

# Phony Confessions

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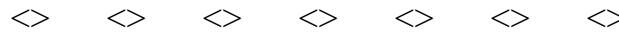
**“I have sinned.”** So confessed the great Egyptian Pharaoh not just once, but twice during the plagues God brought upon him and his people (Exodus 9:27; 10:16). In both cases, the king pleaded for the plague to be removed; in both cases, it was; and in both cases, Pharaoh persisted in his stubborn refusal to free his Hebrew slaves. He obviously lacked sincerity in his confessions. No genuine repentance accompanied his fine-sounding words.

Another king confessed to having sinned, but demonstrated no true repentance. Saul, the first king of Israel, disobeyed God by saving alive the king of the Amalekites and numbers of their finest livestock. When Samuel demanded to know why Saul had not utterly destroyed them as God had commanded, Saul acknowledged twice that he had sinned (1 Samuel 15:24, 30). He evidenced little concern about having offended God, though. Saul’s immediate concerns were to avoid his responsibility and to maintain his status before the crowds. With his first confession, he made excuses for his disobedience (15:24); with his second, he begged Samuel to honor him anyway before the elders of the people (15:30).

Saul also confessed that he had been wrong in seeking to kill David (1 Samuel 24:16-19). Nevertheless, he continued to hunt for David with the intention of killing him. Later, Saul confessed that he had sinned in so doing (1 Samuel 26:21). Though Saul now promised not to harm him, David shrewdly avoided the king. How could he trust this man who had previously confessed error only to continue on his murderous mission? Saul’s actions did not match his rhetoric. His confession was phony!

When King David sinned with Bathsheba, and again when he sinned by putting his confidence in a large army rather than in God, he confessed, *“I have sinned”* (2 Samuel 12:13; 24:10, 17). In contrast to Pharaoh and Saul, David’s confessions were genuine, heart-felt, and accompanied by sincere repentance. After confessing, David made no excuses, nor did he continue in stiff-necked rebellion against God. He exemplified Proverbs 28:13 – *“He who covers his sin will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy.”*

The apostle John wrote: *“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”* (1 John 1:9). What a hope-inspiring promise for Christians! But remember, confession must be accompanied by sincere repentance. A phony confession will not secure divine mercy!



## The Golden Rule

Many in the past have given us rules by which to live:

The iron rule: “*Might makes Right.*” it cares nothing about justice or mercy, but only power.

The silver rule: “*Don’t do to others what you don’t want done to you.*”

The golden rule: not “*The one with the gold rules,*” but “*Do to others as you would have them do to you*” (Matthew 7:12). While the silver and golden rules bear some resemblance, there is a stark distinction between them. The silver rule is passive and reactive; it gives no calling for service to others. While it looks good on the surface from afar, it is found to be quite selfish on closer inspection. The people of God are to be people of active service. *“This is the Law and the Prophets.”*

Thomas Baxley (*Voice of Truth International*) adapted

## A CROSS OR A COUCH?

*“If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me”* (Luke 9:23, ESV).

Hopefully you recognize that the statement quoted above is from Jesus. There is a rumor going around that what he meant to say was, “If anyone would come after me, let him affirm himself, sit down on his couch, and I will always meet his felt needs.” That rumor is false.

In those days, a cross was not a pretty little piece of jewelry. It was a symbol of disgrace, suffering, and death. Jesus is making it as clear as possible that following him will demand commitment. It will be well worth the effort, but it will not always be easy.

Many today seem to have lost sight of this prominent aspect of Jesus’ teaching. They seem to think that the Christian life should demand nothing and grant everything. People want to be considered church members without becoming committed followers of Jesus. They want a couch, not a cross.

Sorry, but I do not have the authority to rewrite what Jesus has declared. In life we recognize the truth of the saying, “no pain, no gain.” In eternity we will learn the truth of the saying, “no cross, no crown.” We can restate what Jesus stated, but we dare not explain it away.

*Now great crowds accompanied him, and he turned and said to them, “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. .... So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple”* (Luke 14:25-27, 33, ESV).

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