

Erlo Stegen:

There is no progress for the one who hides his sin.

Let's look at six people who confessed their sin but only one found forgiveness.

1) The first person had a hard heart.

"And Pharaoh sent, and called for Moses and Aaron, and said unto them, I have sinned this time: the LORD is righteous, and I and my people are wicked." (Exodus 9:27).

He confessed his sin; he said "I have sinned and am evil and so are my people."
He was a proud and arrogant man. Why did he confess his sin with his own lips?

It was because Moses, standing before him, stretched out his staff to the sky and the Lord sent strong lighting and fire and hail. From the time Egypt was formed there never was such a hail storm as that day. Lightning flashed back and forth until a fire was kindled. It was a fierce sight.
When Pharaoh saw that he said "I have sinned". He said it out of fear. He confessed his sin while the storm raged but when the storm passed his confession also came to an end.
His confession of his sin brought him no forgiveness.

There are many people like Pharaoh who confess their sin when something bad happens to them, they experience hardship or there's death in the family. But as soon as the difficulty is past their repentance also ends.

It does happen that a person turns to God and make promises during a difficult time, but after a little while the person forgets all the promises made to God.

Confession is the first part of repentance but if your life doesn't attest to the fact your confession means nothing.

2) The next person is Balaam. He was a double-minded man. He would say "I have sinned" and be so convicted of his evil but then continue with his evil. He was double-minded.

As he went on the donkey and the angel met him he said "I have sinned" but he continued on his way. He was pliable. He would bend towards that which is good and then again towards evil. On the one hand he was like satan and on the other hand so holy and pious. Sometimes he would speak the truth, holy and precious words, but at other times he would be full of jealousy and the love of money. When the king of Moab asked him to come and curse the Israelites he said, "they are God's people, how can I curse them". But when he was offered great riches he eventually followed because of his love for money.

He could be so good but at the same time so evil. He had a corrupt character. He stood for two things. God's Word says no man can serve two masters. But Balaam tried to serve both God and his own interests, money and fame.

It's like those who inhabited the land of Israel after Israel went into exile. They feared God yet served and bowed down to other gods too.

Are there some among us like this - two faced. You look so pious in church but as you go home you pass by the bar for a drink or gossip and speak about others, or fight and steal.

Those without discernment might rejoice when such people repent. But such repentance doesn't bring about forgiveness or salvation.

3) The third person is the first king of Israel, king Saul.

"And Saul said unto Samuel, I have sinned: for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD, and thy words: because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice." (1 Samuel 15:24).

His confession was hypocritical.

Let this matter of the confession of sin be clear. Some say they confess their sin but it doesn't help. Well it's because you confess it like these people. You confess it either with a hard heart or a double-mind or you are stubborn like Saul.

Saul was stubborn. He said he was afraid of the people but that was just an excuse for his deliberate disobedience to get his own way. He was of corrupt character always wanting his own way.

4) The fourth person is Achan.

"And Achan answered Joshua, and said, Indeed I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done:" (Joshua 7:20).

It wasn't clear whether he truly was repenting. But when they had lost at Ai the children of Israel were told to humble themselves and draw near to God the next day. Yet Achan waited till he was caught before confessing his sin. There was a time of grace but he did not use it.

His confession seems to have meant nothing. He still died for his sin.

There are such people who confess their sin and you're unsure whether it's true repentance or not. It's like death-bed conversions - they acknowledge their sin just before they die.

Death bed conversions are dubious. A certain Christian medical doctor found that of those who got converted on their death bed and then got well afterwards, less than 1% actually continue to serve the Lord.

May God have mercy on us that our repentances would be true, not from a hard or hypocritical heart, but from a soft heart and in truth.

May your repentance be seen by your life and the good fruit.

5) There is also the case when a person's hope has come to an end and he confesses out of despair like Judas Iscariot.

Judas went to the priests, threw the money down and said "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood". He confessed his sin out of despair.

Benjamin Keach tells of a certain English man who had been a professor of religion, but later departed from the profession and went into awful sin.

His day of death arrived - a terrible day. Keach, with many other friends, went to see him. They say nobody could outlast 5 minutes in his presence. He'd say to them, "Go away! You can't help me. I've sinned against the Holy Spirit. I'm like Esau. I've sold my birthright. My mouth is full of gravel. I drink wormwood all the time."

His friends would try to tell him about Christ, but he said, "I know He is the Saviour but I hate Him and He hates me".

He died like that crying, "I am lost, lost!"

6) The last person was helped by his confession - the prodigal son who said "father I have sinned against heaven and against thee".

He grew up in a Christian home with good parents. But he turned his back on his family and God. He went into a distant country and there lived a godless life with godless friends. He spent all his money on drink, drugs and prostitutes.

When his money came to an end his friends also came to an end. Not one would invite him into their house or have anything to do with him anymore.

Eventually he found a job to look after pigs.

For a Jew this was the lowest level he could fall to. They considered pigs as defiled and would have nothing to do with them.

One day it dawned on him, for God the Holy Spirit worked in him, that his father is at home and he could go to him. He said "I'll get up and go to my father and say 'I have sinned against heaven and thee and am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me as one of your hirelings'." He said "I'll go and ask my father that I be like a servant, getting up in the middle of the night to work and in the heat of the day". He asked forgiveness with a broken heart. He was willing to go and live in the servant's quarters.

But when he was far off his father saw him, embraced him and received him full of grace and mercy.

True confession of sin

Which of these are you? Confess your sin in humility and in truth.