



## Inward: Confession

Week 3 – Prayer – 3/15/2026

Inward prayer is most often associated with the idea of confession.

So what is confession?

- So what do you think of when you hear the word, “confess”?
- Many people, when they hear of the word “confess,” they think of a dark interrogation room, with someone shining a light on you and trying to get a confession for a crime.
- Sitting in a cold room, with a metal desk, a light in your face...
- “Tell us what you have done!? We know you are lying!”
- “We know you are guilty, confess!”
  - So, people often think of confession as negative.
- But that’s not biblical confession at all!
- According to the Bible confession is positive, it’s life-giving.

“To confess,” according to the Bible, means to agree, to promise, or to admit something.

- Confession is to admit guilt or sin, And,
- To state a belief in spiritual truth.

So, there are two aspects to confession in Scripture, to confess sin and to confess truth.

- The first aspect of confession in Scripture is to confess sin.
  - This is to acknowledge sin before God, often a particular personal sin committed.
  - We also see confession of specific national sins in the Bible.
- The second aspect of confession in Scripture is to confess truth.
  - It’s to declare allegiance to Jesus, he is the Savior and I belong to him.
  - So we are affirming spiritual truth, confession literally means we are “saying the same thing.”
  - So we are, over and over again, confessing our faith and renewing our trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

- One writer says this about the two aspects of confession, “First, individuals confess that they have sinned and are therefore guilty before God. Second, they confess that Jesus is Lord. One confession often leads to the other. Confession of sin is often linked to assurance of deliverance, trust, salvation in Christ.”

So we admit our guilt which leads us to affirmation of the truth.

- This is very important to have both those elements when we think about Inward Prayer.

➤ So, that’s confession in general, now let’s look at confession prayer.

**What is the prayer of confession? And how do we practice Inward Prayer?**

First and foremost, the prayer of confession finds its foundation upon God’s character and His work in Christ.

- Romans 2:4 talks about how God’s kindness is meant to lead people to repentance.
- This is refreshing, because God is abundantly kind, we are drawn to turn back to him after we sin.
- Remember Jesus’ story of the Prodigal Son.
- The son came back home and repented, confessed his evil deeds.
- What did the Father do when the Prodigal son came back home?
  - He ran to him!! He embraced him and they celebrated.
  - He said, that his son “was lost, and now is found.”
- Put this image in your mind when you come to the prayer of confession.
- God is like a kind parent, embracing a beloved child of the family.

**This idea of the Fatherhood of God helps us answer the question,**

- What is the big deal about confession?
  - If we are forgiven fully, why do we still need to confess?
- To some, continually bringing out our sins in prayer, over and over, is unhelpful, it seems like is a step backwards
  - Not resting fully on our complete forgiveness in Christ.
- Well, Jesus says to pray the prayer of confession in the Lord’s Prayer, when we are to pray part of it is praying, “forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.”
- And the whole Lord’s prayer is a model for our prayers, the themes should be prayed often, if not daily, and the prayer starts with, “Our Father.”

- Which speaks to the relationship we have as children with a Father.
- Indeed, God is a Judge and has justified us, made us righteous. Praise Jesus.
- But we relate to God also as a Father, who desires a close relationship with us, day-by-day.

- Kevin DeYoung, in his book on *The Lord's Prayer*, says,

“If we are to have a healthy relationship with our heavenly Father, we must often come before him confessing our sins and asking for grace.”

- So, yes, we have been justified, but we are also growing in this relationship with God.
- Confession helps us stay close to our Heavenly Father.

So we see in Scripture, the prayer of confession is a time of prayer,

- In the Spirit, through the Son, coming to the Father.
- And bringing him prayers of both repentance and assurance.
- We come to the Father with prayers of repentance.
  - We ask God to search us. Then we admit sin and show remorse.
  - We pray Psalm 139:23-24,
 

“Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting,”
- And we come to the Father with prayers of assurance.
  - We call to mind our forgiveness in Christ and God's steadfast love towards us. That's why 1 John 1:9 says,
 

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

So, we don't stay in a perpetual state of guilt and shame,

- We don't need to; we are righteous in the eyes of God our Father.
- This is what we are learning in Romans, we have been made righteous through faith in Christ.
- But God does want us to continually come to him in confession, why?
- To keep our relationship with him close, like of a child to a loving Father.

