

Confess Your Sins

James 5:14-16

Introduction:

1. Reading of James 5:14-16.
2. A Bible class teacher of a class of small boys was emphasizing the necessity of our *personally* confessing our sins to God. As he closed the lesson he wanted to see if he had gotten his message across and so he asked, "Boys, how many of you have sins you would like to confess to God?" Suddenly there was silence all over the room. The boys sat there as still as a mouse, all looking at the floor. Finally one little fellow raised his hand, "Teacher," he said, "I don't have any sins to confess myself, but I know some people who do!"
3. Confession is difficult, but we certainly have no trouble recognizing when others need to confess.
4. In the passage we have just read James asks, "Is anyone among you sick?" I do not think that he is talking about being sick physically. I think he is asking if anyone is sick spiritually? Is any facing severe temptation? Has any, facing such temptation, sinned?
5. Then call for the elders of the church, let them pray over him (symbolically) anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. I think the prayer here is the anointing oil. It is this prayer that leads to restoration. It is this prayer that leads to the Lord raising him up and his sins being forgiven.
6. "Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, so that you may be healed" (v. 16).
7. What is confession? What is efficacious about confessing our sins "to one another?" Why are Christians given the opportunity to confess their sins sometimes publicly?
8. These are vital questions worth your consideration, but before we get into the lesson further let me welcome you to our assembly.

Discussion:

- I. There is an element of accepting responsibility for our sins implied in confession.
 - A. Confession is not avoidance. It is not whitewashing. It is not ignoring sin. Confession meets sin head on.
 - B. It negates denial.
 1. V. C. Grounds says, "It is the opposite of denial whether denial is silent or vociferous" (ZPEB).
 - a. Sometimes you would be silent about your sin. In David's sin with Bathsheba he wanted to keep things under wrap. Invited Uriah, home from war to visit his wife, expecting that the child in her womb might be recognized as Uriah's.
 - b. Sometimes you would be loud and noisy in protest of any violation. "I did not have sex with that woman."
 2. Confession is an open acknowledgement of sins.
 - C. Confession expresses repentance/penitence.
 1. Hard hearts do not confess. They deny and hide the sin.
 2. When the heart becomes soft, when the conscience is pained, when people are sorry

for their sins then they confess.

- D. When you confess your sins you face your responsibility for your actions.
 - 1. Achan faced responsibility for his actions when he confessed.
 - a. At first he was silent.
 - b. Joshua called upon him to confess (Josh. 7:19-21).
 - c. Observe that even though Achan confessed the penalty of death was exacted.
 - 2. Saul faced responsibility when he confessed.
 - a. When Saul was made king over Israel God commanded that he utterly destroy the Amalekites—man, woman, child and infant, ox and sheep, camel and donkey (1 Sam. 15:3).
 - b. But Saul saved alive some of the sheep, and the oxen and king Agag.
 - c. At first he denied that he had sinned (1 Sam. 15:13-15).
 - d. Continued to deny it (vs. 17-21).
 - e. Samuel pressed him (vs. 21-23).
 - f. Saul confessed (24-25).
 - g. Even though Saul confessed there was a penalty that followed.
 - 3. Observe that in both of these instances there is a man of God calling for confession. You don't want to hear someone calling on you for confession, convicting you of sin, holding you accountable. We fear the consequent result.

II. The confession of James 5 involves a request for help based upon our mutual concern for one another.

- A. The Christian life is not lived in isolation.
 - 1. Some think their spirituality does not need others.
 - 2. God does not agree. His plan involves Christians helping one another.
 - a. He has provided the local church for mutual encouragement.
 - b. Our assembling together is designed to provoke us to love and good deeds (Heb. 10:24-25).
 - c. Our singing to one another provides teaching and admonition (Col. 3:16).
- B. Here in James 5 our praying for one another results in healing.
 - 1. Without open acknowledgement of sin others ability to join us in our fight against sin is hampered.
 - 2. Our embarrassment resultant from our sin hampers us from finding healing (Psa. 32:3-6).
- C. Confession is a prelude to God's forgiveness.
 - 1. In 1 Kings 8:33-34 Solomon appealed to God in the dedication of the temple: "When your people Israel have been defeated by an enemy because they have sinned against you, and when they turn back to you and confess your name and turn from their sin because you have afflicted them, then hear from heaven and forgive the sin of your servants, your people Israel."
 - 2. Confession of sins was part of the response of those baptized by John in the wilderness (Matt. 3:6).
 - 3. "If we confess our sins he is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (1 Jn. 1:9).
- D. "I am willing to confess to God, but I don't understand why I should acknowledge my

sins to other Christians.”

1. That their intercessory prayers might be offered for you.
2. It is not so they can judge you, condemn you, embarrass you or make you grovel.
3. Observe in Dan. 9:3-19 how Daniel confessed the sins of his people.

III. The objective in confession is healing.

- A. In James 5 the confession is made “to one another” (v. 16). Particularly in this context the confession is made to the elders (vs. 14-16a).
- B. The meaning of confession as open acknowledgement, however implies the opposite of concealment.
 1. There are sins that it is inappropriate for everyone to know.
 2. It is appropriate to openly confess sins that are public knowledge, so that all affected by that sin may know of the repentance and no longer hold the guilty condemnable.
- C. A tradition to offer opportunity for public confession in our worship assemblies.
 1. Every sinner needs to use discretion in using this opportunity.
 2. Is the sin that you are confessing only between you and God? Then take it to him privately.
 3. Is the sin that you are confessing between you and one other? Then take it to that one.
 4. Is the sin that you are confessing between you and a few? Then take it to the few.
 5. Is it public? Then confess it publicly.
 6. Based upon the principle in evidence in Matt. 18:15ff.
- D. Open acknowledgement leads to healing.
 1. Healing of the conscience. When a person does what God asks guilty consciences are cleared.
 2. Healing from sin: forgiveness is extended.

Conclusion:

1. Accept responsibility for your sins.
2. Openly acknowledge them in confession.
3. Find the healing that you need.