

279. We Should Not Doubt God's Forgiveness.

If Thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with Thee that Thou mayest be feared. *Ps. 130, 3.4.*

When you hear the word of absolution after you have confessed your sins, you should in no wise doubt, but *firmly believe*, that by it your sins are forgiven before God in heaven. But what if a Christian cannot firmly believe, if he cannot come to a cheerful trust in the grace of God, and is not certain about his forgiveness? He tries firmly to believe, but he cannot. He does not venture it. He is afraid to offer his confession and receive absolution. He cannot think it possible that such plenary forgiveness as the word of absolution offers is meant for him. What miserable condition!

Whence these doubts as to the grace and forgiveness of God? Maybe you are a rascal, holding secretly to a sin of which you know that God has forgiven it. In that case, of course, you have forfeited the comfort of God's grace and forgiveness. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us." "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper." "Blessed is the man in whose spirit there is no guile. When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me; my moisture is turned into the drought of summer."

Or maybe you do something which is not of faith, that is, you are not certain, but doubt, whether it is right before God, and yet you do it. Also in this case you cannot comfort yourself with the grace and forgiveness of God; for Scripture says: "He that *doubteth* is damned if he eateth, because he eateth not of faith; for whatsoever is not of faith is *sin*." Rom. 14, 23.

If, however, it is the doubting of a little faith which says: "Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief," then be not afraid, because also weak faith is true faith. Yea, those who have a weak faith should especially come to confession and accept absolution and the means of grace that their weak faith may grow stronger.

Prayer.

O Lord, I come upon Thy will and command, bringing all my petitions, even those very things that hinder and would prevent my coming to Thee, my sins that trouble me greatly, and I ask Thee to remove and forgive them. O Lord God, grant that I may not doubt Thy forgiveness. Let me firmly believe and trust in Thy grace and forgiveness. I feel that I am wanting in this faith, desiring to believe, but yet not able to do so. I therefore pray Thee for this faith, knowing that Thou art willing to give it to me; for Thou hast promised to hear my prayer, and Thy promise will never fail me. Amen.

As the shining rainbow
After storm appears,
God will keep His promise
Through the endless years.

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