

A Spirit of Confession

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Date: 16 June 2024

Preacher: Donnie Griggs

[0 : 0 0] Hey, well, good morning, One Harbor. My name is Donnie. I'm one of the pastors, and it's so great to be with you. I know I'm not physically with you in the room, but man, it is great to just be able to be with you, to encourage you, to strengthen you.

As we looked this morning back in our series in Nehemiah, if you're brand new to the Bible or brand new to checking out Christianity, Nehemiah is actually a book of the Bible. It's a short little book in the Old Testament that talks about God using his people to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.

You might be wondering why that's important to any of us. Well, these are our ancestors in the faith. But it's also important because the New Testament tells us that the city of Jerusalem is a picture of what the church is supposed to be, that we are the church. We're the new Jerusalem.

And so as we look back into the Old Testament and we see the city of Jerusalem, we learn a lot about what God had in mind for who we are and what we're supposed to do. We see lots of things, but I mean, just simply, the city of Jerusalem was a safe place for God's people to come together, people from all over the place, to dwell together, to worship God together, to encourage one another, to help one another. Well, that's what the church should be like.

And then secondly, the city of Jerusalem was meant to be a beautiful witness to a watching world of what God was like. Jesus said this in his ministry. He said that the church would be like a city set on a hill, that we would shine like light into the darkness.

[1 : 1 7] So this is a very powerful picture that the Bible gives us, and it's really worth us spending some time looking at. And we've seen them so far come together, rebuild the wall, face all kinds of opposition.

People started to move back. And then last week, we saw their joyous response as the word of God was brought back and read publicly. And it was just incredible how they responded.

They're excited again to be God's people. But what had led them to be in exile in the first place was their sin. And so this week, we look at how that gets addressed.

This is a very, very good chapter. Nehemiah chapter 9. We're going to read most of it. We're going to break it up because it's a lot. I would encourage you, after we're done this morning, to go back and read the whole thing for yourself.

Just nice and slow. Just take your time reading through it. We're going to start with just the first few verses. Nehemiah chapter 9, verse 1 through 3. Now, on the 24th day of this month, the people of Israel were assembled with fasting and in sackcloth and with earth on their heads.

[2 : 1 6] And the Israelites separated themselves from all the foreigners and stood, and they confessed their sins and the iniquities of their fathers. And they stood up in their place, and they read from the book of the law of the Lord their God for a quarter of the day.

For another quarter of it, they made confession and worshiped their God. Okay, we're going to stop there. Remember, we're looking at them to see, you know, how does this help us? And what's happening here?

Well, you've got confession of sin, repentance from sin. And so we're going to talk about that this morning. Let's just, before we dive in, let's get some clarity. Firstly, what is sin and what is confession?

I don't want to insult your intelligence, but I know that all of us come from different backgrounds, and some of you may be brand new to this whole thing, and I don't want to leave you behind. I want us to all kind of be working with the same information.

So simply, what is sin? Sin is missing the mark. What does that mean? Well, it's failing or rebelling. It's failing to obey God. It's rebelling against God.

[3 : 15] It's choosing to worship something other than God. It's, you know, choosing to put something else over God. Like, these are all things that describe what sin is. And a lot of us grew up in church, and we knew sin was bad, but we weren't really sure what it was.

And so there's lots of lists in the Bible that can help you with, you know, what are some sins to help, you know, help earth this out for you. I mean, think Ten Commandments. You've got idolatry, taking God's name in vain, not keeping the Sabbath, honoring your father and your mother, murdering, adultery, stealing, bearing false witness, coveting.

In the New Testament, we get lists like this one in Galatians 5. Now the works of the flesh are evident. Sexual morality, that word there is porneia. It's where we get our word pornography, but it just means like kind of all things sexual sin.

Impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these.

It's like this dot, dot, dot, right? This is just obvious. He said this is obvious. They're evident, right? It says, I warn you as I warned you before that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

[4 : 26] So that's just a bit of what sin is. Who's a sinner? All of us. Romans 3.23, for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. All of us.

So that's very clear in the Bible, that all of us. That includes me up on this stage. That includes all of you. Well, which sins are serious? So you can think about sin like this.

There's vertical implications, like between us and God. We sin against him. But then there's also these horizontal implications, right? Where we sin against one another. And horizontally, man, some sins are way more serious than others.

I mean, if you murder someone versus like you say something bad about someone, man, those are different, right? They're different in a court of law, you know? So they're all serious.

