

Confession

by William MacDonald

The sermon emphasizes the importance of confession and prayer in experiencing revival and spiritual growth, and warns against the dangers of worldliness and spiritual complacency.

Duration: 33:50

Scripture: 2 Chronicles 7:13

Topics: "Confession"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of valuing and prioritizing the word of the Lord. He highlights how the presence of television can distract and diminish the preciousness of God's word in our lives. The preacher laments the fact that many Christians today are more enthusiastic about TV shows than they are about studying and discussing the things of the Lord. He calls for confession and revival, urging believers to be concerned about the salvation of others and to not become complacent in dull worship meetings. The preacher also warns young people about the negative influence of TV and encourages strict control or elimination of it in order to make progress for God. He references two Bible verses, Psalm 119:37 and 1 Samuel 3:1, to support his argument against the vanity and negative effects of television.

Transcript

Would you please turn in your Bibles to 2 Chronicles, Chapter 7, and I'd like to read with you verses 13 and 14. 2 Chronicles, Chapter 7, verses 13 and 14. I couldn't believe it when Brother Ken said that his time was up.

I thought he was just starting, and I was hungry for more. It says here in 2 Chronicles, Chapter 7, verse 13, "If I shut up heaven that there be no rain, or if I command the locusts to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among my people, if my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my faith, and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land." I'd like to speak with you for a few moments tonight on Confession, the Road to Revival. The conveners of this conference had a deep sense of the desperate conditions of the day in which they, in which we live.

In writing to me, they shared something of that burden, and it echoed in my own heart. So in our country today, we're having terrible times of drought. I come from California, and the situation there is absolutely desperate.

If we go through another winter without rain, nobody knows what the outcome will be. But I'd like to tell you there's another drought that's worse than that, and that's the spiritual drought. I would like to think with you about that tonight.

I'd like to think with you about the spiritual drought in our national life. I'd like to think with you about the spiritual drought in our assembly life. I'd like to think with you about the spiritual drought in our personal lives as well.

Dear friends, we live in desperate days, and we've all gathered here tonight and wearing our Sunday goading meeting clothes, but I'd like to suggest to you what you already know very well, that beneath these clothes that look so fair on the outside, there are a good many people in a room like this who are wearing the sackcloth underneath. Drought in our national life. Did you ever stop to think that almost every basic principle that God has established for mankind is under attack in our country today? God instituted the marriage relationship.

God instituted it for the good of mankind, for the blessing of mankind, for the happiness of mankind. And Satan today is dragging it in the mud, and our country is being swept by a flood tide of adultery and fornication. Sexual immorality is around us on every hand.

A great tide of people living together apart from marriage. I went into a store recently to buy a wedding card, and the woman who sold it to me said, oh yes, she said, I think weddings are coming back, she said, and I'm glad. I think she was glad because she'd sell more cards, not because there was any principle involved.

Think of the tide of divorce, the legalization of prostitution, the terrible spread of homosexuality. God institutes marriage, and man turns around and thwarts it in his face. God instituted capital punishment after the flood.

It was God who said, whoso take of man's life by man, whoso shed of man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed. And in so doing, God instituted human government and gave the magistrate the power of the sword. No question about it, it's reiterated in the New Testament as well.

It says in Romans chapter 13, he beareth not the sword in vain. God instituted capital punishment, but capital punishment is being opposed today in the most specious reasoning. It's very doubtful that many persons will ever be put to death by capital punishment in the United States again.

God instituted the distinction between the sexes with God who did that. Now men and women are trying to break down that distinction. They have the unisex movement, and all the rest that I need not talk to you about.

God set a divine principle in the universe when he gave headship to the man, and decreed that the woman would be subject to the man. He never decreed that the woman would be inferior to the man, but he instituted authority and subjection to that authority, and it's impossible to think of any well-ordered society where you don't have those two principles. All well-ordered society is founded upon those two pillars, authority and subjection to authority.

It's even found in the Godhead. Christ is subject to God, but you know very well what's happening today. People dashing themselves against the rocks, with certain aspects at least of the women's liberation movement.

