

CONFESSING FAULTS AND FORGIVING ONE ANOTHER

1. WHAT has God promised to do when we confess our sins?

“If we confess our sins, *He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*” **1John 1:9.**

2. How has it been made possible for sins to be forgiven?

“If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and *He is the propitiation for our sins.*” **1John 2:1, 2.**

3. To whom should sins be confessed, and why?

“*Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight.*” **Psalm 51:4.** See **Genesis 39:9.**

4. What instruction is given concerning confession of faults?

“*Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed.*” **James 5:16.**

NOTES — The Bible makes a distinction between a sin and a fault. We sin against God; for sin is the transgression of His law. **1John 3:4.** We trespass one against another. These offenses, while involving sin, are called faults, and should be corrected by confession and forgiveness. The only remedy for either pointed out in the Word of God is heartfelt confession. One writer aptly says: “Confess your sins to God, who only can forgive them, and your faults to one another. If you have given offense to your friend or neighbor, you are to acknowledge your wrong, and it is his duty freely to forgive you. Then you are to seek the forgiveness of God, because the brother you have wounded is the property of God, and in injuring him you sinned against his Creator and Redeemer.”

To confess one's faults is not an easy thing to do; in fact, it is one of the hardest lessons to learn, for it requires the grace of humility as well as that of sorrow and true repentance. It has been said that the four hardest words to pronounce in the English language are, “I made a mistake.” Frederick the Great wrote to the Prussian senate, “I have just lost a battle, and it is

my own fault.” Concerning this Goldsmith says, “His confession shows more greatness than his victories.”

The confession should not only be complete, but it should be as broad and as public as was the offense. Private offenses should be confessed in private.

5. When we do wrong, what is the natural thing for us to do?

Excuse it, seek to hide it, or blame some one else for it. See **Genesis 3:12, 13; 4:9.**

6. After David’s great sin had been pointed out to him, what did he say?

“I have sinned.” **2Samuel 12:13.** “I acknowledge my transgressions.” **Psalms 51:3.**

7. When David in contrition of heart confessed his sin, what was God’s word to him by Nathan, the prophet?

“And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the Lord. And Nathan said unto David, *The Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die.*” **2Samuel 12:13.**

NOTE — This scripture is especially encouraging. God hates sin. He wants us likewise to hate it and shun it, because it invariably gets us into trouble, causes sorrow of heart, and in the end brings death. But when involved in it, as was David, as soon as it is acknowledged and sincerely confessed, *that very moment it is forgiven.* David said, “I have sinned.” The immediate answer was returned, “The Lord also *hath put away thy sin.*”

8. Is it ever right to tell a brother of his faults?

“If thy brother shall trespass against thee, *go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone:* if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.” **Matthew 18:15.** “Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: *thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbor, and not suffer sin upon him.*” **Leviticus 19:17.**

9. In what spirit should this kind of work be done?

“Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one *in the spirit of meekness;* considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.” **Galatians 6:1.**

NOTE — It is much easier to tell *some one else* of a brother's faults than it is to tell *him* of them *himself*; but this is not the Christian way to proceed. The first efforts should be made with the offender *in person*, and *alone*. But it is easier even to tell a *brother* of *his* faults than it is to confess to him of *our own*. This, again, let it be noted, is the one very difficult lesson to learn, the one Christian duty difficult to perform. Only humility and the grace of God will enable one to do it.

10. When we pray, what does Christ tell us to do, and why?

“And when ye stand praying, *forgive*, if ye have aught against any: *that your Father* also which is in heaven *may forgive you your trespasses.*” **Mark 11:25.**

11. If we do not forgive others, what will God not do?

“But if ye do not forgive, *neither will your Father* which is in heaven *forgive your trespasses.*” **Verse 26.** See, for illustration, Christ's parable recorded in **Matthew 18:23–35.**

12. What words of Joseph to his brethren show that he forgave them for selling him into Egypt?

“Now therefore *be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither*: for God did send me before you to preserve life. . . . *So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God.*” **Genesis 45:5–8.**

13. What was Christ's reply to Peter's question as to the number of times we should forgive one another?

“Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, *I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.*” **Matthew 18:21, 22.**

NOTE — That is, an unlimited number. We must pardon offenses against us though ever so often done; we must forgive to the end.

14. What spirit did Jesus manifest toward those who nailed Him to the cross?

“Then said Jesus, *Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.*” **Luke 23:34.**

15. How did Stephen manifest the same spirit toward those who stoned him?

“And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, *Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.*” **Acts 7:59, 60.** See **1Peter 4:8.**