Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Confessing Our Sins
Scripture: Selected Scriptures
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In our lesson this time we are continuing to study the theme of spiritual growth, this very essential reality of maturity in the Christian life. And whether you're a new Christian ah, a Christian who's a little bit along in years of knowing Christ, or whether you've been a Christian for a very long time, you never really-stop the process of spiritual maturity, if you do you're in sad shape to be sure. But a Christian who's committed to Christ is going to be in the process of spiritual growth. So these principles are not those that relate say, only to a spiritual infant but anyone along the path of life before you're in the presence of the Lord and have received your instant perfection is involved really in a process of maturing or growing, and so the truths we're sharing in these studies are for everybody, hopefully they'll bless your life no matter where you are on your Christian pilgrimage and hopefully you'll pass them on to someone else who will find great benefit from them. Not because they're my thoughts, Lord forbid that they should be, but rather because they come from God's Word.

Now let me just kind of ah, review a little of what we've covered in the past. We're looking at the concept of growing in Christ. In Second Peter chapter 3 and verse 18 Peter says, "Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ." In First Peter chapter 2 Peter says that we are "to desire the pure milk of the word, that we may grow." Now God calls on us to grow. Peter tells us not only we are...are we to grow but we are to grow through the Word. Paul says in Second Timothy 3:16 and 17, that "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for correction, for instruction. That the man of God may be perfect." And the word literally means mature, in other words the idea is that the Word of God, the scripture is given to make us mature. So as we approach the Word of God We keep in mind that it is ours as a tool or an agency in a process. We're not looking for periodic little tidbits from the Bible, we're not looking for a zap here and there, we're not looking for a once a month, once a week kind of high experience from scripture but rather, the Word of God is given to us as the instrument of progressive maturity. So it becomes as important to us as our own food. As Jeremiah said in Jeremiah 15:16, "Thy words were found, and I did eat them." And what he was saying was that this was the matter of his sustenance. We are to feed as a baby does on the truths of the Word of God; they infuse into us the energy and the life principle which creates growth. So as believers then we are to grow. We have been given a tool for that growth which is the Word of God. And then the Spirit of God is placed within us to energize us along the path of growth.

Now in Our studies past we have helped perhaps to focus on the significant points of growth by reminding you of First John 2 verses 13 and 14 in which we find there are three levels of spiritual growth. First, babies. Second, young men. Third, fathers. And that corresponds with human life, there's the beginning in infancy, where there is parental recognition, you know to whom you belong, and then there is young adulthood, this is the time when you know what you believe, spiritual maturity in the sense of doctrinal comprehension ah, you have a, you have a comprehension of the Word of God, you have your feet on the ground you're no more tossed to and fro and carried about by every wind of doctrine. Finally, spiritually being a father means you not only know to whom you belong, you not only know what you believe, but you know the One in whom you believe in a deep and abiding and mature way.

Now the process of spiritual growth then is ascending at all times toward that goal of really knowing God. Even the Apostle Paul of whom we might think ah, little remained in the spiritual process of growth because he had reached such a high level said this, at the height of his life when he had ministered most of his ministry it was in the past, when he had accomplished all the great dreams and ends ah, that consummated most of his hearts desire, said this,---"That I may know him." In other words, no matter how far along that path of growth he had come there was still a longing for a deeper and a more vital and a broader and more fulfilling comprehension of the very person of God whom he loved and whom he served.

Now in sharing this very general thought that we move along those three elements of spiritual growth, we do it by the Word of God, the Spirit of God and in response to the command of God. We pointed out to you that the key to this whole thing is living to the glory of God. We only grow, now mark this, we only grow when we are living to the glory of God. When we live for ourselves we flatten out, nothing positive happens in our lives, growth only takes place in the times when we are spiritual not when we are carnal, growth only takes place when we are 'Living for the glory of God, not in times when we're living for ourselves.

Now, keep this in mind, most of us when we're saved have ah, a kind of a balancing act that we carry on, in fact this is true of all believers I'm sure. We have the principle of new life in us; we also have the old sin that's around us, the sin that's in our flesh, that thing which is no good that's part of being human. And now that we're a believer we find that a little bit of our life is given to God and a little bit to sin, and we kind of balance it off. But as we mature, there is an increasing frequency of righteousness, and a decreasing frequency of sinfulness. There isn't the idea that sometime in your Christian life you stop being sinful, and you just are righteous no, it's always progress, it's always a moving, Paul says, "Not as though I had attained, but I press toward the mark." You're always moving up and the evidence of moving up is the decreasing frequency of sin. I use myself as an illustration, I'm a well known sinner, and when I was saved ah, it was a struggle a very great struggle a kind of a struggle Paul talks about in Romans 7, the things I wanted to do, I didn't do, the things I didn't want to

do, I did and I was fighting against the flesh and all of this. The struggle is the same now, but what I've noticed is that as I've grown, grown by living to the glory of God, grown by walking in the Holy Spirit, grown by a life of obedience, as I have matured in the progress of spiritual maturity I have seen the decrease of the frequency of sinfulness, not its absence, it just doesn't happen as much as it used to, as I'm growing away from that toward a more righteous standard.

