

David Guzik 02

by David Guzik

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Transcript

The missionary who hosted Goldworth ran forward in the morning meeting and he cried out, Pray for us missionaries, we need it more than any of you. That was the first of many similar meetings that Jonathan Goldworth held throughout China over the next two years. And confession of sin in this manner was very common during the Manchurian Revival.

But I want you to notice something. Jonathan Goldworth never once asked anybody to publicly confess their sins. Never! He simply preached and concluded his messages with this invitation.

He said, you people have the opportunity to pray. And many of them were struck with an urgency to confess their sins. And they admitted the sins of idolatry and theft and murder and adultery and gambling and drug abuse.

But especially they confessed the more urgent sins to the church. And I say more urgent. Because sometimes we believe that such other sins are by far the worst stain upon the body of Christ.

I wonder though. I wonder if hatred and lying and slander and gossip and criticism are not worse sins among the body of Christ. Now, when confession of sin takes place among the people of God, it should be appropriately specific.

To stand before the people of God and to say, if I made any mistakes, I'm sorry. That's not confession of sin at all. By the way, coming from America, before we moved to Germany, I was a pastor in Southern California for many years.

That's the kind of confession of sin we hear most commonly. Well, if I did anything wrong, I'm sorry. It's so insincere.

It costs nothing for a church member to admit in a prayer meeting, I'm not what I ought to be. Anybody could say that. No, no.

How much more important it is for somebody to say, I've been a troublemaker in this church. I've had a spirit of criticism. I've had an unforgiving, bitter heart in this church towards certain people.

And to now, I definitely apologize for that. Dr. J. Eleanor describes her on the 1952 revival, when she had a direct hand-in in Brazil. A woman in a crowded church stood up and she confessed this.

She said, please pray for me. I need to love people more. The pastor of the church gently and appropriately corrected the woman.

He said, my dear woman, sister, anyone could have said that. That's not a confession. Anyone of us could say, I need to love people more.

And so she sat down. Some time later in the meeting, she stood up again. And she said, please pray for me.

What I should have said is that my sharp tongue has caused a lot of trouble in this church. Dr. Bohr said that the pastor leaned over to him and said, now she's telling the truth. A confessional sin should be like that, is it not? The confession of sin should be thorough.

Some confessions are too general. When it comes to sins which should not be named among believers, yes, yes, we should be general and not specific. But other sins, especially the sins that disrupt the harmony and the health of the body of Christ, these are sins we should be specific about.

Wherever possible, we should make restitution, should we not? It's not enough for you to say, I'm sorry that I criticized you. Stop criticizing me. It's not enough for you to say, I'm sorry that I stole.

You need to make restitution. You need to be thorough in your confession. It's not enough for you to announce that you're a student and you've cheated.

You need to go to the teacher and make academic restitution. It's not enough for you to confess that you've been a thief. You need to take back the stolen goods and make restitution.

It's not good enough to say that you've been a troublemaker. You need to correct those falsehoods, those slanders, and put back the reputation of the person that you've been speaking against. If we confess our sin with no real intention of battling the sin, our confession is not thorough and it mocks God.

They tell the story of an Irishman in a little village, and when he confessed to his priest that he had stolen two bags of potatoes. Well, you know, in a little village like that, everybody knows everybody else's business. So the priest had to bring something up.

He said, well, I have to tell you, I heard that it was only one bag of potatoes that was stolen from the market. He said, well, Father, that's true, but I found it so easy, I need to go back and do it again tomorrow. That is obviously not a confession of sin.

No, no, instead, we need to be sensitive to the spirit of God and hear His voice and be open to this aspect of the public confession of sin. And again, I want to stress, the idea isn't that you stand before people and confess every single sin, but to be open to the conviction of the Holy Spirit and to be broken before Him. I would almost say that the point of it is not the confession of sin in itself.

The point of it is the brokenness and the reality before God. And if there seem to be too many things for you to confess, start with the biggest sins and make your way down the list as the Holy Spirit leads you. Listen, the important thing is that we receive this brokenness as a gift from the Spirit of God.

Friends, brothers, and sisters, by all means, I'll say this again, by all means, avoid phony and superficial confessions of sin. If it is not sincere, do not find it. If it isn't deeply real, it isn't any good.

Some decades ago, Thomas wrote Baptist Church in the dream. They had a prayer meeting on a Wednesday night. And the prayer meeting was over.

It had been over for almost an hour. It was about 10.30 in the evening and they were shutting off the lights in the sanctuary, in the assembly room, in the congregation. And there were just a few people scattered across the sanctuary.

