

275. The General Confession.

Who can understand his errors? Cleanse Thou me from secret faults. *Ps. 19, 12.*

The minister asks the confessing congregation whether it is their sincere confession that they truly repent of their sins, believe in Jesus Christ, and earnestly and sincerely purpose, with the aid of God the Holy Ghost, henceforth to amend their sinful lives. After all have answered with a loud yes, the minister proceeds: "Upon this your confession I, by virtue of my office, as a called and ordained servant of the Word, announce the grace of God unto all of you, and in the stead and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ I forgive you all your sins in the name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. Amen."

When you go to this confession, you must not content yourself with repeating, by rote, the memorized words of confession or with having your pastor repeat them to you, but you must bring with you a penitent heart, from which a genuine confession will issue of itself. To offer confession when the heart is impenitent is simply mocking God, and without a penitent heart there is no forgiveness of sins. Let us, then, give God our heart. He will gladly accept it. He asks and demands it when He says: "My son, give Me thy heart and let thine eyes observe My ways." But how can we give God our heart? The heart is the seat of our affections, the seat of love. To give God our heart is to love Him. By nature our hearts are alienated from God. By nature we have left the house of the Father like the prodigal son, and our hearts cling to sin, the world, and its evil lusts. We must, therefore, tear away our heart from the world and from sin and return to our heavenly Father and say: "Father, I have sinned against Thee and am no more worthy to be called Thy son." Yea, before God we should plead guilty of all sins, even of those which we do not know and feel in our hearts. We have sinned against all the commandments of God. But when you have made your confession and hear the voice of absolution, you should in no wise doubt, but firmly believe, that it is God Himself who forgives you through the confessor, or pastor.

Prayer.

O gracious and benignant God, eternal Father, I humbly pray Thee that, according to Thy fatherly love towards me, Thou wouldest nevermore remember against me all that I have transgressed against Thee, but graciously remit all my sins. Be merciful to me because of Thy Son, Jesus Christ, who is Surety for all my sins. Hide me, body and soul, in His holy wounds; cleanse me from all my sins and preserve me in all good works. O Lord God, who can understand his errors? Cleanse Thou me from secret faults and refresh me with the heavenly dew of Thy grace. Without Thee I cannot be saved. Let me daily seek forgiveness of my sins through Jesus Christ. Amen.

Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to Thy cross I cling;
Naked, come to Thee for dress;
Helpless, look to Thee for grace;
Foul, I to the Fountain fly,
Wash me, Savior, or I die!

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.

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