

Lesson 11: The Absolution, pt. 2

(Office of the Keys and the Ministry, pt. 1)

Then the Minister shall pronounce the Absolution:

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 the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. [Verses below]

✠: Amen.

What is the basis for this Absolution according to the pastor's words?

What is the import of his 'office'? Called? Ordained?

If this is "in the stead" of Christ, whose words is the pastor speaking? What is the pastor's 'role'? What does this say about the 'quality' or 'reality' of this absolution?

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Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you! Matthew 9:2

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What does the Bible teach about Confession?

2 Sam 12:13 Then David said to Nathan, "**I have sinned against the LORD.**" And Nathan said to David, "**The LORD also has put away your sin; you shall not die.**"

1 John 1:9 If we **confess** our sins, He is faithful and just to **forgive** us our sins.

THESE WORDS OF GOD TEACH US:

Confession properly consists of two parts:

- 1)
- 2)

(Rome would add another part, _____, while Fundamentalists would take away part _____ and modernists/theological liberals would take away part _____.)

What should we confess?

- (a) **Luke 11:4** (Our Father, who art in Heaven...give us **this day** our **daily** bread...) **forgive us our sins.**
- (a) **Psa 19:12** Who can understand his errors? Cleanse me from **secret faults.**
- (a) **1 John 1:9** If we **confess** our sins, **He** is faithful and just to **forgive** us our sins.
- (b) **James 5:16** Confess your trespasses **to one another.**
- (b) **Mat 5:23,24** If you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that **your brother has something against you**, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. **First be reconciled to your brother**, and then come and offer your gift.
- (b) **Col 3:13** (Bearing with one another,) and **forgiving one another**, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.
- (c) **Mat 3:5,6** Then Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to (John the Baptizer) and were baptized by him in the Jordan, **confessing their sins.**
- (d) **Mat 9:2** Son. be of good cheer: **your** sins are forgiven you.

- (d) **2 Sam 12:13** Then David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD." And Nathan said to David, "**The LORD** also has put away **your** sin; **you** shall not die."

THESE WORDS OF GOD TEACH US:

- (A) We should daily confess all our sins...
The 'absolution' is ours through the general Gospel promise in God's Word.
- (B) We should confess to our neighbor the sin with which we have offended him. The absolution is spoken by the neighbor when he forgives us (or, again, by the general Gospel promise if the neighbor is unforgiving).
- (C) We should confess our sins with the congregation in the General Confession during the Divine Service, pleading guilty before God of all sins and asking complete forgiveness. The absolution is spoken by the pastor and is...
- (D) We **may** confess any particularly burdensome sin in private confession before the pastor (or, in an emergency, another believer), and receive the comfort of God's individual pardon of our sins spoken to us by Him through the pastor. (Note: No one may be forced to make private confession of specific sins; anything confided to the pastor in such a confession will not (by solemn obligation) be revealed by him. See the end of this lesson for a brief example of self-examination from the *Small Catechism*.)

Who has the authority to 'pronounce absolution', that is, to give the forgiveness of sins?

- (a) **Mark 2:7** Why does this Man (Jesus) speak blasphemies like this? Who can forgive sins but **God alone**?
- (b) **Mat 18:17,18,20** If he refuses to hear them, tell it to **the church**. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector. Assuredly, I say to you, **whatever you bind** on earth will be bound in heaven, and **whatever you loose** on earth will be loosed in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.
- (c) **1 Cor 4:1** Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and **stewards (administrators) of the mysteries of God**. [Latin translation: "sacraments of God"]
- (c) **Acts 20:28** Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which **the Holy Spirit has made you overseers**.
- (c) **2 Cor 2:10** If indeed I have forgiven anything, I have forgiven that (person) **for your sakes in the presence of Christ**. [Literally: "in the face" or "in the person" of Christ.]
- (c) **Luke 10:16** He who hears **you** hears **Me**.
- (d) **1 Cor 14:34,35,37** Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak...it is shameful for women to speak in church...acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the **commandments of the Lord**.

THESE WORDS OF GOD TEACH US:

It is indeed God alone (A) who can forgive sin and give eternal life, but He has entrusted this authority to His Church, specifically (B) to the local congregation. According to God's will, he calls (D) men as (C) ministers and shepherds of His flock who for the sake of the congregation and in the name and place of Christ publicly speak God's own forgiveness to sinners.

(The Holy Ministry is the **only** office instituted by Christ. A congregation may, however, create auxiliary offices to assist the pastor in his work, such as: day school teachers, deacons, Sunday School teachers, church council, etc.)