Now, glorifying God becomes the key thing. Second Corinthians 3:18 was our verse on that, and we said that in that verse it says this, that as we, "with an unveiled face," that is there's no more veil over us as there was in the Old Testament. The veil is taken away, "we behold as in a mirror the glory of the Lord." Now somebody asked after class in the last session, why a mirror? And the reason is because the glory of the Lord is reflected to us, isn't it? In other words we don't literally see the shekinah, we don't literally see the presence of God, or we would be consumed, "For no man can see my face and live." Says God. So God refracts His glory to us, He reflects it to us, how? Through the Word. So as we focus on the Word of God, and as we obey its principles we are seeing in this the mirror of Gods glory. And then Paul says, as we see that glory, we move from one level of glory to the next level of glory to the next level of glory, conforming to the very image of Christ, by the working of the Holy Spirit.

Now, spiritual growth then is not just seen in the Bible as a baby and a young man and a father, it is seen as going from one level of glory to the next level of glory to the next, and that happens when we focus on glorifying God. Now let me sum up what I've just said. As you and I live to the glory of God in those moments we are growing, we're progressing toward Christlikeness. The times of our lives when we live for self and the flesh are times when that does not happen.

Now let me remind you also that there are some very practical principles involved in living to the glory of God. And we began to look at those last time and I'm just going to remind you of the two major ones we discusses and then we'll move on. If living to the glory of God is the key to spiritual growth, if this is the sine qua non, if this is the absolute necessity then what does it mean to live to the glory of God? You know we talk about that a lot, and we sing, To God be the glory great things He has done, and we say glory to God all the time, we read it in the Bible it's just everywhere, it's a very familiar phrase but I'm afraid it doesn't have a lot of practical meaning, and we want to give it that.

Now the first thing we said in our last study was that we glorify God by confessing Jesus as Lord, that's where it all begins. Philippians chapter 2 says that we are all to confess Jesus as Lord to the glory of God. Before you can ever begin the path of spiritual growth, before you can ever begin to progress toward Christlikeness you must confess Him as Lord, that is the new birth that's being born into the family. Before you can be a spiritual father you have to be a spiritual baby, right? Before you can be a man or a woman you have to be an infant, and so you have to enter the situation and you enter it when you confess Jesus as Lord, for that is indeed who He is, He is Lord, and when you do that you thus are giving glory to God. For God has indeed placed His glory in Christ, according to

John 1:14.

Now, second thing we said, and this is just a brief review. We said that if we are to live to His glory we not only confess Him as Lord but secondly we aim our life at His glory. And we mentioned First Corinthians 10:31 that says, whatever you do, whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all to the glory of God. Now that I've confessed Jesus as Lord to the glory of God, I will aim my life at His glory. Now that's very basic. Do you remember what we said that means? We said that that means that you are content to give Him glory no matter what it costs you personally. We also said that it means you are suffering the very anguish that God suffers when He's dishonored.

In other words, if I'm living to the glory of God I don't care what it costs me, I don't care whether I live or die, I don't care that ... care whether I gain the credit for anything as long as He is glorified. It doesn't matter what my price has to be, doesn't matter what I have to give up. Now let me just talk about that for a minute. It has interested me in the society in which we live here in America, our Christian society, that we are breeding a generation of people who don't have that mentality at all. Even in Christianity it is amazing that instead of having an attitude of service, instead of having an attitude of humility, instead of having the spirit that says, I give my life for the will of God no matter what it costs me, I will give myself for His glory at all costs. Our attitude is, I want to be successful. I was listening to a tape by ah, a minister today and he was saying that it's interesting to him that whenever we go to a conference or whenever we pick up a new book that's being written, whenever anybody wants to draw a big crowd of Christians together it's always by gaining a celebrity. It's the beautiful people, when you look and see who's speaking at a conference uhm, it's Miss America, or some wealthy business man, or the president of a company, or a very successful person in Hollywood who's made it in television or movies, or a famous athlete, or a politician. These are the crowd getters, the wealthy and the famous and the elite, and what this is doing in Christianity is providing a model for us of success, personal success, rather than service, you see?

