

Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD? And who shall stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully.

– Psalm 24:3-4

God is holy (Isaiah 6:3), and we are unable to approach him based upon our merit alone. No amount of effort or reliance upon human achievement can ever bridge the gap that exists between the holiness of God and the sinfulness of humanity (Romans 3:23). Any self-glorifying attempts to make ourselves presentable to God are acts of robbing ourselves in filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6).

If the only way to “ascend the hill of the LORD” and abide with him is to be clean and pure, and since we are unable to accomplish the needed cleansing alone, we must depend upon Christ’s righteousness (Philippians 3:9). When we trust his sacrifice and seek his merciful forgiveness, we can “draw near to the throne of grace” with confidence (Hebrews 4:16). Our access to God depends upon our relationship with Christ.

The necessity for confession and repentance from sin does not end with our initial decision to follow Christ as our Savior. We must continually seek cleansing from our daily sin by God’s guidance, goodness and grace. To “confess” literally means that we “speak the same thing” as God does about our sin. We agree with him about the seriousness and danger of sin and share in his grief and hatred toward it (Proverbs 8:13). When we look to the patterns and principles in the Bible, we see that confession of sin is an essential part of our prayer lives and our spiritual growth (Psalm 139:23-24; Proverbs 28:13; 1 John 1:9).

Prayer prompt: Read Psalm 51. As you read, ask God to show you any specific sins that are hindering you from hearing his truth clearly or walking with him closely. As God brings those specific sins to mind, confess, repent and thank God for his mercy in offering forgiveness.

I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD," and you forgave the iniquity of my sin.

- Psalm 32:5

Forgiveness is always free. But that doesn't mean that confession is always easy. Sometimes it is hard. Incredibly hard. It is painful to admit our sins and entrust ourselves to God's care.

- Erwin Lutzer

Children of God should not make a general confession by acknowledging their innumerable sins in a vague manner, because such confession does not provide conscience opportunity to do its perfect work. They ought to allow the Holy Spirit through their conscience to point out their sins one by one. Christians must accept its reproach and be willing, according to the mind of the Spirit, to eliminate everything which is contrary to God.

- Watchman Nee