But horizontally, there's some differences, right? However, vertically, all sin is sin. All sin is mutiny. All sin is rebellion against God, who is the sovereign king.

[5 : 24] And most of us don't think our sin is that bad. You know, but all mutiny is mutiny, right? You know, if you're a pirate, whether you're Blackbeard the pirate, you know, and you're really bad, or you're Jack Sparrow just skipping around singing songs to a sovereign king, you're both pirates.

Like, mutiny is mutiny, right? And the situation for all of us is bad. We are actually born into sin. God knows all our sins. God hates all sin, even the little ones.

Yeah, so, man, sin is serious. What do we do about our sins? Why don't you think about one sin for you? Think about maybe one of the ones we've read or one I didn't read, but just, that would help you, actually, right now, get the most out of this.

If you just think about one sin, kind of keep it in your mind, that's, like, for you right now. What are you doing about that? That's kind of what this passage deals with.

Let's talk about confession, repentance. This is the Bible's way. This is God's way of how we're supposed to handle our sin. I think that confession can be something that's particularly hard for many of us.

[6 : 33] And because it seems hard, we choose other options. You may choose to hide your sin. You may choose to distract yourself or to numb yourself from your sin. That's all kinds of things.

We can do that with substance abuse. We can do that with buying things or binge-watching things or just whatever, just trying to get your mind off of it. You can choose to beat yourself up about your sin, you know, whether that's actually externally hurting yourself or internally.

You can choose the path of, you know, do better, try harder, sort of like morality to try to just fix yourself. These are all the things we do instead of confessing sin, instead of repenting.

But those are not the things God wants us to do. And, in fact, it's good for us to know that none of those things actually lead to our healing. And, in James chapter 5, verse 16, James says this, God's got a path for us to deal with sin that actually leads to our healing.

Whereas, all these other things, they don't. They don't lead to our healing. And so, I just want us to ask ourselves, one harbor this morning, what would it look like for us to be a people of repentance? This is what they were. They were now a people of confession and repentance.

[7 : 44] What would that look like? That's what we're going to look at this morning. If you, again, if you're new, just checking out Christianity, this whole repentance thing should be very normal for Christians. There was a bumper sticker that was going around for a while that said, Christians aren't perfect, just forgiven.

I cringe even saying that out loud. But the cringe isn't over the truth of that. The cringe is around the excuse of that. Because a lot of times what's happened is that person would cut you off in the road, maybe, like, hold out an obscene gesture out of the car, or shout profanities, you know, driving recklessly.

And you've got this bumper sticker that says, Christians aren't perfect, just forgiven. Well, okay, it's true. We're not perfect. We're forgiven. But, like, a lot of times we use that as an excuse for our sin. And instead of actually, like, taking care of our sin in a biblical way, like, repenting of it, right?

And so it's just sad that too few followers of Jesus actually repent of their sins, which means that we aren't healed. It also means that we damage our corporate witness to the world, right?

Remember, that's a big part of this. We want to be a city set on a hill. We want to shine like light to the darkness. So let's dive in this morning. And I would encourage you as much as possible to think about yourself.

[8 : 56] Think about that sin or a couple of sins. Think about yourself. In verse 5, we see this. It says, This is, I think, just foundational.

This is good. Repentance happens best when it starts with how good God is, not how bad you or I are. That's when repentance is, like, it happens best when there's this foundation of how good God is.

And that, like, then we move into, like, looking at ourselves. We don't start with how bad we are. A lot of times with repentance, we either make too light of our sin or we make too light of God's goodness and his mercy.

And that leads to, you know, places like pride or despair. We feel better about ourselves than we should or we feel worse about ourselves. We end up in these things, but that's not what you see going on here.

They're not just trying to do better and whatever, and they're not beating themselves up. It's not based in their badness. It's based in God's goodness. And again, this is a model for us.

[10:04] So let's just look at, like, the kinds of things that they do as they worship and confess about their sins. So firstly, we seem to acknowledge that God made everything good. They say, You made everything good.

You are the Lord, verse 6. You alone. You made heaven. You made the heavens of heavens with all their hosts, the earth and all that's on it, the seas and all that's in them. You preserve all of them, and the host of heaven worships you.

Man, that's how they start confession, by, like, going, God, you made everything. You made everything good. Well, we know that James 1 tells us that every good and perfect gift comes from the Father, comes from above.

