

Call to Obedience #309  
PO Box 299 Kokomo, IN 46903 USA  
[www.schultze.org](http://www.schultze.org)

## **I Have Sinned**

By Reimar Schultze

The first step in getting right with God is always the confession of sin.

"I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee."—Luke 15:18

These three words, I HAVE SINNED, are three of the most powerful words in the world. Everything of eternal value, that has the touch of heaven, has begun with the words I HAVE SINNED. Every man who walks with God, who has ever walked with God, has had to say these three words, I HAVE SINNED. Every backslidden Christian who wants to walk with God again must first say these words, I HAVE SINNED. These three words have done more good than all the money given to the poor, all the social work throughout history, all the innovations of man, and all the religious programs of the church. I HAVE SINNED. Much good has been undone by stubborn men refusing to say these words, I HAVE SINNED. Homes would be lighthouses for God, churches would be salvation stations for Jesus, and men's lives would be tabernacles of the Holy Spirit if we would learn to say I HAVE SINNED and mean it. Sin separates us from God. The first step towards God is always confession. We must know that SIN WILL NEVER BE FORGIVEN UNLESS IT IS FIRST CONFESSED. Most people live on in their sins hoping that somehow a loving God will, in some mysterious way, forgive them. Man has always had difficulty coming to grips with his sin problem. Philosopher-theologian Reinhold Niebuhr said that deep in their hearts Americans have never accepted the fact that they are sinners. This was the attitude of the Pharisee who prayed to himself: "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are" (Lu. 18:11). We think about ourselves as a benevolent people who feed, nurture and police most of the world. We look upon sin as a ghetto problem, a social problem, a theological problem or a human dilemma. Somehow we and God will have to live with it and somehow our goodness will override our natural propensity towards evil.

The personal confession of sin and personal guilt has increasingly lost its importance. We don't want to bother with the humiliating process of finding out who is at fault. So we have come up with faultless divorces, and faultless insurance, and the end is not yet. In our churches, also, the personal confession of sin has been replaced by blanket confessions made in unison rituals. Such claims of forgiveness, such as "and forgive us our sins" are often made without the confession of sin. Nothing eternally good will happen to you unless you make a personal confession of your personal sins to your personal God to establish a personal relationship. Man's journey with God will never begin, nor will it ever be resumed, with mass confessions. Man must come to grips with his personal guilt and his personal need to repent and forsake his sins.

Because of the Christian's unwillingness to say I HAVE SINNED; revival meetings, once a force for righteousness, have become a farce. In the last century, revival meant that God's people, those called by God's name, would humble themselves and individually repent, forsake and confess their sins. In fact, REVIVAL ALWAYS MEANT THE CONFESSION AND FORSAKING OF SINS. Today revival means lots of good music, an entertaining evangelist, and a drunk stumbling into the meeting to get saved. But God's people continue in their sins of resentment, criticism, prayerlessness, lukewarmness, lust, disobedience, gossiping, idle words, secret sins, impure motives, pride, jesting, envies and murmurings while hoping that some more 'real' sinners will get converted. Church people are willing to do everything to have revival—they are willing to put ads in the paper, spots on the radio, do door-to-door visitation. They are willing to have special prayer meetings, plan special music and find the best date so everyone can be there. Church people do everything that can be done to have successful revival meetings except THE ONLY THING THAT BRINGS TRUE REVIVAL: Confess their sins.

We do not take our sins seriously! We do not! If we would, most everyone would be at the altar when the call is made. We rather thank God "that we are not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, etc." OUR sin is a human weakness, an inbred racial deficiency that we and God can put up with, while THEIR sin is a personal, rebellious, disgraceful, ugly thing that must be confessed. That is the prevailing attitude. Oh, dear friend, we must know that ANY sin separates man from God and that no sin is forgiven until it is confessed. Sin will not walk with God. Sin will not follow Jesus. Sin can pray, worship, preach, go to the mission field, fast, plan revival meetings, testify, heal, and give sacrificially. Sin can establish orphanages, seminaries, gospel presses, Bible studies, Sunday Schools, street missions, build churches and cause increases in membership, but SIN WILL NEVER TURN ITSELF IN. Sin will do all the above to cover itself so as not to be found out. SIN IS DECEITFUL!

The foundations of the professing church are rotten because of the secret sins of its members. Dear one, sin cannot walk with God, sin cannot follow Jesus, and will not have the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Sin must go! We must not hide our sins under rituals or cheap clichés. Nothing eternally good happens to me until I confess all my known sins and forsake them. Confession and forsaking must go hand in hand because I can't have God's mercy without God's justice.

