

Prayers to Remain – Part 3

In our study series on grieving and healing through the Gospel, we've learned to express our feelings, or grief, and sorrow freely and openly to the Lord so that we might receive his mercy and love as our perfect and loving Savior and Father. We learned to explore how we sin in our grief, to confess those sins, and to receive Christ's beautiful and rich forgiveness. In this, we understand that we are not saved by our own righteousness – by what we do or by the “goodness” of our lives – but as broken sinners in desperate need of a Savior, we are saved by our faith in Jesus, trusting that he will forgive our sins and help us in our time of need. Through this faith, we are saved.

Yet, Jesus doesn't leave us in our sin. By the power of the Holy Spirit, he draws us into his will for our lives – to throw off sin, commit to living a life like Christ, and express that commitment through baptism. In baptism, we are not saved from hell, since we were saved by our faith, but we are saved from the world. The old life that we lived in the world is gone, and our new life in Christ begins. Everything is about him, through him, and for him. We are no longer living for ourselves but for Jesus who died for us. These symbolic waters wash away us clean so we can begin our new life!

So, what's next? Now that we are saved and made clean, will we never sin again? Are our problems over? The answer is no. We still must live in the world, but now in Christ. And he calls us to remain. If we remain in him, he remains in us. It's that simple. As long as we stay in the “city of refuge,” our eternal high priest continually washes away our sins and lives inside us through his Holy Spirit. But how do we remain? Did Jesus leave us with any instructions? Praise God he did! And he left some important guidelines for remaining in him. Today, we'll explore the practice of confessing sin.

Lesson 3

(Answers are provided by Ukrainians and other attendees.)

James 5:13-16

¹³ Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise. ¹⁴ Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. ¹⁵ And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven. ¹⁶ Therefore, confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

Иакова 5:13-16

¹³ Злостраждет ли кто из вас, пусть молится. Весел ли кто, пусть поет псалмы. ¹⁴ Болен ли кто из вас, пусть призовет пресвитеров Церкви, и пусть помолятся над ним, помазав его елеем во имя Господне. ¹⁵ И молитва веры исцелит болящего, и восставит его Господь; и если он соделал грехи, простятся ему. ¹⁶ Признавайтесь друг пред другом в проступках и молитесь друг за друга, чтобы исцелиться: много может усиленная молитва праведного.

James, the brother of Jesus, gives us many ways that we can be a light of Christ to others. What are these ways? Talk about each one of these ways and how they can encourage us and others.

- Pray for one another
- Encourage each other and remind each other of the goodness of God
- Sing songs to one another
- Ask the elders to pray over our friend
- Confess sins to one another and pray for each other

How can sharing our sins, pain, and stories with each other bring healing?

- We feel like we are not alone
- Maybe we don't feel so bad about ourselves – others struggle in the same way or in deeper ways
- We have others to encourage us – maybe they have overcome something that we are struggling with

How should we respond when a brother or sister in Christ confesses a sin or shares a painful situation? How can our negative response keep someone from healing?

- Pray first, before giving advice
- Don't "over" advise. That can feel overwhelming, but offer a perspective, a verse, an encouragement, or a piece of advice.
- Allow for additional time to go deeper in situations that are complicated
- Encourage and not condemn or shame the person
- Relate to the person's struggle
- Negative responses will keep us from confessing again. We will feel failure instead of victory. We can feel frustrated and lonely.

Consider quietly the areas of your life that Jesus wants you to confess or talk about. These may be areas that Jesus wants to cut out of your mind, heart, and life to make you more fruitful.

Take time to discuss some of the needs of others you are seeing around you. Think about your family, neighbors, and friends. What is one way that you can encourage one person this week?

How do these instructions help us to remain in Christ throughout our lifetime?

I John 1:1-10

1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched, this is the Word of life that we now share with you. **2** The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we now share this eternal life with you... **3** We tell you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. **4** We write this to make our joy complete.

5 This is the message we have heard from him and share with you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. **6** If we say we have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. **7** But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have

fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. ⁸ If we say that we don't sin, we lie to ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins [publicly]*, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰ If we say we have not sinned, then we are saying that God lies, and his Word is not in us.

