***The Technique of Confessing Sins, No. 2

Techniques of the Christian Life

TL02-02***

**Position in Christ**

We are considering our study of the techniques of the Christian life. We're looking at the first technique which is the technique of the confession of sin. All Christians were once in Adam in God's sight. That meant that they shared Adam's guilt for the sin which he committed in Eden. They suffered the consequences of that sin in the form of an old sin nature which dominates their entire soul. Christians, however, are in Christ. So, they share many of the things that Christ has. They share his eternal light. They share his righteousness. They share his heirship. They share his Sonship. They share his priesthood, his kingship, his sanctification, and so on. In other words, they enjoy the consequences of potential victory over the old sin nature. When they were in Adam, they were slaves of the old sin nature. When they are in Christ, they have potential victory over the old sin nature.

I very strongly stress this issue of the position in Christ. You have to understand, as we look at what God is like in his perfection; what man is like in his imperfection; what God has done and placed to our credit the perfections of God; and, at the same time, the problem of sin and our being slaves or being victorious over our sin. This is something that we never come to the end of. No matter how far we've gone in the Christian life, we are always faced with the problem of the old sin nature.

It looks something like this: We were once in Adam. We received Christ as Savior. We entered the position of temporal fellowship, as well as eternal fellowship. This is being in Christ. This means salvation, with security. There's no condemnation here, and there's no separation from God here. When we sin, we leave the inner circle of temporal fellowship. When we confess, we come back in.

The Christian came into this life with an old sin nature, with all of its sins, with all of its human good, and with all of its various patterns of lust. The unbeliever produces all of his good from the old sin nature; he produces all of his sins from the old sin nature; and, God rejects both of them. The controlling personality behind our old sin nature is Satan. A Christian has this old sin nature, and he can't please God in any way from anything it produces. Our production as Christians is entirely dependent upon what God the Holy Spirit produces through us. However, because we have an old sin nature, the Bible says, that none of us is good. Matthew 19:17 reads, "And He said and to him, 'Why do you call me good? There is none good, but one, which is God.'" All of the divine good that we produce is simply the grace of God bypassing our old sin nature and doing something good in spite of us.

**The Origin of the Old Sin Nature (The Flesh)**

We should look for a moment at the origin of this old sin nature. We have seen how it exists. We have seen that we come from the position of a square as an unbeliever to the position of a stable Christian. We take the old sin nature right over into the Christian life with us. Where did it come from? The thing that brought it into being in the first place was an act of saying "no" to God. Satan tricked Eve into sinning in the Garden of Eden. When she did, she got a sin nature. 1 Timothy 2:14 explains that: "Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression." Adam saw what happened to his wife; he deliberately followed her; and, he got an old sin nature.

The sin of Adam is imputed by God to all of us. In other words, in God's sight, when he took a bite of that fruit, you took a bite of it with him. You are as guilty as he was. He was our federal head. 1 Corinthians 15:22 says, "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." That death that he received spiritually, you received. So as spiritual death came by one man, also salvation came by one man. What happened? Well, God judged the woman. We read about this in Genesis 3:16: "Unto the woman He said, 'I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception. In sorrow, you shall bring forth children and your desire shall be to your husband. And he shall rule over you.'" She would have a strong craving for the man; she would bear children in pain; and, she would be in a position of subjection to her husband. Yet, through this very judgment upon her, the Bible says that the woman would be the means of salvation, because a child which was to be born through her would be the Savior of the world. 1 Timothy 2:15 says, "Notwithstanding, she shall be saved in childbearing if they continue in faith and love and holiness and sobriety." This Savior would fulfill the promise of Genesis 3:15 where sinful humanity would be delivered from the spiritual death that it had experienced through Adam.

