

# Notes for the Ekklēsia Meeting

Info: (651) 283-0568 Discipleship Training Ministries, Inc www.dtrmnc.org Today's Date: October 13, 2013

## Confess Your Sins To One Another

by Dan Trygg

“Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praises. <sup>14</sup> Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; <sup>15</sup> and the prayer of the faith will restore the one who is weary, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him. <sup>16</sup> Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed.” James 5:13-16

“So it shall be when he becomes guilty in one of these things, that he shall confess that in which he has sinned. <sup>6</sup> He shall also bring his guilt offering to Yahweh for his sin which he has committed...” Leviticus 5:5-6; cf. Numbers 5:6-7

“I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I did not hide; I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to Yahweh’; And You forgave the guilt of my sin.” Psalm 32:5

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” 1 John 1:9

When Adam and Eve sinned in Genesis 3, they immediately felt nakedness and guilt. They wanted to cover themselves, and tried to hide themselves from each other and from the presence of God. **Yahweh called to them, extending to them an opportunity to come forward and acknowledge their sin.** When He did speak with them, they attempted to *divert responsibility away from themselves*. They tried to *blame others*, even God Himself, for their choice to do what they knew was wrong. **Their disobedience unleashed a panoply of unintended consequences that they could never repair.** The loss of intimacy *with God*, inner peace and harmony *within themselves*, the disruption of their relationship *with each other*, the loss of their idyllic surroundings, and the introduction of hardship, pain and the degeneration of the body that ultimately culminated in death, were only the beginning of the ramifications of their choice. Granted, we are not all at the apex of human history, as they were, but **the unintended consequences of inner turmoil, relational breakdown, material waste and loss, and oftentimes even the stealing-away of health, life and opportunity, continue to follow our wayward choices.**

We see unintended consequences throughout Biblical history. *Abram*'s choice to disregard God's command to leave his father's house, and his relatives, resulted in *delay* (until his father died, and God called him, *again* – Acts 7:2-4; Josh. 24:2,3; Gen. 11:29-12:5.), *disharmony* and *disaster* to his nephew, Lot. It led to the birth of two nations that became bitter enemies to the offspring of Abram (Gen. 13:5-13; 18:1-19:38). In another scenario, instead of trusting God to work out His will, Abram and Sarai attempted to “help God” fulfill His promise to provide a child, by employing a slave girl as a surrogate wife. This resulted in disharmony, conflict, accusation, division, divorce, and enmity between her offspring, and those of the promised child God originally intended (Gen. 16; 21:8-21 – Ishmael became father of the Arabs, many of whom have been hostile to the sons of Israel throughout history.) Centuries later, *David*, in self-satisfied pride had an affair with the wife of one of his soldiers. The unintended consequences of pregnancy, duplicity, and murder were not the limits of that sin. Even though God forgave his sin, the consequences consumed David's other family members and friends. The damage to David's image as a man of God caused disdain, emboldened promiscuity, deepened bitterness, unleashing a firestorm of murder, betrayal and insurrection that resulted in the death of *thousands* (II Sam. 11-20). **David wrote about his inner turmoil over his sin.** He said, “...I know my transgressions, and my sin is *ever* before me” (Psa. 51:3). **His conscience accused him, and he was miserable.** He could not escape the guilt. “When I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; my vitality was drained away as with the fever heat of summer” (Psa. 32:3,4). **His inner distress was affecting his physical health.** God's conviction was upon Him. The *Holy Spirit* was convicting him of his sin, bringing him to task for his actions, and calling him to repentance. He knew only too well the principle later recorded by his son, Solomon, “**He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper**” (Prov. 28:13). You can't hide from God. He knows everything about you, even your very thoughts (Psa. 139:1-3). He can, and does, search the hearts and minds of people, testing them to know even their innermost intentions (Psa. 139:23,24; I Chron. 28:9). His purpose is not to judge. **God desires to lead us to humility, truth and honesty in our own hearts, and before Him** (Psa. 51:6,10,17).

Confession is a powerful tool to help us come to grips with our sin. **If he who attempts to hide his sins will not prosper, “he who confesses and forsakes them will find compassion”** (Prov. 28:13). David testified from his own experience, “I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I did not hide; I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to Yahweh’; and You did forgive the guilt of my sin” (Psa. 32:5). **Confession was a required step in the Law of Moses for securing forgiveness.** When a person became aware of his or her sin, he was to confess his sin before the Lord, and bring a guilt offering as a sacrifice to cover his sin. **If the sin was toward a person, he was not only to confess the sin to God, but also to the person he harmed. He was to make restitution for any damages or loss incurred as a**

result of his offense (Num. 5:6,7). He was to restore what was lost or stolen, and add one-fifth (20%) the value. **Then, he was to offer a sacrifice** for a guilt offering. The restitution was a necessary part of undoing the damage of sin, and righting the wrong. **Without restitution, confession could be only cheap talk.** When someone was sincere enough to take full responsibility for his or her actions, and fully repay whatever damage and inconvenience he may have caused, then it was clear that the repentance (change-of-mind) and confession were genuine. **John the Baptist emphasized this same point.** People were coming out to be baptized for forgiveness, confessing their sins. John emphasized that they were to bring forth fruits in keeping with repentance (Lk. 3:7-14). **If their heart was truly changed, and the confession of their lips was based in something real within them, it should become evident in their actions.**