God instituted the submission of children to their parents, honor your parents. Today's may be long upon the earth. This is the first commandment of promise, and now we have children's rights amendment, and pretty soon I think parents will be dragged to court for disciplining their children.

Bible prohibits sexual perversion. Man says it's perfectly all right, let's make it legal as long as it's done between consulting, consenting adults. Our country is in a desperate condition.

Over and over again in the Old Testament you have God's attitude toward nudity. It was God who clothed Adam and Eve. He gave them those coats of skin, and now you see the bumper stickers more nude beaches.

Every divine principle in the word of God is under attack today. The sacredness of life under attack by the great wave of abortion, and drunkenness is no longer a sin. It's a sickness.

We're being bombarded with it over the radio, and it just needs treatment. We're suffering terrific national drought today, and our country is on the skids. Now, how does that apply to us as a group of Christians gathered together here for a concert? Well, I believe that the verse that we read today is the answer.

If my people which are called by my name shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my faith, and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land. Confession is the road to revival. Think of how Moses stood in the breach in days of old on behalf of the nation of Israel, and God heard and answered.

Think of how Ezra stood before God and cried out to God for the people, took his place as the intercessor, and God heard. Think of Elijah and how he prayed to God, and Daniel, and Daniel chapter 9, and he changed the whole course of human history. Did it ever occur to you that God expects you and me to take the place as confessors in behalf of our nation, to eat the sin offering as Daniel did, and cry, we have sinned? Generally, we look at the nation and the great wicked evil world around us and draw off our skirt as if we had nothing to do with it, but dear friends, if you and I don't pray and confess, who will? I remember back in the days of Watergate in our own country, and I remember that I think Senator Mark Hatfield and others called for a great national day of confession and repentance, and of course it never passed officially.

The houses of Congress, it was hardly expected to, but never mind. The day went on, and all over this country Christians bowed the knee we did ourselves down in California, and we cried out to God on behalf of our nation. So what happened? Well, I want to tell you, if you want to check back the dates, it was shortly after that that some of those very explosive Watergate tapes were revealed, and the abscess was punctured, and the pus began to flow, and we had a change of government.

You say, do you think that was related to the prayers of Godspeed? I believe it was. I'm just simple enough to believe it was. A few years back, a group of Christians gathered together down in San Leandro.

They gathered on the second Friday of every night of every month for a time of prayer, and this particular night they gathered together, and they opened their time of prayer, extended time of prayer, with a time of confession, confessing the sins of the nation, confessing the sins of the assembly, confessing their own personal sins, and really cried out to God. And when they finished, they had a sense of having touched the throne of grace, and then they moved on to pray for areas of the world, and they began zeroing in on the Chad Republic. At that time, there was a very wicked president in the Chad Republic in Africa.

His name was Tombulbai. I may not be pronouncing it correctly, but that's the way it's spelled, Tombulbai. He was a very wicked man, and he was oppressing the Christians, something terrible.

He had revived the most sordid initiation rites, and men were being hauled off to these rites, and some of them never came back. Time magazine reported that one Christian was buried up to his neck in the sand so that the ants could finish him off. Another Christian was placed in a drum, inside a drum, and they beat on the drum until he died.

I had a letter from Dick Sanders there in the Chad, and he said, don't feel sorry for the Christians who died. He said, pray for the Christians who are still living and going through such unspeakable tortures. Well, this little group of people down in San Leandro were praying on into the wee hours of the morning and crying to God for the Chad Republic.

That was Saturday morning. On Sunday morning, I was on my way to Bethany. I turned on the radio, a news flash.

Military coup in the Chad. Tombulbai killed. Military general elevated to power.

Later, we learned that man was very favorable to the evangelical movement in the Chad, and is still in power. Question. Do you think a little group of nobodies praying in a petty neighborhood in California can influence the destiny of a nation in Africa? That's what I believe.

That's what I believe. If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven, will forgive their sins, and will heal their land. Doesn't that give an exalted view of prayer, that you and I can change the destiny of nations? We can learn to move men through God by prayer.

And this very important ingredient, confession. But you know, the sad thing is that most of us can live and die without ever attending a meeting in an assembly called for the special purpose of confession to God. I think if I were to ask for a show of hands tonight, which I'm not going to, how many have ever attended such a meeting? There wouldn't be many hands, and yes, it's impossible to fulfill the conditions of 2 Samuel 7 14 without also realizing the results.

