

Th122 Foundation Doctrines

Lesson Th122 - 3 Repentance: Confession of Sin

The first president of the United States of America was George Washington. An American folk tale says that when he was a child, he took an axe and cut down a cherry tree. As the story goes, his father confronted him and asked, "George, did you cut down my cherry tree?"

Little George confessed, "I cannot tell a lie. I cut down the cherry tree!"

Confession is a very important part of repentance. We must first admit or confess our sin in order to truly repent. In our last lesson we learned the difference between worldly sorrow and godly sorrow. Today we will learn how confession can be an important part of true repentance.

The ancient city of Ephesus was once one of the major cities of the Greek and then Roman empires. Today the ruins of Ephesus can be found in the country of Turkey. Fifty thousand people lived in Ephesus during the time of Jesus and the apostle Paul. It was famous for the temple to the Greek goddess Artemis. This temple was considered one of the "Seven Wonders of the Ancient World." The people of Ephesus were very proud of it.

It was to this bustling city of commerce that the apostle Paul came to preach the gospel. When he arrived, he discovered that there were already disciples in the city. He began talking to them. He discovered that they had been baptized in water, but had never been baptized in the Holy Spirit. Paul told them, "John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. John told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus." Upon hearing this, all of the disciples believed in Jesus and were baptized in Jesus' name. Then Paul placed his hands upon them. They were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in tongues. This began two years of ministry by Paul in the city of Ephesus.

Paul began to preach and teach in the Jewish synagogue. For three months he argued powerfully that Jesus was the Messiah. But he met stiff resistance from some of the Jewish leaders, so he took the disciples and left the synagogue. He began to preach and teach in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. All of the Jews and Greeks who lived in Ephesus and the surrounding villages heard the word of the Lord during Paul's time in Ephesus. God performed many great miracles through Paul during his ministry there. People were cured of their illnesses and evil spirits left them.

Now there were some Jews who went around attempting to drive out evil spirits. These were the seven sons of the Jewish chief priest named Sceva. These men had heard that many evil spirits were being driven out through the ministry of Paul. So, they decided that they would try to use Paul's method, to be more successful in their business of freeing people from demonic spirits. One day they were hired to drive an evil spirit out of a man. They demanded that the evil spirit leave the man by saying, "In the name of the Jesus whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out."

The evil spirit answered them, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know about, but who are you?" The man who had the evil spirit jumped on them and overpowered them all. He gave them such a beating that they fled from the house. They were bruised and bleeding, with their clothing torn from their bodies.

News of this quickly spread through the city and soon both Jews and Greeks began to fear and respect the name of Jesus. Now there were those who had come to believe in Jesus that came forward to confess their sins. Some of these had practiced sorcery and witchcraft. These people had privately used spells and magic rituals to try to change people. Although believers in Christ, they still held onto their books of sorcery. They believed, but had not truly repented of their past lives. These believers experienced godly sorrow and then came forward and confessed to their witchcraft. They brought out their scrolls of sorcery—rolls of parchment with written secrets—and publically burned them. When the value of these scrolls was added up it came to the equivalent of the annual wages for 150 people (Acts 19:1-20).

There are many things that can be learned from this story. Perhaps most important is that these people, who experienced Godly sorrow, were willing to suffer the shame of publically confessing their sins. Their confession led to true repentance. The proof of their repentance is that they were willing, at great personal cost, to destroy the very items that bound them to sin.

From this story we learn that true repentance begins with godly sorrow, which leads to a confession or admission of sinful behavior. Who should we confess our sins to? It is important to confess our sins to the person we have sinned against. When a person first comes to Jesus, he must confess to Jesus his sins against God. Sometimes the Spirit leads us to find a person we have sinned against. We may need to confess to them our sins against them and ask them to forgive us. This leads to an important result of repentance, that is, a clear conscience before both God and men.

This lesson is **important** because it gives an example from Paul's ministry, of converts who demonstrated godly sorrow.

The **main truth** of this lesson is that godly sorrow leads to repentance of sin to God and sometimes to people too.

To **review** this lesson, answer the following questions:

1. When the people of Ephesus experienced Godly sorrow, what sin did they confess? [Pause]
A. If you said, "The sin of sorcery," then you are correct.
2. What did the believers do with their written scrolls of sorcery after confessing their sins? [Pause]
A. If you said that they publically burned them, you are right.
3. What was the value of the scrolls of sorcery that the believers in Ephesus burned? [Pause]

A. If you said that the books were worth the annual wages for 150 men, you answered correctly.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to review the list of six foundation doctrines at least ten times until you have memorized the list. Here is the list one more time:

Repentance (Pause) Faith (Pause) Baptisms (Pause) Laying on of Hands (Pause)
Resurrection (Pause) Eternal Judgment (Pause)