

General Topics :: confessing national sins

confessing national sins - posted by frontier (), on: 2009/1/21 6:00

Examples abound in scripture of leaders confessing national sins or "the sins of my people". I'm just a nondescript citizen but I have a very difficult time doing this on a personal level. Intellectually I understand God's answer to Habakkuk's question, but is this confession of national sins something I should be doing? If so, I find it very hard.

Is the problem my cold heart, or just don't understand God's holiness and man's sinfulness. Perhaps it's only for leaders. It's one thing to intellectually say the words for sorrow but quite another to own them in our soul. Anyone have any help? Thanks.

Re: confessing national sins - posted by RobertW (), on: 2009/1/21 9:36

Hi Frontier,

You may be interested in the (https://www.sermonindex.net/modules/newbb/viewtopic.php?topic_id26547&forum40) Just who is responsible for this state of affairs? thread that deals with this issue throughout.

Re: confessing national sins - posted by ccchhhrrriiisss (), on: 2009/1/21 10:49

Hi frontier...

I understand what you're saying (at least, I think that I do). This has been attempted by many denominations and even government leaders at times. The problem, however, is that most of these "pick and choose" the sins for which they confess or apologize.

In the United States, we realize that our nation had a history of slavery. What a disgusting and terrible practice! It was a major inner conflict at the founding of our nation (particularly around wording that conveyed that "all men are created equal" and "endowed with certain unalienable right"). It remained a conflict until a great civil war was fought largely around this issue. While the official conflict revolved around whether states could establish laws that superseded the laws of the Federal Government, the underlying laws in question regarded the trend toward anti-slavery laws...and whether a state could dissolve their union with the republic because they felt like the federal government was removing certain "rights" in regard to this issue (amongst a very few others).

Slavery was effectively ended in 1863 with the Emancipation Proclamation by Abraham Lincoln and ratification of the 13th Amendment in 1865 (at least in a legal sense). Bigotry, racism, and segregation laws continued for more than a century following the Civil War. What a terrible sin in our nation's history!

Should this nation apologize? In one sense, I think that it has. The United States has sense condemned the practice of slavery for any purpose. Presidents have condemned the practice. Slavery was wrong in Africa (where some Africans sold their fellow Africans into slavery). It was wrong when men in the Scriptures owned slavery. In a legal sense, a public apology gives credibility (at least to some) about the notion of reparations -- that is, economic compensation to the descendants of slaves. In my opinion, this is a silly notion because such reparations can only be paid by an entire nation (including those descendants of former slave owners, those descendants of non-slave owners, and the descendants of former slaves too -- since we are ONE nation). But if an apology is made -- who should make it? And what should the apology consist of?

In a large way, the United States (the federal government) has *repented* of slavery. The same nation that once protected the practice eventually passed civil rights laws to protect African Americans from discrimination...and even passed "affirmative action" laws to promote African Americans to entry in schools and the workforce. While a formal apology might not have been made, the confession of sin came from Lincoln's mouth (amongst others) and repentance was demonstrated in various ways since then.

But why do we pick and choose the sins of a nation? Is it because slavery was so evil? Was it any less evil than abortion...or homosexuality...or protection of pornography? Why should a national leader confess a sin that still goes on unrepentantly? Should a national leader speak for a nation and verbally say "we're sorry" if the nation will continue in that sin? Sorrow is best demonstrated through actions.

I don't know why, but I wanted to make sure that my ancestors did not own slaves. One of my undergraduate history professors assigned us to complete a genealogy. In the course of this, I found that none of my ancestors owned slaves. I have to admit, it was a relief to know. Yet my genealogy was limited in scope. On my mother's side, I followed roots back to Europe (and even to the Cherokee nation). On my father's side, I was limited by a lack of knowledge (just that my biological grandmother is Jewish and my grandfather was Irish/English). No one owned slaves...as far as I can tell. Yet our ancestry is long...just like everyone's...and can be traced back to Noah and his wife...and eventually to Adam and Eve. At what point do we stop acknowledging family sins?

I think that the best confession of sins (personally and corporately) is when we confess them to God...and then turn from them. This doesn't have to be a public affair or written in stone. It can be a heartfelt ripping of the robes in godly sorrow! Yet it must be demonstrated by a turn from that sin. We cannot pick and choose which sins for which we hope to confess...for all sin is terrible in the sight of God. It would be far better to realize and proclaim how sinful we are -- that we are literally conceived in sin...born to a sinful nature that we inherited from our primary ancestors (Adam and Eve)...and can rely only on the grace and mercy of God to be reconciled to Him.

A confession of our need for Him...to know Him...to desire to belong to Him...to love Him...to need His mercy and forgiveness...that life is futile without Him...is probably the greatest thing lacking in the world today! May I be the first to confess this!

Re: confessing national sins - posted by HeartSong, on: 2009/1/21 14:34

Quote:
-----Examples abound in scripture of leaders confessing national sins or "the sins of my people". I'm just a nondescript citizen but I have a very difficult time doing this on a personal level. Intellectually I understand God's answer to Habakkuk's question, but is this confession of national sins something I should be doing? If so, I find it very hard. Is the problem my cold heart, or just don't understand God's holiness and man's sinfulness. Perhaps it's only for leaders. It's one thing to intellectually say the words for sorrow but quite another to own them in our soul. Anyone have any help? Thanks.

The reason that we find it hard is that we don't want to take responsibility for what we view others as having done. Kind of like Adam and Eve in the garden with Adam pointing at Eve, and Eve pointing at the snake.

What we fail to realize is that God sees things from an eternal perspective where past, present and future are all the same. Also He does not need to use dimension and space to define what is and what is not.

There are many parts that make up the whole. What appears to be a vessel is actually many pieces of dust coming together to make up the clay. From space, the earth, which appears to be just a round ball, is actually a multitude of elements - land and sea, mountains and valleys, with billions upon billions of plants and animals. Then picture that round ball (earth) in relation to the rest of the galaxies and at the same time consider the molecular level of just one single plant. The incredible thing is that God sees, and controls, all of these levels simultaneously.

Now think about the sins of the nations.

If you are truly looking to know, pray and ask the Holy Spirit to show you that which you should confess. He did for me, so I assume He would do the same for you. He will also help you to repent if you ask Him, for He is quite capable of breaking your heart.

Re: - posted by murrcolr (), on: 2009/1/21 15:59

How about starting with our own sins first?