What is this authority called and what else does it entail?

- (a) **Mat 16:19** *I will give you the **keys of the kingdom of heaven**, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.*
- (b) **Mark 16:15** *And He said to them, “Go into all the world and **preach the Gospel** to every creature.*
- (b c) **Mat 28:18,19,20** *Then Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make **disciples** of all the nations, **baptizing** them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **teaching** them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”*
- (c) **1 Cor 4:1** *Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and **stewards (administrators) of the mysteries of God**. [Latin translation: “sacraments of God”]*
- (d) **John 20:22** *(Jesus) said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If **you forgive** the sins of any, **they are forgiven** them; if **you retain** the sins of any, **they are retained**.”*

THESE WORDS OF GOD TEACH US:

- (A) This authority (or power) of the Church exercised through Christ’s called servants is called the Office of the Keys, because it opens or closes heaven by:
- (B)
- (C)
- (D)

Whose sins are to be forgiven, and whose sins retained by this authority?

Psa 51:17 *The sacrifices of God are a **broken spirit**, a broken and a **contrite heart**; these, O God, You will not despise.*

Acts 3:19 ***Repent** therefore and be **converted**, that your sins may be blotted out.*

Psa 32:5 *I **acknowledged** my sin to You, and my iniquity I have **not hidden**. I said, “I will **confess** my transgressions to the LORD,” and **You forgave** the iniquity of my sin.*

Acts 16:31 *So they said, “**Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ**, and you will be saved, you and your household.”*

Mat. 18:17 *If he **refuses even to hear the Church**, let him be to you like a **heathen** and a tax collector.*

THESE WORDS OF GOD TEACH US:

The sins of:

Penitent sinners, that is, sinners who, being sorry for their sins...

Impenitent sinners...

BIBLE DISCUSSION: 2 Samuel 11:1-12:25; St. John 20:19-31; “Given Through Men”

READ the Small Catechism, pp. 213-226, CPH 1991 Blue (217-230 Mar), 181-192 (CPH 1941), 243-258 STLK

**MEMORIZE The Office of the Keys and Confession, Small Catechism, pp. 24-27, CPH
1991 Blue (26–29 Mar), 18-19 (CPH 1941), 23–24 STLK**

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING

1. T F Only God can forgive sins.
2. T F A Christian congregation can forgive sins.
3. T F The pastor of a Christian congregation can forgive sins.
4. T F The Office of the Ministry is a divine institution.
5. Women are barred from the Office of the Ministry by:
 - a) Church tradition.
 - b) A patriarchal Lutheran hierarchy.
 - c) Their inability to carry out the functions of the pastoral office.
 - d) God's Word.
6. T F The power of the Office of the Keys is the opening or closing of Heaven's door by forgiving sin or withholding forgiveness.
7. T F Confession of sin to the pastor is necessary for salvation.
8. T F Hearing the Absolution spoken through the pastor can bring us great comfort.
9. In St. Matthew 18:15-18, Christ prescribes three steps in dealing with someone who sins against us. The first—and most often neglected—step is: _____

Confession in the churches is not abolished among us; for it is not usual to give the body of the Lord, except to them that have been previously examined and absolved. And the people are most carefully taught concerning faith in the absolution, about which formerly there was profound silence. Our people are taught that they should highly prize the absolution, as being the voice of God, and pronounced by God's command. The power of the Keys is set forth in its beauty and they are reminded what great consolation it brings to anxious consciences, also, that God requires faith to believe such absolution as a voice sounding from heaven, and that such faith in Christ truly obtains and receives the forgiveness of sins.

Augsburg Confession XXV:1–4

Confession has two parts. First, that we confess our sins, and second, that we receive absolution, that is, forgiveness, from the pastor as from God Himself, and in no way doubt, but firmly believe that by it our sins are forgiven before God in heaven.

What sins should we confess? Before God we should plead guilty of all sins, even those of which we are not aware, as we do in the Lord's Prayer; but before the pastor we should confess only those sins which we know and feel in our hearts.

Which are these? Consider your place in life according to the Ten Commandments, whether you are a father, mother, son, daughter, husband, wife, or worker; whether you have been disobedient, unfaithful, or lazy; whether you have been hot-tempered, rude, or quarrelsome; whether you have hurt someone by your words or deeds; whether you stolen, been negligent, wasted anything, or done any harm.

Small Catechism, V: 16–19