

## "Of Repentance unto Life" part 13 WCF 15.6.3, The Duty and Privilege of Confession to One Another

2021.09.05 Sabbath School Lesson

Hopewell ARPC, Culleoka, TN

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WCF 15.6 (TPH p928)

VI. As every man is bound to make private confession of his sins to God, praying for the pardon thereof;<sup>(l)</sup> upon which, and the forsaking of them, he shall find mercy:<sup>(m)</sup> **so, he that scandalizeth his brother, or the Church of Christ, ought to be willing, by a private or public confession, and sorrow for his sin, to declare his repentance to those that are offended,**<sup>(n)</sup> who are thereupon to be reconciled to him, and in love to receive him.<sup>(o)</sup>

<sup>(l)</sup> Ps. 51:4, 5, 7, 9, 14; Ps. 32:5, 6.

<sup>(m)</sup> Prov. 28:13; I John 1:9.

<sup>(n)</sup> James 5:16; Luke 17:3, 4; Joshua 7:19; Ps. 51 throughout.

<sup>(o)</sup> II Cor. 2:8.

James 5:13 **Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms. <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 faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. <sup>16</sup>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. <sup>17</sup>Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. <sup>18</sup>And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit.**

- There are often temporal chastenings—disciplinary actions of God in our earthly lives—for our sin.
- Our sins are against our consecration unto God, and against the purpose for which Christians have been redeemed
- There is a special ministry of prayer from our elders, and a special duty of the offended and reconciled brother to pray
- There are different moments of confession here: implied before the elders, but plainly stated before others
- Especially when a justified believer is told to pray for something specific, as Elijah was, we may have confidence that we are heard and that the prayer is effective

Luke 17:1 **Then He said to the disciples, "It is impossible that no offenses should come, but woe to him through whom they do come! <sup>2</sup>It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones. <sup>3</sup>Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. <sup>4</sup>And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, 'I repent,' you shall forgive him." <sup>5</sup>And the apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith."**

- The duties of rebuke, confession, repentance, and forgiveness... *and of persistence* in these
- The needfulness of great faith for this

Joshua 7:16 **So Joshua rose early in the morning and brought Israel by their tribes, and the tribe of Judah was taken. <sup>17</sup>He brought the clan of Judah, and he took the family of the Zarahites; and he brought the family of the Zarahites man by man, and Zabdi was taken. <sup>18</sup>Then he brought his household man by man, and Achan the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was taken.**

<sup>19</sup> **Now Joshua said to Achan, "My son, I beg you, give glory to the LORD God of Israel, and make confession to Him, and tell me now what you have done; do not hide it from me."**

<sup>20</sup> **And Achan answered Joshua and said, "Indeed I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel, and this is what I have done: <sup>21</sup>When I saw among the spoils a beautiful Babylonian garment, two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold weighing fifty shekels, I coveted them and took them. And there they are, hidden in the earth in the midst of my tent, with the silver under it."**

- When the sin has been against the whole church, not only private confession but especially public confession is required
- Notice the specificity of the confession (remember 15.5)

**Psalm 51, which we have studied before, is addressed "To the Chief Musician." Here, David's private confession unto God was made public confession before the entire assembly.**

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**(The following is a machine-generated transcription. Please be aware of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording referenced above)**

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So the 6th section of the chapter on repentance unto life reads as follows.

As every man has banded to make private confession of his sins to God praying for the pardon thereof, upon which and the forsaking of them he shall find mercy.

So he that scandalize of his brother, or the Church of Christ, ought to be willing by a private or public confession, and sorrow for his sin, to declare his repentance to those that are offended.

Who are thereupon to be reconciled to him and in love?

To receive him.

Then you see in footnote in there they give as prooftexts James 5:16.

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.

And then.

Luke 17 verse three take heed to yourselves.

If your brother sins against you, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him.

And if he sins against you seven times in a day.

And seven times in a day.

Returns to you saying I repent.

You shall forgive him.

And then Joshua 7 verse 19.

Now Joshua said, taken my son, I beg you, give glory to all the God of Israel, and make confession to him, and tell me now what you have done, and do not hide it from me.

And then Psalm 51 and it just says throughout the whole Psalm, which is interesting, because when we were on the first line of this section, we had 12345 specific verses, particularly identified.

So first James 5:16. Confess your trespasses to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed.

