

In the HOUSE *of the* LORD

LESSON #2 – CONFESSION & ABSOLUTION

The Holy Trinity that we studied last lesson is a mystery. However, our sins – along with the pain and death they cause – are all too real. We may often think that if we could just clean up the moral cesspool of the world we live in, we could be happier and live more God-pleasing lives. However, the Bible makes it clear that our problem is not the situation we live in, but what lives in us – our sin. This lesson we learn that God provides the solution for our problems of sin, death and hell in His Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus brings forgiveness, new life and eternal salvation in His heaven.

The Bible says that on the seventh day of creation, “God saw all that he had made, and it was very good” (Genesis 1:31). Everything was perfect. But then sin entered the world when Adam and Eve fell to the devil’s temptation. God had given Adam and Eve one command – not to eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil (Genesis 2:16-17). Read Genesis 3. What effects did sin have upon Adam? What effects did sin have upon Eve? What effects did sin have upon the world?

Read Genesis 3:15 again. What promise does God make to Adam and Eve in order to deal with their sin and death?

What is sin?

- 1 John 3:4 *Sin is lawlessness.*
- Matthew 22:35-40 *An expert in the law tested him with this question: “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”*
- Matthew 5:48 *Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.*
- Isaiah 59:2 *Your iniquities have separated you from your God.*

Why is sin so strong?

- Genesis 5:3 *Adam had a son in his own likeness, in his own image.*
- John 3:6 *Flesh gives birth to flesh.*
- Psalm 51:5 *Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.*
- Romans 7:18 *I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.*
- Romans 3:23 *All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*
- Matthew 15:19 *Out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander.*

- Romans 3:10-12 *There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.*
- Psalm 19:12 *Who can discern his errors? Forgive my hidden faults.*

What is the result of sin?

- Romans 6:23 *The wages of sin is death.*
- Romans 5:12 *Sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned.*
- Galatians 3:10 *Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.*
- Matthew 25:41 *Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.*



How does God's Word deal with the problem of sin?

The Law's Verdict and Purpose

Read Romans 3:9-20. What is the problem with all people, Jews and Gentiles alike? (v9)

Paul gives a number of ways that we can see the truth of verse 9 illustrated. What are some of the ways that we see clearly that all people are sinful? (v10-18)

When a person is asked if they think they will go to heaven when they die, the typical answer is "Probably." When asked why, they usually reply, "I've been pretty good. I've never actually murdered anyone and I generally try to do right." Evaluate that answer in the light of this section of Scripture.

These verses are law verses. In verses 19-20, we hear what the main purpose of God's Law is. What?

The Gospel's Verdict and Purpose

Read Romans 3:21-26. There is righteousness. Where? (v21)

How does God bring that righteousness to me? (v22)

No matter how many "good works" we might try to do, what would God's verdict have to be? (v23)

But according to verse 24, what verdict will God declare concerning me?

In what ways does God describe our justification? (v24)

In verses 9-20, we heard about how we had destroyed our relationship with God. Because of Jesus' work, what has happened to our relationship with God now? (v25a)

In what ways does the cross show both God's justice (Law) and God's love (Gospel)?

In your own words, what is the only way that you can have the assurance of eternal life?

The Law's purpose is to show my sin and my need for a Savior. What is the Gospel's purpose?

Most of our Lutheran worship services begin with a section called "Confession and Absolution." We cannot approach our holy God unless we first tell Him the truth about ourselves. Confession allows us the opportunity to tell God about how sinful we are in our actual sins, as well as in the sins we have inherited in our sinful nature. We admit that our sins have caused us separation from God now and for all eternity.

The pastor serves as the voice of God. He announces that the truth of our sinfulness is answered in the truth of God's forgiveness through the suffering, death and resurrection of His Son. The pastor "absolves" or releases us from the guilt of our sins. The congregation responds by saying, "Amen," which means "Yes, I agree." Congregational members are indicating that the gifts of forgiveness, new life and salvation have been received.