I not only think of this desperate situation in our national life, but I think of the situation in our assembly life today as well. Things are really bad. Things are really bad.

I think of the scandalous cases of immorality prevalent today. I think of the broken homes and the divorces. Doesn't anybody care enough to pray? Doesn't anybody care enough to cry out to God in humility and confession? I think of children, of Christian parents who become rebels, apostates from the Christian faith, given over to drugs, oftentimes their minds destroyed by drugs.

Going on in liquor, free love. Young people who hate their parents and want nothing more than a few thousand miles to separate them from them. I think of the desecration of the Lord's day.

I guess I'm a little old-fashioned about this still, but I still hold to the philosophy that if you love the Lord, you'll love his day too. I know we're not under legal bondage to keep a day, but I think it's a day of special privilege when, free from the activities of secular life, we can devote it in a special way to worship and praise and service for the Lord. But, it means little today to most people.

I think of the prayerlessness in our midst. You know, I'm afraid that to the average Christian today, an athletic event is more exciting than a prayer meeting. Why is that? I'll tell you why it is, because we're walking by sight, not by faith.

I think of the famine of the Word of God that we're experiencing today. I think of so much of ministry today without unction, ministry that doesn't drive us to our knees, and don't blame the preachers because we're at fault. I think of the dull worship meetings oftentimes we have in the assemblies.

Do you have them, dull worship meetings? Do you know why? I'll tell you why. TV. It's very hard, it's very hard to sit at the TV and worship it all week and be filled with the Spirit on Sunday morning.

One of the greatest problems we have in the work of the Lord today is TV. In TV, you leave a world of reality for a world of unreality. TV is a never-never land, doesn't exist.

A world of fantasy. On TV, you leave a world of holiness for a world of smut and suggestiveness. And I want to tell you young people tonight, if you're going to make progress for God, that TV has to be strictly controlled or completely eliminated.

It's just like that. I'm just telling you the way it is. In TV, you leave a world of eternal profit for a world of temporary amusement.

And it's very bad spiritual food. It's not a friend of grace. I only know two verses in the Bible on TV, and both of them I have to interpolate and paraphrase.

One of them is Psalm 119, verse 37. You might like to turn to it. Psalm 119, 37.

And unfortunately, in neither case does it speak too well of TV. Psalm 119, verse 37 says, Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity. There's the T, turn, and the V in vanity.

Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity, and quicken thou me in thy way. That's TV. TV is a world of vanity.

That's number one. The second is found in 1 Samuel, chapter 3, verse 1. And once again, I have to take liberties with the verse, but I know you'll forgive me. 1 Samuel, chapter 3, verse 1. It says there, it says there at the end of the verse, The word of the Lord was precious in those days.

There was no television. I mean, open vision. That says a lot, doesn't it? The word of the Lord was precious in those days.

There was no television. The more you feed your soul on television, the less precious the word of the Lord will become to you. Dull worship meetings.

You know, dear friends, it's really a sad thing when our Christians today know more about the late night show than they do about Ezekiel. It is really sad when people today can converse more enthusiastically about programs on TV than they can about the things of the Lord. But does anybody care enough to confess? Confession, the road to revival.

I think of how few there are being saved today in our midst, and how unconcerned we are. Lord, deliver us from ever getting used to seeing men and women go down to hell. Desperate conditions.

I think of how we are guilty today of the sin of Sodom. In Ezekiel, chapter 16, verses 49 and 50, we read that the sin of Sodom was pride, fullness of bread, and prosperous ease. You say, what can you do about it? Well, I'll tell you what you can do.

Years ago, there was an island off the northwest coast of Scotland known as the Isle of Lewis, and there were two old Christian women in that island, and they were burdened before the Lord. They were like Issachar. They were discerners of the times and the seasons, and they had their finger in the pulp of the situation.

And those two old women got before the Lord, and they started to cry out to God to visit that island with his reviving power. What could two elderly ladies do like it? Well, they did, and then after a while they wrote a letter to a man on the mainland. His name was Duncan Campbell.

