

Set Free: Confessing to Your Shepherds

I almost hate to begin with the following passage. However, I believe it best describes the work of shepherds by rebuking Israel's pathetic ones.

Ah, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves! Should not shepherds feed the sheep?...The weak you have not strengthened, the sick you have not healed, the injured you have not bound up, the strayed you have not brought back, the lost you have not sought...So they were scattered, because there was no shepherd, and they became food for all the wild beasts.

Ezekiel 34:2-5

The shepherd's job is to strengthen the weak, heal the sick, bind up the injured, seek the lost, and bring back the straying. No doubt, there are many responsibilities for our pastors. However, **James 5:14-15** demonstrates some responsibility for us.

Certainly, our bishops must be on the look out for our sicknesses. At the same time, when we know we are sick, we should go to them, confessing. In both contexts, I believe the sickness is spiritual and the healing is just as spiritual.

Allow me to ask you something. If you kept seeing a strange man outside your house, following you to work and to the store, would you call the police? Obviously. Why, when Satan is stalking us, do we not call the shepherds? Our elders are here not simply to make administrative decisions about the congregation but to shepherd the souls in the body. They are here to heal us when we are sick, bind us up when we are injured, and strengthen us when we are weak.

Here is the great thing God promised in **James 5:14-15**. When we are humble enough to take this step, when we are willing to overcome our sins enough to turn to our brethren and especially our overseers, God will heal us. He will forgive us. If we try to hide our sins from our brethren and our shepherds, we are simply keeping ourselves in Satan's trap and sin's bondage. Falling to sin in the midst of the battle against Satan is not hypocrisy. Coming to the assemblies and among our brethren while trying to wear a façade of sinlessness is (cf. **I John 1:8-10**).

Confessing to our bishops helps because our leaders learn where we need help. They know where we need strengthening. They know our pitfalls and know what to look out for in our lives to help us stay on Christ's path.

Satan cannot win the victory when we are confessing to our God, our brethren, and our shepherds. When we have this kind of relationship with God and one another, we will overcome. We will be set free. Praise God!

More on this to come.

—**Edwin L. Crozier**