But there was a university attached to that church. And when there was just a few scattered people, an hour after the prayer meeting had ended, one student, a young man, he came up on the platform and he came behind the pulpit. And he spoke to a microphone that had already been turned off, to a room where the lights had been switched off.

And there was just a few scattered people around. And he came to the pulpit and he wept. And through his tears, he confessed his sins before the few scattered people that were still in the auditorium.

And the student's passionate repentance caught the attention of a few people still in the auditorium. Somebody started singing. And somebody else went to the piano and started playing softly.

And as many people wept, most people knelt down either at the front altar or at the fuse. Another broken person came to the pulpit and they confessed their sins. And then another person after that.

And then after two hours of this, frantic calls went out to the pastors and the deacons of the church. And they said, revivals! Hit the church! And in the middle of the night, members of that church started streaming to the church building. And they stayed there from Wednesday night until Sunday morning.

They seemed to cancel all of their normal activities. Classes at the university were canceled. Most people stayed home from work.

And some people didn't eat. Those who felt that they had to stay there, they slept in the fuse in the back. They said it lasted from Wednesday night until Sunday morning.

We asked, what made it end on Sunday morning? I'll tell you what made it end. Early Sunday morning, one student rose to confess his sins. But he seemed to be bragging about what he had done.

There was no sin, no brokenness. And within one hour, everybody knew that it was over. They went back home and back to daily activities.

So friends, by all means, avoid phony confession of sin. Insincere, unbroken confession. But this is what we see.

That real confession of sin, prompted by the Spirit of God. An early sign of revival. And it is, in fact, somewhat traumatic.

You know, it's very much, it's our blessing. Brother, you ordered Richard to share with us yesterday, did you not? Be careful when you pray for revival. You might just get it.

And does this not explain why many prayers for revival are not answered? When many people pray for revival, what they are, in fact, praying for, what is in their heart, what is in their mind when they pray, is they say, Oh God, send revival. Send a season of spiritual excitement to your church. Now listen, I believe that revival this year is really exciting.

And I praise God for it. I think that anybody who has studied revival will tell you that revival is spiritually exciting in its secondary or third or fourth stages. In the beginning of it, it can feel like judgment.

And those who pray, God send us revival in a sense of spiritual excitement, God knows the heart. God knows that the heart of that person, they don't want revival. If it could be said accurately in their heart, they would be saying, Lord, please don't send revival.

Keep it far from us. If you've got some spiritual excitement to send our way, we'll take that, Lord. Not the true cleansing work of revival that is so often expressed in the public confession of Christ.

Now, when we hear about this, there's a legitimate concern that some people have. They say, won't it get out of hand? Won't it become a crazy or a farcical thing? And I have to tell you, it just does not have to be that way. Again, Dr. Moore tells of a time when a woman was overwrought by deep sorrow for sin, and she started to become hysterical.

And he saw the danger immediately, and he just told her this, Quiet, sister, turn your eyes upon Jesus. And the danger of an overwrought emotionalism was quelled. The work went on in deep power and glory.

Friends, let me remind you that at the same time, we do not regard the work of revival as something to be controlled by. If it falls apart, we recognize that there will probably be things in it that will challenge us, that will make us feel uncomfortable. I think God often deliberately plans revival, by the way.

This was very vividly communicated to me by a story of the greatest South African revival that there ever was. It was, again, that mid-19th century revival that they heard about the revival in America from missionaries, but they weren't very impressed by the news. They thought, as many people thought, well, those kind of things happen easily in America, but not in other places.

So the missionaries began to arrive from Scotland to South Africa, and they said that a similar work was going on then. It was that great work of 1860, 1861 that happened in tremendous power in Great Britain and the United Kingdom. They told of the revival happening there, and they were deeply impressed.

They began to have more hope for South Africa, and they started prayer meetings. Well, in one conference that they held, of 137 ministers, they heard reports of revival in other places, and they made

an even greater commitment to prayer. Fifty days after that, on Pentecost Sunday, the young people of a Dutch Reformed church in Wooster, South Africa, they were having a meeting.

It was a young people's meeting. In that young people's meeting, a colored girl asked if she might give her testimony. The young man who was in charge of the meeting gave her permission, and she gave such a testimony that it brought a sweet hush of the sense of the presence of God over them.

The youth leader said that he heard what he described as the sound of an approaching tornado, and he thought that he felt the whole hall where the youth were meeting shaking, and then all the young people sprang to their feet and began praying out loud at the same time. This is unusual among Dutch Reformed people. The Dutch Reformed have been described as Presbyterian with a little extra starch.