Secondly, they acknowledge, God, you chose us to be your people. You didn't just make everything. You picked us. You chose us, verse 7. You chose Abraham. You brought him out of the Ur of the Chaldeans and gave him the name Abraham and on and on, right?

Well, 1 Peter 2.9 says that we are a church. We're a chosen race. We're a royal priesthood. We're a holy nation. We're people of his own possession. Thirdly, they acknowledge that he keeps all of his promises.

[11:06] You're a God who keeps all your promises. Verse 8, You have kept your promise, for you are righteous. In 2 Corinthians 1, we see that it says that all the promises of God find their yes in him, in Jesus.

Next, they say, God, you see when we suffer. You hear our cries for help. You saw the affliction of our fathers in Egypt. You heard their cry at the Red Sea. Man, we see this over and over again.

1 Peter 5 tells us we can cast all of our anxieties, all of our cares or anxieties on him because he cares for us. Next, they say, you showed how powerful you were by triumphing over our enemies.

You, verse 10 says, you performed signs and wonders against Pharaoh and against all his servants and against the people of his land. You knew they acted arrogantly against their fathers and you made a name for yourself as it is to this day.

Colossians 2 says he disarmed. Jesus disarmed the rulers and authorities. He put them to open shame by triumphing over them. Next, they say, you made a way for us to be rescued. They're just worshiping, right?

[12:10] You made a way for us to be rescued. Verse 11, you divided the sea before them. They went through the midst of the sea on dry land. You cast their pursuers into the depths. Well, Hebrews 10 tells us that, it says, Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by this new and living way that he opened for us through a curtain, that is, through his flesh.

He made a way for us to be rescued. You gave us your presence to lead us, they say, by a pillar of cloud you led us. It says, in fire at night you led us. Well, John 14, Jesus says that he sends the Holy Spirit.

He sends the Holy Spirit to be God with us, the presence of God with us, to lead us, to guide us. They say, God, you came down from heaven and you showed us how to really live.

I mean, gracious. If that doesn't point to Jesus, what does? Right? You came down. You came down. You showed us how to live, like how to live your true laws, your true statutes, your commandments.

You showed us how to do this. That's exactly what Jesus did. The Bible says God sent his son. Jesus came down to earth and he lived among us. He didn't just come, die on a cross, and leave.

[13 : 18] He came and lived among us, not just to be with us, but to show us how to live. They say, God, you satisfied our hunger and our thirst. Verse 15, you gave them bread from heaven for their hunger and brought them water out of the rock for their thirst.

Jesus says about this very thing in John 6, he says he's the bread that has come down from heaven. And in the next chapter in John 7, he gets up and he says, if anyone thirsts, let him come to me.

Let him come to me and drink. He satisfies our hunger and our thirst. And lastly, we see here they worship by saying, God, you gave us a place and a purpose.

You told our ancestors to go and to possess the land that you had sworn to give them. And the very last words Jesus gives in the gospel of Matthew, he says to his disciples, go, therefore, into all nations.

I've got authority over the whole earth. Go into all nations. Make disciples of all nations. He gives us a place and a purpose. So far, so good. God is amazing, right? Well, when you really do that, when you sit in that, like how good God is, it puts you and God in stark contrast.

[14 : 32] This exalting of God had come against the backdrop of being brought back out of exile, being given a home, being given the word of God, and it led them to do business with God about their own simpleness.

Why? Why? Well, because they weren't measuring themselves against themselves, right? And that's how most of us get by in life. We tell ourselves we're better than so-and-so, right? And that moves us along.

Like when we start to feel bad, oh, well, at least I'm not as bad as so-and-so. Well, Jesus spoke about that kind of religion and frankly condemned it. In Luke 18, he told a parable to some who, he said, trusted in themselves they were righteous, and they treated others with contempt.

He said two men went up into the temple to pray. One was a Pharisee. This is a religious leader, a teacher. And the other a tax collector, which is a, it's not what you would think of in our day, despite what you think of tax collectors today.

This is someone who was a crook. They were a crook. They were a terrible person. This is two people go to church effectively, and Jesus says the Pharisee stands by himself, and he prays like this.

[15 : 33] God, I thank you I'm not like other men. Hmm. I'm not like those extortioners, the unjust, the adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I mean, it's a bit awkward. I fast twice a week.

I give tithes on all that I get. Look at me, God. Look how great I am. This is how he's praying. But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven.