No, I don't know if any of you have have been redeemed out of a Roman Catholic background where one of the things you might have done is you've gone to confession.

And use it with the screen in between you and the priest.

And and you confess your confess your sins to him.

And that's one of their sacraments.

The church I grew up in wasn't running Catholic, but when we kind of got into.

Junior high and especially high school youth group, we had kind of an unofficial sacrament of the church.

In which we were separated into small groups and one of the things we did was, you know, every week when we got together.

We kind of bemoaned our sin to one another and had this kind of cathartic cleansing experience for some more.

For others, this competition about who could be more self deprecating about how badly they felt about their sin.

But so.

When we read confess your trespasses to one another and we need to do so in the context of James Chapter five, we need to understand what the Lord is telling us so that we don't end up abusing.

What is a biblical instruction?

So this this comes in the context of and not.

Not every suffering is occasioned because God is disciplining.

But not every believer suffering comes as an occasion of discipline for a particular sin.

So many believers suffer for many reasons.

Sometimes the Lord is just bringing you through something to increase your dependence upon him.

Sometimes he's just displaying the glory of the gracious work that he has done in you that you are able to suffer well.

And and bless his name.

Sometimes he's giving you opportunity for evangelism.

Sometimes he is increased.

Thing the penalty, the punishment and guilt upon the heads of those who are persecuting you.

We can't go to all the different passages that give examples of all those things.

But there are a lot of different reasons that believers suffer.

But one thing that can be true.

That we do need to take seriously whenever we suffer is that God may be chastening us for a particular sin. So that factors into if we're suffering and if we're sick. So James 5:13 is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray.

The fact that you are suffering means whatever else it means. It means that you are needy and.

It's a prompt to call upon God's name. That's that's pretty clear. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms. Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of Church.

And let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.

Now this is not a mixture of pastoral and and medical ministry, although I've I've heard it said that way anointing with oil is something that of course has a very long Bible.

Background before you get to James Chapter 5.

And the marvelous thing is in the Old Testament, those who were those who were being brought into an office of prophet or priest or king.

And now we have not only the marvelous truth that Jesus is the great Prophet, the one like Moses, who was supposed to arise.

And not only is Jesus the great high priest, so all the Levitical priesthood, all of the Aaronic priesthood is obsoleted because Jesus has an eternal priesthood that doesn't even come.

From Levi and Aaron.

He's from the tribe of Judah.

His priesthood is like that of Melchizedek, and not only is is Jesus the Forever King, to whom all kingdoms on Earth belong, so that not only now the Jewish Kingdom, but every.

Government of every nation is a lesser magistrate under King Jesus.

But in him, every believer has a part in those things.

One of the things that.

One of the things that that you rejoice over is the priesthood of all believers, that every single one of you who come to God through Jesus Christ gets to go all the way through the curtain.

Approach all the way unto him himself.

There is no holy place in all of.

Creation and all of the display of God's glory where you are not qualified by Christ to be.

And so when we go over there and and worship.

None of us is nearer to God than the others because we are all in Christ's great high priesthood. We ourselves have a priesthood and so.

We're all praying and we all sing a.

Yeah, does hope they'll have a choir.

Yes, it's it's in the pews.

It's part of the priesthood of all believers.

The Levitical choir didn't even exist until the temple.

It was part of as you looked forward to Jesus, the Forever King, the son of David and Jesus the the final and Ultimate temple.

David provided musicians.

And singers, as part of the priesthood.

Looking forward to when we would all be the priesthood.

We all have a prophetic ministry.

We're not all ministers of the gospel.

We're not all Pastor teachers.

But we do all by the the ministry that Christ gives us.

Ephesians Chapter 4 of.

Of the.

The pastor teachers stabilizing us in our doctrine so that we can all speak truth to one another.

In love so that every Member has a share in that and and, uh, every joint supplies something we are all to admonish one another as we sing the Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs we all show forth the Lord's death or proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

At the table and we're all joint heirs with Christ.

This is a rim boys and girls full of princesses and princesses of the Kingdom.

Yeah, there's there's no scene in Narnia with as many or as high a royalty as the scene in Hopewell AARP's Fellowship Hall right now.

So these are glorious, precious things that you don't well appreciate when you're terribly under the weather and you feel like you can't move or your sinus is or blowing up, or your eyes feel like they're floating in lava, or you know whatever else you know there are.

Other kinds of sickness.

