

Confessional Prayer: God's Mercy and Forgiveness

A LENT DEVOTIONAL BY

Brian Theurer

Daniel 9:9-10 **9** To the Lord our God belong mercy and forgiveness, for we have rebelled against him **10** and have not obeyed the voice of the Lord our God by walking in his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets.

“The only sins not forgiven are the ones that go unconfessed.”—Dr. David Jeremiah

Lamentations 3:22 says, “The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; His mercies never come to an end.” If we know by nature mercy and forgiveness belong to God and that they never cease, why do we not pray confessionally with hope in our disobedience? Are we ashamed of what we have done? Do we not actually believe or have hope in God’s mercy and forgiveness? Or have we not acknowledged our disobedience? The answer to this question will oftentimes vary throughout a Christian’s life. It is far too easy to forget or doubt the goodness of God and accepting that He is truly that merciful and forgiving. This can be especially true when we are experiencing a difficult season. Sometimes these difficult seasons are a result of our own disobedient decisions and actions, while other times they are completely out of our control. If it is a result of our own disobedience, what is our response? Are we responding properly in confessional prayer with hope, knowing that by nature mercy and forgiveness belong to Him? As Charles Swindoll said, “God’s forgiveness extends to the worst offenders and to anyone who wishes to receive it—not because of who we are, but because of who He is.” So, are we accepting and receiving with hope that He is truly that merciful and forgiving because of who He is? In this season of Lent, we need to know that, in our own disobedience, we can respond to God in confessional prayer with hope because by nature mercy and forgiveness truly belong to Him and are never ceasing.

Daniel clearly shows during his corporate confessional prayer that he places his hope on the very nature of God. He accepts and receives – with hope – that mercy and forgiveness truly belong to God. He acknowledges that even in disobedience there is a chance to experience mercy and forgiveness from God, because He is merciful and forgiving by nature. Daniel, in his confessional prayer, petitions God to be merciful and forgiving because he knows God cannot go against His nature. As Exodus 34:6 says, “The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.” This means that He will always extend mercy and forgiveness to us because it is eternally part of who He is. So, no matter the level of our disobedience or the amount we question His goodness, His mercy and forgiveness are ceaseless for each of us when we confessionally pray with hope. Daniel reminds us as we approach God in confessional prayer that we ought to acknowledge and cast our shame of disobedience upon God with a confident hope. It should not be with fear or doubt because we can rely on His nature, since mercy and forgiveness belong to Him. John Chrysostom said, “Let no one mourn that he has fallen again and again; for forgiveness has risen from the grave.” This is a great reminder that the ultimate proof of God’s mercy and forgiveness was displayed at the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He took on flesh and had the sins of the world placed on Him instead of us so that those who accept and receive Him in faith will have eternal life. This means there is hope for ceaseless mercy and forgiveness in Christ because God’s righteous judgment was satisfied in Him. So, whether you’re a believer or non-believer, there is hope for mercy and forgiveness in Christ when we rely on God’s nature through confessional prayer in our disobedience.

As I truthfully answer that question, I am realizing that I am typically ashamed of what I have done because I feel like I should know better, which leads me to forget that God is truly that merciful and forgiving. What I fail to remember is that God is still changing me to be more like Christ by the sanctification of the Spirit, which means I will still have periods of disobedient decisions and actions.

What is important is that I remind myself daily of the Gospel, which points to God's ultimate mercy and forgiveness, so that when I am tempted to respond with forget or doubt I can be reassured through Christ. This assurance should drive me quickly to confessional prayer with hope in my disobedience, showing reliance on God to respond by His nature with mercy and forgiveness. So, let's be reminded and encouraged to quickly respond to God in confessional prayer with hope in our disobedience, so that He can respond to us with mercy and forgiveness as we need. Just as Kirk Cameron said, "I could see that it was God's forgiveness and mercy that I needed, and that was provided through Christ on the cross for those who will receive Him as Lord and Savior. That is how I came to Christ."