He beat his breast, and he said, God, be merciful to me, a sinner. Those are two very different ways to come to God. Jesus says this, I tell you that this man went into his house justified, rather than the other.

Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled. The one who humbles himself will be exalted. The Pharisee in this parable was enamored with himself, measured himself against others. The tax collector knew his own guilt, knew his sin, and he measured himself against the holy God.

Friends, maybe if you're a follower of Jesus and you're not repenting of sin, it may just be because you lack awareness of how good and holy your God is.

[16 : 39] It's interesting, actually, that the way this works, that this chapter is after chapter 8. Chapter 8, where they get the word, and they're rejoicing, they're worshiping. I mean, you almost think that, like, they come back to God with repentance, and then they go into this kind of worship word sort of moment.

But I think it's actually really powerful here. They've just had the most amazing time in the word. They've just had the most amazing time. They've been reminded of the goodness of God, the knowledge of God. Frankly, the awareness of God again.

Like, they've been made aware of God again. And what has that done? It's made them want to bring their sin into the light, not sweep their sin under the rug. Well, what does repentance look like?

Well, we see a brilliant example here, right? Again, verses 1 through 3. On the 24th day of this month, the people of Israel were assembled, fasting, sackcloth, earth on their heads. They separated themselves.

They confessed their sins and the iniquities of the fathers. They stood up for a quarter of the day. They made confession. I think what we see them doing here is owning their sin.

[17 : 39] I think repentance requires us to own our sin. Again, what do I mean by that? Well, not making excuses for our sin.

Not blaming someone else for our sins. Well, God, I wouldn't have done that if so-and-so hadn't done this. I mean, that's often how kids are, right? Well, Mom, you don't know what they did. That's not owning up to what you've done.

We can make excuses. We can blame others. We can make light of our sin. Well, at least I didn't do that. I know someone who's way worse than me, right? That's not what you see going on here. You see them own their sin, and that's true repentance.

That's true confession. I mean, look what they did. They humbled themselves. They fast. They put on these garments of mourning, sackcloth. They put dirt on their head. They separate themselves. They stand.

It's kind of like what they've done here is they're at a legal hearing, and they're all collectively just entering a guilty plea. Like, no contest. We're guilty. Is your client having anything to say?

[18 : 38] No. Nothing to add. He's guilty. They're outwardly demonstrating this inward recognition of sin. Secondly, they're very thorough with their confession.

I mean, a lot of times, if you think about this, I mean, I mean, they're just, a lot of times, they're like, sorry, God. My bad. But it doesn't really get at the gravitas of our sin. It took a quarter of the day to do this.

That's a long time. They're not in a rush. There's also such a comprehensive approach to their sin. I mean, they confess their own sin, which is okay, you know. And so think like this.

This is sins done by us, right? And there's two categories here. There's sins of commission, which are things we do, we shouldn't do. And then there's sins of omission, things that we should have done that we didn't do, right?

And a lot of times when we think about sin, we're just thinking about stuff we did that we shouldn't have done. But actually, like, this other category can trip you up just as easily. In fact, in Matthew 23, Jesus, talking to the Pharisees, condemns them, not so much for their sins of commission, although he does, but often for their sins of omission.

[19 : 43] He says you tithe on everything, even your mint and your dill. You're, like, weeding through your spices, counting out a tenth of everything, but you've neglected mercy and justice. It's not just what you've done.

It's what you haven't done, right? Sins of commission, sins of omission. They confess their own sins. But then they confess the sins of their fathers. Verse 16 to 17. But they, our fathers, they acted presumptuously.

They were stiff in their neck. They didn't obey your commandments. They refused to obey. They weren't mindful of the wonders you performed among them. They stiffened their neck. They appointed a leader to return their slavery to Egypt, and on and on and on it goes.

This is not just sins done by them. This is kind of sins done around them. This is a point of major, you know, kind of conflict, even in our current moment.

You know, which sins are we responsible for? Like, if I didn't personally do it, am I responsible for this at all? That's more than we have time for this morning. But too often our position is, well, I didn't do it. I didn't do it.

[20 : 43] But it's just not the position you really see a lot in Scripture. And even when it's something that the individual didn't do, there's a kind of a recognition of cultural sin. In Isaiah 6, Isaiah sees the pre-incarnate Jesus, the New Testament tells us.

