

James 5:14-16 (NKJV)

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.

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.*

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.*

It's important to notice a few things in this passage. The context of this passage is physical healing of sickness and confession of trespasses (or mistakes) to one another, not to God. Only by looking at the context, we can conclude that this passage cannot be taken as a biblical support for confession of sins to God, the way Christians do it today. Verse 15 says



clearly that if the sick person has committed sins, they will be automatically forgiven without any confession. More striking is that those sins will be forgiven after the person was healed and not before. Sometimes when I go to pray for someone sick, if the sickness doesn't go instantly and is stubborn, some leaders would say to me: "Ask the person if they have some unconfessed sin or hidden sin in their life." What does that have to do with anything? Does unconfessed sin stop healing? No, not at all. While we were yet sinners, God took the initiative to send His Son to die for us, even before we were born without waiting for us to ask Him to do that. The passage clearly says that the sick will be healed first, irrespective of their sins, and if they committed sins, they will be forgiven without mentioning anything about confession of sins to God.

Verse 16 then talks about confessing our trespasses to one another. However, that doesn't

make us more holy and worthy of healing before God, it doesn't bring us closer to God, and neither delivers us permanently from not committing those sins again.

Confessing, crying, and taking the load off your chest doesn't really make you free of sin. Such freedom comes only by grace through faith, and not by confession to one another. Yes, it's true, that some sins like witchcraft and involvement in the occult can be the direct cause of certain diseases. Likewise, stress, unforgiveness or bitterness can cause some diseases, as well, and by simply confessing those sins to one another and bringing them to light, the sick person can be healed and delivered. However, confession in such instances is not a condition to make God heal the person, but rather an act to expose the demonic or to seek reconciliation in human relationships. This would be the first reason for confessing sins to one another.

A second reason for confessing sins to one another, based on this passage, can be to receive help in prayer from other believers concerning a problem or sin, and to be strengthened for victory over those sinful behaviors. In fact, verse 16 encourages praying for one another. The third reason for confessing hidden sins to other people is your emotional relief and the therapeutical effect following the sharing of those things. Sinful behaviors or deeds steal your peace and keep condemning you continuously, so confession helps you forgive yourself and cleanse your conscience of that guilt easier and faster, especially in the case of repeated sins. However, that confession doesn't influence God and His relationship to you in any way. This aspect of bringing to light things hidden that tear a person apart inside is encouraged even by the secular world as being beneficial. However, it cannot be used to make atonement for your sins before God.

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