We read about the man's judgment in Genesis 3:17-19. He had to earn his living now by strenuous effort until he returned to the dust of the ground. Because he deliberately sinned, something very different was imposed upon him, relative to the old sin nature, than was upon his wife. That was simply this: That the Bible held him responsible. It never says that we sinned in Eve. It always says that we sinned in Adam. Because he did it deliberately, he becomes the vehicle for this our sin nature to be transferred to our children. You don't have an old sin nature because of your mother. You have an old sin nature because of your father--not because your mother doesn't have one, but because Adam was guilty and responsible for deliberately sinning, so he becomes the vehicle. We know this from the fact that the thing that was different about the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ was this one crucial fact that he did not have a human father. Consequently he was born without an old sin nature. He was born without the quality of sin. Had He had a human father, he would have been in the same boat that all the rest of us are in.

It was important that He be born spiritually alive as Adam once was. Therefore, he had to be born without that human father. Matthew 1:20 says, "Joseph, the son of David, fear not to take unto yourself Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit." Hebrews 4:15: "For we have not a high priest who cannot be touched with the feelings of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." 2 Corinthians 5:21: "For He has made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." The judgment on man then was Romans 5:12: "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men for all have sinned." By one man (that is, Adam) sin (that is, the old sin nature) came into the world, and through that sin death (spiritual death) for all have sinned (that is, Adam's sin imputed to everybody). Psalm 51:5 speaks about our being brought into being in sin, which means with a sin nature. This means that through the sex act, the father passes the sin nature on to the child, which is then conceived in the womb of the mother. But it is the father who is responsible for the old sin nature.

All of this is the result of Adam's deliberate sinning, and consequently, you and I are now faced by this major problem of sin. We do not avoid this just because we are Christians. We still have the problem of sin. We have imputed sin--this thing of Adam's spiritual death being imputed to us (1 Corinthians 5:21-22, Romans 5:12). We have inherent sin which is the old sin nature. You get that from your human father. And, we have personal acts of sin that come because we have an old sin nature.

When you or I, as believers or unbelievers, do something that is evil from our sin nature, is that a sin? That is sin. If we do something nice from our old sin nature is that a sin? It is not a sin. But is it accepted by God? No, it is rejected. In other words, we cannot say that the human good that people do is sin. It is not sin. It is not violating a moral code. But, does God reward you? No. It's rejected. So, we have sins and we have good things but across the board God says, "I'll have none of it." The old sin nature will someday be removed from us when we have a resurrection body and we will be like Christ. Philippians 3:21 says, "Who shall change our lowly body that it may be fashioned like his glorious body according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things unto himself." Romans 8:29 says, "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

**Can You Improve the Old Sin Nature?**

Can you improve the old sin nature? Jeremiah 13:23 says, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots? Then may you also do good that are accustomed to do evil?" Is there any way that we can make this thing better? The answer is "No." That's always the hope that people have and our society is structured upon this. The reason it's important that you understand how bad you are on the inside by natural birth, is so that you will have a perspective on what our society is trying to do to improve morals--to improve what people do. They're up against a real tough job, because the old sin nature can be educated. It can be trained so that it acts in a moral way. You can take the old sin nature and so train it that a person will not steal; that he will not murder; and, that he will observe moral niceties. The old sin nature can actually be given a veneer of respectability. You can do this with education. One of the favorite ways of trying to show respectability of the old sin nature is materialism. When you see somebody who lives in a very nice big palatial house, with very elegant furniture, somehow you think, "Isn't that a nice person?" There's just automatically dignity projected toward a person that lives in great material possessions. But this is a subtlety of veneering the dirty old sin nature. None of this in any way makes our old sin nature good or acceptable to God. Man looks on the outside, but God looks on the inside; and when He looks in there, he sees the old sin nature, and, therefore there is no one who is good. Everything we produce is unacceptable.

Now, what is God going to do about this? Here is the believer's production. Everything that the believer will ever do that's wrong--past, present, and future for every believer--has been covered by Christ. What is the doctrine that refers to that? Unlimited atonement. Everybody is covered. Now, that seems to elude people. I have found ministers that do not seem to grasp the significance of unlimited atonement. For everything that has ever been done that's wrong, for everyone that has ever lived, Christ has already paid for it. Therefore, God will never judge you for that. 1 Peter 2:24 says, "He bore it all in his body on the tree."