And he's undone by this. And what it leads to is powerful repentance. We see in verse 4 and 5 of Isaiah 6, Jesus shows up and the whole building starts to shake.

The foundations are shaking. And Isaiah's response is, woe is me. He begins to pronounce a curse on himself. He says, I am lost. I'm a man of unclean lips.

But he doesn't end there. He adds this. I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips. He's like recognizing his own sin. But he's also recognizing that, man, I'm surrounded by sin.

And I've seen the king. The real Jesus. And his response when he sees the real Jesus is not, I'm doing just fine over here. Look at all these terrible people with unclean lips. He's like, no, I'm messed up.

[21 : 46] And man, my gosh. Like, look at all this sin. How often should Christians repent? I think a lot of times we treat it like a special occasion, you know, whereas I think repentance should be a normal part of the Christian life.

Now, certain streams of kind of Christianity have more overt kind of moments of confession. You know, think of liturgical, more liturgical churches. Or you think of like, you know, with Catholicism, actually going to a confessional, meeting with a priest.

But for a lot of like non-denominational churches, this is really rare. And what can happen is we can talk a lot about Jesus paid for my sin, and we can sing lots of songs about it.

And we're addressing sort of general, you know, sin in a general sense. But we don't ever actually deal with our specific sin. And then we can even poke fun of other traditions who do.

However, confession of sin isn't a liturgical or a Catholic thing. It's a Christian thing. Remember James 5.16. That verse actually goes on to say, the prayer of a righteous person has great power at its working.

[22 : 57] It's very telling to me that I think we quote the last part of that verse a lot more than we quote the first part of that verse. I mean, I've heard a lot of times, man, the prayer of a righteous person availeth much, has great power at its working.

Yeah, well, that verse is connected to the rest of the verse, which is confessing your sins to one another, praying for one another that you may be healed. Look at 1 John 1.

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he's faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we haven't sinned, we make him, God, a liar, and his word's not in us.

One preacher said it like this, birds fly, fish swim, Christians repent. This should feel normal. Martin Luther said the whole of the Christian life is one of repentance. Why the whole of the Christian life?

Well, because we keep sinning. We keep sinning. I wish we didn't, but we do, right? Listen to this incredible summation of the history of Israel. It's going to take me a couple minutes to read this, but man, this is just such brilliant kind of concentrated history here.

[24 : 01] But as I read through this, just listen to the back and forth. God did this, but they did this. God did this, but they did this. I mean, you just shake your head like, what is wrong with these people, right? But you are a God ready to forgive.

Verse 17. You did not forsake them, even when they made for themselves a golden calf, and they said, that's the God who brought us out of Egypt.

He committed great blasphemies, and in your great mercy, you did not forsake them in the wilderness. You could have just left them right there to die. No, you gave them a pillar of cloud to lead them in the way, and did not depart from them by day or pillar of fire by night, to light for them the way which they should go.

You gave them your good spirit to instruct them. You did not withhold your manna from their mouth. You gave them water for their thirst. Forty years, forty years, you sustained them in the wilderness, and they lacked nothing.

Listen to this. Their clothes did not wear out in the wilderness for forty years, and their feet did not swell. What a fact, right? What a fact. Look how good God was.

[25 : 11] He cared even about their feet not swelling. You gave them kingdoms and peoples, and allotted them in every corner. They took possession of the land. And Shanon, king of Hezbon, in the land of Ah, king of Bashan, you multiplied their children as the stars of heaven.

You brought them into the land that you told their fathers to enter and possess. So the descendants went in and possessed the land, and you subdued before them the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, and gave them into their hand with their kings and the peoples of their land that they might do with them as they would.

You captured fortified cities, and they were rich land, and took possession of houses full of good things, cisterns already hewn, vineyards, olive orchards, and fruit trees in abundance. God, you did all this?

And they ate, and they filled, and they became fat, and they delighted themselves in your great goodness. Dot, dot, dot. Nevertheless, they were disobedient, and they rebelled against you.

After all that, they cast your law behind their back. They killed your prophets who had warned them in order to turn them back to you, and they committed great blasphemies.

[26 : 16] They went right back to the beginning. Therefore, you gave them into the hand of their enemy who made them suffer. And in the time of their suffering, they cried out to you, and you heard them from heaven. And according to your great mercy, this is the theme, great mercy, great mercy, great mercy.

What did you do? You gave them saviors who saved them from the hand of their enemies. But after they had rest, they did evil again before you, and you abandoned them to the hand of their enemies so that they had dominion over them.

