

# The Old Paths

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## “Once You Admit It, Will You Stop It?”

Jarrod Jacobs

There was a cartoon several years ago in the *Saturday Review of Literature* in which little George Washington was standing with an axe in his hand. Before him lay the famous cherry tree we know so well. He had already made his admission that he did it -- after all, he “cannot tell a lie.” Also pictured was his father, who was standing there exasperated. His words were in the caption which read, “All right, so you admit it! You always admit it! The question is, when are you going to stop doing it?”

The story above is amusing, but it makes a good point that deserves our attention. Once we come to the point that we admit that we have committed a certain sin or sins, will we stop it? Perhaps you know of those who readily admit that they are a sinner, and in need of salvation. At the same time, these people will not take that next step, which is to turn from those sins and live right by obeying the Gospel (Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38). How many people do we know who will admit (while they are smoking a cigarette, drinking their alcohol, etc.) that they are in error, and “it is a nasty habit,” but refuse to do anything about their sin? They have admitted their sin, but they have not stopped their sin.

Many have said that one of the most difficult aspects of any problem is admitting that you

have one. It seems like some people have “conquered the fear” of admitting their problem, but will do nothing beyond that. How can continuing in a sin that one recognizes and admits is sin, be beneficial to anyone? A friend of mine said when it gets to this point, the person is not confessing sin in his life, but bragging! I agree.

In reading the Bible, we learn that God not only demands that men admit they are sinners in His sight, but also demands that men do something about that sin! In Old Testament days, Solomon said, “*He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy*” (Prov. 28:13). Notice please that God expected the man to confess AND forsake the sin in order to have mercy. It is not enough to merely confess (admit?) the sin and then go on living in sin! In New Testament days, Christ said, “*Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish*” (Lk. 13:3). What does “repentance” mean? It means turning away from the way you used to live, and living in accordance with Christ’s will! An example of repentance is found in the book of Matthew. Christ spoke a parable concerning two sons who were told by their father to go work in the vineyard. One boy said he would go, but did not. The other refused, but later “*repented and went*” (Matt. 21:29). This boy not only had to admit that he was wrong for disobeying his father, but also had to do what was right! Read Luke 15:11-21, and see another son who

was in the same position. In repentance we see one not only recognizing the guilt of his sin and confessing sin, but also stopping the sinful behavior!

When the apostle Paul wrote the second epistle to the Corinthians, he told them that he knew what he wrote in the first letter would make them sorry, but he rejoiced because that godly sorrow led them to repentance (II Cor. 7:9-10). Notice that when we sorrow over an act that we know is wrong, we still have not done what is right! That sorrow *leads* us to repentance, but we must still repent!

When one learns that he has sinned in the sight of God, he must not only admit that he is in sin, not only be sorry about the sin, but also turn from sin and do what is right! Only then can one be in a right relationship with God.

Dear friend, examine your life. Are there things you are doing which contradict the will of God? In what areas of your life are you guilty of sin? In those cases, not only must you face up to the fact that you are guilty, but then also take the necessary steps to get out of that sin. If you’re outside of Christ, then waste no time in repenting of your sins, confessing Christ as the Son of God and being baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:36-38, 8:36-38; Mk. 16:16). If you’ve done those things already, but have been caught up in various sins, then turn from your error in repentance, confess those things and pray for God’s forgiveness (Acts 8:22; I Jn. 1:9). It is not enough to admit you have a problem. You must cease in that and do what is right, just as God told the Jews in the long ago (Isa. 1:16-17)! God is longsuffering. Therefore, let us repent and live for Him (II Pet. 3:9; II Cor. 5:14-15).

*“Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.” (Jer. 6:16)*

# WANDERING PILGRIMS

Benjamin Franklin, preacher of the gospel (1812-1878)

We know of two or three wandering pilgrims that are now old men, of good enough talent to have made a permanent record long ago, and yet received in doubt wherever they go, held in distrust, and, to say the least, they have nothing that could be called a standing. To be safe, all the overseers in the church need do is simply receive no man till he produces clear evidence of good standing. Look back over the record and see where the men have gone to who have tried the *gospel of soul sleeping*. Where are Elias Shortridge, Wm. P. Shockey, Wm. S. Speer, J.K. Speer, Snooks, and others of the same ilk? and where are their works? A streak of desolation has followed in their train all the way. They have divided churches, set the people of God at variance, and sown the seeds of discord. This is the kind of fruit that has been gathered from their work. Look back over the ground and see what has followed every man that has stranded among us. Nothing but ruin has followed. Men that stood fair, had fine talent and valuable attainments, by some kind of departure or other, have gone, little by little, blaming those that loved them, and would, had it been in their power, have done anything to make them happy, till all is lost and they feel averse to almost everything. This is what it brings to get restless and dissatisfied with the plain truth of the Scriptures.

The race of some men is short, and the mischief they do is certain. The ruin they bring to the churches is inevitable. Nothing is more important than that the churches should guard against false teachers. In the place of being flattered that all is well, and that they mean all right, we should be on the lookout; watch all unscriptural words and phrases; every false move and pretence; every doubtful man and measure, and encourage that which is safe, sound and good. Make every public man sensible that it is of importance to him, and to the cause, to be known to be sound in teaching; to hold fast the form of sound speech that can not be condemned; to be entirely safe and reliable; to have a good record during his past history as a preacher. Make all our young men specially sensible of the importance to them to become permanent men, firm decided and determined in their course. We want no milk-and-water men, a little this way and a little that, but men of settled principles, religious convictions and reliable purposes. Be careful who you "indorse" as preachers of the gospel. Men who want good indorsers should be good men. (From: *Book Of Gems*, p. 219-220)

### Editor's Note:

Let us pay careful attention to the words of brother Franklin and

the warnings he is sounding in this article. Solomon said, "*Hear counsel, and receive instruction, that thou mayest be wise in thy latter end*" (Prov. 19:20). May we do this with the words of brother Franklin. His call for men to return to the Bible, and be satisfied to follow God's word is a call that needs to be repeated today.

Yes, he lived long ago, but his life spanned some 66 years, where he saw many godly preachers of the gospel and many ungodly false teachers. Surely, his insights and thoughts are worthy of our consideration in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Brother Franklin loved the Lord and the church of Christ, and was someone who wanted folks to simply follow the New Testament and be New Testament Christians. Hence, he sounded warnings like the above to make sure folks did not stray from the New Testament pattern.

There are many today who think they can discover some "new" truth. Yet, the need today is to just keep on preaching and pressing the same eternal truth that has been given to man by God. God's word gives us *all things that pertain to life and godliness*. Since this is true, let us not wander to the right hand or the left, but respect and love God for this precious gift of His word; this word that has the power to save all men from sin and lead us to Heaven (Rom. 1:16).

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