**The Great White Throne**

Furthermore, Titus 3:5 tells us that we are not saved by our works of righteousness; that is, Jesus Christ rejects all of the human good of the old sin nature. Yet, we know that the unbeliever produces human good. Now, if God has paid for his sins, and He has rejected his human good, what is God going to do concerning the human good of the old sin nature of the unbeliever? Where is it going to be judged? Is He ever going to do anything about it? He will judge it at the Great White Throne. You must tie the Great White Throne and unlimited atonement together.

I talked to a minister the other day, and I could see on his face as I talked, that this was a whole new idea. It had never struck him that at the Great White Throne, out there in Revelation 20:11-15, where people stand, the books are opened, and they read their works: it never occurred to him that those are all good works. That's all the good stuff you did. I pointed out to him that unlimited atonement means they could never name sins out there. Nobody can ever be out in eternity with anybody holding a book of his sins. That's gone. That's done with. That's removed. But, they will read your good works. That's what you're asking to be credited on. That's when the people at the Great White Throne, the unbelievers, discover that they are lost, and that they do not have enough to their credit. The sins, Revelation 20:12 indicates, have already been carried: "And I saw the dead small and great stand before God, and the books were opened, and another book was opened which is the Book of Life, and the dead were judged out of those things which are written in the books according to their works." So the unbeliever, because his good works are not enough, is cast into the Lake of Fire.

**Christ, our Advocate**

Now, here are you and I as Christians. We too had this problem with the old sin nature. We're happy to accept the fact Christ has removed our sins. We're not worried about that. 1 Peter 2:24: "Who His own self bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we being dead to sins should live unto to righteousness: by whose stripes you were healed." 2 Corinthians 5:21: "For He has made him who knew no sin to be sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." We know that we do sin, and we know that the minute we sin, what does Satan do? He barrels right up into heaven and he accuses. He says, "Alright God. You are the great God of grace, look at your Christian down there. How do you like that?" And, the Lord Jesus Christ, we are told in 1 John 2:1-2, is our advocate, our lawyer: "My little children, these things write I unto you that you sin not, and if any man sin we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He is the propitiation for our sins, and not ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." He stands up and he shows the wounds in His hands and His side, and he calls attention to the fact that he suffered those wounds in the process of dying for the sins of the world. Therefore, the Christian is not guilty. What does God do? He throws the case out of court. Satan is constantly, day and night, the Bible tells us, accusing us before God, trying to bring us under condemnation. But because we're in the outer circle, there is no condemnation and no separation. That is positional truth. It goes back to the cross, it's true now, it will be true forever, and it continues to be true in your experience to the extent that you use the technique of the confession of sin that we're going to come to.

**The Judgment Seat of Christ**

So, Jesus Christ rejected our human good at the cross. If he had accepted it, it would have violated the principle of grace, which is God doing everything for us. If he had accepted the human good, it would have been man getting the credit, and all that has been rejected. So all is rejected except what the Lord Himself has done. Titus 3:5: "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit." So, when does the Christian face the music concerning his human good? That happens at the Judgment Seat of Christ, which takes place after the rapture. That's when the Christian's human good is brought out. What does God do with it? Is the Christian punished because of it? No, it's not sin. All sins have been covered. There's nothing for which he will be punished. But the Christian is going to walk right in there with his human good. What's going to happen? It's going to be burned up and rejected.

That's why this technique number one is important. We have a fantastic position in Christ. We have a fantastic problem with an old sin nature. We can move through our Christian experience on this earth in a condition that is simply pouring out human good, and that is robbing us of the reward that could be ours. That's why this is important. A Christian cannot be prepared to meet anything in life unless he is in that inner circle of his relationship to the Lord. The old sin nature is something that is utterly rejected. It is in no way acceptable.

**Sin**

There are some other words in the Bible that you should be acquainted with that are talking about the same thing, the old sin nature. For example, sometimes the Bible uses the word "sin" in the singular. That refers to the old sin nature. Psalm 51:5 speaks of being conceived "in sin" (with a sin nature). Romans 5:12: "As by one man (that is, Adam) 'sin' (the old sin nature) entered." Romans 7:14: "I am carnal sold under 'sin' (an old sin nature)." 1 John 1:8 says, "If we say that we have no 'sin' (sin nature again), we deceive ourselves." Romans 6:1 says, "Let not 'sin' therefore reign in your mortal bodies (again, the old sin nature)." So, sometimes the old sin nature is called "sin."

**The Flesh**

At other times, you may find the old sin nature described by the word "flesh." Romans 8:8 says, "They, in the 'flesh' (that is, in the power of the old sin nature) cannot please God." Romans 7:18 says, "In my 'flesh' (that is, my old sin nature) dwells no good thing." Galatians 5:16-21 speaks about the works of the 'flesh,' the old sin nature. Ephesians 2:5: "An unbeliever fulfills the lusts of the 'flesh' (that is, the lust of the old sin nature)." These lusts include the desire for power, the desire for praise, the desire for sex, the desire for materialism, our likes, our pride, and so on. There's one more under flesh: In Romans 13:14 and Galatians 3:3, it's simply called "the flesh."

**The Old Man**

Then it’s sometimes called "the old man," because it is as old as Adam. Roman 6:6: "The old man is crucified with Christ." Ephesians 4:22 says, "Put off the old man" (that is, the old sin nature). Colossians 3:5-9 says, "Put off the old man with his deeds" ("old man" referring to sin nature).

**Heart**

Then, sometimes the old sin nature is called "heart." It's important to notice this, and you have to decide this by the context. Sometimes the word "heart" refers to the soul as a whole. Sometimes it refers to individual parts of the soul. In this case, there are times, because the old sin nature is in the soul, the word "heart" is actually referring to the sin nature. In Jeremiah 17:9, you have "the heart is desperately wicked." That means the old sin nature, that factor in the soul, is desperately wicked. Matthew 12:34 says, "Out of the heart" (out of the old sin nature). Matthew 15:19 and Mark 7:21-23 use the word "heart," a series of sins described. That's the old sin nature pouring forth. Psalm 58:2-5 says, "In heart you work wickedness... They go astray as soon as they be born (this 'heart' again is the old sin nature.

**The Carnal Mind**

Then, the old sin nature is sometimes called the carnal mind. Romans 8:6-8 says, "For to be carnally minded (controlled by the old sin nature) is death (temporal death it means here), but to be spiritually minded (controlled by the Holy Spirit) is (temporal) life and peace." The carnal mind is control of the old sin nature. Romans 7:14 says, "I am carnal, sold under sin," meaning I am controlled by the old sin nature.

**Spirit**

Then there is one more. Sometime the old sin nature is described by the word "spirit," as we have in James 4:5. It says, "The spirit that dwells in us lusts to envy," and we may understand the word "spirit," in this case, as "nature." The nature in us is inclined to envy. You can compare that with Genesis 6:5 which speaks about the spirit of man at a certain point in history. So, these are other words, all of them meaning "old sin nature."

**Newness of Life**

Now the thing that all of this leads up to is that you and I have a struggle, a very definite struggle, with the old sin nature. As new creatures in Christ, we are expected to walk in what the Bible calls "newness of life." We are supposed to stay in the inner circle of temporal fellowship, but in the soul of every Christian there's this constant struggle for control between the Holy Spirit and the old sin nature because both of them are in there. If you are a Christian, you have God the Holy Spirit and you have the old sin nature, and each of them is struggling to take charge.