Notice that in all these cases, there was no “go-between” or human mediator between people and God. It was not the duty of a priest in the OT to “hear confessions”. People were encouraged to address their confessions to **God Himself, or to the people who had been hurt.** No one was appointed to listen to the confessions of people coming to worship or offer sacrifice. Priests did not do this. Prophets were not appointed to this task. Pastors or elders were not called to this responsibility. The Bible says, “There is *one* mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus.” He gave Himself as a ransom for all, so that God would be just in accepting us (I Tim. 2:5,6; Rom. 3:24-26). Because of *this*, **God’s word clearly encourages us to come to Him as individuals, ...and we will be received.** The apostle John wrote, “If we confess our sins, He is *faithful* (dependable) and *righteous* (i.e., He has a just basis through the blood of Christ) *to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness*” (I Jn. 1:9). Think again of Psalms 32:5, “*I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I did not hide; I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to Yahweh’; and You forgave the guilt of my sin*”. **David felt no need to seek out a priestly-mediator to confess to. That was a totally foreign concept to his mind.** David had a *personal* relationship with God. He could, and *did*, come directly to Him to acknowledge his sin issues. **Now, after confessing his sin directly to God, then he offered a sacrifice, according to the Law. To do this, he had to rely on a priest to offer his sacrifice.** That was a privilege reserved only for the descendants of Aaron. It would have been against God’s law to offer sacrifice on the altar himself. **On that front, he had to rely on a priestly mediator, but not in regard to his personal confession to God.**

**Why, then, does James command us to “confess your sins to one another”?** The same principles apply here as mentioned above. **(1.) We are to confess our sins to God, because every sin is an offense to His holiness and our covenant commitment to walk in obedience to Him.** For example, **Joseph** clearly saw that the temptation to commit adultery with his master’s wife was first and foremost a sin against God. It would be a betrayal against Potiphar’s trust, and the favor he had bestowed on Joseph, to sleep with his wife. Even though *she* was approaching *him* with an offer for sex, to respond to her in that way would be to demean and degrade *her*, not respect or value her as God intended. Of course, *she* did not feel that way. In fact, she was angry that he would not have sex with her. Joseph’s main concern, however, was that to commit this act would be a blatant “sin against God”. Joseph understood that Yahweh was a holy God, and had very high standards regarding sexual activity. It was to be reserved for *marriage* alone. Period. To engage in sex in any other context was to *disregard, disrespect and disobey* God, His expectations and commands. Therefore, Joseph refused his master’s wife, and said to her, “Behold, with me here, my master does not concern himself with anything in the house, and he has put all that he owns in my charge. There is no one greater in this house than I, and he has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do this great evil, and *sin against God*?” (Gen. 39:8,9) **David** also felt this very keenly. He wrote, “Against *You, You only*, I have sinned, and done what is evil in Your sight, so that You are justified when You speak and blameless when You judge” (Psalm 51:4). In actuality, he had sinned against Bathsheba (by committing adultery with her), and certainly against Uriah (by his adulterous betrayal, and then by plotting his murder). So, when David said, “against You, You only, I have sinned”, he was speaking in hyperbole, using exaggerated speech to emphasize a key point. His sin, first and foremost, was against God, so the acknowledgment and confession of his sin started there.

**(2.) We are to confess our sins to one another, when we wrongfully treat or harm one another. We cannot come to God in sincerity, if we have unresolved and unaddressed conflict with another brother or sister.** Jesus said, “If you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar and go; *first* be reconciled to your brother, and *then* come and present your offering” (Matt. 5:23-24). If we feel wronged, we are encouraged to share that with our brother or sister who offended us, to give them a chance to patch things up (Matt. 18:15-17). Whatever the response, we are to do all *we* can to live at peace with everyone (Rom. 12:18). **The purpose of this “one-another” responsibility is to promote honesty in ourselves and health in the relationships of the Body.** The wise are those who are meek, approachable, open to reason and ones who are willing to acknowledge their faults or sins, wherever they may exist. We should be *eager* to hear one another out, and *quick* to own our errors and openly confess our faults. These are the seeds of peace, humbly sown, which will produce both righteousness in the honest disciple, as well as peace in strained or damaged relationships (Jas. 3:17,18).