
Confessing and Healing

James 4:13-19

“Can we talk?”

In the late 1980's, comedienne Joan Rivers popularized a phrase and set off a trend for TV candor that has gone from bad to worse in the succeeding decades. Set in the casual style of her talk show, Rivers moved beyond her guest's remark to a pointed, stinging truth: “Can we talk?” Americans spread this catchy phrase, reading it as code for cutting facts.

Challenging a friend to speak plainly, without mincing words, dodging the truth or glossing over the facts, is a mark of integrity and an earnest desire for relationship. To say to someone, “Can we talk?” should say something deep, without superficiality or false sincerity.

In the Epistle from James, we get such a challenge. He says to “tell each other what you have done... you can pray for one another and be healed.” Just short of prayer, personal confession may be the most candid talk we can have with another person. James is telling us to talk plainly about what grieves God's heart, verbally with another believer. Unlike the staged “tell all” tabloid confessions of our day, James calls the Christian to something deeper, more intimate and healing.

It is only God who forgives our sins. But the act of going to another believer in confession exposes to the light that which was hidden in darkness, and through this confession of sin, we can disarm sin's power. Can we talk? Yes, to God. And can we talk to a brother in Christ? Yes, for accountability is part of what Christ's body, the church provides.

Reflection

I fear sharing my struggles with someone else. I fear more the sharing of my sins. It seems that I prefer the darkness of my guilt to the clean light of a clear conscience. I find the thought of telling my sins to another an impossibility. God's prompting to confession to another believer is for my good; his call to me to confess my sins is for my wholeness.

Accountability

Is God nudging you about confessing a sin? Has he drawn to your mind a mature believer who will hear you and, in Jesus name, receive your heart's confession with gentleness and discretion?

Prayer: Lord, I have not practiced confession of my sins to others. It's difficult enough for me to deal with them with you. Please give me the opportunity and the openness to expose the dark areas of my soul to another in Christ.

James 4:13-19

Boasting About Tomorrow

¹³Now listen, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.”

¹⁴Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. ¹⁵Instead, you ought to say, “If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that.” ¹⁶As it is, you boast and brag. All such boasting is evil. ¹⁷Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins.