

What Are the Great Blessings of Confession and Absolution?

Focus: How God forgives sins through His Word and His called servants.

Key Verse: “If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them.” — Jn 20:23

Text: NAS 2020

Introduction: Dear friends in Christ: This is **Part 12 – the final sermon in this important series on repentance!** Why is it important? “...the proper understanding of repentance can lead a person to heaven and... the wrong understanding... can send a person to hell.”¹ **2 Cor. 7:9-10** “I now rejoice... that you were made sorrowful [aor. pass.] to the point of repentance... For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation...”

1. **Spirit-Worked Initial Repentance:** Earlier in this series, we learned that **✦repentance is essential (Part 2)** and **✦God must turn the heart (Part 3)**. What are some details?
 - a. The Holy Spirit works **contrition** through **the Law** to **✦reveal** our sin, **✦accuse** us and condemn us, and **✦produce** sorrow and fear of God’s judgment (*Acts 2:36-37*). **The Law makes us hate our sins!**
 - b. The Holy Spirit works **faith** through **the Gospel** to **✦trust** in Christ for forgiveness, **✦remove** fear of condemnation, and **✦produce** a desire to live for Christ. **The Gospel makes us love ❤️ Jesus!**

¹ Good News, Concordia Mission Society, Repentance, Issue 16, page 34.

2. **Confession Begins with Acknowledgment: Jeremiah 3:12–13** “...‘Return [repent], faithless Israel, ...acknowledge your wrongdoing [confess], That you have revolted against the LORD your God... And you have not obeyed My voice...” // For all the **unrepentant**, **the HS wants to** ▶reveal sin, ▶accuse and condemn, and ▶produce sorrow (see 1 a)!
3. **Confession Includes Turning from Our Sins:**
- Proverbs 28:13** “...one who confesses and abandons [his wrongdoings] will find compassion.”
 - Jeremiah 26:2-3** “...speak to all... who have come to worship *in* the LORD’s house... Perhaps they will listen and everyone will turn from his evil way...”
 - Ezekiel 14:6** ...“Repent and turn away from your idols, and turn your faces away from all your abominations.” // Abomination examples:
▶Homosexual relations (Lev 18:22); ▶worship of foreign gods (Deu 32:16); and ▶following detestable customs of foreign nations (1 Kgs 14:24).
 - Ezekiel 18:30** ... “Repent and turn away from all your offenses...” // Confession includes turning away!
4. **Repentance Is for Forgiveness of Sins:** Note the connection between repentance and forgiveness. **Luke 24:46-47** [Jesus said to His disciples:] “...it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and that **repentance for forgiveness of sins** would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations...” // Whenever a person **rejects God’s call to repent**☹, sadly, he also **rejects God’s gift of forgiveness**☹.

5. **The Authority to Announce God's Forgiveness:** Given to all Christians **to announce to** repentant ones: **private use for all**, **public use for pastors in public worship**.
- a. **Matthew 16:16–19** – Jesus and Peter (**singular**):
- i. Peter said of Jesus: **16** “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”
 - ii. Jesus said to Peter: **18** “...**you** [singular] are **Peter** [petros – stone], and upon this **rock** [petra – bedrock confession: “**You are the Christ**”] I will build My church...” // The Church is **not** built on Peter.
 - iii. Jesus said to Peter: **19** “I will give **you** [singular] the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.”
- b. Jesus – to All His disciples (**plural**):
- i. **Matthew 18:18** “Truly I say to **you** [plural – y'all], whatever **you** [plural – y'all] bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever **you** [plural – y'all] loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.”
 - ii. **John 20:23** “...If **you** [plural – y'all] forgive the sins of any, *their sins* have been forgiven them; if **you** [plural – y'all] retain the *sins* of any, they have been retained.” // Let's always admit every sin to God – *who knows all*; then – through His called servants – *let's gladly hear God's forgiveness!*

6. The Great Benefits of Absolution / Forgiveness:

a. Psalm 32:1–5

- i. **1-2** “How blessed is he whose wrongdoing is forgiven, Whose sin is covered! ² How blessed is a person whose guilt [violation of God’s moral law] the LORD does not take into account...”
- ii. **5** “...I said, ‘I will confess my wrongdoings to the LORD’; And You forgave the guilt of my sin.”

b. 1 John 1:9

“If we confess our sins, [God] is faithful and righteous, so that He will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” // Let’s distinguish between repentance and confession:

- i. Repentance is the **full work of the Holy Spirit through Law and Gospel.**
 - ii. Confession is the **verbal acknowledgment of sin within that process.**
- ### c. Isaiah 1:18
- [Great news for all lost ones who are open to the Spirit’s work through the word:] “...Though your sins are as scarlet, They shall become as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be like wool.”

Let Us Pray: Father in heaven, for all repentant ones – *keep us living in repentance!* For all others – *make them open to Your saving truth and quickly transform their lives!*

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