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# DECISION

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Will  
You  
Win  
Life's  
Greatest  
Race?

A MESSAGE BY BILLY GRAHAM



# What Ruins Our Fe

BY RONALD DUNN

When we become Christian, we enter into relationship with God. We also enter into fellowship with God. And the extent to which we enjoy our relationship with God is determined by our fellowship

with Him.

There were times, while I was growing up, that I didn't enjoy my relationship with my dad. It became quite painful because something had happened to our fellowship. And in the Bible we read of the Prodigal Son who was in the far country. He was still his father's son, yet he was starving to death. The father was a wealthy man, but the son was unable to receive the blessings of the relationship. Why? Because something had happened to their fellowship.<sup>1</sup>

If we are not enjoying the relationship that we have with God, perhaps it is because something is wrong with our fellowship with Him. How do we maintain our fellowship with God?

## A Consciousness of Sin

Sin is the only thing that can violate our fellowship with God. We need to examine our lives in the light of God's Word. I have found from studying not only Scripture but also the history of God's revival movements that when God begins to do a new work, He begins by making us painfully aware of our sin.

Our prayer should be, "Lord God, make me sensitive to the things in my life that are contrary to Your will." The most helpless condition that we can get into is when we say we have

no need to draw close to God. In the dark you can't see the dirt on your hand, but the closer you draw your hand into the light, the more obvious the dirt is. If we say that nothing in our lives needs to be adjusted, it's a sure sign that we're walking in darkness.

## A Confession of Sin

Confession means "to say again." It isn't necessarily begging God to forgive you, but agreeing with God about sin and saying the same thing about sin that He says about it.

Once a woman said to me, "Oh, I wouldn't call what I do 'gossip.' I just have a talkative nature." I replied that God will forgive gossiping if we admit it's a sin, but God won't forgive a "talkative nature."

A woman with a severe moral problem had been seeing a psychiatrist about it. When she came to see me, I asked her what the psychiatrist had been telling her. She answered, "He said that it's really just a personality trait—I ought not to be bothered about it." I told her that nowhere in the Bible does it say that God forgives a "personality trait." But He does forgive adultery if we admit it's a sin.

Until we are willing to say the same thing about sin that God says about it, we will have no deliverance.



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# Fellowship With God?

## A Cleansing From Sin

Sometimes we want God to forgive us because we don't want to be punished and we don't want to turn off the tap of His blessings—but we aren't interested in being cleansed. Why? Because we like the sin.

But I don't believe that God forgives without cleansing. Are you willing for God not only to forgive you of that sin but also to cleanse you, to take the sin from you, and to remove the stain? It's not enough just to say, "Lord, I'm sorry, I want You to forgive me." You must allow Him to take the sin away, to cleanse you: "He that forsaketh his sin shall have mercy."<sup>2</sup>

## Continual, Complete and Confident

Confession is to be *continual*. If, at the moment we become aware that we have sinned, we confess—we agree with Him—there is immediate forgiveness. God restores the fellowship.

Confession also is to be *complete*. The Bible says, "If we confess our sins"<sup>3</sup>—did you notice that "sins" is plural? We need to be specific, confessing our sins one by one.

And confession is to be *confi-*

*dent*. Some Christians are unable to forgive themselves of forgiven sin. Counselors report that a major problem with their patients is guilt. We go to God and confess a sin, and then we still carry it around.

I counseled a couple with marital problems, and the wife said, "Every day for the past year I have asked God to forgive me." What she was saying was that God had not forgiven her, and so God was a liar. But the Bible says that if we confess, He will forgive.<sup>4</sup> This woman was not offering a confident confession.

The Holy Spirit of God will not convict us of sins that He already has forgiven. The devil goes to our past and dredges up sins and hassles us with them, and he says to us, "Remember what you did? You can't pray." But if we have confessed those sins, God has forgiven them; those sins have been washed away.

The confidence in our confession comes from two places: the authority of Scripture, and the advocacy of the Savior.

*The authority of Scripture.* The Bible says, "If we confess our sins, he . . . will forgive."<sup>3</sup> In Psalm 103 we read that "as far as the east is from the west,"<sup>5</sup> that's how far God has separated our sins from us. East and west never

meet. Under the authority of Scripture we know that when our sins go under Christ's blood, we'll never meet them again in this life or at the Judgment.

*The advocacy of the Savior.* The Apostle John wrote that Jesus

Christ is a good lawyer.<sup>6</sup> He is in good standing with the court: He is called "Jesus Christ, the Righteous One."<sup>7</sup> And He already has paid for my crime. What an unusual lawyer this is! He doesn't plead innocence for us. He doesn't plead justifiable circumstances for us. He pleads His blood. He says to God, "Father, look at the nail prints in My

hands and feet. I don't plead their innocence—I plead My blood. I've already paid for every sin on the list."

And the verdict? "There is now no condemnation."<sup>8</sup> How can we be certain? We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous. And the presence of this Person and the power of His propitiation ensures our forgiveness: "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin."<sup>9</sup>



(1) Luke 15:11-16. (2) Cf. Proverbs 28:13. (3) 1 John 1:9, NIV. (4) 1 John 1:9. (5) Psalm 103:12, NIV. (6) 1 John 2:1-2. (7) 1 John 2:1, NIV. (8) Romans 8:1, NIV. (9) Cf. 1 John 1:7. Bible verses marked NIV are taken by permission from The Holy Bible, New International Version, copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984 International Bible Society, Colorado Springs, Colorado

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