Now when we go back to this kind of a generation of Christians we're producing and try to get them to take the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the ends of the world it's going to be tough to get them to do that. When we go back to them and ask them to give their life for the cause of Christ it's going to be tough because they've been told, whether verbally or not that the people who make it in Christianity are the rich, and the famous, and the successful, and the popular. And so we're producing a generation of Christians who are oriented toward personal success, much more than they are toward humble service. And this is exactly the opposite of living to the glory of God. Living to the glory of God is not making a career for myself, living to the glory of God is not hiring a press agent to book me, living to the glory of God is being expendable, living to the glory of God is to die if it needs be - to accomplish God's ends. I know in my own life that I'm expendable, just like Paul said, If I die in the service of Christ, sweet death. If I die or be offered as a sacrifice for the cause of your joy in the Gospel I'll die gladly. I'm expendable, I'm expend-able. And that's the attitude of one who lives to the glory of God, and what I'm saying is the bottom line is humility, if you are aiming your life at the glory of God you

have the kind of humility that says in effect, God, I hurt when You hurt, my heart beats with Your heart, and all I see is to give You glory no matter what it costs me. We see this even with people who want to go into Christian service, there are a lot of people who are going into seminaries and Christian colleges and so forth, they want to serve the Lord only they want to serve the Lord on their condition, in the perfect environment, with everything the way they want it, with all of the success factors laid in so that when they can go in it'll all really happen. And you wonder where are those humble people who are willing to risk a great adventure for the glory of God even if they're lost in absolute obscurity. We talked also last time about the fact that if you lived to the glory of God you're content to be outdone by somebody who does exactly what you do better than you do it, as long as God is glorified.

Now this is the bottom line people, these are the first two things that we need to see. If we're to grow spiritually, we have to lose ourselves, first in the Lordship of Christ at the moment of salvation, secondly, in the Lordship of Christ as He dominates our lives from then on. And as we obey Christ and respond to His direction in our lives with no thought of what it means to us, no thought of are we going to be successful, no thought of is this comfortable for me, but rather is He being glorified? We are then moving along in a progression of growth. For every time we do our own thing, chose our own way, seek our own will, even in the matter of Christian service if the motive isn't right, we flatten out and growth doesn't take place.

But let's move on to a third major point. How do we glorify God? We glorify Go thirdly by confessing sin, by confessing sin. Now this may seem a little bit strange but it follows along the same line I've been talking about, the greatest, now mark it, the greatest expression of humility is to confess sin, but most people don't do that, most of us even Christians kind of gloss over our sin, we are too busy to bother to acknowledge it, or we sort of figure we're pretty good most of the time, there's no sense dragging up dirt about ourselves. Or we blame our circumstances, or our environment, or the people around US. But we are prone not to confess sin, and thus we miss the glory of God.

Now in Joshua chapter 7 there's a most insightful verse. You'll remember that the children of Israel had come into the promised land under the leadership of Joshua, not under the leadership of Moses because he had sinned in hitting the rock with a stick when God told him to speak to it, because Moses was seeking his own glory and wanted everybody to think how powerful he was when he hit the rock, and so he forfeited his right to take the people in, but Joshua led them in and they went in and they had a great victory at Jericho, the walls fell down, they took the city and that was the first of the cities they were to take as they dominated the land of Canaan. But, they had been told one thing, don't take anything out of that city, I don't want you to have any remnants of pagan society, God said. I don't want you to gather up anything, I don't want you to haul anything away, I want you to leave it there, it represents a society that you are apart from. But, there was one man, and you'll remember his name if you've studied the story, his name was Achan. And Achan was just aching to steal things, that's how I remember him. And he took some things out of the city, and of course as a result they

were defeated at Ai, the next city. And then Achan was confronted in Joshua chapter 7; verse 19 by Joshua himself. "And Joshua said unto Achan, My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the LORD GOD of Israel," now how ya going to that? By this, "by making confession unto him, and tell me now what thou hast done; hide it not from me. And Achan answered Joshua and said, Indeed, I have sinned against the LORD GOD of Israel, and thus and thus have I done:" And then he goes on to describe, when I saw this I wanted it, and when I saw that, I wanted it, and he buried it in his tent and all of this.

