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Confession
The Key to Freedom

By

Ryan M Marks

with

Kenneth Zimmerman, III

Hillsboro, MO

Confession the Key to Freedom

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Dedication

This project has been different from my other books as it is the first of a series of sermons turned to MiniBooks. Thank you, Kenneth, for helping edit this sermon and prep it for publication!

Confession: The Key to Freedom

“For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?”

—1 John 5:4-5

What did David, Paul, Peter, Abraham, and Noah have in common? They were not perfect. In our Christian lives, sometimes we expect ourselves to be perfect now that we have Jesus. We expect our **feelings** to be completely different. We expect all our problems; our **sin struggles** to go away. This is being written for me as much as it is for you.

The Struggle is Real

Sin; it's why we need Jesus. After we're saved and commit sin, the reality of this struggle is often the source of our greatest shame. Satan loves to hold sin over your head, constantly condemn you, and build a stronghold by exploiting your sin and telling you that you can never change. You try harder and harder to be better and the sin just grows bigger and bigger.

“For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.”

—Galatians 5:1

Many times, people begin the Christian life and experience the grace of God but then Satan comes along and enslaves them. With what lie, with what clever trap? With the lie that we are meant to live this new life in Christ in our own power. Beloved of Christ, *we are not meant to be saved by grace and then be sustained by our works and efforts.* It is all of

God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ that we are saved and it is all by God's grace through faith that God will empower us to live for Him.

“You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace.”

–Galatians 5:4

What Paul is saying here is *not* that we can reach a point where we lose salvation. He was repeating a point he made earlier in the letter to the Galatians: that Christ's death would have been pointless if relying on law brought about righteousness. ***“I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose.”*** –Galatians 2:21. What he was saying was that they were moving away from the true grace-centered salvation to a works-centered salvation. The issue was the works-centered salvation was a false method of salvation. We cannot be saved by good works.

The Struggle is Identified

“But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.”

—Galatians 5:16-17, emphasis added

In Christ, we want to do what’s right. We want to please God. This struggle with the flesh and Spirit of God, both within us is very real. *“But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience,*

kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.” –Galatians 5:18-24

Crucify – here means to extinguish, put out

Flesh – here means human nature

Passions – here means emotions

Do you want God to cast something out of you, just to fix your sin struggle with anger, gossip, haughtiness, jealousy, worry? It doesn't normally work that way. God can do a miracle, yes. But human nature, the flesh, the Bible says has to be crucified. And it doesn't mean just once, but carries with it the idea of repeatedly, of a daily picking up of one's cross, denying yourself and following Jesus. As we lean on the Spirit of God, as we depend on Him and walk following Him, we will be renewed and transformed. **Jesus does**

**not ask you to wage war alone, He only asks
you to follow Him.**

***“If we live by the Spirit, let us also
keep in step with the Spirit.”***

–Galatians 5:25

The Solution

“If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.”

–Romans 8:11

We have got to stop trying to fix it ourselves. Do you believe that our God really cares about you? Then on the authority of His Word, through which He has promised the redeemed, let Jesus handle it. Give it to Him and let Him transform you. Quit trying to achieve change through self-effort. Personal responsibility for the sin? Yes. Change possible in our own willpower? No. But yes, in His Power.

“I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one

teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

—Jeremiah 31-33b-34

"I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules."

–Ezekiel 36:25-27

People *don't really change outwardly until their heart changes inwardly*. Just think of a child. I'm sure you've seen a parent make their child apologize to someone and the child with a huff and a puff and a sticking out of the lip and crossing their arms in a voice that is surprisingly fast says, "I'm sorry!" Now we laugh or sigh but it's true of adults too. The heart has to change first because it is the heart Jesus said, out the abundance of what is in it, that come our words and actions. What have you allowed to take root in your heart? The Only seed that will grow is the one you allow to get watered (2 Peter 1:3-15).

Not only has God given us His Spirit and a new heart that wants to please Him which is essential; but He has given us the local church family, each other. A Bible-believing, Gospel-preaching local church family will help you water the right seed.

“Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself.”

–Galatians 6:1-3

We need each other. We need accountability. I know that I do and I thank God for friends and mentors that will confront me if they are concerned about something in my life. I need that, especially because of writing and preaching and teaching. But every single one of us needs that no matter how insignificant you feel the role God has called you to play in His Kingdom is. It is not just for pastors and teachers to be held to a standard of being “above reproach.” That standard is for every Believer.

