

## *“Good for the Soul”*

*Psalm 32; James 5:13-16*

May 23, 2021

### Introduction

- Wells Fargo – things changed
- Blue chair – things changed
- The aims of churches in today’s time have changed
  - o Learn how to be good citizens and not faithful Christians.
  - o Means by which we broadcast outwardly that we’re good people.
- The aims of the ancient church were much more closely aligned with Scripture
  - o Making disciples was their primary task.
    - Year-long course of instruction
      - Instructed on the Scriptures
      - Participated in the work of God
      - Learned the practices of the community
        - o One of those practices was confession of sin
- WHOA! We’re not Catholic
  - o And you’re right. We’re not
    - We DO NOT believe that confession of sin is a sacrament and must be shared with a priest who then mediates forgiveness for it to be effective
    - BUT we don’t want to throw out the baby with the bathwater
      - Confession of our sin to God and to another human being is a faithful and worthwhile undertaking that can help us and others

### Reading of Scripture

- **James 5:13-16** – “Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise. 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. And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.”

### Confessing our sin is difficult

- **Irwin Lutzer** – ““Forgiveness is always free. But that doesn’t mean that confession is always easy. Sometimes it is hard. Incredibly hard. It is painful to admit our sins and entrust ourselves to God’s care.”
- Fear that we will be rejected
  - o So we keep it secret
  - o Upsets our pride
    - **PROBLEM -SECRETS KEEP US SICK**
      - **Anita E. Kelly**, a doctor of psychology at the University of Notre Dame – “People who keep many secrets experience a significant amount of stress that has been scientifically proven to impact long-term health. They become prone to depression, anxiety, and body aches.”

### Why Confession of Sins?

- **It’s Biblical**
  - o **Proverbs 28:13** – “Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.”
    - Jewish wisdom literature
    - Deeply understands human psychology

- **From Psychology Today** – “...when you’re keeping a secret to protect your reputation...your mind continuously wanders towards that secret even when you’re not with those people. As you do so, you experience feelings of inauthenticity because you know your behavior doesn’t match what you claim to be your beliefs.”
  - Confessing our sins enables us to stop that feeling of hypocrisy.
    - This feeling makes us feel like a failure even when we’re successful

- **I John 1:19** – “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”
- **Acts 19:18-20** – “Also many of those who were now believers came, confessing and divulging their practices. And a number of those who had practiced magic arts brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted the value of them and found it came to fifty thousand pieces of silver. So the word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily.

- **Confessing Sin links us with our Jewish heritage**

- Confession of sin held a significant place in the life of Jewish belief and practices
  - **Leviticus 16:20-22** – “And when he has made an end of atoning for the Holy Place and the tent of meeting and the altar, he shall present the live goat. And Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat and confess over it all the iniquities of the people of Israel, and all their transgressions, all their sins. And he shall put them on the head of the goat and send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a man who is in readiness. The goat shall bear all their iniquities on itself to a remote area, and he shall let the goat go free in the wilderness.”

- **It shares the burden of righteous living**

- Being a Christian is tough
  - You can’t do it along
  - You need the Holy Spirit
  - You need OTHER PEOPLE
    - Celtic Christianity
      - Important historically
        - During the Dark Ages – Ireland’s church grew without interference from Rome
      - Anam Cara
        - Soul-friend
        - Shares the burden of righteous living
        - This is the role that, over time, assumes the role of the priest.
- When we’re truly our authentic selves with another person, we grow more comfortable being ourselves. Especially when the sharing is mutual

- **Allows us to live in the light**

- Story – Nothing good happens after midnight
  - Just a way of saying that darkness isn’t as preferable as daylight.
  - The dark is where most crime happens, concealing.
- We are children of the light
  - **I Thessalonians 5:5** – “For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness.”
- **Galatians 5:1** – “For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.”
- We are created by God
  - We are children of the light

- **1 Thessalonians 5:5** – “For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness

- **In harmony with our creation**

- We are created in the image of God.
- God’s image is known to us through Jesus Christ
  - **John 8:12** – “Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life.”
- Psychology of Confession
  - Procedural dramas – good cop, bad cop
    - They are all means to entice you to do something you really want to do – tell the truth
      - It’s wired into us through our creation
- It facilitates repentance
  - Not just a one time thing, an ongoing struggle
    - We turn away from sin but our sinful nature keeps turning us back
      - New Kitten wanted to do something
      - Kept moving him back, he kept going and doing it.
      - Finally, I gave up
  - When we confess to others we allow ourselves to be vulnerable
    - Which reduces our pride, the primary obstacle to our
- Disables Shame
  - “You’re only as sick as your secrets”
  - Shame is a powerful force
  - “Shame’s power is entirely dependent on secrecy”
  - When we confess, we disempower shame. Allowing other people to know us as we truly are  
When we know other people know and have encountered similar difficulties, we grow stronger in our ability to avoid sin and live in the light.
- It helps other people
  - Clayton’s confession
    - Drug something out of the darkness into the light

## Scripture and Quotes

**James 5:13-16** – *“Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise. 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. And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.”*

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