So, putting everything together, here's a full explanation of what happens in Inward Prayer.

- This quote comes from the *Worship Sourcebook*.
- This is a very helpful explanation of Inward Prayer, long so on sheet,

“The prayer of confession invites us to speak words that are remarkably honest about our sin, words that do not come naturally in our relationship with God or with our fellow human beings. Such honesty, perhaps more than we could ever generate on our own strength, becomes remarkably liberating when we sense the immensity of God’s grace. In this sense we can think of confession (and the assurance of pardon that follows)...as a gift of grace...Even as we confess our sin, we are claiming God’s promises in Christ...Many classical prayers of confession feature a decisive turn from honest confession to explicit profession of faith and trust in Christ.”

That’s a great description, and I want to emphasize three things about it;

- Confession as honesty, confession as a work of God, and confession as a movement.

In confession, it is important to be “honest.”

- God knows what we do, so there is no hiding from Him, so come!
- He wants a good relationship with us, which includes repentance and a renewal of closeness with our Father.

We also understand that confession overflows from a work of God in our hearts.

- Only God can bring about confession.
- The Holy Spirit convicts us and moves in us to confess.
- When we confess our sins consistently, we continually see the depth of our sin nature and sin problem.
- And this makes us appreciate and magnify God’s grace all the more; we experience the “immensity of grace.”
- We also “claim God’s promises in Christ.”
- As we remind ourselves of who we are in Christ – forgiven, sanctified, holy, adopted as God children, we are assured of our secure identity in Christ.
- This reality keeps us steady during Upward Prayer when we feel like we are in a free fall because of sin.

Also, we in Upward Prayer, have “confession” leading to “profession.”

- There is a movement in our hearts in the prayer of confession, decisive turn.
- We move from admitting sin to resting in grace and trusting in Christ.

## Examples of Inward Prayer in Scripture.

- In preparation for this topic, I studied the major Bible passages where we see an actual Inward Prayer recorded.  
(those on this sheet plus, Is 6; Jer 3:24-4:4; Ezra 9:5-15)
- And I looked for themes,
- Characteristics or elements of Inward Prayer in Scripture that serve as a model for us, what I call, “attitudes.”
- So here are the six Attitudes of Inward Prayer that I found, on sheet,
  1. Approach God humbly.
  2. Acknowledge God’s character.
  3. Admit specific sins.
  4. Ask for forgiveness.
  5. Affirm God’s mercy.
  6. Act upon God’s calling.

Let’s look at some **examples** to see these attitudes of Inward Prayer.

### In Nehemiah 1, we have a great example of prayer,

- Part of Nehemiah’s prayer includes Inward Prayer.
- Nehemiah was humbled and grieved about the report... that the people in Jerusalem were in great trouble and shame. Wall was broken down.
- Also Nehemiah 9 is a prayer of corporate confession of the leaders,
  - The prayer mostly walks through the historical sins of Israel, and then
  - They recommitted to God, made a covenant to walk in God’s Law.

### In Daniel 9:3-19, we have an example of Inward Prayer,

- Go ahead and turn to Daniel 9.
- This one passage the best example of our six attitudes of Inward Prayer
  - Daniel was reflecting on Scripture, from Jeremiah, and God pierced his heart to pray for his nation and plead for mercy.
  - It records Daniel’s prayer of confession, “I prayed to the Lord God and made confession.”

### Some of the best examples of Inward Prayer are found in the Psalms.

- I want to highlight two of David’s prayers in the Psalms.
- Both are David’s prayer of confession and repentance.

**Psalm 32**, an example of Inward Prayer from David,

The start of this Psalm makes me think of the blessings of forgiveness that we have in Christ, blessed is the man whose sins are forgiven and not counted against him.