He was connected with a faith mission on the mainland, and they said, look, God's going to work on this island, and you better get over here. I don't know about subjection, but anyway, that's what they said. Sometimes God does raise up Deborahs when men aren't taking their place, eh? Well, anyway, he wrote back.

He was just having a great revival in Edinburgh or someplace else, and he couldn't possibly come, and so the next time they dipped their pen in acid, and they said, look, God is going to work, and if you don't come, God's going to use somebody else, and you better come. And he took the next, by the time he got the second letter, his work had kind of fizzled out there in Edinburgh, and he took the ship across the Minch to the Isles of Lewes, and when he got there, the things had already broken out. People were in the church buildings praying till four o'clock in the morning.

People were getting saved without anybody talking. A man going home at night, drunk before he ever got home, the Spirit of God had come upon him in saving power. Hundreds of people were swept into the kingdom of God at that time, and very few of those who were saved have ever gone back into the world.

Why? Because two women got down on their knees and confessed the sins of the island as their own sins. They took the place of confessors before God, and God swept the place, and that will go down in the history of revival as one of the great revivals that our planet has known. And that's exactly what Daniel did in chapter nine.

Daniel, chapter nine. You hear Daniel, and he confessed his sins there, really, that he was never guilty of. If you'll read it carefully, he says that we have sinned and committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled even by departing from thy precepts and thy judgments.

O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, verse seven, but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day to the men of Judah, to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to all Israel that are near and that are far off. And he just tells out the whole catalog. This is known as eating the sin offering.

He took his place before God, and he cried out to God in confession of sin. I'd like to suggest to you, dear elder sisters here tonight, perhaps you're the ones that God is going to use. I know assemblies across the United States today, and what blessing there is, there is thanks to the prayers of elder Christian sisters.

And I often think of those two women on the Isle of Lewis. Nobody knows them. You've never heard of them.

I tell you, but their names are well known in heaven, because they stormed the gates of heaven, and God came down in mighty power. Confession, the road to revival, right? Revival in our national life, revival in our assembly life, and revival in our personal lives as well. You know, we really have become a pleasure-loving people.

Most people today, they don't feel any sense of loyalty toward the local assembly. You would never want a meeting of the local assembly to interfere with a weekend in the mountains. Ridiculous.

And they'll use the slightest excuse for not being there, including a family outing on Groundhog Day. That's where we are, a pleasure-loving people, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God. If we were to tell the truth, we'd have to confess in many cases that we're living double lives.

What we are during the week is quite a different thing than what we are on Sunday in meetings of God's people. A terrible coldness has come in. We can talk more enthusiastically about golf than we can about the salvation of souls.

I think of the bitterness that often comes in among God's people. I think imagine a ridiculous situation of people sitting down to break bread in ostensible communion around the person of the Lord, and there are people in that meeting they won't shake hands with. How ridiculous can you get? I think it's time that elders would go to people like that and say, look, it's quite inappropriate for you to be breaking bread here till you go to that brother and get things made right.

In the meantime, we ourselves should be down on our knees, crying out to God. I think of the gossip and backbiting that are tearing apart churches today. That's a strange thing, you know.

Many of us have very strong convictions about the subject of tongues, and this is a great whipping post today, the subject of tongues, but I'd like to tell you a strange thing. The English tongue can often be a lot worse than so-called unknown tongues. I'm not pleading for tongues tonight.

I've never spoken in tongues and never heard anybody speak in tongues, so it's pretty distant from me. I have my own convictions on the subject based on 1 Corinthians 12, 13, 14, and sometimes I think that our lack of love is worse than tongues, and I think it's a bad thing that a person should be excommunicated if he speaks in so-called unknown tongues, and he can be a gossip and a backbiter and be a citizen and first-class standing in the assembly. It's not right.

Just not right. We're in desperate condition today. Dear friends, we really need revival, and we need it soon, don't you think? I believe it.

I believe it with all my heart. We're essentially a worldly people. We were talking about the Sassanid, how the world has crept in with all its cold tentacles and just entwined them around our hearts.

We're essentially worldly at heart. I think of the personal feuds and animosities. I think how we lay up treasures on earth.

We mentioned in direct disobedience to the Word of God, a people given over to materialism. What's the answer? Is there no answer? Must God's people come to meeting after meeting and just hear the ministry of the Word of God and go away with their problems unsolved? No, there's an answer, dear friends. Confession.

The road to revival. If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land. That's it.

The prodigal son down in the far country came to the end of himself. Sain would have eaten the husk that the swine had eaten. No man gave him to eat.

He said, I know what I'll do. I think back of home and my father's servants have more to eat than I. I perish with hunger. I will arise, go to my father and say, Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy spite, and no more will he be called thy son.

Make me, I pray thee, as one of thy hired servants. I tell you, that was the beginning of revival, wasn't it? That's where the Lord wants us, really, you and me, to flatten ourselves before him, to just break at the foot of the cross and cry out to him in confession. A verse that has been very precious to me is Isaiah chapter 44 and verse 30, and verse 3, and this connection, Isaiah chapter 44 and verse 3, it says, I will pour water upon him that is thirsty and flood upon the dry ground.

Different than a thirsty tonight? That's the condition. Is your heart dry ground tonight, longing for something better? That's the condition. God says, I will pour water upon him that is thirsty and flood upon the dry ground.

Confession, the road to revival. Dear friends, if this doesn't work, I have no answer, but it does work, and it's absolutely impossible to fulfill the condition without experiencing the blessing. I don't want to hesitate to mention this, but you know that the Parkside meeting in San Francisco, one night they came together on a Tuesday night in prayer meeting, and they got desperate with God about the drought in California, and they cried out to God in confession, and you know, the next day it did something it never does in San Francisco.

It snowed, it sleeted, and it hailed. They don't have that in San Francisco. They couldn't on those hills.

But God was just giving a little token to that assembly. Look, you can't do that without me showing myself in power, and yet I fear as I stand here tonight that we'll go away from the conference and things won't be any different. Shall we look to God in closing prayer? Let's make this a prayer of confession to him.

Lord, we can honestly say with Daniel tonight, we have sinned, have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments. We think of our government, Lord. We think of how it's been racked by Watergate.

We think of the bribery. We think of the corruption. We think of that absence of righteousness that exalts a nation.

Oh God, we would eat the sin offering tonight. We would say we've sinned, Lord, as a nation. Visit our land, we pray, in healing power.

Have mercy, Lord, upon our government. We do pray for President Carter tonight, and for all those in authority over us. We pray, Lord, that you reveal yourself to him in power and a mighty way.

We think of our business lives, Lord. We think of oftentimes how our lips are sealed by our lives. We think of how we use the wisdom of this world instead of the wisdom that comes from above.

We think of how we give greater priority to dollars than to spiritual values. We think, Lord, of our assembly life, of our pride and our self-satisfaction, and oftentimes, Lord, we're just blissfully unaware of the low state of our spirituality. And we have a greater interest in the sound of music than we do in the sound of God's voice, more interested in TV shows than we are in the meetings of the assembly oftentimes.

Lord, send a revival, we pray, to our assemblies. We think of our family lives, Lord. We think of the unequal yokes.

We think of the separations, the broken homes, the divorces. We think of the wayward children. We think of how the family altar has been abandoned from coast to coast.

Lord, we pray that again it might be said of our homes, Christ is the head of this house. The unseen guest at every meal, the silent listener to every conversation. We pray, Lord, in our family lives we might judge everything by how it appears in his sight.

We think, Lord, of our personal lives as well, how materialistic and covetous we have become in direct disobedience to the word of God. We think of how we have become a pleasure-seeking people, occupied with the love of passing things. Oh, God, forgive us.

More interested in things than in people. We think of the neglect of the word of God. We think of the gossip and the backbiting that we've been speaking about, and the utter prayerlessness.

And, Lord, we pray that you'll send a great revival and begin the work in us. May we hear your voice calling us tonight to a life of confession, to humbling ourselves before you on behalf of our nations, our assemblies, our families, and our own selves. And, Lord, may we see rich blessing in the days ahead as we take you at your word.

We ask it in the prevailing, all-powerful name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

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