

August 13, 2017

Confession is Good for the Soul

Read James 5: 16

One of the practices that has fallen by the wayside in our church body and churches in general in the United States (and probably most other countries in the world) is Individual Confession and Absolution. No longer do we set aside time to come together in a personal way and confess to one another our wrongs and shortcomings, and we certainly don't go to our pastor for this, at least not regularly. To be honest, I get it too. I mean, who wants to take the time to list out all of the things that they have done wrong, the ones they can think of, and let someone else absolve them of those things? There are better things to do, right? Well let's consider that last question.

The Catechism once again provides some clarity and help to this problem. In the explanation section under question 264, we are instructed what we are to confess to our pastor; knowing this also helps us understand why we are encouraged to do it. There we read we are to confess those sins which we know about specifically, and in particular the ones that weigh heavy on our hearts. Think about that for a second- we are not necessarily supposed to come to our pastor or confessor with a list a mile long with things that don't bother us or things that we are sure of Christ's forgiveness. Instead, it is the things that hurt us, the things that keep us up at night, the things that make us doubt or unsure that we are to bring to our confessor.

This leads into the understanding of the role of confessor. Just as the person confessing is supposed to come to his or her confessor with those



things that are hard or difficult, the confessor or pastor is supposed to come to the confession with a tender ear and a compassionate heart. James 5: 16

tells us as much about the confessor as it does about the one coming to confession. We are to confess our sins to one another, not so that we can be judged (the confessor is never on a judgment seat). Rather, we do it so that we might be unburdened by the things that hold us back in faith. We confess to one another so that healing can take place in our lives. We confess to one another so that the burden of sin might be replaced with the burden of Christ's forgiveness and that we as Christians might share that burden together.

Confession is not the dark confessional of TV, nor is it the 17 prayers you *have* to say after in order to be forgiven. Confession is letting go of something that is no longer yours and certainly not yours to bear alone. Individual Confession and Absolution should be celebrated, because it is the personal sharing of Christ's forgiveness and mercy in our lives. It is two sinners coming together that one might remind the other what Christ has done and they both might come out of the "session" revitalized and renewed, not by each other's kind words alone, but by the very application of God's Word for each of them. For absolution is never one man's word, it is the Man's word, the word of Jesus given to and applied to a hurting heart in need of life and freedom from a burden. That is Confession and Absolution, God's word in Christ to the hurting heart.

Pastor *Carl P. Jh*