- One of our six attitudes of Inward Prayer is to Affirm God's mercy.
- So far I have shared Old Testament examples of Inward Prayer celebrating God's mercy.
- When we look at the New Testament, what is the picture of the depth of God's mercy?
  - It is the cross!
- When we look at the cross, at what Christ did for us, this is the ultimate demonstration of God's mercy.
- We don't get what our sins deserve; the punishment was laid on Christ.
- In Inward Prayer, we look to that; we celebrate mercy at the cross.
- So we affirm God's mercy, and ultimately this mercy is, In Christ.

### Psalm 51,

- This is a confession Psalm written by David after his sin with Bathsheba.
  - So the prayer is raw and real, David showing humility and repentance.

Verse 6 says, "Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being,"

- This verse has our word "inward" of Inward Prayer.
- God wants truth in the "inward being."
  - So we see Inward Prayer is a cry to God from the heart of our being.
- And Inward prayer is an encounter with truth, it says God desires "truth" in the inward being.
  - So we rehearse truth, confess and turn, seeking to walk in truth.
- And it also says that God "delights" in this Inward Prayer.
  - This word means, "to take pleasure in, to desire something."
  - God's great desire is that we confess his truth in our very core.
    - God takes pleasure in this.
  - God delights in Inward Prayer and is greatly pleased when we do it.

And Psalm 51:17, says, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God you will not despise."

- This the key to Inward Prayer, "a broken spirit, a contrite heart."
  - It is important to acknowledge God's character & admit specific sins.
  - We should ask for forgiveness and affirm God's mercy in Christ.
  - We need to act upon God's calling.
- But, we must have humility in Inward prayer, if we don't approach God humbly; our confession prayers are stale and heartless.
- More than anything else, humility is what God is looking for,

- “O God you will not despise.”
- We must come humbly before God, authentically and in all sincerity, with broken spirits and humble, contrite hearts.
- Only then will God do his work in us.

**I have also found that some Bible-based resources can be helpful to put Inward Prayer into practice.**

One resource I like is called, *The Valley of Vision*, it is a book of Puritan prayers.

- These prayers help me practice what Psalm 139 says to do, “search me O God and know my heart.”
- The prayers help me search my heart and life, and humbly come before God.
- I have found section 3 in the book to be most helpful for Inward Prayer.
- I read through one of the prayers slowly.
- Using it as a prompt for my own prayers in my prayer of confession time.

**Another resource I have used to guide me in Inward Prayer is *A Way to Pray* by Matthew Henry.**

- I mentioned this book last week, it has written out prayers based on Scripture.
  - It is arranged with the main themes of prayer,
- There is a helpful section for Inward Prayer, section two on confession.
- These are great examples of putting together biblically informed confession prayers.
- It also has a helpful section on assurance of forgiveness, prayers based on Christ’s work and the Father’s compassion.
- I usually read one or two of the prayers, and then pray my own Inward Prayer to God, using these prayers and the listed Scriptures as my guide.

**What are some benefits of inward prayer?**

Benefits I can think of [incorporate if they fit the group responses]

- It humbles us. In Inward Prayer, we practice contrition and humility.
  - God says, “I dwell in a high and holy place, but also with the contrite and lowly in spirit. To revive the spirit of the lowly and revive the heart of the contrite.” (Is 57:15).
- It keeps us reliant on God’s grace and Spirit for power in our Christian walk. Reminds us that we need him!
  - Inward Prayer helps us have a clean conscience before God and enables us to grow in a lifestyle of integrity.
- It reminds us of God’s compassion and assurance of forgiveness that we have in Christ.

- Every time we do Inward Prayer, we repeat gospel truths that we are debtors, but that God had forgiven us in Christ.
- It takes a load off, we were not meant to bear our sins, Jesus already did, so we confess and cast our anxieties on him.
- It renews a right spirit within us, a clean heart in our relationship with God.

**Growth Project for next time!**

- Use the handout as a guide for an extended personal time of confession prayer. Respectable Sins, (from Bridges), on the back.