Now listen, Joshua says to him, give glory to the God of Israel by making confession of sin. Now that verse says it glorifies God to confess your sin. To acknowledge that you've sinned is to glorify God, why? Well let me show you what happened, verse 24, "And Joshua, and all the children of Israel with him, took Achan, and the son of Zerah, the silver, (th..) the garment, 'the wedge of gold," and that's all the things that he had taken his sons, and his daughters, his oxen, his asses, his sheep, his tent, and all that he had; and they brought them unto the valley of Achor. And Joshua said, Why hast thou troubled us? The LORD shall trouble thee this day." You notice that even though he had confessed his sin his judgment was coming? You see confession doesn't preclude chastening. David confessed his sin in Psalm 32 and Psalm 51 and God forgave him and then punished him. So just because there's forgiveness doesn't mean there won't be chastening. He had confessed that was in the past but God's going to judge him anyway, "And all Israe1 stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire, after they stoned them with stones. And they raised over him a great heap of stone unto this day. So the LORD turned from the fierceness of his anger. Wherefore the name of that place was called, The valley of Achor, unto this day." And Achor by the way in Hebrew means, trouble.

Now look, God was going to teach Israel a lesson, the lesson is this, don't disobey Me, if you do there will be severe consequence. The consequence was that Achan and his whole family, who evidently were implicated in the crime also were all stoned to death. Now listen, why did he want Achan to confess his sin? I'll tell you why. Because God would have looked like a cruel ogre if He had taken the life of this man and his family, and nobody known really why. When Achan confessed his sin he was saying God, You as a holy, righteous God are free to punish me, free to chasten me with no impunity against Your righteous nature because I deserve it, you see?

Now maybe you've never thought of confession of sin that way but that's exactly the heart of the matter. The reason God wants Achan to confess his sin is so that God is free to chasten him and not have anybody think that it was undeserved. God is a holy God, and God reacts against sin, He cannot tolerate sin, He cannot let sin go unpunished if He could've He never would have had Jesus die. God must deal with sin, and God will look unjust, and God will look unfair in the eyes of people, if you and I do not admit that everything that God does to chasten us is deserved, and in verse 20 he said, "I have sinned against the LORD GOD of Israel." He didn't blame God, he didn't blame the circumstances, he didn't blame his influences, he accepted the responsibility. You have a similar situation at the crucifixion of Christ, the thief on the cross had dishonored God all his life, he had done exactly what he wanted to do and now he was hanging on a cross beside Jesus Christ, but in that

very moment, the last moment of his life, hanging on a cross for one time in his life he gave glory to God, you know what he said? He said to the other thief in Luke 23:41, "We indeed suffer justly." In other words he said, what are you complaining about fella, you're getting exactly what we deserve.

In other words, you cannot dishonor God in this act, we deserve this, you cannot impugn God for this, we deserve it. Now, friends that's really the heart of what I want you to understand. Whenever you excuse your sin, you're really putting the blame on God. Now you have a classic illustration of this in the book of Genesis. You'll remember that Eve sinned and then Adam sinned, and then God comes to Adam and He says, Adam, why did you do that? And you remember what Adam said? He said, the woman You gave me. And people have always thought-he blamed Eve, but he didn't blame me, he said, the woman You gave me. Who did he blame? He blamed God. You gave me this woman, I went to sleep a bachelor, woke up married what choice did I have? You could have picked any woman You wanted, why her? She's a loser. You made her, I didn't even know what a woman was and then I was married to one. Look at this mess, the woman You gave me. By not being willing to blame himself he impugned God, and he also implicated the woman, and no doubt in so doing implicated the serpent, but he never took the blame himself.

Now that's the very opposite. Giving glory to Cod means that I'll accept the responsibility for sin, it isn't God's fault, it isn't the fault of somebody God brought into my life, it isn't the fault of some circumstance, you can't say, well God, You didn't have to make a Satan, You didn't have to let him fall, You didn't have to put me in this city I'm in, You didn't have to bring that person across my path, You're sovereign, You're in control and all of those things we always try to say to get out of things. Excusing sin impugns God, if you sinned, if I sinned, who's fault is it? Ours and ours alone, that's all. So if God chooses to chasten us He's free to do that, we cannot deny responsibility.

Now people I really believe this is part and parcel of spiritual growth, I feel that you grow spiritually as you consciously openly face the reality of your sinfulness and confess it. Because you see what you're doing then? You're really dealing with the dead weight that drags down the process of spiritual growth. if growth is like a race, we can't run it with weights, as Hebrews 12 says. That just pulls us down, slows us down, we need to be dealing with sin. Now this is a very important theme. As we acknowledge our sin, as we face our sin, as we confess our sin, that weight drops off and we really begin to grow. Now let me show you an illustration again of this in First Samuel chapter 5.

