

*In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit*

Have you ever done something so wrong it's made you sick?

You know, that gut feeling that has your stomach churning—  
you can't sleep at night, or concentrate on your work, and your family knows you're  
distracted—

have you ever felt like your body can't keep the sin in any longer?

What do you do?

You've tried ignoring it—

it just keeps festering.

Sometimes it's not a bother at all,

other times you feel like panicking, not knowing what to do,  
running away sometimes sounds best.

You've tried sleeping it off, or getting away.

Those help at first, but in the end, don't work either.

You know you've got to do something about it, because it's eating away at you,  
but what?

Where can you go?

Who will take this burden away,

this pain and torture of a guilty conscience?

This is exactly what Confession and Absolution are all about:

freeing you from a guilty conscience.

Now, to back up and ask "what is Confession?" we'd do well to remember our catechism,

**"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,**

**not doubting, but firmly believing that by it our sins are forgiven  
before God in heaven."**

Confession is all about the Absolution;

it's all about *forgiveness*,

about a clear and free conscience.

But forgiveness doesn't do you any good unless you're a sinner.

To the sinner, forgiveness has a way of removing your burden,

your weight, your guilty conscience, and churning stomach.

Without the word of forgiveness, you're left to your own ways, your own working and worrying and stress of trying to get rid of this feeling and make things right.

One of the best examples of Confession and Absolution is found in today's Old Testament text, the story of David, Bathsheba, Uriah, and the prophet Nathan.

David is King of Israel.

Whatever he wants he gets.

He has no lack of wealth or possession,

He has a couple wives and countless concubines,

David is rich and powerful and famous—

He's King of Israel.

But when David saw Bathsheba bathing on the roof-top, he simply had to have her—  
and he did!

So, Bathsheba conceived and sent a messenger to David with the news:

“Guess what, I'm pregnant” (2 Sam 11:5).

Now, to break the 6<sup>th</sup> commandment, to commit adultery, is in itself, a great sin.

But for whatever reason, in our culture just as it was for David,

we seem to think it's not so bad, as long as we don't get caught!

For Bathsheba to conceive and be pregnant while her husband is away at war—  
well, that's not good for anyone.

So, David does what we all do with our sin,

quickly try to cover it up:

hide the evidence, clear the history, call Uriah back from battle and send him  
home.

But Uriah's a good man. A good commander of the army.

He's faithful to Yahweh and to David, his King, and to the men under him.

As long as the battle is on, and his men are away from their families, so also Uriah.

So David resorts to plan B—

if Uriah won't go home and cover up David's sin, then Uriah quickly needs to get out of  
the picture.

David devises an elaborate scheme where Uriah fights on the front line of a difficult and  
dangerous battle.

Not only that, but the General over Uriah, who's under David's orders, must pull the  
army back and let Uriah die alone.

To catch up with where we are in the story,

David's now broken the 5<sup>th</sup> commandment: murder,

the 6<sup>th</sup> commandment: adultery,  
 the 8<sup>th</sup> commandment: lying, and devising a scheme of lies,  
 the 10<sup>th</sup> commandment: coveting his neighbor's wife,  
 and, as always, the 1<sup>st</sup> commandment: making himself God.

And, in the midst of all this sin—  
 it seems to work!

Uriah is out of the picture, Bathsheba then is fair game for consoling and comforting—  
 she needs a loving man to care for her in the midst of such tragedy.

David's in the clear, right?  
 No one knows the depth of his sin—  
 Bathsheba is now rightfully his wife and the timing works out such that no one  
 would question the date of conception.

And what's more, David has justified all this to himself.  
 He doesn't think it's wrong, in fact, it's a good thing—  
 Uriah couldn't treat her nearly as well as David will.

Everything looks good, that is, until Nathan comes in.

Nathan is the prophet of God.  
 That means Nathan speaks what the Lord tells him to speak.  
 He's the Lord's man, the Lord's mouthpiece, and David's Pastor.

Now, for Nathan to come in and forgive David wouldn't do David any good—  
 as far as he's concerned, he's not a sinner!  
 So, Nathan comes to David and tells him about a horrendous crime committed in the kingdom.

He tells the story of a rich man and a poor man—  
 the rich man has a guest staying for dinner, and so he wants to sacrifice a lamb for the  
 meal.  
 Rather than taking one of his numerous lambs,  
 he takes the poor little ewe lamb of his neighbor,  
 the lamb that his neighbor treated like a daughter.

When David heard this story, his anger boiled over and he shouted,  
 “**As the Lord lives, the man who did this deserves to die!**” (2 Sam 12:5)

And then, what might be the most powerful preaching of the Law in all the Scriptures,  
 “**Nathan said to David, ‘You're the man!’**” (2 Sam 12:7)

At that moment all the sins David worked so hard to cover up came rushing out into the open.  
 His murder, his adultery, his coveting, lies and deceit, all out in the open.  
 And David spoke the word of judgment himself—“that man deserves to die!”

So what are David's options at this point?

Well, he can either kill Nathan and cover up the evidence again, justifying himself along the way;  
or, he can plead guilty, confess his sin, and let the Lord take his life, if that's what's needed.

Thankfully, David chose the right option,

**“David said to Nathan,  
‘I have sinned against the Lord.’”** (2 Sam 12:13)

That's Confession.

It's repentance, it's telling the Lord I'm guilty and worthless, and deserving of death.

But, as you remember from your Catechism,

“Confession has *two* parts...”.

The second part is the word of Absolution, forgiveness, coming from the Pastor as from God Himself.

**“And Nathan said to David,  
‘The Lord also has put away your sin; you shall not die.’”** (2 Sam 12:13)

That's the Gospel—

that's the good news that the sinner doesn't die because his sins are forgiven.

And as it was for David, even in his great and hideous sins, so it is for you.

The Lord Jesus died on the cross in order for this word of forgiveness to come to you.

For the victory and salvation accomplished by the cross to crawl into your hear,  
to make a home,  
and to heal your broken and burdened conscience—  
all done through the voice of your pastor.

The Absolution, spoken each and every Sunday in the Divine Service,  
can also come to you individually.

If you want to hear God speak out loud to you, come to individual confession and absolution.

You'll tell God what pulls you down, what burdens you, what ties your stomach in a knot—  
and he'll lay His hands on you and say,  
“Your sin is put away; you shall not die.”

And where sins are forgiven, where death is put away, where it's sting can no longer harm you,  
then there you have life;  
and with life, comes freedom, peace, and joy.

Go, you are free.

*In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit*