

SERMON NOTES: MORE THAN SERMONS 3: WASH YOUR SOUL (04/09/16)

SCRIPTURE

Psalm 51:1-12

Isaiah 1

1 John 1:9

James 5:16

QUOTES

“Conviction of sin is the lance of the divine Surgeon piercing the infected soul, releasing the pressure, letting the infection pour out. Conviction of sin is a health-giving injury. Conviction of sin is the Holy Spirit being kind to us by confronting us with the light we don’t want, to see the truth we’re afraid to admit and the guilt we prefer to ignore. Conviction of sin is the severe love of God overruling our compulsive dishonesty, our wilful blindness, our favourite excuses. Conviction of sin is the violent sweetness of God opposing the sins lying comfortably undisturbed in our lives. Conviction of sin is the merciful God declaring war on the false peace we settle for. Conviction of sin is our escape from malaise to joy, from attending church to worship, from faking it to authenticity. Conviction of sin, with the forgiveness of Jesus pouring over our wounds, is life.”

- Ray Ortlund

“Sin wants to remain unknown... He who is alone with his sin is utterly alone... Sin demands to have a man by himself. It withdraws him from the community. The more isolated a person is, the more destructive will be the power of sin over him, and the more deeply he becomes involved in it, the more disastrous is his isolation... In confession the light of the Gospel breaks into darkness and seclusion of the heart.”

- Dietrich Bonhoeffer

FURTHER READING

“Confession” in Celebration of Discipline - Richard Foster

KEY POINTS

- + While repentance is a 180° turn to receive salvation in Christ, confession is regular ‘owning up’ to specific stuff that is robbing you from entering the life that Jesus has for you today.
- + Confession is difficult to grasp because we live under the grace of Jesus (which we can misunderstand as not needing to be made right) and in an age of entitlement (thinking we’re owed something special/exempt from responsibility).
- + Practicals to confession:
 - + **Seek solitude.** Necessary for the natural intuitions of our souls to come into the open.
 - + **Embrace conviction.** While guilt leads to death, conviction leads to life.
 - + **Confess to God.** Not a generalised “sorry”, but a specific, ruthlessly honest account—met by divine love (see Ortlund quote).
 - + **Confess to others.** James 5:16 instructs Christians to do this as part of the healing process from sin.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- + Print and read the chapter excerpt from Richard Foster (may be easiest to do this silently/individually). Have you had someone confess to you before? Whether you have or haven't, how do you feel about being in that position? Have you confessed to someone else before? Take some time to share your experiences and discuss what it could look like for this to be a more regular discipline in the life of our church.
- + What might be some of the dangers that could accompany confession with others? What are a

few key things to keep in mind to keep the practice of confession healthy?

- + How would you distinguish between false guilt and genuine guilt?
- + When is the discipline of confession an unhealthy preoccupation with sin and when is it a proper recognition of our need for forgiveness?
- + Spend some time in quietness before God, allowing Him to reveal anything within that needs to be confessed. Break into pairs to pray for each other, giving room to confess if people are comfortable (be sensitive here and ensure people don't feel forced to confess to each other –emphasise confession before God and prayer for each others' engagement with the discipline of confession).

- + **What stuck out to you from the teaching?** Did God remind you of something, or reveal something new? Did the Spirit minister to you?
- + **Were any questions raised for you?** Did you get stuck on any scriptures or points? Anything you need clarity on?
- + **Where do we see Jesus Christ in this teaching?** Jesus is at the centre of everything in the Scriptures. It follows that he is at the centre of everything we understand about church, faith and the Kingdom. What in the teaching has helped you see more of Jesus and the cross, or moved you to love him more?
- + **How can you personally apply this teaching?** Identify and commit to something you sense the Spirit is leading you to do in obedient response. Make it actionable and personal. What is in place to help you stay accountable to this?
- + **What/with whom can you share from here?** Who in your life needs to know the truth you've discovered? How can you share it with them?