Now this is most fascinating part of Biblical history. The children of Israel ha paid little attention to God for a long time. They had been pretty well pursuing their own ends ah, they were still religious in a formal sense they still cranked up the ritual but there was nothing in their heart toward God. And so now they get into a battle with the Philistines, and they have a problem the Philistines basically can overpower them militarily. And so they are fearful, and in their fearfulness they decide that if they're going to defend themselves against the Philistines they had better get God back into their army. But having ignored Him for so long, in fact they'd even take the ark of the covenant, which was the place

where God's presence abode and they had removed it off somewhere other than where it should have been, and so they were told to go get it. So somebody says in chapter 4 go to Shiloh and get God. We're not going to get into this battle with any sense of victory unless God is here, so they ran off to get God. And so off they went, they came back with the ark, the ark arrives, tremendous things begin to happen in verse 7 of chapter 4, "The Philistines were afraid; and they said, God is come into the camp." You see to them it was just an idol, they had their own idols, they saw this little box with the angels wings on the top and the polls runnin' through the rings and ah, they said, that's their God, and boy, their God is a powerful God, "Woe unto us!" This is the God you know, who, who delivered them from Egypt, and this is the God that drown all the Egyptian army, and this is the God that brought the plagues and boy, we don't wanna mess with the God in that little box. And so they were afraid. But you know what happened? They didn't have much choice, they had to fight, so verse 10 says, "And the Philistines fought, and Israel was smitten."

Now wait a minute, what do you mean Israel was smitten? The had God on their team. Well, "they fled every man to his tent; there was a very great slaughter, and thirty thousand foot soldiers of Israel fell." And you know what else happened? "The ark of God was taken; and two sons of Eli, (the high priest) Hophni and Phinehas, were slain." The priests sons were killed, thirty thousand footmen died, and the Philistines walked off with the ark. Now that isn't exactly what Israel expected, they thought God was a utilitarian genie, you run your little bottle, He pops out and says, yes master, what can I do for you? But He wasn't God is not jello; you don't plop Him in your mold and then spring Him out to do your thing in the way you want it done. They had ignored God and God was going to show them a lesson, they can't do that. So, they lost the battle. Well if you think it was tough on Israel, it was tougher on the Philistines because now they've got God on their hands, and that's a tough one. They walk off with this little box and all hell breaks loose in their country, believe me. Chapter 5 it says this, "And the Philistines took the ark of God, and brought it from Ebenezer to Ashdod."

Now they were going to go through a series of cities in Philistia, which by the way is the primitive name of Palestine, it's where that name comes from. "And when the Philistines took the ark of God, they brought it in to the house of Dagon, and set it by Dagon." Now the obvious thing to do with a God is to put Him in a god's house, right? Dagon was their god; Dagon was a god that was half fish, half man, sort of a malemaid rather than a mermaid, a weird thing. Half fish, half man, but this is what the Philistines worshiped, and he had a temple so they figured we've got the God of Israel we'll stick Him in the house that we've made for our own god. Well, verse 3, "When they in Ashdod (where the house of Dagon was) arose early the next day, behold, Dagon was fallen on his face (in which direction?) he was bowing before the ark of the Lord." They came in and here was the whole deal duped over bowing down to this little box. "And so they set him in his place again." They probably figured there was a localized earthquake or something went on real bad and he fell over and we have to fix him, and so they put him back. In verse 4, "They arose early the next morning, and Dagon was fallen on his face to the ground (again) before the ark of the LORD; (only this time) his head was cut off and both the palms of his hands were cut off; and only the stump remained." And God was saying, don't

pick him up again, he's right where he belongs. God will not tolerate any other gods; God will not tolerate any idols being compared to Him. Well, that wasn't all that happened, verse 6, "The hand of the LORD was heavy on them of Ashdod, and he destroyed them, and smote them with...now some versions say hemorrhoids but that's a very bad translation, that is not what they were smitten with, that would be a bad problem but that isn't what the problem was right here. Ah, one of the old versions says hemerods, that sounds like a flower, but the best translation is tumors. The whole society of Ashdod were smitten with tumors, by the way, ah, mo...many of them died in a plague that was brought by some mice, something like the black death or the bubonic plague and the ones that didn't die by the mice were smitten with these tumors. Well the men of Ashdod were fairly smart and it didn't take them long to figure out that they got into a lot of trouble when they got the ark of God, so they said, get that ark out of here. And so they said, well, what are we going to do with it in verse 8, and they said, send it to Gath.

Now Gath is a familiar town to some of you because there was a big man from Gath by the name of Goliath, another town in Philistia. So they took the ark of the God of Israel to Gath, which wasn't any big favor for the people who lived there. Same thing happened, great destruction, a plague of mice, death everywhere, "He smote the men of the city, small and groat, and they had tumors (again) in their secret parts."

