

# To Whom Do We Confess Our Sins?

## Questions Christians Ask

27 October 2023

A common question that some Christians have is “*What does it mean to confess your sins?*” This question is prompted by a misreading or a mistranslation of James 5:16. Today, we’ll address this question.

### James 5:14-16

**Vs 14** The *elders of the church* are called upon to pray over the sick. This disproves the teachings of some preachers who claim that the entire book of James only applies to *Jews in the Tribulation*. Nobody who is “*of the church*” will be present on Earth during the Tribulation. James is for the Church.

**Vs 15** “*And the prayer of faith shall save the sick.*” This is often taught as a promise of healing. Note that it does not say, “*shall heal the sick.*” Sickness can cause conditions that God can save you from:

- Depression, despair, anger, bitterness, worry or concern, etc.
  - This is not a promise of instant healing from prayer, but a promise that God will “*raise him up;*” He’ll help us get through the sickness safely.

“*If he have committed sins, they shall be forgive him.*” This verse does not teach that sickness is a result of a person committing sin. “*If*” is the key word to prove that. Sickness and disability are the result of Adam’s sin (See John 9:1-3).

**Vs 16** “*Confess your faults one to another...*”

#### CORRUPT TRANSLATIONS:

**American Standard Version:** “*Confess therefore your SINS one to another.*”

**New American Standard Version:** “*Therefore, confess your SINS to one another.*”

**Revised Standard Version:** “*Therefore confess your SINS to one another.*”

**New International Version:** “*Therefore confess your SINS to each other.*”

**Good News for Modern Man:** “*So then, confess your SINS to one another.*”

**New King James Version:** “*Confess your TRESPASSES to one another.*”

**New World Translation (Jehovah’s Witness Bible):** *Therefore openly confess your SINS to one another.*

**Amplified Bible:** “*Confess to one another therefore your faults (your slips, your false steps, your offenses, your sins).*”

**Darby Translation:** “*Confess therefore your OFFENCES to one another.*”

**English Standard Version:** “*Therefore confess your SINS to one another.*”

**A fault is not a sin. A sin is not a fault.**

This verse aims to HELP Christians.

- Confessing *sins* to another Christian **will not help**. In fact, it could cause harm.
- Confessing *faults* **will help** because it will prevent others from sinning against you when they don't know your faults. Revealing your faults will remove false assumptions others may have about you.
  - A fault is something about us that is defective. It is not a sin.
    - Quick temper, poor hearing or eyesight, shyness, poor communications skills, easily depressed, physical limitations, health conditions, no biblical or Christian upbringing.
      - These are conditions that might make others think you are rude, lazy, mean, or unsociable if they don’t know about it.

**CONFESS:** To own, to acknowledge, to avow (admit); as to confess a crime, a fault, a charge, a debt, something that is against one’s interest or reputation.

## CONFESSION IN THE BIBLE

- Lev 5:1-6** Verses 1-4 reveals that a person can be guilty of sin and not know they are guilty. Until they know it, they are not accountable for it.
- Verses 5-6 says as soon as you know you are guilty, you must confess (acknowledge, avow, own), not to a man, not to a group, not even to God. You simply admit: *“God said to do this, and I didn’t do it.” “God said not to do that, and I did it.”* Own it, acknowledge it.
- Know that you have sinned, confess that you have sinned, deal with that sin by finding a sacrificial offering to satisfy the requirements of God.
- Lev 16:20-22** This is the confession of iniquities over the head of the scape goat. In this situation, it is one man (Aaron) speaking to God on behalf of the entire nation, making confession.
- The scape goat pictures Jesus Christ (the sacrificial offering), upon whom all our sins were placed, who then took those sins out to the wilderness never to be seen again.
- Num 5:5-7** This passage speaks of sins that men commit against one another.
- Know that you are guilty. Confess that you are guilty. Go fix it with the person you sinned against.
- Neh 1:4-9** Nehemiah fasted, wept, and prayed to God when he heard of the burning of Jerusalem. He acknowledged that the city was destroyed because of the sins of the Israelites. He understood the importance of turning back to God and keeping His commandments.
- Confess, then do what is right.
- Mark 1:4-5** John the Baptist preached **“the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.”** This resulted in all the people being baptized and confessing their sins.
- They didn’t confess their sins to John. They didn’t say them out loud to anyone. But the very act of humiliating themselves in baptism revealed their confession of guilt.
- Mark 2:3-7** Jesus forgave a man of his sins. The scribes knew that only God could forgive sins.
- 1 Tim 2:5** Jesus Christ is the only mediator between God and men. This is how we get forgiveness now.
- If you want your sins forgiven today, don’t go to a man, don’t bring a sacrifice, go to Jesus Christ and confess that you are a sinner. He can forgive your sins.
- 1 John 1:7-9** **“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”**
- Now God forgives us when we confess our sins (own, acknowledge, avow). We don’t bring God a list of sins. We admit we are a sinner who comes short of God’s glory.
  - We don’t bring a sacrifice. Jesus Christ is our final and only sacrifice.
    - God brought the sacrifice (Jesus), you confess your need for the sacrifice.
  - Don’t preach against individual sins to lost people. Preach the gospel.
  - We don’t have to confess individual sins. Jesus died for ALL our sins (Col 2:13).
- Psalms 32:1-5** David confessed (acknowledged) his sin to God but notice that he didn’t name them.
- Then notice that God forgave **“the iniquity”** of David’s sin (vs 5). The heart and imagination and nature that caused David to sin was forgiven by God.