
Confess Your Sins to One Another

“Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.” (James 5:16)

Introduction

1. Confessing our sins is a difficult concept.
2. What is perhaps more difficult than that?
3. James 5:16: “Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. A prayer of a righteous person, when it is brought about, can accomplish much.” (NASB)

Discussion

I. Sins that Need to Be Confessed “To One Another.”

- A. The sins confessed have led to physical consequences.
 1. 5:15: “If he has committed sins he will be forgiven.”
 2. Implication: If sickness is the result of his sins.
 3. 5:16: Pray...that you may be healed – from consequences of sins.
- B. 1 Cor. 11:29-32: Paul spoke the same way.
 1. Weak, sick, sleep why?
 2. Vs. 32: chastened by God so not destroyed.
 3. When we experience consequences like this, even in repentance, our prayers may be hindered simply for a lack of faith! (James 1:6).
- C. The one struggling with sin and its consequences is greatly helped in prayer by a righteous person.
 1. I.e. “The effective fervent prayer of righteous man.”
 2. Galatians 6:1: You who are spiritual, go to such a one.
 3. 1 John 5:16: “he will ask, and He will give him life.”
- D. Three Inspired men, all referring to well-established biblical principles we often overlook:
 1. The need for open confession of sin.
 2. The need for a prayer of a righteous man.

II. Prayer of A Righteous Man for One Who Has Sinned

- A. Bible Pattern for the Righteous Praying for the Sinner:
 1. Job 42:8: “My servant shall pray for you. For I will accept him.” Result? _____
 2. Gen. 20:7, 17: Abraham and Abimelech, “he will pray for you, and you will live.” Result? _____
 3. Deut. 9:17-21: At the golden calf incident. Result? _____
 4. Num. 21:7: “We have sinned... So Moses prayed for the people.” Result? _____
 5. Num. 12: “I beg you, we have been foolish... So Moses cried out to the Lord...” Result? _____

6. 1 Sam. 12:20-25: "far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you; but I will teach you the good and the right way."
 7. 1 Kings 13:6: "to the man of God, 'pray for me...'" Result: _____
- B. WARNING: Jeremiah 42:19-22: God knows when our confession and request for forgiveness is not genuine.
1. This does not mean that we should hastate to go to God after repeated sins.
 2. Repeating a sin is not the same as hypocritically confessing it.
 3. Matthew 18:21-35: The parable of the unforgiveness servant teaches us to forgive seventy times seven times because that is how merciful God is to us.

III. You Who Are Spiritual

- A. God's pattern is that we should confess our sins to one another:
1. Specifically, the _____ to the _____.
 2. And that the _____ should _____.
- B. DISCUSSION:
1. What is missing in a congregation if we feel like there is no one we trust confess to and help us pray for our sins?
 2. 1 Timothy 1:5-8; 1 Peter 5:14: At the very least, who should be trustworthy enough to bear this burden?
 3. Even if none are available, what should be taking place in a congregation to develop enough trust among the brethren to encourage the bearing of one another's sins in this manner?
 - a. See Galatians 5:16-6:1
 - b. See also James 3:17-18.
 - c. Lastly, 1 John 2:3-6; 5:14-18
- C. Where are you in this?
1. Galatians 6:1: Are you spiritual OR overtaken?
 2. Matt. 7:3-5; Luke 6:41-42: Do you have a beam OR speck?
 3. These question are not intended to puff up, but evaluate our own faith and character. Do we strive to be someone others can trust to help address their sins?
- D. "Righteous" man does not describe one who is sinless, but rather one whose faith is strong enough that they are walking blameless (to the extent that prayers are not hindered, James 1:6)
1. Like Job: Job 1:8; 2:3; 42:1-7
 2. Like Abraham: Gen. 20:1-2
 3. Like elders: 1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:6

Conclusion

1. There is a lot of confusion about confessing sins to one another.
2. The command and pattern of this practice is for the benefit of the one struggling with sin.
3. There are consequences for sins that we have allowed control in our lives.
4. God's provision in the church allows us to work together to bear one another's burdens and help each other in our mutual struggle against sin.
5. Confessing to one another allows the stronger to help the weaker not only seek forgiveness, but to become free from the chastening that results from sinful behavior.