

271. Do Also Hypocrites Receive Forgiveness?

Let favor be shown to the wicked. yet will he not learn righteousness; in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly and will not behold the majesty of the Lord. *Is. 26, 10.*

It frequently happens that also hypocrites come to confession. The Lord complains: "This people draweth nigh unto Me with their mouth and honoreth Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me." A hypocrite is a person who feigns to be what he is not. Hypocrisy in religion, accordingly, is acting outwardly as though one were a Christian while at heart one is not, being without faith. How detestable to try to appear outwardly what inwardly one is not! Such a person goes to church, but he does not go there to hear the Word of God. He does everything, or at least many things, that are expected of a genuine member of a Christian congregation, but only to hear his heart flatter him with a recital of his good works, as did that Pharisee in the Temple. He goes to confession, but not for the purpose of confessing his sins, humbling himself before God, and praying: "God be merciful to me, a sinner," as did that publican. He goes to be seen by the people; or he goes to offer unto God Cain's offering! or he goes to assist in making the house of prayer a den of thieves, for there are those who serve the golden calf in the very face of the crucifix and under the sound of the Gospel. It will be a terrible awakening for these sacrificing fools when the Judge shall accost them: "Depart from Me, ye that work iniquity!"

Such hypocrites do not receive forgiveness of sins through the word of absolution. The grace of God is offered also to them in absolution, but they do not accept it with a believing heart. We know from the Word of God that true faith in Jesus Christ must dwell in the heart of man. It is possible to deceive men, but it is impossible to deceive God, who knows the thoughts of the heart. God will not be content with a mere profession of the mouth. Be sure, therefore, that the confession of your mouth proceeds from the heart. The impenitent sinner, in absolution, does not obtain God's grace and forgiveness, but His wrath and displeasure abides on him. May the Lord save us all from hypocrisy and its terrible doom and keep us in the true faith unto our end!

Prayer.

O my God, do not let me perish under the load of my sin, nor despair as did Cain and Judas, but turn to me and be gracious unto me and forgive all my sins. Show unto me, I pray Thee, Thy fatherly heart of love and mercy, which has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but earnestly desires that he turn from his way and live. Speak kindly to my soul, saying Thou wilt show mercy, in place of dealing out justice, and for Jesus Christ's sake nevermore remember my transgressions. Amen.

O lay to heart this wondrous thought,
Through what sore agony
And death was your redemption bought,
And to your Savior flee
Ere 'tis too late. The world disown
And fix your love on Christ alone
And do His will; for at the final doom
Those who dishonored Him shall wrath consume.

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.

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