that line. Somewhere today in the regions of the doomed and the damned is the man who confessed, "**I have sinned.**"

Some time ago I conducted a Bible conference in the capital's a northern state. I closed each message with an evangelistic appeal. Most people bowed their heads, but one old, gray-haired man would stare at me with the most stoical indifference I had ever seen. Upon inquiry as to who he was, I was told that years before he was "**almost persuaded**" but had turned away and now testified, "**It is too late.**"

Be that as it may, one thing is sure, Judas said too late, "**I have sinned.**"

VI. The Prodigal

“**I HAVE SINNED,**” said the prodigal in Luke 15:18.

This was a true confession and had all the elements of true repentance. Dr. C. I. Scofield, in the *Scofield Reference Bible*, says, “Repentance is the translation of a Greek word (*Metanoia—metanoeo*) meaning ‘to have another mind,’ ‘to change the mind,’ and is used in the N.T. to indicate a change of mind in respect of sin, of God, and of self.”

The whole of Luke 15 is not three parables but one parable in three parts—a parable which illustrates the love of the Trinity for lost souls. In the third part of that parable the father is representative of the great Heavenly Father, who wants to welcome the sinner home. You will note, according to the above definition, this confession had all the marks of true repentance. There had been a change of mind toward sin, self, and God.

VII. Job

“**I HAVE SINNED,**” said the patriarch in Job 7:20. This is the repentance of a saint.

God loved Job and had testified to Satan, “**There is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil.**” But Job was conversant with that truth later unfolded in the New Testament, “**If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us**” (I John 1:10). As a saint, Job was acting upon the kindred truth, “**If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness**” (I John 1:9).

Of the seven we have studied who said, “**I have sinned,**” in the light of the Word of God, only two were recipients of salvation. Dear reader, do not say these words too late.

God’s house is filling fast,
“Yet there is room!”
Some guest will be the last,
“Yet there is room!”
Yes! soon salvation’s day
To you will pass away,
Then Grace no more will say,
“Yet there is room!”

~ end of chapter 11 ~

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