

Confessing Other People's Sins

Samuel Logan Brengle:

'Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?' asked the Lord of Adam in the Garden of Eden. And Adam replied, 'The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat. And the Lord God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.' Thus they confessed the sins of others and ignored their own, and the curse fell upon them instead of blessing.

Nothing more surely makes manifest a man's spiritual blindness and deadness and hardness of heart than this hiding behind others and confessing their faults instead of his own, and nothing will more surely confirm him in his blindness and sin. It is a deadly kind of hypocrisy. It is an endeavor to shift on to others responsibility for a man's own evil heart and life, and it can meet only with God's displeasure.

'He that covereth his sins shall not prosper,' said Solomon; 'but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy,' and there is no more dangerous way of trying to cover one's sins than by blaming somebody else and calling attention to his faults instead of humbly confessing our own.

An incident in the life of King Saul makes this plain. 'Samuel said unto Saul, Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel..... Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep and ass. But Saul and the people spared Agag (the king) and the best of the sheep and of the oxen and of the fatlings and the lambs and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them; but everything that was vile and refuse, that they destroyed utterly....

'Then came the word of the Lord unto Samuel, saying, It repenteth Me that I have set up Saul to be king, for he is turned back from following Me, and hath not performed My commandments.....And Saul said..... I have performed the commandment of the Lord. And Samuel said, What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears and the lowing of the oxen which I hear? And Saul said..... I have obeyed the voice of the Lord, and have gone the way which the Lord sent me..... but the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed.' Thus Saul tried to cover his own sin by confessing the sins of others; but Samuel answered him, 'Thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord hath rejected thee from being king.' So Saul lost his kingdom.

And men still lose their crown of peace and salvation and God's favor by sinning, by disobeying, and by confessing the sins of others instead of their own.

'Confess your faults one to another,' wrote James. 'If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness,' wrote John.

'I have sinned!' cried David, and again he said, 'I acknowledge my transgressions; and my sin is ever before me.' We can hear the sob of a broken and penitent heart, through the open and humble confession. And God put away his sin.

'God be merciful to me a sinner!' prayed the publican; and 'this man went down to his house justified.'

'Are you saved?' I asked a little woman in one of our Prayer Meetings.

No, I am not,' she replied with emphasis.

'Were you ever saved?' I asked.

'Yes, I was.'

'And what did Jesus do that you turned your back on Him and started for Hell?' I questioned. 'A man who called himself a Christian slapped my husband in the face,' said she; but she did not tell me the fact (which I learned later) that the man confessed his wrong, and apologized.

'Well, that was too bad,' I replied; 'but you shouldn't have turned your back on Jesus for that. You know they slapped Jesus in the face, they "smote Him with the palms of their hands." And she opened wide her eyes and looked at me. 'And you know they spat in His face also, and not content with that, they crushed a crown of

thorns on His head; but that did not satisfy them, so they bared His back, and tied His hands to His feet, and whipped His poor bare back till it was all cut and torn and bleeding -- that was the way the Roman soldiers, under Pilate, scourged Him; and then they smote Him on the head and mocked Him; but not content with that, they then placed a great cross on His shoulders, and it must have pressed heavily upon the poor, wounded back. But He carried it, and there on Calvary they crucified Him; they drove great nails through His hands and feet, and lifting the cross they let it fall heavily into its place. This must have rent and torn His hands and feet very terribly, but He prayed, "Father, forgive them." And there He hung in agony and pain, while they robbed Him of His only suit of clothes, and gave Him gall and vinegar to drink, and wagged their heads and mocked Him. Then He bowed His head and died. And this He suffered for you, my sister, but you turned your back upon Him because some one ill-treated your husband!

And as I talked she saw Jesus; the sin of the other man faded from her sight and her own sin grew big before her eyes, until she was in tears; then rising, she rushed, sobbing, to the penitent-form to confess her own sin to the Lord, and, I trust, to be restored once more to His favor.

When a man gets this vision of Jesus, he ceases to blame other men, and looks only at his own sin, which he can no longer excuse. He blames himself, pleads guilty, and confesses his wrongdoing with a broken and contrite heart; then, looking into the pitying face of his suffering Saviour, he trusts, receives pardon, enters into peace, and becomes a new creature in Christ Jesus.

This is the vision and faith that begets love to the Saviour, that produces obedience in the heart, that saves from all sin, and that gives love and skill to save others also.

Oh, my brother, my sister, let me beg of you to take your eyes off other people and fix them upon yourself and upon Jesus; then you will get the 'beam' out of your own eye, and see clearly how to get the 'mote' out of your brother's eye!

And you that have to deal with people who are always confessing other people's sins, let me beg of you to deal with them very tenderly, though very firmly, lest you forget 'the hole of the pit whence ye are digged,' and lest you become severe with your brother for a fault from which you may think yourself delivered, but are not entirely free.

Remember Paul's words: 'Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.' I have seen men fall themselves through failing to be gentle with those who have fallen. Remember the words of Jesus: 'Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart.' How hard is that sweet lesson of meekness and lowliness of heart! But that is the first lesson Jesus sets us to learn.