Yet, when they turned and cried to you, you heard from heaven, and many times you delivered them according to your mercies. And you warned them in order to turn them back to your law.

Yet, they acted presumptuously. They did not obey your commandments. They sinned against your rules, which if a person does them, he will live by them. They turned a stubborn shoulder and stiffened their neck and would not obey.

Many years you bore with them, and you warned them by your spirit through your prophets. Yet, they would not give ear. Therefore, you gave them into the hand of the peoples of their lands.

[27 : 20] Listen to this last sentence. Nevertheless, nevertheless, after all that, in your great mercies, you did not make an end of them or forsake them, for you're a gracious and merciful God.

Man, we can shake our heads at them, but I think they just described what it feels like to be a Christian. God is amazing. We see it. We respond. Then we forget.

We get comfortable. We get fat. We get complacent. We deal with consequences. We realize he's good. We come back, like, just back and forth, right? And so, and I think repentance should be a bit more normal, right?

Because our sin is, sadly, not infrequent, right? Well, how do we repent? There's definitely a way to repent and a way not to repent.

Hiding your sin is not repentance. Making excuses for your sin is not repentance. Doing better and trying harder, that's not repentance. That's probably what a lot of people in church do, would just do better, try harder.

[28 : 24] That's not repentance. Beating yourself up and wallowing in shame is not repentance either. So what does it look like? Here's my last point.

When you repent, repent like a Christian. Repentance is not just some Old Testament idea. It came out from the very start of Jesus' ministry. In Mark 1.15, Jesus introduces his ministry and he says this, the time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God is at hand.

Repent and believe the gospel. And I think this is a powerful formula. Repent and believe. Repent and believe. Firstly, let's deal with repent. When you repent, if you want to repent or repent like a Christian, man, call your sin sin.

Don't blame it on other people. Don't look for cultural ways out. Just call sin sin. Right? Know your sin. Call it sin. Now I know that talking about sin makes us uncomfortable, but if the gospel is good news, there's got to be some bad news.

There's bad news that makes the good news good news, right? Our sin is the bad news. Right? So we have to deal with it. Call your sin sin. And when you come into repentance, come with a desire not to just get this over with, but to see your sin put to death.

[29 : 39] Like, you want to see this sin gone. That sounds extreme, Donnie. No, it just sounds biblical. Colossians 3, 5. Put to death, therefore, what is earthly within you. Sexual morality, impurity, passion, evil desire, covetousness, idolatry, put to death these things.

Romans 13, 14 says this, make no provision for the flesh to gratify its desires. What does it say? Starve it out. No mercy. Kill it. So, if you want to repent like a Christian, those are some beginnings there.

You call your sin sin and you want to see it gone. It's like seeing sin as cancer and going to the doctor, like, I don't know, I'm kind of getting used to this tumor. No, man, get it out of me. Right?

The old Puritan said this, John Owen, he said, be killing sin or it be killing you. Right? It's like a cancer. We want it gone. But that's just, that's just the first part. That's just repenting.

Right? We want to repent like a Christian. And Jesus says, repent and believe the gospel. And so, man, don't just stop at repenting. Go on to believe the gospel. Other religions, there's other religions where they talk about sin and the way you handle sin is by hurting yourself.

[30 : 44] There's some horrible, horrible religions around the world where they beat themselves with whips and they cut themselves. They do horrible things to their bodies. Friends, friends, you and I don't have to beat ourselves because we have a Jesus who was beaten in our place.

Repent and believe the gospel. John Newton, the famous writer of Amazing Grace, said, I am a great sinner and Christ is a great Savior. That is repenting and believing the gospel.

First Timothy, Paul says it like this, this saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am the foremost. I receive mercy for this reason that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience, his mercy, his grace as an example for those who are to believe in him for eternal life.

Paul's saying, look, if he can save me, he can save you. I was the worst and look what he did. Friends, that is what it looks like. Repent and believe the gospel. In the Garden of Eden, when man first sinned, what'd they do?

They hid their sin. They tried to cover up for their sin. They made excuses for their sin. They did all these things that aren't repentance. But because Jesus is so good, you and I don't have to run away and hide.

[31 : 58] We don't have to try to fix things. We don't have to try to make excuses. We can bring our guilt and our shame and our sin to him. We can say, I blew it. Please fix it again. Please fix it again. Heal me.