But the youth meeting was completely overwhelmed by the spirit of spontaneous prayer and crying out to God. An elder of the church was walking by, and he saw the meeting, and he heard the promotion, and he was very concerned. And so he decided to go report it to the minister immediately.

The minister was new to the ministry and new to the church. So the minister came back with the elder to this youth meeting that was just under an amazing outpouring of the spirit of God, and he said to the youth pastor in charge of the meeting, he said, what's happening here? The youth minister mumbled something about the presence of God. The young minister looked at the youth man, and he said, I hold you responsible for all of this.

And then the minister spoke to the young people directly. He told them all to be quiet, but none of them took any notice. And then he said, I am your minister sent by God.

Will you be quiet? And it was like they didn't even see him or him. The minister went back to the youth meeting, and they started to sing a hymn to try to get things more on track, but nobody listened to them. The minister finally stomped out of the meeting, and he said, God is a God of order.

This is nothing but confusion. Do you know the name of that Dutch reformed minister? His name was Andrew Murray. And it was said that when Andrew Murray was a mellow old saint, his friends used to tease him by saying, tell us, Dr. Murray, about how he tried to stop the war.

It's said that Andrew Murray was his smile when they asked him that question. But we should give some credit to the man, because he very soon got it right. He very soon discerned that something special was happening, and he called for a special prayer meeting the following Saturday at his school, and there was more than a thousand people packing the school room for that prayer meeting, and there were hundreds standing outside.

Dr. Murray came onto the podium, he read a passage of scripture, he gave a short commentary, and then he said, the meeting is now open for prayer. Again they heard the thought of the sound of an approaching tornado, and then all the thousand people were on their feet spontaneously and started crying out to God. A visitor forced his way to the front of the meeting, and he touched Andrew Murray on the arm, and he said, this is the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Be careful what you do. That was the beginning of the greatest revival in South Carolina. So friends, we don't say for a moment, when we give cautions, when we give ideas about the wisdom of confession, that we're not trying to control the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Instead we're just trying to recognize that sometimes unwise, sometimes unspiritual confession of sin can actually quench the work of the Spirit instead of advance it. Let me tell you very plainly, that real, deep confession of sin has been a feature of every genuine awakening or revival in the past 240 years. Did you notice the magazine Dear Brothers and Brothers of America from Pennsylvania? The story there about the wonderful revival nightcastle and how the front page headline that really struck you, Boy Confesses Barn Fire over \$10,000 or whatever it was.

Well, that's confession of sin. It's unusual, you might say, during normal times, but it is common during revival. We should know that.

It isn't anything new. Let me leave you with one last passage of Scripture which opens your Bibles to Acts chapter 19, beginning at verse 17. I regard this as another wonderful example of revival in the apostolic church.

Acts chapter 19, beginning at verse 17. This became known to all Jews and Greeks dwelling in Ephesus. And fear fell upon them all.

And the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. And many who hadn't believed came confessing and telling their deeds. Also, many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all.

And they counted up the value of them, and it totaled 50,000 pieces of silver. So the word of the Lord grew mighty and great. I could speak for a whole other hour just on those verses, couldn't you? But can I just point out to you verse 18? Many who believed came confessing and telling their deeds.

Wouldn't we love to see a work of God like that upon us? Wouldn't we love to see it at the whole congregations which we represent all over the world? This was Christians getting right with God, an open confession of His heart. It gave glory to God. Now, in closing a message like this, I confess that there's a little bit of awkwardness.

Because I can't say, well now, let's confess our sins. We'll start with the people here and we'll just go on a little while longer. That isn't what we're talking about now, is it? We want to be open to what the Spirit of God may do.

What He may do now, what He may do this evening, what He may do in our home congregations. We need to pray for it intelligently, anticipate it with all of our heart, and wait for the Spirit of God. Father, You are a great God.

And when we sense Your presence, when we sense Your power, it humbles us, Lord, as it should. So, we want to give You glory. So we ask that You would pour out Your Spirit upon us.

Even if it be in a way that cleanses us, and feels as if it were judgment day on us. We are ready, Lord, to respond to the move of Your Spirit. And we ask You to send forth this power.

We have been so richly blessed, repeatedly so through the days of this conference. But we're bold enough to believe You for more. And we're bold enough to believe You for a blessing to take back to our congregations.

Speak to us, Lord. We want to be filled with faith and anticipation with Your glory. We pray this, Lord God.

In the name of Jesus, our Lord.

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