“For through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.”

–Galatians 5:5-6

Respond in Faith to the God who really intervenes. He cared for people in the Bible, we have their stories recorded. Their lives were not free from “stuff” and the Bible does not present them as “cleaned up.” It presents them as those that God graciously saved, kept, and used for His glory.

FAITH IS TRUSTING THE PROMISE OF GOD

“But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”

–Hebrews 11:6 (KJV), emphasis added

“For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin.”

–Romans 14:23b, emphasis added

“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”

–Hebrews 11:1

“Because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.”

–Romans 10:9, emphasis added

The Key to Freedom is Confession in the Bible

I can assure you how to fail in your struggle against sin because I've done it: fight it in your own strength. You will fail every time. All sin is linked to pride. When Satan tempted Eve, he said, "Did God really say" but he closed with this [I'm paraphrasing a bit]: eat the fruit and you will be like God! The first sin, the first temptation that preceded it, was *to be like God*. That sin caused Satan's rebellion and it is the reason why we continue to sin to this day. **Do you want freedom? Then it begins with confession. The Scripture is crystal clear on this!** God's been dealing with me. It has not felt good but God has shown me some sins in my own heart that I thought were insecurity but it's really pride. Most insecurities are actually pride: insecure of what people will think, of how you don't do something perfect, the inability to make mistakes, or repent and move on in Christ after a failure.

Many of our strongholds come through self-deception. Let me say that again; **many of our strongholds come through self-deception.**

Maybe the person that you have to forgive is yourself. Maybe, like me, you place too much stock in how you feel or in doing your best instead of just trusting. Simply trusting God's promises. Finances are tight, the future is uncertain, your family's health or relationships are on the edge, you are overburdened, you fill in the blank—you feel hopeless. What do you do? You stop. You give it all to God. I know it may sound trite but you need to get still, probably alone and just depend on God. Block out the voices and distractions telling you to take it into your own hands and remind yourself, depend on God.

- Depending on God means that God, not me, is going to do it.
- It means not rushing with the decision that looks best and not seeking Him.

- It means something that the Scripture talks about hundreds of times but we often forget. We are on a journey in life but it is not about rushing and getting as much done for Jesus as we can. A lot more than we would like to think in our Christian life simply is waiting on God and being faithful. Being faithful where God in His providence has placed you, every day depending on Him and following Him wherever He leads. That is it.

It's simple: **be faithful where God in His providence has placed you, every day depending on Him and following Him wherever He leads.** Simple, but it means slowing down and following rather than doing it in our own strength and on our own.

You don't have to confess to a person. You need to confess to God, He is the one who shed His only Son's blood for your sin. The

Lord may prompt you to share with a fellow Believer you can trust or to apologize to someone you have wronged. But there has to be personal admittance, confession of our true condition before there can be healing.

“Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight.”

–Psalm 51:4b

“Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working”

–James 5:16

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

–1 John 1:19

So ok, we've looked at what the Scripture says, now how you apply it? Let me offer a few brief suggestions:

**The Same Spirit that raised Christ
from the dead
lives in you
if you have repented of your sin
and trusted in Christ alone
for forgiveness of your sin!**

1. Confess daily the sin you're struggling with in a quiet time with Jesus

2. Just ask, it is ok to ask God, for victory in Jesus.

3. Remind yourself of the power of the Spirit and the sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross and the victory of Jesus at His Resurrection. Even in your weakness, Christ is strong!

4. Be faithful where God in His providence has placed you, every day

depending on Him and following Him wherever He leads.

5. Worship – what David often did when struggling was turn to God in worship, he entered the house of the Lord and praised Him. Let's praise Him.

“His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence” –2 Peter 1:3

We have all we need for life and godliness in Christ. Today, do you need to depend on Jesus? Really depend? **The first step to victory is admitting it to Him.** Confess your sin to God. Repent. Truly cry out to God like this parable:

He also told this parable to some who

trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt: “Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.’ But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.” –Luke 18:9-14

About the Author

Ryan M Marks (B.A. in Communications and pursuing an MTS in Theology from Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary) has taught in two local churches and served as an evangelist throughout Missouri. Having begun preaching and writing at 15 following the Lord's call, Ryan has authored a number of books. He serves as Director of and contributor to the blog and online ministry of FocusingOnTheMarkMinistries.com which provides resources for evangelism and discipleship globally.

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