I'm focusing on the affliction of living in Tennessee.

But when we are brought low by sickness and Christ gives you access to his elders, this is one of the reasons why when you're sick, it is so bad to not call the elders.

And yes, I am rebuking.

All of you.

Because you are telling yourself I don't want to bother the elders.

But Jesus sends you his elders.

And then he has them anoint you with oil.

To show you how great is God's personal interest in each one of his Saints, this side of the cross and our experienced union with Christ.

OK, one of the things you get, however, if you are a adopted child of God, is discipline.

Hebrews chapter 12 the Lord chastens, the Son, whom he loves.

If you are without discipline, you are not his child, and so all of those things are pulled together, if any.

Is anyone among you sick?

Let him call for the elders of the church.

Let them pray over him.

There's a special prayer, ministry of the Elders.

Anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord, reminding you not only.

That you have been set apart to God and owned by him and adopted by him, but also that you owe him everything you have.

You are now in the office of Saint Anne and the prayer of Faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up.

So you have the.

The fact of what Christ has done for you and who God has made you to be in Jesus, attested to you in the presence of the elders.

And then they're praying over you and they're anointing you with oil and you believing in Christ, believing that he has.

Died and risen again, believing that he is your savior, and if you are in his hand he will raise you up on the last day.

You are guaranteed that that sickness is not the end for you.

Now it can be the end for you in this life.

But the end for you in this life is not the end for you.

Christian faith.

Is infinitely more than just what it looks for and rests in Christ for infinitely more than just what we get between the time we believe in this world and the time we leave in this world.

This last year and a half or so with the COVID stuff.

This ought to have been something that we rejoiced over and grew in confidence about, and had all of the opportunity in the world to give an answer for the hope that is within us as anxiety and.

Fear and strife filled our nation and our community and our families, and our friendships and our workplaces and.

The prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up.

OK, so that's part of what you're doing there.

You're saying I will rise from the dead?

Not just from this illness, but in the case that, and like I said, they're not always because of a particular sin.

In the case that it is for a particular sin, that's where you get the rest of verse 15, and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.

What does that mean?

That your sins had not been completely atoned for in Jesus, so you needed to have this confession of sins that no.

Your guilt has been wiped out in Christ it.

There is therefore now no condemnation.

For the one who is in Christ Jesus but in the Lord's mercy to his children. When he chastens us for sin. That chastening is designed to bring us to our repentance. And when we repent of that sin.

The Lord, the the usefulness or the time of the chastening is removed, and that's what's being described by the.

He will be forgiven at the end of verse 15, not just the fact.

That all of your sins are as guaranteed forgiven as your resurrection is guaranteed to occur, but that there are cases in which the Lord is is chasing someone with sickness and it is to bring the elders and have him pray, have them pray over the.

The person and for them to.

To have that self reflection.

You know, is there sin, of which I have not repented, and you have, and you have an opportunity for that moment.

But not all of our sin is hidden and just between us and God.

Sometimes often our sin is against one another, isn't it?

And yet, that's the case.

That's that.

Verse 16 brings us to confess your trespasses to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed.

OK, so sometime.

Thus the Lord has his anointed ones who have been sinned against, and he asked that, and he instructs us that they have to pray for those who have sinned against them before they will be healed.

This happens with Abimelech, doesn't it, Abimelech?

In Abraham and and Abraham is actually sinned against Abimelech more than Abimelech has sinned against Abraham.

But still, Abraham has been set apart by by God as his servant, and God tells Abimelech.

He's got to pray for you.

For you to be healed, you have it with Job and his three friends at the at the end of the Book of Job.

We actually.

Had it last week in second Samuel with the Gibeon Nights and God had brought a famine in the land for for three years and one of the points in the text was to bring the Gibeon nights to the place where they are able to bless.

Israel before God and what Saul had done to the Gibeon Nights would no longer.

And God would no longer hold that against Israel.

Well, now we've got a whole Group A whole congregation full of anointed people who are supposed to pray for one another.

And what's implied here in verse 16?

If it's confess your trespasses to one another and pray for one another.

That you may be healed is that there are situations in which there's sin between brothers and sisters and the church.

Church, and until that's reconciled, the Lord withholds his healing.

He gives us the privilege to put it another way, of confessing to one another, that confession, being received with forgiveness and that reconciliation resulting in praying.

