

# Biblical Topics

## Confession and Absolution

### What is Confession?

Confession has two parts. First, that we confess our sins, and second, that we receive absolution, that is, forgiveness, from the pastor as from God Himself, not doubting, but firmly believing that by it our sins are forgiven before God in heaven.

### What sins should we confess?

Before God we should plead guilty of all sins, even those we are not aware of, as we do in the Lord's Prayer; but before the pastor we should confess only those sins which we know and feel in our hearts.

### What are these?

Consider your place in life according to the Ten Commandments: Are you a father, mother, son, daughter, husband, wife, or worker? Have you been disobedient, unfaithful, or lazy? Have you been hot-tempered, rude, or quarrelsome? Have you hurt someone by your words or deeds? Have you stolen, been negligent, wasted anything, or done any harm?

God knows all of our sins. We should plead guilty of any and all sins He may have charged against us. We should not seek to cover our sins by blaming others like Adam did. He who is willfully unrepentant in one sin forfeits the forgiveness for all his sins. Willful impenitence kills faith and without faith we cannot have any forgiveness.

- Psalm 19:12: Who can discern his errors? Forgive my hidden faults.
- Proverbs 28:13: He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy.
- 1 John 1:8-9: <sup>8</sup> If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. <sup>9</sup> If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

Absolution comes from the verb "absolve." It means to declare loose and free from sin, to forgive sin. Absolution by the pastor does not mean that he does the actual forgiving. Forgiving is something only God can do. Absolution presupposes that Christ has atoned for all our sins and that God has forgiven them. It means that this forgiveness, which in the Gospel is proclaimed as an accomplished fact when it is by the pastor offered, applied, and assured to them that make confession.

- John 20:23: If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."
- Matthew 18:18: I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

When we confess our sins and ask for forgiveness we receive the comforting assurance that these sins are forgiven.

- Matthew 9:2: Some men brought to him a paralytic, lying on a mat. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven."
- 2 Samuel 12:13: Then David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD." Nathan replied, "The LORD has taken away your sin. You are not going to die."

Much of the above information is taken from: "Luther's Small Catechism" annotated by Edward W. A. Koehler.