

Series – Part 21: How to Live as a Christian:

Confess To and Pray For Each Other!

James 5:16-18 NIV

Sunday, September 22 at 8:00 & 10:45

Monday, September 23 at 7 PM

18th Sunday After Pentecost / 17th After Trinity – 2013

Introduction: Dear friends in Christ, we are in the middle of a section in James which is telling us how to function *within the community of believers*.

Last week we learned about speaking plainly to each other – “yes” or “no” is enough! We also learned about praying for those who are sick in body and soul – *right where we are, in their presence, or even in connection with the anointing of oil*.

Today we go even deeper in our community relationships by **admitting our sins to each other** and **praying for each other**.

1. **Don't Shower With Your Clothes On:** Can you imagine doing that? Thorough washing, rinsing, and drying would be impossible; in the end we would be dirty, wet, and miserable! In a similar way a spiritual shower – *without a full disclosure of our sins* – will leave us dirty and miserable! **16a** **Therefore confess [admit] your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed [cured].** // Illness is never pleasant; *physical illness (dirtiness)* is bad, *spiritual illness (dirtiness)* is worse! Therefore, God – thru James – is giving us the steps to *the cure (the cleansing)*: **first confess; then pray!** Note that *BOTH people* are doing *BOTH*; **LTIJ:** **“Such mutual transparency is startling...”** (334)

a. Confess:

i. These passages include confession:

1. They desired to be spiritually clean: ^{ESV} **Matthew 3:6** ... [the people] were baptized by [John] in the river Jordan, **confessing** their sins.
2. They were in awe of God's greatness: ^{ESV} **Acts 19:18** ...many of those who were now believers came, **confessing** and [announcing] their [sinful] practices.
3. Confession is encouraged: ^{ESV} **1 John 1:9** If we **confess** our sins, [God] is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

- ii. So what is confession? **“Confession has two parts. First, that we confess our sins, and second, that we receive absolution, that is, forgiveness...”** (Small Cat.)
Confessing is *admission* and *sorrow*: ♦I did it, ♦I'm sorry that I did it, and ♦I plan to go and sin no more! **The wonderful offer of God's forgiveness encourages us to make a full, heartfelt disclosure of our sins!**
- b. Pray: Again, James wrote: **“...confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed.”** As a physical illness hinders the function of a physical body, so a spiritual illness – *such as un-confessed sin* – hinders the function

of the body of Christ. So, *for the believers in Christ here at Bethlehem to be healed*, it is important for everyone to *confess to and pray for each other!*

2. **Don't Be Restricted By the Limits of This World**: She is very sick – *the doctor says her condition is terminal, so we are throwing in the towel – giving up!* We could think and function like that, but God wants us to remember that ***all things are possible through Him!***

- a. Encouragement to pray: ^{16b} **The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective** [*lit. A petition of a righteous man being made effective is very strong*].
- i. Prayer / Petition: *Speaking to God in words and thoughts!*
 - ii. A righteous man: *A person who knows Jesus as His Savior!*
 - iii. Being made effective is very strong: Since God ♦does hear those who are righteous, ♦is always able to answer, and ♦has promised to grant the requests of those who abide in Him – *the likelihood of such a prayer being made effective is very strong!*
- b. A powerful example of prayer: ¹⁷ **Elijah was a man just like us** [*with the same nature as us; since God worked through him, God can work through us*]. **[And] He prayed earnestly** [*lit. in prayer he prayed*] **that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years.** ¹⁸ **[And] Again he [Elijah] prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and**

the earth produced its crops [*lit. fruit*]. // The situation is simple: God controls the rain, so Elijah – *who trusted in God* – prayed that it would not rain. *Then God granted his request!* But wait, did that really happen?

- i. Jesus verified what happened in Elijah's time: Jesus said: **"But in truth, I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heavens were shut up three years and six months..."** (Luke 4:25 ESV)
- ii. The LORD can also work powerfully through us: We may ask: *Who are we in comparison to Elijah?* Yet we are precious in God's sight; *through Jesus we are God's forgiven children!* So, as Elijah prayed and was heard, *we can also pray and be heard!*

Conclusion: Some prayer requests:

1. Dear LORD, we have all sinned in various ways; our sins can even bring disunity to the body of Christ; therefore, help us to openly admit our sins to each other and pray for each other so that You might grant us healing! Amen.
2. Dear LORD, guide us as a congregation so that we always honor You, never compromise Your Word, truly love each other, and work together to seek and follow Your will in all things. Amen!
3. Dear LORD, in our nation and around the world, many families, schools, and Christian congregations are in great trouble; many have pushed You aside and gone their own way. Please grant forgiveness and restoration according to Your good will. Amen!

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