Now what that means is internal tumors, some cancers on the inside. And so they said, get rid of the thing, they sent it to Ekron, the Ekronites yelled and said, wait a minute! And so this thing is being passed all the way through their country and everywhere it goes there's trouble, in fact in verse 12 it says, "The men that died not (that is from the plague) were smitten with the tumors; and the cry of the city went up to heaven." Now what were they saying to heaven? God, You, boy, what kind of a God... were they cursing God. What were they doing? When they cried to heaven? Were they saying, God why are You doing this? Let's find out verse 1 of chapter 6, "And the ark of the LORD was in the country of the Philistines seven months. And the Philistines called for the priests and the diviners," soothsayers, you know, said what are we going to do, well how do we get ourselves out of this mess? "And they said, If you send away the ark of the God of Israel, don't send it empty;" don't send it back the way you got it. Well, what do you mean? "By by all means (now watch this) return him a trespass offering; then you will be healed."

Now listen, what does a trespass offering admit to? To sin. You admit that it's your fault, not God's. If you wanna have peace, and these guys were smarter than a lot of people I know, you admit that the God you have desecrated, the God you have dishonored, the God you have defamed had every right to react in the way that He did, and the reason you've got problems is because you have defiled this God. In other words, you take the blame and you give a trespass offering. Well, "they said, What shall the trespass offering be?" In chapter ah, 6 verse 4. And he said, the wise men said, "Five golden tumors, and five golden mice," now that sounds weird that is not a Levitical trespass offering, these are pagans. Whenever they would give an offering they would give what was called a votive, v-o-t-i-v-

e offering, votive offerings were symbolic replicas of the problem brought on by the desecration of the god, for example let's say that you lived in that society and, and you had, a withered hand, - in your pagan thinking you would assume that the gods had given you a withered hand because you'd dishonored them, so when you went to the temple to worship the gods you would have fashioned out of clay a hand, and when you put that hand down that would be the way you were acknowledging to the gods that you knew your problem with your hand was because you dishonored them. That's what votive offerings were. When I was in the city of, of Corinth ah, I went into a little room in the ah, museum there where have collected the votive offerings, and a man there had the key, and they don't let people in there very often but we were able to get in. And we noticed in there that all over the place were these clay replicas of every possible organ and limb of the body, external and internal. They had come to worship the god Asclepius, who is the god of healing, and when they came they would bring these parts of the body, these symbols knowing that they were thereby saying to the gods, whatever disease I have is a result of my failure to fulfill your will. And so these pagans are doing what is very normal, they were saying, the tumors and the mice are reckoned to be a result of Your judgment on us, and we want You to know that we know that. Alright, verse 5, "Wherefore, you shall make images of your tumors, and images of your mice that ma the land; and you shall give glory to the God of Israel." In other words, you glorify God when you recognize that He had every right to do that. Because you defiled Him.

Now let me tell you something people, as long as you are making excuses for your sinfulness you will never grow spiritually. You will grow spiritually when you are humbly acknowledging your sin and doing something about it. You see if spiritual growth is a process in which there is the decreasing frequency of sin, then spiritual growth must include a dealing with sin, you see? You have to be dealing with it. And how do you deal with it? You acknowledge that you are responsible for it, that's first, that's first. You don't blame your circumstance, you don't blame your husband, your wife, your boyfriend, your girlfriend, your boss, you don't blame your employees, you don't blame the pastor. You, you blame yourself. You don't even blame the devil and that went around for along time, the devil made you do it, we still have things today that people believe demons make them do everything. I read a book by a man who even said that the problem with his runny nose was the demon of postnasal drip. It isn't demons, and it isn't the devil, and it isn't he circumstances, and it isn't your friends, and so forth, oh, all of that system contributes to the problem but ultimately sin every time it occurs is an act of the will, and you are responsible.

And so first of all you have to acknowledge that. In Nehemiah chapter 9 and verse 33, Nehemiah said this, listen, to God, he said, "Thou art just (listen now) in all that is brought upon us." Isn't that interesting? "Thou art just in all that is brought upon us." Everything You've done to us God, You're just in doing it. When the prodigal came home to his loving father in Luke 15, he said, I have sinned against heaven, and against you. He said; just treat me like a day laborer, that even would be gracious. He didn't expect anything because he knew he didn't deserve anything. It is that mentality people, that you know you're a sinner, you deserve nothing. That is the source of a dealing with sin

that's part and parcel of spiritual growth. In Psalm 51 David says, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." He didn't blame anybody but himself. And he said in effect, God, You're just in all that You've brought to bear on my life. And that's where confession begins, it begins by acknowledging the sin is my fault.

