

# Confess to Heal

## James 5:16

### Minister Keron Brown

**Historical Context** – The book of James seems to be written to primarily Jewish believers who are in the church (1:1; 2:2) who may have been scattered after the martyrdom of Stephen (Acts 8:1) or after James, the brother of John, death in A.D 44. This general epistle was written to believers who were struggling with various trials (1:2), including poverty (1:9-11), oppression (2:1-13), and perseverance (4:7-11) which led to them struggling with their obedience (1:19-27) and their faith (2:14-26). Therefore, James wrote to them to instruct and encourage the dispersed people in the face of their difficulties. His primary purpose is for the believers to practically walk out their faith, in the midst of their trials, that would lead to a mature faith.

**Message Statement for the Entire Book of James** - “Mature faith is developed by exposing and rejecting wrong attitudes and actions and embracing right attitudes and actions.” –

Dr. Charles Savelle

**Message Statement for Today** – We Confess so God can Heal

**Homiletical Outline**

## I. Why We Confess – v. 16

### A. We confess because we are dealing with physical and spiritual sickness

1. The word “therefore” shows this verse as a conclusion to the context which begins in verse 14 in which James addresses the person who is sick.
  - a. **Sick** – The Greek word for sick (*astheneo*) means sick (illness) or weak. While *astheneo* can denote spiritual weakness, this meaning is usually made clear by a qualifier (Rom. 14:2, ‘in faith’; 1 Cor. 8:7, ‘in conscience’) or the context. The context here points more towards a physical illness being addressed more than a spiritual weakness.
    - i. However, in verse 15, James uses another Greek word (*kamnonta*) that is considered “weak” which is translated as sick person, and it literally means “to be weary.”
    - ii. With the incorporation of Sin (vs. 15 & 16), James leaves room for both physical illness and spiritual weariness or weakness to be addressed here.
    - iii. In the OT, God used sickness as a punishment for sin (Deut. 28; 32:39; Num. 12:9-15; 2 Chr. 21:18-19; 26:16-21). In the NT, after healing the man at Bethesda, Jesus also told the man not to sin anymore

so nothing worse happens to him, thus implying that his sin had to do with his illness (John 5:1-14).

- iv. However, Jesus also showed that some sicknesses were to show God's glory, so all matters of illness are not because of sin (John 9:1-3).

**B. We are to confess because it is a command.** The word confess is written in the present, middle, and imperative tense which means it was a command that was expected to be continual.

**C. We confess to show that we agree with God and to keep our sins in the light.**

- 1. **Confess** - to make an admission of wrong-doing/sin
  - a. Confession also means to say the same thing as another, and, therefore, to admit the truth of an accusation
  - b. When we confess, we put God back into his rightful place as our master, and we keep things in the light as he is (1 John 1:5-6).

**D. We confess to keep things out of darkness so the devil cannot influence us.**

- 1. In Ephesians 4, Paul tells us that our sinful anger can give the devil an opportunity to influence us (Eph. 4:26-27).
- 2. This is the same principle that God seems to invoke when he tells Cain that sin is crouching at his door (Gen. 4:7)

## II. What We Are To Confess – v. 16

### A. Confess our sins

1. **Sins** - a departure fr. either human or divine standards of  
uprightness
  - a. *Sin*, with any context, ordinarily suggests the level of  
heinousness (wrongful or wicked act) that is about the action  
itself, as well as its result.
  - b. To sin is to miss the mark of God's holy and righteous  
standard.
  - c. James also includes a person's personal knowledge of a  
situation and their failure to do the right thing (Jas. 4:17)
  - d. Any act or thought that separates us from God and misses his  
standard should be confessed.

## III. Who We Are To Confess To – v. 16

- A. The object of our confession should be to the members of our local assembly,  
not simply the elders who are used in a special case in verse 14. The  
person(s) we should confess to are those who are:

1. **Righteous** - pert. to being in accordance with high standards of  
rectitude, upright, just, fair
  - a. The righteous person is not one who has simply been justified  
by God and declared right, but the one who is also committed  
to maintain God's standard of righteousness.

## 2. The Person is committed to prayer

- a. **Prayer** - urgent request to meet a need, exclusively addressed to God.
  - i. Prayer itself shows a dependency on God
  - ii. This prayer is powerful and effective (fervent) because it is done by a righteous person, by faith, in the power of the Spirit.
  - iii. Prayer is used 7 times in this context (vs. 13-18), thus, making prayer the main action.
  - iv. This prayer is to be offered in faith in the ability of God

## IV. The Results Of Our Confession – v. 16

A. When we confess our sins to one another, and we pray for each other, healing takes place.

1. **Healing** - to deliver from a variety of ills or conditions that lie beyond physical maladies, *restore*
  - a. The healing (that you may be healed) is not bodily healing but healing of the soul (*iathēte*; cf. Matt. 13:15; Heb. 12:13; 1 Peter 2:24).
  - b. The word for healing (*iaomai*) is used to represent God's work of healing or restoring bodily or mental health (Matt. 9:35;

12:15). It is solely through the power and will of God that human well-being and good health can be restored fully.

2. **Commentary** - First, by understanding the purpose statement *that you may be healed* in a spiritual sense or in a combined spiritual/physical sense, we could view v. 16 as a generalization from the encouragement to pray for healing in vv. 14–15. Since the prayer for healing offered in faith accomplishes so much (v. 15a) and since God is anxious to forgive the sins of his people (v. 15b), the whole community should be encouraged to confess their sins to one another and to pray for one another. By doing so, the health (in the broadest sense) of the community will be insured.

## V. **Biblical Principles & Applications**

### A. **Biblical Principles**

1. Our sickness (both mental and physical) can be the result of the sin in our lives.
2. All sins separate us from fellowship with God, therefore all sins should be confessed
3. Sins left in the dark can be used/influenced by the devil
4. Our confession of those sins can lead to God restoring us physically and spiritually

### B. **Applications**

1. Pray and ask God to reveal to you what could be hindering you from being physically and spiritually healed. Confess that immediately.
2. If you don't have someone to confess to, pray and ask God to lead you to someone who is righteous and will pray for you.