For the one who had sinned against you with your renewed, your renewed, reconciled relationship, you're no longer at odds with one another, the.

The breach has been healed between you and the Lord, listens to the prayer of the one who had previously been been offended.

The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much so.

He he describes Elijah.

Elijah was a man who liked nature like ours.

He prayed earnestly that would not rain.

It did not rain on the.

Planned for three years and six months, he prayed again and the heaven gave rain.

Then the Earth produced its fruit and he says every one of you is of like nature with Elijah.

Elijah was a Sinner.

You're a Sinner.

Elijah was forgiven by Faith in Jesus Christ.

You are made.

Elijah was made righteous with God by faith in Jesus Christ.

You are made righteous with God by faith in Jesus Christ.

You have been given the privilege not just of playing for things generally, although the end of verse 16 does apply generally, but in the context, it specifically applies.

Two when there has been broken relationship between believers because of sin and the each confesses their sin to the other, it's usually the way it works.

There two sinners involved and each prays for the other and the Lord listens to it.

This is part of of.

Our privilege in reflecting what our father is like, you can see it in the Lord's Prayer.

Forgive us our debts, even as we forgive our debtors, you can see it in how Jesus talks about it after the prayer.

For if you do not forgive one another, neither will your father in heaven forgive you.

You can see it in the way that things that the Lord worked in his Providence in the Apostolic Church.

You had the one who had sinned against the congrega.

Nation in Corinth and Second Corinthians.

Once the confession has taken place, he tells them that they now have to reaffirm their love for him, because it's one of the designs of the devil to keep to keep churches in conflict.

So this is actually a big part of our Christian life and it's dealing genuinely with our sins against one another.

It's not, you know, the Roman Catholic idea or the.

You know who can.

Make the biggest deal about how bad they are.

Are you know group session idea?

It's actual sinners who've committed actual sins against one another, and the Lord is dealing with us as children whom he is disciplining so that we will confess and repent and be restored.

And we are to confess our sins to one another.

When we when we sin against one another.

Uh, we'll just very quickly highlight the the rest of them so that we can move on next week.

Luke 17

Jesus reminds us that it's it's a great wickedness before God to cause a brother or sister to stumble.

And that part of what we need to do is maintain.

Maintain relationships with one another in which we help one another.

Stop sinning, so take heed to yourselves.

Verse 3.

If your brother sins against you, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him and the temptation is to stop at the end of verse three.

And say, alright, that means if they show lots of fruit of repentance, and if they show themselves.

Trustworthy, and if I can tell that they really mean it.

Well, there's the problem of verse 4.

Now versus you know when it says, forgive him.

It doesn't mean trust him again, or entrust things to him, but.

It definitely means that we that we not hold.

Bitterness against them.

Because verse four goes and if he sins against you seven times in a day and seven times in a day returns to you saying I repent.

You shall forgive him.

Now that's important because the the only reason you or I might not have done this with the Lord.

As if we have not been honest enough about our sins to do it seven times in a day.

But you have seven times in a day sinned against the Lord.

And if you have come to him and confessed those sins to him all seven times, you have been restored and reconciled.

Well, the apostles recognize how how big a thing this is, and the apostle said to the Lord, increase our faith, and I think.

I think you need increased faith for both to be able to repeatedly humble yourself and confess sin again.

As is something that requires faith in Jesus Christ and also to keep forgiving.

Uh, to keep forgiving?

With something that requires faith in Jesus Christ, it's one of the ways that Christ is glorified that the full forgiveness of God in Christ is glorified is by the reflection of that in the repeated restoration of believers relationships.

This is one of the ways that.

But perhaps we could more glorify our forgiving savior.

There's much more to be said there, but there is at least that much to be said there.

And then.

Sometimes our sins aren't just against individuals, sometimes our sins.

Or against the congregation as a whole.

And that was the case with Aiken and.

That's why Joshua says to Aiken my son, I beg you, give glory to you, alway God of Israel, make confession to him and tell me now what you have done.

Do not hide it.

Hide it from me when the sun has been against the whole church.

The you know not only private confession is required, but public confession. And then finally Psalm 51. Notice if you look at the superscripts and in the Psalter in the Psalms Book of Psalms, those superscripts are Hebrew scripture. Those are Bible.

And it says to the choirmaster.

And so the private confession of of David before God that we studied a couple weeks ago is actually something that the church as a whole is to sing together and pray and pray together.

