

## **Part 5: Confession**

### **What is confession?**

Confession consists of two parts; the one is, that we confess our sins; the other, that we receive absolution from the confessor as of God Himself, in no wise doubting, but firmly believing that our sins are thus forgiven before God in heaven.

### **What sins ought we to confess?**

Before God we should acknowledge ourselves guilty of all manner of sins, even of those which we do not ourselves perceive; as we do in the Lord's Prayer. But before the confessor we should confess those sins alone of which we have knowledge, and which we feel in our hearts and which trouble our conscience.

### **Which are these?**

Here consider your station according to the Ten Commandments, whether you are a father, mother, son, daughter, master, mistress, servant; whether you have been disobedient, unfaithful, slothful; whether you have grieved any person by word or deed; whether you have stolen, neglected or wasted aught, or done other injury.

### **A brief form of confession.**

Say to the confessor, "Reverend and dear Sir, I beseech you to hear my confession, and pronounce forgiveness to me, for God's sake."

(If a servant continue) "I, a poor sinner, confess myself before God guilty of all sins. Especially do I confess before you that I am a servant, etc., but, alas! I serve my master unfaithfully; for in this and in that I have not done what they commanded me; I have provoked them to anger and profane words, have been negligent and have not prevented injury, have been immodest in words and deeds, have quarreled with my equals, have murmured and used profane words against my mistress, etc. For all this I am sorry, and implore grace; I promise amendment."

A master, or mistress may say:

"Especially do I confess before you that I have not faithfully trained my children and household to the glory of God; I have used profane language, set a bad example by indecent words and deeds, have done my neighbor harm and spoken evil of him, have overcharged and given false ware and short measure;-" and whatever else he has done against God's commandments and his station, etc.

But if anyone does not find himself burdened with such or greater sins, he should not trouble himself on that account, nor seek nor invent other sins, and thus make confession a torture; but simply mention one or two that you know, after this manner, "Especially do I confess that I have once been profane; I have once used improper words; I have once neglected this or that, etc." Let that suffice.

## Day6L2R03\_ *Confession*, Luther's Small Catechism Part V

But if you are conscious of none at all, which, however, is scarcely possible, then mention none in particular, but receive absolution upon the general confession which you make before God to the confessor.

### **The words of the General Confession**

"O Almighty God, merciful Father, I, a poor, miserable sinner, confess unto Thee all my sins and iniquities, with which I have offended Thee and merited temporal and eternal punishment. I am heartily sorry for them and sincerely repent of them, and I pray Thee, for the sake of Thine infinite mercy and of the holy, innocent, and bitter sufferings and death of Thy beloved Son, Jesus Christ, to be gracious and merciful to me, a poor, sinful being."

### **Then the confessor shall say:**

"God be merciful to thee, and strengthen thy faith. Amen."

Furthermore: "Dost thou believe that my forgiveness is God's forgiveness?"

Answer: "Yes, I believe."

Then he shall say: "Be it unto thee as thou believest. And I, by the command of our Lord Jesus Christ, forgive thee thy sins, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen. Depart in peace."

Those, however, whose conscience is heavily burdened, or who are troubled and tempted, the confessor will know how to comfort and incite to faith with more passages of Scripture. This is designed merely to be a general form of confession for young people and the unlearned.

### **The Office of the Keys**

This is the command of Christ: "And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Matt. 16:19.

Also: "Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain they are retained." John 20:22, 23.