CONFESSION OF SINS FOR THE DIVINE SERVICE I

M: Beloved in the Lord: let us draw near with a true heart and confess our sins to God our Father, asking him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to grant us forgiveness.

C: Holy and merciful Father, I confess that I am by nature sinful and that I have disobeyed you in my thoughts, words, and actions. I have done what is evil and failed to do what is good. For this I deserve your punishment both now and in eternity. But I am truly sorry for my sins, and trusting in my Savior Jesus Christ, I pray: Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner.

"LORD, HAVE MERCY" (also called *Kyrie Elison*)

C: Lord, have mercy on us. Christ, have mercy on us. Lord, have mercy on us. Amen.

ABSOLUTION

M: God, our heavenly Father, has been merciful to us and has given his only Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Therefore, as a called servant of Christ and by his authority, I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son (+) and of the Holy Spirit.

C: Amen.

CONFESSION OF SINS FOR THE DIVINE SERVICE II:

M: Dear friends, let us approach God with a true heart and confess our sins, asking him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to forgive us.

C: Lord of life, I confess that I am by nature dead in sin.

For faithless worrying and selfish pride,

For sins of habit and sins of choice,

For the evil I have done and the good I have failed to do,

You should cast me away from your presence forever.

O Lord, I am sorry for my sins. Forgive me, for Jesus' sake.

ABSOLUTION

M: Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again. In his great mercy, God made us alive in Christ even when we were dead in our sins. Hear the word of Christ through his called servant: I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son (+) and of the Holy Spirit.

C: Amen.

How do you see God's Law in this?

How is the Gospel proclaimed?

Why can the declaration of forgiveness be so forceful, with no strings attached?

Why do we use a Confession and Absolution in most of our worship services?

How does God *absolve* us?

- 1 Peter 1:18-19 *It was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, ¹⁹but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.*
- 1 John 2:2 *He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.*
- 1 John 1:7 *But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.*
- John 20:21-23 *Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."*

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Is it OK for us to keep on sinning since we can keep on being forgiven?

- Romans 6:1-2 *What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? ² By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?*

If we already received complete forgiveness for all sins in baptism (which we'll see in a later lesson), why do we still need to confess our sins that have already been forgiven?

- 1 John 1:8-9 *If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*
- Psalms 32:3-5 *When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer. Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD"-- and you forgave the guilt of my sin.*

Why do we need this regular cycle of confession and absolution?

- Romans 7:18-25 *I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. 19 For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do--this I keep on doing. 20 Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. 21 So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. 22 For in my inner being I delight in God's law; 23 but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. 24 What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? 25 Thanks be to God--through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.*

What do we experience once our sins are forgiven and removed?

- Romans 4:7 *"Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered.*

How might your pastor assist you in repentance, confession and absolution?

How can your pastor forgive sins? Doesn't God do that?

What comfort is yours to know that your pastor may hear your confession but beyond the confessional, may never speak of your sins?

- Psalm 103:12 *as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.*

I AM HE
WHO BLOTS OUT YOUR
TRANSGRESSIONS
FOR MY OWN SAKE
AND REMEMBERS
YOUR SINS
NO MORE

A hymn that teaches the faith: Christian Worship #303 – “With Broken Heart and Contrite Sigh”

With broken heart and contrite sigh,
A trembling sinner, Lord, I cry.
Your pard'ning grace is rich and free
O God, be merciful to me!

I smite upon my troubled breast,
With deep and conscious guilt oppressed,
Christ and his cross my only plea
O God, be merciful to me!

Far off I stand with tearful eyes
Nor dare uplift them to the skies,
But you can all my anguish see
O God, be merciful to me!

No gifts, no deeds that I have done
Can for a single sin atone.
To Calvary alone I flee
O God, be merciful to me!

And when, redeemed from sin and hell,
With all the ransomed souls I dwell,
My joyous song shall ever be:
God has been merciful to me!