**The Holy Spirit vs. the Old Sin Nature**

Now the Holy Spirit will not rule jointly with the old nature. There is no coexistence in the soul between God the Holy Spirit and your old sin nature. God the Holy Spirit will have nothing to do with the old sin nature. I hope we have established that. God has nothing to do with your sins, and nothing to do with your human good. Therefore, there is no way that God the Holy Spirit and the old sin nature will coexistent. Consequently, either one or the other is in charge, and it is up to the will of the believer to decide who's going to be in control. This control is total. The Holy Spirit rules, or the old sin nature rules. Now, when the Holy Spirit controls a believer's soul, he is called "spiritual." When the old sin nature controls, he is called "carnal." So, one or the other is in charge.

**Carnality**

Now, Roman 7 is written from the viewpoint of a Christian who suffers in this carnal status. Romans 7, beginning at verse 11: "For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it, slew me." Here the word "sin" is in the singular, so it means the old sin nature. The commandment refers to the moral law, that is, the Ten Commandments of God which reveal sin to us. This is not the ceremonial law. That revealed Jesus Christ. That was in the form of offerings, feasts, priesthood, and the tabernacle. This is not the civil law which revealed the walk which is necessary to protect the Jews during their time of life here on Earth. Verse 12 says, "Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandments holy and just and good." Verse 13: "Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good, that sin by the commandment might become exceedingly sinful." The moral law is the code of God which is good, but it expresses that which in man is sinful, that which is not good.

Verse 14 says, "For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin." Here's a Christian who is in the status of being controlled by the old sin nature. Here's the situation: "For that which I do (the things that come out of the life of the carnal Christian), I understand not." He doesn't know why he does them. Have you ever done something wrong, and said to yourself, "Now, why did I do that?" That's what he's saying. Here you've done something, especially if you're really proud about the fact that there are some things that you just don't do. There are some really dirty kind of sins that just aren't for you. And all of a sudden you find yourself indulging in that sin that you wouldn't have done, and you say, "Now why did I do that?" That's what he's saying. He's saying, "I am carnal. I'm controlled by the old sin nature, and in that status I don't understand why I am doing the things that I do." He says, "For what I would, that I do not." He says the things that I would not do, I do, and the things that I would like to do I don't do. But what I hate, that I do. The things that I want to do that are right, those I don't do. The things that I hate (and loathe), I find myself doing.

Now, you are kidding yourself, or you're kidding somebody else, if you have not had this experience. This is the strangest thing. This is very frightening to a Christian to find himself in a position where he is actually doing wrong things, and maybe the same wrong thing repeatedly. He goes to God and he says, "Lord, I am fed up with this." He confesses it. He clears the deck, and then finds himself again falling into that same thing. The question is: Why is that happening? Something is happening inside of me to cause this. What I would, the desire to honor the Lord, that I do not. What I hate, I keep on doing. Verse 16: "If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that is good." If then (first class condition: since) it is true I do the things that I don't want to do, I approve that the law is good, because what I don't want to do is what the law says I should not do. The law that I recognize is spiritual; that is, it is righteous, it is good, and I don't want to do those things. And yet, those are the things that I am doing--the very things that the law condemns and I agree with.

So, we have a picture here of a very helpless believer. He's in the clutches of the old sin nature because he doesn't understand the technique for release. If no one ever teaches him the technique for release, he will be frustrated. Now, when the old sin nature controls your life, and you have a frustration condition, here's what will happen to you. From our sin nature, we have two trends. One is asceticism, and the other is lasciviousness, which simply means sensuality, and it can be just normal satisfaction of the senses all the way to downright illicit sex. Now, here's what happens: You come in, and you sin. And you move along here on the lascivious scale. You get a guilt complex that you're moving along here in sin, so you fly up here to asceticism. Nobody has told you how to handle the fact of sinning in your life. Therefore, you move over to the other side of your old sin nature. Nothing has changed. You're still inside the old sin nature. So, you go along up here for a while on asceticism, and you're now cranking out your human good. And, after a while, you get tired of that, and you think about the good old times you used to have and you go back down here to lasciviousness. And, you begin living it up for a while again. And, after a while the guilt complex begins to eat away at you, and you fly up to asceticism. And you move along here, pouring out your human good. Then, after a while, you get bored with all this goody good stuff, and you fly right back down here to lasciviousness. Now, you can keep going like this--in and out, in and out--and every time you go back up here to the ascetic side, you think that somehow you've gotten back with God. You've quit fooling around, and now you and the Lord are on good terms again--but you're not.