Now let me just take that a little further. If you're really going to grow spiritually you must be confessing your sins to the glory of God. That means first of all you see it as your sin. Secondly, you acknowledge it as sin, you acknowledge it as such. This is my problem and I know that it is sinful, and it is a, an affront against Your divine nature. Genesis 41:9, "Then spoke the chief (ah,) butler to Pharaoh, I do remember my sins this day." Genesis 44:16, "So Judah said, What can we say to my lord? What can we speak? And how can we justify ourselves? God has found out our sins." That's the end of the conversation. First Samuel 15:24, "Then Saul said to Samuel, I have sinned; I have transgressed truly the command of the LORD." Second Samuel 12:13, "And David said to Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD." Daniel 9:20, Daniel good, godly Daniel says, "I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin." Luke 5:8, "But when Simon Peter saw that, he fell down at Jesus' feet, saying, De-part from me; for I am a sinful man, O'Lord." Luke 18, The publican in the corner "wouldn't so much as lift his eyes toward heaven, but smote upon his breast, and cried, Lord be merciful to me a sinner." So you see confession of sin is recognizing it's your problem and it's sin, it's sin. And I really believe people that that's so very basic to spiritual growth, because that's where you're dealing with the thing that holds you back from growing.

Now let me go a little further on this. The word confess, in the Greek in the New Testament is the word homologeo, logeo from which we get logos means to speak. We talk about logic, that means a discus-sion of principal. Logical, to speak is, is part of the word the other part is homo or homo, when we say something is homogeneous, or homogenize, we mean it is the same, it is the same, and that is exactly what the word means, to speak the same. To confess your sin, now watch this, is not to beg for forgiveness it is simply to say the same thing about your sin that God is saying, and what's He saying? It's sin and it's your fault, see. Confession is not a pleading and pleading and a begging for forgiveness. It is an agreement with God that your sin is your sin, that's all. And that's very basic. When I confess my sin I'm not saying, oh God, please forgive me, I be You please forgive me, I want You to forgive me. Like ah they used to saying revivalist type meetings, pray it through brother, pray it through, keep plowin' in there, keep bangin' on the door and God will forgive, no-no-no. When you became a Christian, how much of your sin did He forgive? Well the Bible says, He's for- given all your trespasses for his name's sake, First John 2. You see, you say...somebody says to me, well, that was only the sin in the future, listen, when Christ died all your sin was future. All your sin is forgiven, confession is not a matter of forgiveness, it is a matter of agreeing with God that you are a sinner and willing to deal with that sin in your life. It's already been forgiven. Y...you know Jesus already paid the penalty for all my sin, doesn't have to be paid again

In Ephesians chapter 4 and verse 32, that wonderful verse, it say this, "Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, hath (past tense) forgiven you.' You're already forgiven. We're not begging for for-giveness, forgiveness is already there we just accept it. What we are doing is agreeing with God that we are at fault.

Now in First John 1:9 it says, and I'll paraphrase it, "If we are the ones confessing our sins, the he is the one faithful and just to forgive us our sin." And what he's doing there is characterizing a Christian, you have to understand the whole argument of First John, and if you take the course in First John we'll get into that in detail. But the whole argument of First John is the difference between a Christian and a non-Christian and a non-Christian does this, he denies his sin, First John 1:8 and 10. John says, "If any man say he has not sinned, he makes God a 1iar." That's typical of an unregenerate man, he denies his sin. But we are the ones confessing, it is characteristic of a true believer to be agreeing with God about his sin, that it is sin against God, and that it is his fault. People say, well, are, are you sure, don't you think you just have to kind of deal with sin when you get saved and never again?

Listen, were you saved by faith? Yes, well is that where faith ended? Did you say, well now I'm saved by faith from here on I'll live by sight. No-no. You were saved by faith and you continue by faith. You were saved in a confession of sin, and you continue to confess the sin, in your life. The mark of a Christian is a constant life of faith. The mark of a Christian is a constant life of love, that's what First John says. The mark of a Christian is a constant life of obedience. The mark of a Christian is the constant life of separation from the world. The mark of the Christian is constant life of instruction at the hands of the Holy Spirit, rather than worldly wisdom, and another mark of a Christian a constant willingness and openness to confess sin. So that a Christian is characterized as one who confesses sin, now there are degrees of it, that vary. Sometimes we don't make as full a confession as we ought to, but any true believer is sooner or later going to acknowledge his sin, that's First John 1:9.

