

LEAD! C.9 Confrontation and Confession

In Which We Speak The Truth, Even If It Hurts

Early we discussed [reconciliation](#) and forgiveness in the light of [Christ's salvation](#). This week, we dig into the disciplines which enables all of those: confession, and its handmaiden confrontation.

Though we love to be forgiven, we generally hate to confess, and are terrified of confrontation. Though we are ready to face persecution and death for the sake of Christ, we find ourselves paralyzed at the thought of admitting our sins to another -- never mind confronting them face-to-face with their own sin!

Yet these two disciplines have the potential to break individual and community strongholds of sin that otherwise would not fall despite years of bible study, prayer, and fasting. They may be a heavy cross to bear, but if we persevere in them we shall find a glorious resurrection at the end...

Memory Verse: *"Remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins."* -- [James 5:20](#) (NKJV)

Assigned Reading

1. [Richard Foster: *Celebration of Discipline*](#)
 - Part III. The Corporate Disciplines
 - 10. Confession
2. [Donald Whitney: *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*](#)
 - 11. Journaling
3. [Eugene Peterson: *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction*](#)
 - 2. Repentance: "I'm Doomed to Live in Meshech"
4. [Ruth Haley Barton: *Sacred Rhythms*](#)
 - 6. Self-Examination: Bringing My Whole Self Before God

Anecdote

Read [Nehemiah 9](#). What all is encompassed by the confession of the Israelites?

Bible

[James 5](#)

James begins this chapter with a rather dramatic example of confrontation:

[5:1](#) Come now, you [rich](#), weep and howl for your [miseries](#) that are coming upon you!

By misery, he apparently means the destruction of the treasure in which they placed their hope (cf. [Matthew 6:19](#)):

[2](#)Your riches are [corrupted](#), and your garments are moth-eaten. [3](#)Your gold and

silver are [corroded](#), and their [corrosion](#) will be a [witness](#) against you and will eat your flesh like fire.

Why?

Helpfully, James doesn't merely blame them for being rich, he identifies specific sins they have committed against man and God:

You have heaped up [treasure](#) in the last days.

⁴Indeed the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.

⁵You have lived on the earth in pleasure and luxury; you have fattened your hearts as in a day of slaughter.

⁶You have [condemned](#), you have murdered the just; he does not resist you.

From the context (cf [James 2:6](#)), it is unlikely that "the rich" are part of James' primary audience. Instead, he may well be proclaiming their impending judgement in order to encourage those who have been mistreated by them:

⁷Therefore be [patient](#), brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See [how] the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. ⁸You also be patient. [Establish](#) your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.

The day of the Lord's coming is not just a reason to persevere under injustice, but also to avoid it ourselves:

⁹Do not [grumble](#) against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door!

There is a subtle but crucial distinction between James' confrontation of the rich and the "grumbling" he speaks of here. In our flesh, we typically respond to slights against us (real or imagined) by grumbling or gossiping (cf. [Philippians 2:14](#)). The way of Christ, however, is to either confront our offenders directly or release them to God, as James does. [C.1]

That is also the path taken by the prophets:

¹⁰My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of [suffering](#) and patience.

This is not out of some perverse desire for self-punishment, but an understanding of what it means to live in the fulness of God's blessing:

[11](#)Indeed we count them [blessed](#) who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the [end](#) [intended by] the Lord--that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful.

In Christ's economy, we can endure unfair deprivation knowing that God will reward us. This is opposite how the "rich" spoken of earlier view the world, as a game to be won by our own power at any cost -- even our integrity:

[12](#)But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath. But let your "Yes" be "Yes," and [your] "No," "No," lest you fall into judgment.

If we truly fear God more than the things of this world, we will not be tempted to cut corners with the truth. [C.2] Instead, we will seek His name first -- whether in good times or in bad:

[13](#)Is anyone among you suffering? Let him [pray](#). Is anyone cheerful? Let him [sing psalms](#).

In particular, we will be free to reach out others in our time of need:

[14](#)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.

Whether our need is physical or spiritual healing [C.3]:

[15](#)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.

Note that we need not only turn to those in positions of formal authority; any believer has the power to express God's forgiveness to a penitent sinner (cf. [John 20:23](#)):

[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.

The last part of this verse is often used to motivate all kinds of prayer, which is certainly appropriate. However, it is worth remembering that the original context is that of confession; if nothing else, confession is the primary way sinners can become righteous! [C.4]

Confession and prayer together really do have the power to move heaven and earth, as Elijah -- no stranger to confrontation! (cf. [1 Kings 18](#)) -- well knew:

[17](#)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.

[18](#)And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit.

As glorious as that is, it pales beside the impact of confronting someone who has lost their way, to help them find life: [C.5]

¹⁹Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, ²⁰let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.

Amen!

Conversation

1. Do you respond to offenses against you by complaining or confronting?
2. Share about a time you said "yes" but meant "no", or vice versa. What happened?
3. When have you seen or experienced a dramatic healing (physical or spiritual)?
4. Has confessing your sins to another person ever impacted your walk with God?
5. What responsibility do we have towards our brothers and sisters in Christ who walk away from the faith?

Decision

- Repentance: Where in your life?
- Action: What changes will you make?
- Worship: How can this vision inspire praise and submission?

Explore More

- [Confession – International Standard Bible Encyclopedia](#)
- [Confession of Sin](#)
- [EFFECTIVE CONFLICT AND CONFRONTATION](#)
- [Bible.org: SESSION 1 – Christian Integrity and Community](#)
- [YouTube – Usher – Confessions Part 1 \(Lyrics\)](#)

For Next Week

For next week, read [John 4](#). What kind of worship is Jesus looking for? Does He find it?

Memory Verse: "God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth."
-- [John 4:24](#) (NKJV)

References

1. **Blue Letter Bible.** "[James 5](#) – New King James Version." Blue Letter Bible. 1996–2009. 17 May 2009. < <http://www.blueletterbible.org/Bible.cfm?t=NKIV&b=Jam&c=5> >
2. **New King James Version (NKJV)** Copyright © 1982 by [Thomas Nelson, Inc.](#)


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