All you've done is that you have gone back to your asceticism. All you've done is swung over to another side of your old sin nature. This happens to be the picture of the average person. This is the picture of the average unbeliever. This is the picture of the average Christian. And, most Christians that you know move like this. Now, it is true that, depending on what your temperament is, you'll spend more time up in one or the other. And, most people would prefer spending more time in the good image side of their asceticism rather than where they don't give a care what anybody thinks and what anybody sees. In time, you become very frustrated, and you realize that this is all profitless and empty.

**The Indwelling of the Holy Spirit**

So, what's the solution? This takes a solution. Obviously, something has to be done about this. We need a solution for this old sin nature, and this problem of fluctuating back and forth under a condition of condemnation before God. If you're an unbeliever, what you need is faith in Christ as Savior (1 Peter 2:24, Ephesians 2:8-9). "For by grace are you saved through faith, that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast." You need regeneration to give you a living human spirit. Then the Holy Spirit comes and indwells you, and you have the ground for producing divine good. The old sin nature remains, but you have the capacity to deny control to it.

If you're a Christian, what do you need? Here's your situation: You are already in union with Christ. You have current positional truth. You are in Christ. You are also identified with Christ in His death. Everything that He did on the cross, in the eyes of God, you were on the cross too. That's retroactive positional truth. You also have the capacity for experiential positional truth; that is, an experience to deny the old sin nature control and power. Jesus Christ on the cross had no old sin nature. You are in Christ. Therefore, you identified with him. Therefore, you are free of the old sin nature. It is possible for you to reject it. Christ died not only for our sins, but to free us from control of the old sin nature. So, a Christian therefore is commanded to reckon himself dead. Romans 6:11: "Likewise reckon you also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." If you do not understand this, you will fall into the trap that many people have of simply gritting their teeth, looking themselves in the mirror, and saying, "You're dead to sin." No you aren't. This is what it means to be dead to sin: It means positional truth. Positional truth is your security for your salvation, and your security for control of the old sin nature. When we get to describing how you handle the old sin nature, and you explain this to people, they're going to say to you, "Oh, I can really live it up then. I don't have anything to worry about, if I just have to tell God what I did--confess it. That's easy." Or, they will say, "Oh, no. If I sin, I'm lost again." This means they don't understand positional truth.

So, a Christian does not have to serve the old sin nature. An unbeliever does. It's your decider--volition positive or negative--that decides what's going to take charge in your life. Being out of temporal fellowship means no reward. Being in temporal fellowship means producing divine good. The filling of the Holy Spirit is the answer. What solves this problem--the problem of controlling the old sin nature in my life? It's the filling of the Holy Spirit. Galatians 5:16: "This I say then. Walk in the spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh." What we're going to take up next time is how to set filling into motion. The crucial factor is how do I maintain the filling of the Holy Spirit? We will look at the consequences of not practicing this particular technique of the Christian life.

So, here we are. God is perfect. Man is imperfect. God has removed the wall. We become Christians. We take an old sin nature into the Christian life with us. Christ has born the sins of all of us. He has set aside our human good. Our old sin nature can produce bad human good. It can produce sins. If we are believers, and we live on the basis of control of the old sin nature, we're committing sins or committing good things. We're fluctuating between the two, and we're under the condemnation of God. If you spend your whole life as a Christian in that condition, you will go to heaven, but you will have no reward.

On the other hand, if you understand how to control the old sin nature so that you are not forever falling out, and staying out of the status of being filled with the Holy Spirit, you will find mountains of reward to your credit in heaven. It is the most important decision you have to make after salvation--the decision of controlling the old sin nature. So next time we will take up that actual control.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1973

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