Now let me tell you something people, when you are doing that faithfully and honestly and objectively before God, you will find yourself in the process of growth. When you won't face your sin, and you won't admit it and deal with it and bring it before God, you won't because you're not ready to let go of it. That's the key. That's why I say there's no such thing as true confession without repentance. You know I can remember in my life saying, Lord, I, I'm so sorry for those sins and I thank You for already forgiving me, and that was all I said. And it came to a mile stone in my life when I began to say this, Lord, thank You for forgiving those sins, I know they did not please You, and I never want to do them again.

Now sometimes we don't say that because we want to do them again. We just want to take care of the past we don't want to eliminate the future, we kind of like em. What I'm saying then is, that's a betrayal of a lack of spiritual maturity. When you face your sin, you acknowledge that it's yours, that it's against God, you square off with it, you admit it, and you repent of it that's the heart, that's the

core of really genuine confession of sin. Now people I've spent some time on this because I think this is so very basic. Here e are trying to grow, the thing that retards us is sin. Here we are endeavoring to glorify God, if there's one thing in the universe that doesn't glorify God what is it? Sin. And for example, if I regard iniquity in my heart the Lord won't even what? Hear me. I can't grow spiritually, I can't even commune with God, if I am harboring sin so there must be in my life confession of sin. And I, I believe this is so very basic. As you and I are involved in facing the reality of our sin and confessing it, we free God from any impunity, if He wants to chasten us we accept it. And we don't say, well, God you know you sure do make it tough on me, why do I get the dirty end of the stick? You know and sometimes you, you ought to examine your life you may be getting exactly what you deserve, and you ought to be willing to accept it. So that as a believer, if we're to grow we must be dealing with that which retards our growth, and what retards our growth is sin.

Now let me make it as practical as I can. Somewhere in your prayer life, as a matter of routine, as a matter of constancy there ought to be confession of sin, and that is an overt and open and honest dealing with sin, and a willingness to accept whatever chastening God brings, because that's how He keeps you from doing it again. I tell parents all the time, that if there are no consequences to your child's misbehavior, your child will continue to misbehave. In my own life I've said even to the Lord, Lord, if I need chastening to be conformed to You, then chasten me, see? Because I don't want to go down the same path all the time.

But God has put in us a system of guilt, and it's good. If you didn't feel guilty you'd be living your spiritual life like a physi-cal life where you didn't feel pain. Can you imagine trying to live physically where, where you felt no pain? You might be interested in a simple illustration. In recent studies they have found out that leprosy as terrible a disease as it is, is far different than what they originally thought. They thought that originally leprosy was a disease that ate away the flesh, ate away the face, the nose, the fingers, the goes, the body. They have found in recent studies, and this you can read about in Phil Yancey's very helpful book, Where Are You God, When It Hurts? But they found out in these studies that they've done hat the problem with leprosy is this, leprosy numbs the extremities and people then wear them off, because they don't feel any pain. They did a study for example with a man who wore tight shoes and ah, he lost all his toes in a grotesque way, well they assumed that that was the eating of leprosy when all it was was his shoes, too tight rubbing away his toes but he never knew it because he never had any feeling. A leper who has a problem with his nose that irritates will rub and rub and rub the nose, and it isn't the leprosy that eats the nose away, he literally rubs off the nose, and doesn't know it because he feels nothing.

Now God has put within us a system of pain, in leprosy that's lost and destruction takes place. Now in your spiritual life God has placed guilt. Guilt is a little bell, or a buzzer that goes off when you sin, it should then bring you immediately to the point of confession, when there is a sin and you feel the guilt and you sense the reality, that is God's way of saying, that's pain to your soul. And there at that point you con-front it, you say, God, I know it is sin, I know it is against You, I realize it Is my fault, I do not

want to do it again, I turn, give me the strength to walk in another path. Now as you live like that, you're going to find yourself in a tremendous pattern of spiritual growth, and frankly, you'll never grow spiritually until you begin to deal with the things that hold back your growth, that retard your maturity.

What have we learned so far? Spiritual growth is a process of giving God glory, as we live in the framework of giving Him glory we grow, that means confessing Jesus as Lord, that means aiming my life at His glory of matter what it costs me, suffering when He suffers, and being content to be outdone by others who do the same thing I do only better, and then finally for the first part of our study, it means that I am willing to acknowledge my sin so that whatever God may bring into my life He is just to do it, for I have sinned, and He is holy and righteous in His reaction. And in these conditions people, with this framework we'll begin to grow spiritually.

Now believe it or not we've only covered three of a dozen keys to spiritual growth. The last nine aren't going to be as lengthy as the first thee but these were basics. Let's thank the Lord for our study. Father we do thank You for the time we've shared together in this lesson and we pray that this foundation might be laid, that these keys might be taken in hand to unlock the treasures of Your blessing to those who are mature. Help us as we further our study as well, in Christ's name, Amen.

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