

268. What Is Confession?

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. *1 John 1, 9.*

"Confession embraces two parts: one is that we confess our sins; the other, that we receive absolution, or forgiveness." Every sin that may be committed is a sin against God. If our sins are to be forgiven, God must forgive them. God, however, has given this power to the Christian Church and its ministers. They can forgive sins, not of their own power, but by the command and in the stead of God and our Savior. To the Church the Lord says: "Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them." The penitent sinner should therefore confess his sins to the local church, or to its minister, and from the church, or its minister, receive the absolution, or forgiveness, as from God Himself.

If one looks at this precious doctrine only in a perverted form, such as preached, taught, and practised by the Romish Church, which requires the penitent sinner to enumerate all his sins to the priest, it is no wonder he will turn away in disgust. The papists have succeeded in making the confessional a place to be dreaded, and it is not to be wondered at that those who constantly have before their minds this horrible caricature of confession and never yet went to the trouble of studying the Lutheran, that is, the Scriptural, doctrine, take offense at it. The Lutheran Church does not hold it necessary, indeed, not even possible, to recount all sins one has committed.

We read in the Augsburg Confession, Article 25: "Of Confession they teach that an enumeration of sins is not necessary and that consciences be not burdened with anxiety to enumerate all sins; for it is impossible to recount all sins, as the psalm testifies, 19,13: 'Who can understand his errors?' Also Jeremiah, 17, 9: 'The heart is deceitful; who can know it?' But if no sins were forgiven except those that are recounted, consciences could never find peace; for very many sins they neither see nor can remember." Ministers are commanded to remit sins, but not to investigate secret sins.

Prayer.

O Lord, omniscient God, the first requisite for a penitent heart is that it recognize its sins and feel sorry and penitent over them. Therefore, above all things we bow our knees before Thee and call upon Thee to open our eyes that we may thoroughly recognize the multitude and magnitude of our sins. We pray in the words of David: "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me and lead me in the way everlasting." We thank Thee, Lord Jesus, for Thy infinite love, that Thou hast rendered full satisfaction for all our sins, procuring a perfect forgiveness of all of them. Amen.

Higher than the highest heavens,
Deeper than the deepest sea, Lord,
Thy love at last has conquered:
None of self and all of Thee.

This devotion is one of 318 taken from *Daily Bread* by F. E. Pasche, published by CPH in 1926, but now in the public domain. They have been copied and reformatted by Rev. Bruce G. Ley and made available for distribution by pastors and missionaries. You may contact Rev. Ley at: pastorley@leychalet.com.

You are invited to go to www.scholia.net for the other devotions from *Daily Bread*.