

A Good Confession

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[0 : 00] It's great to be with you this morning. If you haven't watched the clip before this, please watch it. It's a clip from Joel Abadeo. He's a fashion designer.

He's built a whole business around his Christian faith. And his Christian work ethic is, he says, our heart needs to be as transparent as our shop window.

That's a really great thing to think about, isn't it? His transparency, his openness in his Christian life and work allows him to walk freely with Jesus. And in this morning's reading from Nehemiah, we talk about a good confession.

And in this lengthy reading from Nehemiah 9, that's exactly what the people had come to a point to do. They had come in this point of confession because they wanted to come to a point of total transparency with God.

The wars had been completed and they knew that there was a risk. There was a real risk that they would go back to their old ways, like their ancestors had done.

[1 : 01] And so they name it. They actually call it out. They remember that this was the mistakes that were made before and they don't want to go back to doing that. So they confess it.

So in this act of confession, they remind themselves of their heritage, their rebellion, past rebellion against God, and they speak it out.

And I sometimes think that's really helpful. In fact, I think it's essential sometimes to have to confess it, to confess and be honest before God.

You know, do we do that often? Do we confess the things that separate us from God and neighbour? Those things which get in the way of the fullness of our life and discipleship with Jesus, the things that get in the way and diminish our faith.

We need to be transparent. And if you struggle with that, you are not alone. Because Nehemiah's reading this morning, people are reading this, and they see the serious, serious danger of all that Nehemiah had brought to them, all that that community had brought together, and they didn't want to go back.

[2 : 16] They just wanted to go forward. That's so encouraging, isn't it? Maybe at this point of time, too, as we move forward and we regather as a church, that we move forward, and we don't want to be looking back.

One of the main aspects of failing to acknowledge our own sin is that sometimes we can revert into a victim culture. You know, it's everybody else's fault.

It's nothing to do with me. And we hear that again and again. Maybe you've experienced that. So have I. You know, I do this because somebody did it to me. I do this because it's the culture that I'm in.

I'm giving back as good as I get. You know, we never truly own and confess the things that we need to. And that just perpetuates the sin and diminishes God's character in us.

And that makes us often want to fall into that place of we're all too ready to criticise other people, aren't we? You know, we can point out the speck in other people's eyes rather than look at the log in our own, as Jesus tells us in Matthew 7.

[3 : 26] Can I encourage you this morning? There is something hugely positive about making a good confession. There's something redemptive of getting rid of all this junk in our lives that we carry around.

As you know, investigating officers I know too well will tell you stories of when somebody that you are interviewing suddenly wants to tell you the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

As the old coppers say, they clear their plate. There was something that came alive in somebody when you were interviewing them because they know they didn't have to carry all that stuff around

anymore.

They didn't have to perpetuate the lie. And often on the back of that would come everything else. All the other offences that they committed, we called them TIC, taken into consideration.

Because they knew that they had a fresh start. There was a new beginning. They didn't have to go around looking over their shoulder thinking that a policeman was going to come and arrest them again for something that they'd left in the past and hadn't confessed.

[4 : 33] And in the confidence of God's love and compassion, often the things that we've hidden darkness need bringing into the light to give us that new freedom.

Because in Christ there is no condemnation. You know, the essence of clearing our plate, after all, a good confession, as they say, is good for the soul. The good news is that Jesus doesn't require us to dress in this reading like an itchy sackcloth and cover ourselves with ashes.

You know, we don't have to be outwardly penitent in that way in which they did. It was good for them. They had to do that.

But for us, it may be something really different. It may be just that open and transparency with God that we need because God sees our heart and he knows that there's stuff that we need to hand to him.

Things that maybe for us are getting in the way. Maybe that sin has taken root in your life and often we don't want to let go of it.

[5 : 38] Maybe it's become part of who we are. It's become comfortable. I know that sounds strange, but it's true. Maybe that's why in reading this, the people became so intentional and open. I want to get rid of that.

I don't want to carry that anymore. I'm always impacted when someone shares their story of how their life was transformed in the power of God's love. It's powerful stories that we remember and we think, isn't that wonderful?

We hear those stories. But what are those things that are left undealt with in our lives? Being real and honest is at the heart of a good confession.