Forgive me. In Colossians, sorry, in verses 32 through 34, there's this great line we don't have time to get to this morning.

They say, they're talking about how much they've suffered and they're not saying, God, look how terrible our life is. They say, God, you've been righteous in all this. You have dealt faithfully. We acted wickedly.

But they come to him and say, but God, you're so good. The story is not just how bad we are. The story over and over again is really your goodness, your mercy. One way that we can repent and believe the gospel is actually through a thing called confession and assurance.

Confession of sin and assurance of pardon. You know, when I was a kid, I grew up in church and I often felt like when I sinned that I had to start all the way back at the beginning and like, man, Jesus, I want to give my life to you all over again.

[33 : 01] I want to, please forgive me my sins. Please take my life. I'm so sorry. Like, every time I sinned, I thought I was going straight to hell. Like, I got the confession of sin bit. I just didn't get any assurance of pardon bit.

I got the repent bit. I just didn't get the believe the gospel bit. If you're a follower of Jesus, we don't just confess sin. We receive pardon.

We remember that while we are guilty, we are loved and forgiven. We are secure. Tim Keller says it like this. The gospel is this. We're more sinful and flawed in ourselves than we could ever dare believe.

Yet at the same time, we are more loved and accepted in Jesus Christ than we ever dare to hope. Repent and believe the gospel. Confession and assurance. And actually, we're going to do that right now together.

I know we don't do this often, but this is actually a good thing to do. Maybe this will actually help you in like your daily life in repenting of sin, normalizing repenting of sin, and normalizing receiving grace, believing the gospel.

[34 : 04] So we're going to have a slide up. This is the confession bit. And I'm going to read it and I'd love us to read it together. That's okay. Just read it nice and out loud. We'll read it together, okay? Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed.

By what we have done and what we have left undone, we have not loved you with our whole heart. We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We are truly sorry and we humbly repent.

For the sake of your son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways to the glory of your name.

Amen. All right. If you just said that, you just confessed that, follower of Jesus, hear the good news. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

sinner. He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross that you and I might be dead to sin and alive to God. And that means if you are in Christ Jesus, you are declared a new creation and you are fully forgiven.

[35 : 12] All together, we say this, thanks be to God. If you're here, you're watching this as the band comes up and you're not yet a follower of Jesus, I don't know what got you in the room.

Sometimes people go to church to try to just make their life better. As human beings, we're always trying to fix ourselves. Don't just come to church, come to Jesus.

Don't try to fix yourself. Don't hide your sin. Don't wallow in your sin. Don't make excuses for your sin. Just come to Jesus. Jesus said that he is a doctor who came for the sick.

He said he came, he came for the sick. He came to call sinners to repentance. He came for the sick. He said, I'm a doctor. I came for the sick. Man, if you're sick from your sin, come to Jesus.

In just a few months, there'll be a slide on the screen with a prayer you could pray to start that journey of you saying, Jesus, today, I want to come, I want to be one of your followers. I need you. For the rest of us, in just a moment, we're going to come and we're going to take the Lord's Supper together.

[36 : 22] Confession should be normal for us. Sadly, it's not. Maybe it's normal for you, but believing the gospel is not. You repent, but you don't believe. I don't know where this is for you, but man, I know for us, we need to take some ground in this area.

We want to be radical disciples of Jesus. We want to be real followers of Jesus. I'd encourage you this week to think about maybe some of your sins that you need to deal with, with God.

You know, you haven't done, you need to go, just take some time with the Lord and spend time like they did, just confessing sin and believing the gospel. I would encourage you to find some friends, some trusted friends who also follow Jesus and say, hey, help me with this.

Maybe though that some of your sins aren't just vertical, they're horizontal. And it might be that what's eating you up on the inside right now is not having to go talk to God, but having to go talk to someone else.

I know it takes courage. I know it's hard, but the Bible says it leads to healing. It leads to healing. And so, why wait another day? I mean, if healing was available, if you thought like you could walk into a room, have a tough conversation and your cancer would be gone, what would stop you?

[37 : 42] Let me pray for you. Jesus, thank you so much for this church. Thank you for every single person watching this. We need your help. This is a big, it's a big subject.

It can be hard, but God, you are good. You are good. You're not just their God. You weren't just good to them. You're good to us. You're our God too. Help us, God.

Help us with all these things, Lord, now as we come to the table. In Jesus' name, Amen. God bless you. God bless you.