



Forgiveness: Saying Thank You

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

We think, and rightly so, that we're to ask God for forgiveness. Jesus tells us to do just that when we pray. You know His words: *Forgive us our sins*. We *are* to ask. But there's more to forgiveness than asking for it. There's also confession. And cleansing. And responding to being cleansed and forgiven by saying thank you. For cleansing and forgiveness are gifts, and it's important when we get gifts to say "Thank you."

Jesus said much the same thing to Peter in [John 13:10](#). Peter was arguing with Jesus about whether Jesus should wash more than his feet, and Jesus told Peter that he was already clean [the one-time event] but that he still needed dust washed off his feet [which repeatedly got dirty]. And so with us. John tells us that if we agree with God that we have "dusty feet" (confess), Jesus will send away (forgive) the "dust" and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. And then we walk around a while, again get our feet dirty, tell Jesus about it, He re-washes our feet, and we are once again (albeit temporarily) clean. It's a repetitive process. It's also a process for which we need to be thankful.

There's more to forgiveness than asking for it. Let's explore what's involved.

Confession

Confession is often misunderstood. We think of it as an uncomfortable person-to-person event – whether before a professional clergy-person or with a friend we've wronged. If we were to draw a picture of someone confessing, we'd draw an embarrassed expression on their face. A YouTube clip would show them giving just enough detail so they weren't actually *lying*, and they'd definitely be looking down at the carpet as they wait for the other person to tell them how to make up for what they've done.

Our pictures of confession mislead us. First of all, confession does not mean asking for forgiveness. It really doesn't. The word John uses for "confess" means "to say the same thing." Say the same thing as who? As God. When we confess we describe something exactly as God describes it. If God calls what we just said a lie, we agree and call it a lie. Confession is no more, and no less, than being honest and transparent before Him. Secondly, confession is not something we do to earn forgiveness. We don't earn our forgiveness; Jesus has already earned our forgiveness.

Confession – saying what God says – has different purposes and different results than you might expect: it both connects us to God and connects us to reality. Think about it. When we say the same thing God says we agree with Him. We end up thinking like God thinks; we find ourselves on the same side. Confession promotes relationship with God. That's its first benefit. There's a second: confession helps us see what we're doing, and that's crucial, for it's impossible to turn from practices that we never name or address. Confession promotes realistic choices. You never thought of it that way, did you? You're probably more used to confessing and feeling shame than you are to confessing and feeling clean.

Cleansing

The Greek word for “cleanse” simply means “unmixed.” (Like pure water with no sugary flavoring stirred in.) When we confess that we are sinners and ask Jesus to forgive us, He responds by making us clean (unmixed) at the core of our being. That kind of cleansing is a one-time event. It happens at salvation. For believers, it's a past-tense event.

But then there are our current daily screw-ups. Those need to be cleansed as well. And that's John's point. 1 John 1:9 is a very present-tense verse. A here and now verse that we ought to apply frequently (as in every time we fall short of God's character). Confess...thank you. Confess...thank you. Again and again. Until it becomes a habit. John isn't talking about salvation, he's talking about the moment-by-moment cleansing that needs to follow our moment-by-moment sins.

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Saying Thank You to God

We must not let our awareness of God's gifts fade into the background. I still ask for forgiveness, but more and more nowadays when I confess I then thank Him for His forgiveness and cleansing. It's the only way I know to keep these gifts at the front of my mind. When the Lord shows me that I've (once again) resisted Him, rather than wallowing in guilt (and ignoring Him), I agree with Him – I confess. Then I start thanking Him. In my life, it looks like this:

- Lord I was just performing so I could feel special. I was ignoring the worth you've already given me. Thank you for forgiving me. Thank you that, once again, you have made me clean.
- Lord I just interrupted my husband. I thought my words more important than his. I was being arrogant. Thank you for forgiving me. Thank you that, once again, you have made me clean.
- Lord I confess my pushiness this morning when I wasn't noticed. I was making room for myself when you say you'll make a room for me. Thank you for forgiving me. Thank you that, once again, you have made me clean.

You'll notice that I confess not just behavior, but also heart attitudes. Both outer and inner rebellions need forgiveness and cleansing. And for those gifts, we gift the Lord back when we remember the importance of telling Him thank you.

Putting This into Practice

Each time you substitute your will for His (likely many times each day) I encourage you to be honest with God – to confess – and then follow your confession with a thank-you. Then go on to whatever the day holds with a sense of freedom and with the knowledge that you and the Lord are in agreement with each other.

As you practice confessing and thanking, please, as you have opportunity, share with others how this practice impacts your life. Are there heart changes you've noticed? Do you sense a different kind of connection with the Lord? And pray that your sharing will bless others as I pray this post has blessed you.

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