He has modeled for us.

Public confession together.

Before God of the fact that we have private sin.

Really can't take more time to say that.

Do you have a minute or two?

If there's a question or comment that we could deal quickly with?

Yep, Dave.

Flushing whatever person.

Planning issues we identified with the church.

Is there consequences?

Right?

Well, someone who's identifying with the church and is not a believer.

One of the things if they have.

Repeated demonstration of UN repentance or particular sins that are very scandalous.

There's a church discipline process in which they're either brought to repentance with fruit, or they end up being.

Put out of the church.

That's something that is not being done well in most of the churches that we know and are aware of today, but.

If we're to interact with one another in ways that require an actual grasp of the gospel and living out of that and clinging to one another, then if we fail to do church discipline to preserve and promote the purity of the church.

We put a lot more of the earnest on particular believers because now they're dealing with people in the church, but they're not able to deal with everyone in the church as the Scripture describes dealing with believers.

Because you lose that ability to interact with one another as two people who are clinging to the same Christ in the same way according to the same gospel.

And that's that is the foundation of being able to confess and repent and be reconciled and pray for one another, yeah.

So now.

You mention Roman church.

You considered Roman church?

Eastern Orthodox is a more difficult question because they have not anathematized the gospel the way Rome did at Trent.



Rome is a synagogue of Satan.

The reformed have confessed that for.

Hundreds of years.

Uh, so.

But they've also modified if.

You look at the height of.

Her confession in the Westminster.

They they handed out.

Depends on the particular denomination and those who modify usually are not going in the right direction.

Did you have something Jeff?

It's so clear that.

This is something different, but back in James.

I think about conversations I've had in the past, and as I understand it, it seems like the sick in verse 14 and the sick in verse 15, two different people.

And the reason why I'm saying this, 'cause I've had conversations where people will somebody.

They die anyway.

Right?

And that can make your ship your face shipwreck.

If you're expecting me to pray, or someone and all of a sudden.

They bounce back and.

They don't die, and the.

I'm gonna butcher this, but the second verse 14.

Is as I can pronounce, it asks me to.

And for 15.

Can't normally anyway.

Post 15 it seems.

To speak with someone who's weird, depressed, tired.

Penguin, maybe from the pressures of life.

I don't believe in verse.

Is somebody here?

There are a couple of different things involved here.

One is that the believer who dies has not thereby failed to be saved or failed to be raised up.

OK, the two different types of sickness.

I actually didn't look at that, but I'm not sure that that's as significant as well.

One is to unto death, and the other is is not unto death.

What's going on here is?

A resurrection confidence that sometimes does have.

Results in the immediate but in in the cases in which the results are in the immediate, it's specifically tide to a sickness that is a temporary chastening.

And not all sickness is for believers or are temporary chasings.

You know one of the problems.

Uh, when you know there's there's two problems.

One is the idea that.

What's being promised here is that if you pray for someone.

They'll get better.

In this life and the other problem is.

Not holding to salvation as something that is found primarily in resurrection.

And and everlasting life, and a new heaven and a new Earth.

But rather some kind of increased level of prosperity, whether physical or financial or even social or relational, in this life.

Alright, we do need to get going.

Let's close them for.

Our father, we thank you that in Christ you have given us a perfect confidence.

That there is no condemnation.

For us who are in him.

That even sickness and death.

Uh and satanic attack or any other thing?

Produces no separation.

From the love of Christ or from your love which is in Christ Jesus.

So we pray that you would give us that confidence not only so that as your adopted children, we can by the spirit put to death the deeds of the body, but so that, as your adopted children we can relate to one another.

With the same love and forgiveness as we are learning from you, our Heavenly Father and from the Lord Jesus, your only Begotten son.

We pray that this confidence in you would lead in our particular congregation to a congregational culture in which we are freely able to confess to one another.

When we've seen against one another because of the forgiveness and the reconciliation in which you are glorified, we pray that you would give us.

The desire to take up the privilege of praying for those who had sinned against us, as you have afforded us that also in your image, now glorify yourself.

We pray in the worship to which we are coming through Christ.

We praise you as the father from whom.

The whole family in heaven and on earth is new.

Named and we come now to that assembly help us by your spirit to rejoice in worshipping with the whole family in heaven and earth, and especially led by your son, our Lord Jesus Christ and his name also.

We pray this Amen.