

Catechetical Sermon, July 6th, 2025

Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 51 "Forgiveness"

Scripture Lesson: 1 John 1:1-2:2

Lesson Aim	To understand three things: First, how our Scripture lesson speaks to the need to continue to confess sins, second, why we need to continue to confess our sins when they are already forgiven in justification and third, what to do if someone has sinned against us but refuses to confess his sin to us.
Steps to Learning	Read the Heidelberg Catechism Lord's Day 51 and 1 John 1:1-2:2 . Also discuss the sermon and the particulars of the lesson below. It may be best to work through the material over several days or sessions.
Discuss	<p>How does our Scripture lesson in 1 John 1:1-2:2 speak to our need to continue to confess our sins to God?</p> <p>The historical context is that the people to whom John writes are not concerned to confess their sins to God. There are three main points to discern in the text: First, Christians can be deceived that they are in fellowship with God while they sin without confession or repentance. They overcome their deception by walking according to God's Law (this <i>demonstrates</i> that they are justified). Second, if we deny that we are sinners then we are deceived. But the truth is that if we confess our sin, then it is evident that God has already cleansed us from all unrighteousness. Third, if we believe that we are not liable of the verdict that "all have sinned," then we are deceived. The truth of the matter is implied in 2:2 that if we accept God's verdict of sin, then it is a fact that God's anger has been appeased at the cross. The key issue to understand in our Scripture lesson is that we are saved, forgiven of our sins, solely by the work of Christ; the condition (not the cause) of continued forgiveness is confessing our sins to God.</p> <p>Why do we need to continue to confess our sins when they are already forgiven?</p> <p>From our last point above, we will have a continued sense that are sins are forgiven as we confess them to God. This exercise helps to support our "vital" relationship to God by the power of the Holy Spirit. Our federal relationship to God in justification is set and doesn't change; our vital relationship to God can change. That is, our sense of God's favor can be lost existentially when we sin in grave ways (see the Canons of Dort, head 5). In addition, the Scriptures command us to continually confess our sins to God.</p> <p>What do we do when someone sins against us but won't confess the sin?</p> <p>We follow Matthew 18, which requires us to confront the person. If they refuse to listen but are in the church, we "tell it to the church." If they are not in the church, we love them and trust that God will make things right.</p>
Bible Reading	2 Corinthians 12 – Galatians 5 (Reading through the New Testament)