

# **Grace Communication 9 - Confession Communication and the Vow**

a study for the Gulf Coast Baptist Church Bible Institute

Winter 25-26 by Steve Thomas

## **Introduction**

Sin is a part of the believer's life, unfortunately. John the Apostle tells the believer that if he believes that he has no sin nature (literally a quality of sin) that he is deceiving himself and lacks the truth necessary to defeat that sin nature. The "truth" spoken about in 1 John 1:8 is that body of revelation in scripture that will enable the believer to overcome his sin nature. Christ prophesied while speaking to the believing Jews in John 8 that the truth would set them free, this was to occur in the future if they continued (remained or abided) in his Word. John continues in verse 10 of the first chapter in his epistle that if the believer states that he has never sinned (the action) then he makes God a liar and does not possess the Word.

So in these two verses God tells the believer that he possesses a quality of sin (his sin nature) and has performed sin as well. But given that bad news, there is a verse in between that should be a wonderful relief for the believer. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:9.

Sin is defined as "lawlessness" (1 John 3:4), or behaving as if God has not placed any restraints on one's life. This involves definite action in violation of the standards given by God.

When a believer sins, God has created an opportunity for the believer to restore the fellowship that was broken by his actions. This opportunity comes through confession communication.

## **Definition**

The word used in the Greek language is homologia or "to say the same thing as". Homo - same - Logia - to say. "Confession" is the believer's communication with God the Father in which he says the same thing as the Father does about acts of sin calling them sin.

## **A Barrier to Fellowship**

According to some revelation in the OT and NT, sin creates a situation where the Spirit of God is grieved and must be dealt with. I cried unto him with my mouth, and he was extolled with my tongue. If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me: But verily God hath heard me; he hath attended to the voice of my prayer. Blessed be God, which hath not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy from me. Psalm 66:17-20 Sin grieves the Holy Spirit making Confession necessary to return to the position of fellowship with the Holy Spirit. Ephesians 4:30

## **Content of Confession**

This type of communication distinctly names the sin which has been committed by the believer. The content of the communication is based upon God's standards. The believer says the same thing as God about his sin. 1 Samuel 15 tells the events after King Saul sinned and did not have an honest appraisal of what took place. David was honest with God and himself after being

approached by Nathan the prophet. Psalm 51 recounts some of David's words following his rebuke from Nathan. There will always be temptation to deflect some of the responsibility to others (and they may bear some of this responsibility). But the believer does not confess for others, only for himself. Daniel, Nehemiah, and other leaders confessed for the nation, but they were given the authority to do this. This would be a distinction between OT and NT communication.

Confession is directed towards the Father. The context of 1 John 1 leads us to believe that the fellowship is broken with the Father because of sin, and confession restores fellowship. The believer does not need to ask for forgiveness. Eph 1:7, 4:32, Col 1:14 all tell the believer that forgiveness is a present possession. Confession is all that is necessary, not a request for forgiveness. According to 1 John 1:9 forgiveness is present, as well as a cleansing for the uncleanness that led up to the sin. Forgiveness has been given, it is not conditional.

The believer can offend God before he commits the sin, this could be termed a trespass, or uncleanness or unrighteousness. This all is forgiven when the believer confesses the sin connected to this other behavior. This simple verbal agreement with God concerning sin brings forgiveness of the sin with the assurance that God has cleansed from all unrighteousness leading up to the sinful act.

Confession is also not a statement of human frailty. It should be a specific naming of the action that was committed by the believer. God knows about the weaknesses of the believer, it was not that weakness that broke fellowship with the Spirit of God, it was the sinful action. According to James 5:16, confession might occur towards another believer to restore fellowship with that individual. If a believer sins towards another believer, confession might be necessary.

### **The Character of the Godhead**

In 1 John 1:9 John directs the attention to the faithfulness of God. God is faithful in that He will never change concerning his promises, he is also righteous in that he always acts rightly in every instance concerning sin. God's faithfulness is described in detail throughout scripture, but it is referenced here to give the believer confidence that confession is all that is needed to restore fellowship. A faithful and righteous God has given forgiveness and will cleanse the believer.

The verbs are all in the subjunctive mood, noting probability or possibility. The confession is a possibility as far as the believer is concerned. As was seen earlier, the forgiveness is not conditional, but the confession of the believer is.

### **Conclusion**

The believer's sin nature makes confession to God necessary. The believer will sin, breaking fellowship with God the Father. This is grievous to the Spirit of God. The Spirit is seeking to

conform the believer to the image of Christ, leading the believer's walk. When the believer sins, this process is interrupted. A specific statement agreeing with God that sin has occurred will trigger a cleansing by God of the uncleanness that led to the sin and a restoration of the broken fellowship. What a joy to understand that forgiveness is a present possession and that restoration is always possible for the believer.

## **The Vow**

### **Introduction**

Although mentioned only three times in the New Testament, referring to only two situations, one of which is not recommended for grace believers, the vow is still worthy of our study. It is the least used of all 8 forms of communication. Its meaning has changed slightly through the dispensations. Paul made a vow to God, but he placed himself under law at the request of a brother who was motivated by anxiety. This was not a spirit-filled situation, I believe. But there is a situation where a believer may make a promise to God, and keeping it will relieve him of an infirmity that has beset him because of sin. This is also a unique situation.

### **Definition**

This term was more prolific in the OT. The "Vow" communication is a rarely used type of communication for most grace believers. The word – εὐχή, (euche) is found in Jas. 5:15 in its one occurrence for communication with God. In this form of communication a believer makes a promise to the Father to do something the Holy Spirit has prompted his heart to do if it is possible for him to do it.

The Jew was not to swear by things, Matt 5:33-37, this is Millennial Kingdom teaching here in the passage, but gives background on the use of the term as it was being used in the NT.

### **Paul's Situation**

Was encouraged by James to participate in taking a vow with several young men. Paul was being confronted about his teaching to the Gentiles, and it caused some issues with the Jews. He puts pressure on Paul to do what they were telling him to do (Acts 21:17-26; Acts 18:18). Paul actually allows what he advises against later on in his ministry (Col 2:16). He recommends to the Galatians to "stand fast" in the liberty where Christ had made them free. The vow he took at Corinth seems to be voluntary, but he was definitely pressured into taking the vow in Jerusalem.

This seems to be a time where Paul is out of fellowship with God, but God graciously deals with Paul and he is still usable. I believe this an important time of lesson learning for Paul.

### **The Vow of the Sick**

This passage has been dealt with already in two other classes. There seems to be an individual with an infirmity here. The infirmity is an emotional or mental illness because of sin. This was a sin that was committed against another individual which is the reason why confession should

be made between the parties. Repentance gives restoration and the individual is received back into fellowship with the laying on of hands - a recognition of the situation being resolved. The vow (translated prayer in verse 15) of faith will save (heal) the sickness, and the Lord will remove the malady. the elders pray (worship) over the individual - and then we have the phrase: the effectual fervent prayer (supplication) of a righteous man has much strength.

The supplication of the righteous man carries with it the unknown factor, whether or not the repentance is genuine or if the faith of the individual will waver in the future. But the elders recognize the repentance of the individual and the mental infirmity is removed.

In this passage, worship, supplication, and the vow are present. The worship is by the elders. The supplication would be from the elders and the other individual - perhaps the recipient of the sin committed by the sick individual. The vow of faith will be from the restored individual.

### **Conclusion**

This situation is rare, but can happen. Identification of the words used for each type of communication will give insight into what is happening. There is opportunity to misuse this communication, either in the OT method or without the leading of the Spirit.