And that's what Nehemiah's people had to do. You know, there's dangers. There's dangers, isn't there, if we're not transparent and open with the things that need to be dealt with in our lives.

I think it's like leaving loaded weapons around. It's like leaving a stick for the evil one to pick you up and beat you with. It's so accessible. And that's what the evil one does.

[6 : 39] The evil one loves to remind us of the things that we have done wrong in the past that get in the way of us and God. Weapons that he will use against us to challenge our faith, to challenge our character, our self-worth, our intimacy with Jesus, our relationship with others.

Weapons that will intentionally be used against us because he thrives on brokenness and demolishes lives.

You know, and some things that are brought to us are recalled so easily by the evil one. I can think of so many the same as you can.

You know, how can you call yourself a Christian? You know, remember when you did this. And suddenly it comes flooding back to mind. And the thought comes, yeah, how can I be a Christian? Because I did that. Or share your faith. If only knew people what you were really like. I've heard that before. You're a real hypocrite.

[7 : 46] And also as well, you know, that sense, pray. What, pray with other people? You know, lead ministry. Oh, look at the things you did this week. You're not even worthy to step through the door of a church.

You know, the list goes on. You know those thoughts the well as I did. That's why good confession is so powerful. These things can't be dragged up. You know, when the evil one comes and sort of brings things to you, you say, no, no, that was dealt with.

I am forgiven and I am free to stand in the love of Christ. You've probably heard the story here on a Sunday morning. I've told it several times.

But we had an amazing service on a Sunday. We really stepped out as a congregation in the power of the Holy Spirit. And we'd come forward. People had come forward for prayer. People were forgiven.

There was healing. There was all the things that the Holy Spirit wanted to do. And I left church on a real high that morning saying, thank you, God. Thank you. I got to the entrance of the church.

[8 : 46] I stepped over the road by the bowling club. And I heard these words which weren't of God at all. I knew where they'd come from. And they said, oh yeah, you really think you're up yourself, Clive, don't you?

Who do you think you are? You know, to lead a church, you're not even worthy to. Do you know what? And in that point, I thought, no, no.

And I said out loud, get behind me, Satan. How dare you? Get behind me. You have got no place. I said it out loud. There was nobody else around.

Well, I didn't think so. But there was. I heard a voice from down below the wall. And apparently, there was one of the guys from the bowling club sat there on a bench. And he looked at me and I looked at him.

And he said, that's right, Vicar. He said, you tell him where they go. Slightly embarrassed, but I thought, too, Ryan, I will tell you where to go, Satan, because you have got no place.

[9 : 52] If there's only one thing that you remember from this morning, that confession rids the weapons from the evil one, don't give him an inch because he will take a mile.

But you may think this morning, what will God think of me? What will God think of me when I spill all these things out to him? You know, what will he think of me?

But hear this, hear this. If there's one thing this morning, remember from Psalm 103. The Lord is compassionate and gracious.

He is slow to anger, abounding in love. He does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions.

God's love is constant. Transparency, forgiveness, intimacy comes from God. That's why there is those powerful words on the cross as Jesus is being sacrificed.

[10 : 57] He says, and it's being sacrificed for our sin, for all of this thing we're talking about. He says, Father, forgive them. there's nothing that can shock God.

Believe me, I've told him all mine, there's nothing that can shock him. The wall had been restored. The people acknowledged their sin and confessed it.

And do you know what happened then? There was total freedom. And because of that, praise and worship broke out in a way that had never broken out before. Freedom at last.

In Psalm 51, it says, my sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

Have a good confession. Hand it to God. Even if it's really messy, in Christ, all things will be made new. And following on from this talk, there's a clip and I'd really encourage you to engage with it.

[11 : 59] It's by a guy called Bob and he points out that, carrying on with Psalm 51, seven ways to confess well. And maybe watch the clip. Pause as I did as you go through each area.

Confess and be transparent with God. Be clear. Clear our plates, as we said. Be totally transparent. No excuses. Own it. Hand it to the listening and loving hand of God.

And then hear his words, which you will hear, as he says and said so often to people, your sins are forgiven.

Bless you. Have a good confession. Enjoy the day. Amen.