* In the Greek text and in early Christian practice, this confession is a public confession, not a private confession to God.¹

1-е Иоанна 1

О том, что было от начала, что мы слышали, что видели своими очами, что рассматривали и что осязали руки наши, о Слове жизни, -- ² ибо жизнь явилась, и мы видели и свидетельствуем, и возвещаем вам сию вечную жизнь, которая была у Отца и явилась нам, -- ³ о том, что мы видели и слышали, возвещаем вам, чтобы и вы имели общение с нами: а наше общение--с Отцем и Сыном Его, Иисусом Христом. ⁴ И сие пишем вам, чтобы радость ваша была совершенна. ⁵ И вот благовестие, которое мы слышали от Него и возвещаем вам: Бог есть свет, и нет в Нем никакой тьмы. ⁶ Если мы говорим, что имеем общение с Ним, а ходим во тьме, то мы лжем и не поступаем по истине; ⁷ если же ходим во свете, подобно как Он во свете, то имеем общение друг с другом, и Кровь Иисуса Христа, Сына Его, очищает нас от всякого греха. ⁸ Если говорим, что не имеем греха, --обманываем самих себя, и истины нет в нас. ⁹ Если исповедуем грехи наши, то Он, будучи верен и праведен, простит нам грехи наши и очистит нас от всякой неправды. ¹⁰ Если говорим, что мы не согрешили, то представляем Его лживым, и слова Его нет в нас.

Here we see John sharing the message of Jesus with others. What is "fellowship," and how does it make our joy complete?

- A group of people who come together and are united in their faith in Jesus.
- Fellowship means that we are as open as much as possible with one another. Otherwise, fellowship is difficult. Jesus wants us to be very open.
- When we are open and honest in our words and actions, we feel joy and life.
- When others are telling what is going on in their lives, then it shows me that they are trying to go in a direction where they desire God to help them, just like God wants to help me. It brings us together in our struggle – to support and encourage one another.
- We feel like we are not alone.
- We are all trying to receive God in a healthy way. Openness builds trust. A closed heart leads to mistrust.
- People in this type of community really know each other and feel loved and unconditionally accepted by each other. If they only know our good side, then that becomes the condition of their love. They don't know the real us. They only know the good side. So, this isn't real love. Real love loves no matter what we confess.

Why does walking in the light strengthen our friendships in Christ?

- Openness creates trust and allows for true love and encouragement to happen.

How does walking in the dark and hiding sin hurt our friendships?

¹ Martin M. Culy, I, II, III John: A Handbook on the Greek Text, (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2004) 18-19.

TalkEnglish

- Hiding sin creates mistrust. There is not a chance to trust because we don't really know each other.
- A lack of repentance in a community or individuals creates a hopeless environment. It becomes a place where people "dump" their problems and there's no solution. No one takes personal responsibility for their sin, and there's no effort or expectation to change.
- This can become discouraging and draining. We should expect that change can be difficult and confusing, but we work together toward growth, deeper understanding of situations and our hearts, and ultimately change. This is all through the power of Jesus, as we follow his commands and pray. This process is not always simple and easy.
- People who are willing to walk with us through these difficult situations are true friends.

As baptized believers, we have decided to turn away from sin, but this doesn't mean that we won't ever sin or struggle with sin. How does Jesus want us to handle this problem? What does he promise if we do this?

- See above
- He will forgive our sins

How does confessing sin to one another and sharing our personal stories strengthen our friendships in Christ?

- See above

Are there sins in your life that you have never confessed? Perhaps you experienced a difficult or painful situation in your life that is keeping you in the dark. Do you want to share these with another believer whom you trust? If yes, make a list of these situations or sins that are recent or in the past that you want to share. Write the name of a trustworthy Christian friend who will listen, encourage you, confess with you, and pray with you. (*This is done privately.*)

- Join the TalkEnglish "Appendix B: What is Sin?" study (see schedule for TalkEnglish classes)

Is there any struggle, prayer request, need, or personal story you wish to share with the group today? How can we pray for you? (*For privacy, names and situations are not recorded.*)

In our final time of prayer this week, we will break into groups of men and women to allow everyone to share their thoughts, situations, sins, or needs. Please take time in your group to encourage and pray for one another.

Time of prayer