Nothing can replace the confession of sins. I cannot harbor one sin in my life, be it a sin of the spirit such as resentment, or a sin of the flesh such as adultery. I may double my giving, church attendance, Bible reading and prayer time—nothing can restore my relationship with God until I confess and forsake that sin. Sin always causes man to lose the joy of his salvation. It always causes spiritual growth to cease, fellowship with God to be broken, and the Holy Spirit to be taken from us. Nothing but personal confession—the three words I HAVE SINNED—can get us back on the road again. The absence of joy in the church is clearly an indication of the presence of sin in the body of Christ. Unconfessed sin leads to spiritual and emotional sickness. The confession of sins, on the other hand, is the greatest spiritual and emotional catharsis possible on earth. At the

root of most mental illnesses are unconfessed sins. I have seen cases where emotionally ill persons spent a good part of their lives in mental hospitals, in outpatient clinics with psychiatrists and psychologists without having been cured one iota. These dedicated counselors have tried so hard to reconstruct shattered lives upon the foundation of unconfessed sins. It can't be done. You can't build strong houses on rotten timber. But once their sins were confessed, oh, glory to God, healing came quickly. Oh, how powerful these three simple words, I HAVE SINNED.

Dear one, if you have lost the joy of your salvation, or if you never had it, it is probably because of your sins. Martin Luther, in his search for God, cried out over and over again as he prayed and fasted in the Augustinian monastery of Erfurt: My sins.., my sins....my sins! His cry intensified even more after his first celebration of mass. He felt that his sinful thoughts, the attitudes and responses of his sinful heart were the greatest problem in the world. No wonder God could change the world through his heart.

Or consider the words of confession of that great servant Horatius Bonar as he penned it in one of his hymns:

Ah! mine iniquity crimson hath been, Infinite, infinite—sin upon sin:  
 Sin of not loving Thee, Sin of not trusting Thee—Infinite sin.  
 Lord, I confess to Thee sadly my sin; All I am tell I Thee, all I have been:  
 Purge Thou my sin away, Wash Thou my soul this day: Lord, make me clean.

Dear one, if you want to walk with God, you have to take your sin seriously. Not only the obvious sins but also the sins of neglect: neglect of prayer, neglect of loving God, and neglect of your support of the men of God who lead you to greener pastures. Unless you realize that your own sin, not the sins of others, is your greatest problem; you will not be a candidate for new life. David did not weep over the sins of Israel but over his own sins. Isaiah's greatest problem was his own unclean lips, and Paul confessed to be the chief of sinners. Only Jesus, who had no sin, could sincerely and deeply weep over the sins of others. The sins of others cannot rob me of my fellowship with God. All who walk with God will confess their known sins and be forgiven. Whatever unknown iniquities they bear, they put them under Calvary's blood. (I Jo. 1:7). **SIN WILL NOT WALK WITH GOD. IT MAY PRAY AND PREACH AND PROSELYTE BUT IT WILL NOT WALK WITH GOD. SIN SEPARATES FROM GOD.**

Indeed, it is true that "all have sinned" but it is also true that all who sin "come short of the glory of God." The fact that all have sinned does not make my sin excusable. I must not look at my sin through the eyes of the majority but through the holy eyes of God. God's punishment for sin is not based on the majority opinion of man but rather on his justice. To sin is to come short of the glory of God—to miss fellowship with God and eternity with God. The prodigal repented saying, "I have sinned against heaven and against my father." Oh, what a day it was when he said I HAVE SINNED. Those three words sincerely spoken are never missed by the ear of God. They always lead to a royal ring on the finger, a robe of righteousness on the shoulders and gospel shoes on the feet. Hallelujah! Every time you have a sin, just one—confess it, forsake it. IT WILL

NEVER BE UNNOTICED IN HEAVEN. New life and joy will always follow. The prodigal not only confessed his sins toward God but also toward man. When we sin against God, we also sin against man. Every time a Christian sins against God, he puts a cancer into the church. The church is a body and what one member does affects the rest of the body. That is why man's confession to God must go hand in hand with man's confession to his church. If you sin against the head (Christ), you also sin against his body (the church). If you have been prayerless or disobedient, you have not only hurt yourself and grieved Christ; you have also contributed towards the death of his body. Regaining favor with God, victory in Christ and joy in the Holy Spirit is not complicated. It was not complicated for the prodigal to say, I have sinned and to make a total reversal. Dear friend, do what he did and come home again. Let us not only believe in the forgiveness of sins but also in the confession of sins.

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