

FORGIVEN™

THE TRANSFORMING POWER OF CONFESSION

SESSION 4

Biblical Foundations:
Sin, Mercy, and the
Sacrament of Confession

FORGIVEN

THE TRANSFORMING POWER OF CONFESSION

Nihil Obstat: Currently Under Review

Imprimatur:

Copyright © 2016 Augustine Institute. All rights reserved.

With the exception of short excerpts used in articles and critical reviews, no part of this work may be reproduced, transmitted, or stored in any form whatsoever, printed or electronic, without the prior permission of the publisher.

Some Scripture verses contained herein are from the New Testament, copyright 1946; Old Testament, copyright 1952; The Apocrypha, copyright 1957; Revised Standard Version Bible, Catholic Edition, Copyright © 1965, 1966, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America; Revised Standard Version Bible, Ignatius Edition, Copyright © 2006, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

English translation of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* for the United States of America, copyright ©1994, United States Catholic Conference, Inc.—Libreria Editrice Vaticana. English translation of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church: Modification from the Editio Typica* copyright ©1997, United States Catholic Conference, Inc.—Libreria Editrice Vaticana.

Writers: Ashley Crane, Lucas Pollice, Sean Dalton, Becca Arend

Print Production/Graphic Design: Jeff Cole, Brenda Kraft, Christina Gray, Devin Schadt, Kathleen McCarty, Ann Diaz

Media: Steve Flanigan, Aurora Cerulli, Jon Ervin, Matthew Krekeler, Justin Leddick, Kevin Mallory, Ted Mast, Edward Sri, Molly Sweeney



AUGUSTINE INSTITUTE

6160 South Syracuse Way, Suite 310
Greenwood Village, CO 80111
Information: 303-937-4420
formed.org

SESSION 4 | BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS: SIN, MERCY, AND THE SACRAMENT OF CONFESSION

OPENING PRAYER

Hear my prayer, O LORD; give ear to my supplications!
In thy faithfulness answer me, in your righteousness!
Enter not into judgment with your servant;
for no man living is righteous before you.

For the enemy has pursued me; he has crushed my life to the
ground; he has made me sit in darkness like those long dead.
Therefore my spirit faints within me; my heart within me
is appalled.

I remember the days of old, I meditate on all that you
have done;
I muse on what your hands have wrought.
I stretch out my hands to you; my soul thirsts for you like a
parched land.

Make haste to answer me, O LORD! My spirit fails!
Hide not your face from me, lest I be like those who go down
to the Pit. Let me hear in the morning of your merciful love,
for in you I put my trust. Teach me the way I should go,
for to you I lift up my soul.

Amen.

INTRODUCTION

Have you ever wondered, “Where is *that* in the Bible?!”
When it comes to the Sacrament of Reconciliation, Catholics
and non-Catholics alike often want to know how confessing
our sins to a priest lines up with Scripture passages such as
“**Who can forgive sins but God alone?**” (Mark 2:7).
Confession has its roots in God’s revelation of his mercy as
well as his authority in Scripture—and a closer look quickly
shows just how biblical this sacrament really is.

CONNECT

How has your perception of God changed from your childhood to the present?

How has your perception of yourself changed from your childhood to the present?

“Pray with great confidence, with confidence based upon the goodness and infinite generosity of God and upon the promises of Jesus Christ. God is a spring of living water which flows unceasingly into the hearts of those who pray.”

—St. Louis de Montfort

VIDEO

Watch the video. The following is a brief outline of the topics covered.

I. Sin and Mercy in Scripture

- A.** Adam and Eve sinned, and God showed them mercy
- B.** This pattern is repeated throughout Scripture: Israel sins, and God responds with mercy
- C.** Greatest example is at Mount Sinai



VIDEO CONTINUED

II. Exodus 34:6–7

- A. Becomes one of the most important passages in the Old Testament
- B. Eight key attributes of God
 1. Merciful
 2. Gracious
 3. Slow to Anger
 4. Abounding in steadfast love
 5. Faithfulness
 6. Storing up steadfast love for 1,000 generations
 7. Forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin
 8. Does not clear the guilty (those who don't ask for forgiveness)
- C. All the prophetic books quote this passage to remind Israel of God's mercy

III. *Shuv*

- A. "Repentance" in Hebrew
- B. Literally "to turn about"
- C. Repentance is about changing from our way to God's way

IV. David

- A. Greatly blessed and favored by God
- B. But then he commits adultery and murders to cover it up
- C. David admits his sin and repents (2 Samuel 12)—in contrast to Saul who denies his sin
- D. David has courage to confess because he has hope in God's mercy
 - 1. Psalm 51:1—**“Have mercy on me, O God”**
 - 2. Themes of mercy and forgiveness in Psalm 51 echo attributes of God revealed in Exodus 34:6–7
- E. David shows us what it means to trust in God's forgiveness
 - 1. David's last words, 2 Samuel 22 (also Psalm 18)
 - 2. 2 Samuel 22:21–27—David says he is blameless and pure
 - 3. He can say this because he trusts that God's forgiveness truly cleanses him from his sin
 - 4. Psalm 103:12—**“As far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us”**

