

# Confession

Services: Wednesday, 2/14 at 11 AM & 7 PM

Church Year: Ash Wednesday – 2018

**During Lent: Wednesday Services at 11 & 7**

**Introduction:** Dear friends in Christ: As we begin the season of Lent, let us remember that it is a *penitential* season, a *time to remember and be sorry for our sins*. But why should we be sorry? Because every sin is against the Almighty God and makes us deserving of eternal punishment! So God calls us to *sincerely confess* and *gladly receive* His gift of forgiveness! This sermon focuses on the fifth chief part of Luther's Small Catechism (page 306), *which is called Confession!* Dr. Luther asked: What is confession? Then he answered: **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.

## **The Central Thought**

“The Christian life is one of repentance [*sorrow for sins*]... But we do not despair because of the assurance of forgiveness for Jesus' sake that God gives through His servants.”

Today's catechism section includes 9 questions: **325-333**

## **A Closer Reading of the Small Catechism**

325. **What is the first part of Confession?** We acknowledge that every violation of God's Word is a sin. When we don't, *the unconfessed sin makes us miserable*. David

prayed: “...when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long” (Ps. 32:3 ESV).

Therefore, “we admit that our sins have offended God and are deserving of His eternal punishment” (307).

Then, *like David*, we can say, “‘I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity’ ...and you forgave the iniquity of my sin” (Ps. 32:5 ESV).

326. **What sins should we confess before God?** All sins – “known and unknown, intended and unintended” (308). David prayed in Psalm 19, “Declare me innocent from hidden faults” (12). So, *confessing all sins*, we are certain that through Christ we have *all forgiveness!*
327. **What sins should we confess before our neighbor?** Whatever sins we have committed against him or her. The Bible says, “If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men” (Rom. 12:18 NAS). So let us ✦contact whoever we have sinned against, ✦confess our sin, and ✦receive forgiveness from him or her!
328. **What sins should we confess to our pastor?** Sins that trouble us; in other words, we have confessed them to God, *but we are still struggling with them*. So we go to the pastor for *forgiveness* and *Bible instruction*. This passage should encourage all of us to ✦confess our sins and ✦turn from them; the Bible says, “Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy” (Prov. 28:13 ESV).
329. **What is the second part of Confession before the pastor?** Absolution, that is, forgiveness; in the first part the Holy Spirit ✦gives us the knowledge of our sin,

✦ makes us sorry, and ✦ moves us to admit our sin to God; then, *in the second part*, God speaks through the pastor to give us what we need, *the forgiveness of sins!*

### **Connections and Applications**

330. **How should we regard the Absolution spoken by the pastor?** “When the pastor absolves us—that is, says, ‘I forgive you all your sins’—he speaks with Christ’s authority and on His behalf” (310). Therefore, as your pastor, I am not giving my forgiveness, *but God’s forgiveness!* How is that possible? Jesus said to His disciples, “If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them...” (Jn. 20:23 ESV). Jesus also explained the connection between ♦God the Father, ♦Himself, and ♦those on earth who represent Him; He said to His disciples, “The one who hears you hears me, and the one who rejects you rejects me, and the one who rejects me rejects him who sent me” (Lk. 10:16 ESV). So when the pastor says, “I forgive you all your sins,” *you are forgiven before Your Father in heaven!*
331. **Can I be sure that my private Confession to the pastor will remain confidential?** When I was ordained, I was asked this question: “...will you promise never to divulge the sins confessed to you? [Then I answered:] *Yes, I will, with the help of God.*” As God – *through the work of Christ* – has removed our sins from us, *as far as the east is from the west* (Ps. 103:12), so it is important for me and others to *no longer speak of or even think about* sins that have been forgiven!
332. **What is the benefit of individual (private) Confession and Absolution?** If I have a particular sin that is

bothering me, I can carry that burden on my own, *but it is much better to share that burden with someone else!* Even more, *to hear God's forgiveness;* and even more, *to hear Bible advice on how to go forward in life!*

333. **How do I prepare for Confession?** Here are some suggestions:

- a. Read through Luther's **Table of Duties (33-36)**; wherever you are falling short, *confess!*
- b. Read through Luther's **Christian Questions with Their Answers (37-40)**; wherever you are falling short, *confess!*
- c. Read through one of these **penitential psalms: 6; 32; 38; 51; 102; 130; 143**; wherever you are falling short, *confess!*

**Some quotes from Luther's Large Catechism:**

- ➔ "...when I exhort you to go to confession, I am doing nothing but exhorting you to be a Christian" (479:32).
- ➔ "...those who ignore [confession] and do not come of their own accord, we let go their way. However, they ought to know that we do not regard them as Christians" (479:27).
- ➔ "...confession should and must take place continuously as long as we live. For that is the essence of a genuinely Christian life, to acknowledge that we are sinners and to pray for grace" (477:9).

**Conclusion:** Let us pray: Father in heaven, what a privilege we have to acknowledge our filth and receive Your cleansing; *thank You for washing us in the precious blood of the Lamb!*

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Podcast: Benefit from the Bible | Facebook: Bethlehem Lutheran Church Parma  
Bethlehem Lutheran Church, 7500 State Road, Parma, Ohio 44134, 440-845-2230