V. Exile

- A. Nehemiah 9—Ezra reminds the people of Exodus 34:6–7 and the pattern of Israel's sin and God's forgiveness
- B. Exile is the physical manifestation of the reality of sin—being far from God
- C. The return from exile is the *shuv*—the people are brought back to Jerusalem as a sign of repentance and returning to God
- D. The real scandal of Scripture is God's mercy

VIDEO CONTINUED

PART II

I. Why do we confess our sins to a priest?

- A. Matthew 9:1–8—the paralytic lowered through the roof of Peter’s house
 1. Physical healing is a sign that Jesus also has the power and authority to forgive sins
 2. Son of man—reference to Daniel 7:13–14
 3. **“They glorified God, who had given such authority to men”** (Matthew 9:8)
- B. Authority in Matthew’s Gospel
 1. Matthew 8–9 shows Jesus’s authority through ten miracles
 2. Number ten signifies authority
 3. Jesus has authority from the Father, and he has the authority to delegate that authority
 4. Matthew 10—Jesus gives his authority to the twelve Apostles and sends them out
- C. Authority in Luke’s Gospel
 1. Luke 10—Jesus sends out seventy disciples with his authority
 2. Jesus sends his disciples as his ambassadors—they speak his words
 3. 2 Corinthians 5:18–20—Paul talks about his ministry as an ambassador of Christ’s reconciliation
- D. Authority in John’s Gospel
 1. John 17:18—Jesus sends the Apostles as the Father sent him (*apostello*, Greek meaning “to send”)
 2. In the Old Testament, the angels bear the presence and word of God, speaking and acting on his behalf
 3. In the New Testament, the Apostles now bear the presence and word of God, speaking and acting on his behalf
 4. Jesus shares his divine authority with men
 5. John 20:22–23—Jesus gives his Apostles authority to forgive sins

DISCUSS

1. Author Richard Dawkins writes in *The God Delusion*: “The God of the Old Testament is arguably the most unpleasant character in all fiction.” As an atheist, Dawkins writes this to undermine Christianity and the Bible. How can we reconcile the God of the Old Testament and the merciful love of our heavenly Father revealed to us through Jesus Christ?

2. God says this of David, the great king of Israel: “I have found in David the son of Jesse a man after my heart, who will do all my will” (Acts 13:22). And yet, David failed miserably in doing God’s will when he committed adultery with Bathsheba and had her husband killed so that he could take her to be his wife. Given these circumstances, how is David a role model for us?

3. The great rabbi Maimonides is credited with this profound statement: “Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.” How does this statement give insight into the reasons Jesus delegated his priesthood?



“God’s patience has to call forth in us the courage to return to him, however many mistakes and sins there may be in our life. . . . It is there, in the wounds of Jesus, that we are truly secure; there we encounter the boundless love of his heart. Thomas understood this. Saint Bernard goes on to ask: But what can I count on? My own merits? No, ‘My merit is God’s mercy. I am by no means lacking merits as long as he is rich in mercy. If the mercies of the Lord are manifold, I too will abound in merits.’ This is important: the courage to trust in Jesus’ mercy, to trust in his patience, to seek refuge always in the wounds of his love.”

—Pope Francis, *Homily on Divine Mercy Sunday, April 7, 2013*

COMMIT—ENCOUNTERING GOD’S MERCY

In the video Tim Gray said that Exodus 34:6–7 becomes the most important passage in the Old Testament for understanding who God is. Read through this passage two or three times slowly and prayerfully.

“The LORD passed before him, and proclaimed, ‘The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in mercy and faithfulness, keeping merciful love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty.’” (Exodus 34:6–7)

Which of the eight key characteristics of God revealed in this passage stands out the most to you? Why?

Psalm 18 is a prayer of David thanking God for delivering him from his physical enemy, Saul. When he prayed it again at the end of his life, David surely understood the necessity of thanking God not only for rescuing him physically throughout his life but, even more importantly, delivering him from his sins. Read through Psalm 18, and then compose your own short psalm of thanksgiving to God for his saving mercy toward you.

CLOSING PRAYER

I love you, O LORD, my strength.

The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer,
my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge,
my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.
I call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised,
and I am saved from my enemies.

The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness;
according to the cleanness of my hands he recompensed me.
For I have kept the ways of the LORD, and have not wickedly departed from my God.
For all his ordinances were before me, and his statutes I did not put away from me.
I was blameless before him, and I kept myself from guilt.
Therefore the LORD has recompensed me according to my righteousness,
according to the cleanness of my hands in his sight.

With the loyal you show yourself loyal;
with the blameless man you show yourself blameless;
with the pure you show yourself pure;
and with the crooked you show yourself perverse.
For you deliver a humble people; but the haughty eyes you bring down.
Yes, you light my lamp; the LORD my God lightens my darkness.
Yes, by you I can crush a troop; and by my God I can leap over a wall.
This God—his way is perfect; the promise of the LORD proves true;
he is a shield for all those who take refuge in him.

Amen.

—Psalm 18:1–3, 20–30

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Tim Gray, “Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation” in *Sacraments in Scripture: Salvation History Made Present* (Steubenville, OH: Emmaus Road Publishing, 2001)

Scott Hahn, *Lord Have Mercy: The Healing Power of Confession* (New York: Doubleday, 2003)

Catechism of the Catholic Church on the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation, 1440–1445

