

CONFESSION

May 11, 2020

It's the Bible Study Evangelista Show, Bible study spinach that tastes like cake. I'm Sonja Corbitt, your host. We're talking about Confession to a priest today, and where is that in the Bible. Well, I'm so glad you asked. I have been very excited to do this show. I think the more controversy - down here in the south anyway - that a subject has, biblically speaking, the more I like it, when it comes to the Catholic Church.

So we're talking, then, about Confession as a sacrament. We have - so far - we've been looking at all of the sacraments. We looked at what sacraments are and where the term "sacrament," how that's biblical. We looked at Baptism as a sacrament. And we looked at the Eucharist. And we're doing them in the order that they correspond to the natural life. So just as we are born in the natural life, we are reborn in the Spirit. Just as we are nourished in our bodies, we are nourished in the soul through the Eucharist. Just as we receive medicine when we're sick, we receive medicine through Confession, which is what we're gonna talk about today.

Sometimes, then, a rite of passage like adolescence in the natural life, that can correspond to Confirmation in which we receive the power from the Holy Spirit to become witnesses even unto death. And then there is the vocational. In the natural, we would choose an employment or a job or a career. And, of course it's not the same thing in a sacrament, but those would be Holy Orders and Marriage. And then for the final journey of death into the arms of God, then we have, in the spiritual life, we have Anointing of the Sick, or that's also called, sometimes, the Last Rites.

So today we're talking about Confession. Before we actually do that, we need to talk about sin. Actually, before we talk about sin, I wanna just point out that part of why Confession is so controversial between Catholics and non-Catholics - of course it has to do with the priesthood - but it's mostly because neither Cath - Catholics have a hard time defending it when it comes to confession to a priest, and non-Catholics misunderstand it. They think it's not biblical at all. But I'm gonna show you that it's *super* biblical.

Before we do that, let's talk about sin. Sin is actually a word that comes directly from the Old Testament. We call that a *transliteration*. It's a word that's sort of lifted from the Old Testament and planted in the New without changing its spelling or meaning. So sin, then, is actually an Old Testament word. It means - this is the meaning, there are actually a lot of them, but here they are: lack perversity; transgression, which means to violate, to go beyond, to overpass or break a law, a rule, a duty, or a command, it's a breach or a rebellion. Transgression, that's a big bible, church-y word. But that's - basically you can boil it down to rebellion. So, lack perversity; transgression; to miss the mark, which is how I was taught what sin is, you miss the mark. The mark is the center of the bullseye. And when you sin, you have missed the center, which is the mark. That to me, sort of, smacked of perfection, that we're supposed to be perfect. Well, nobody hits the bullseye every time and we all know that we can't, so why the big deal over sin? Well I'm gonna show you why.

Other definitions included in the word sin are: injustice; unrighteousness, which just means what is not right; an error; mistake; wrongness; blame; loss; guilt; offense; unreal; untrue; false; iniquity, which means crookedness; and then forfeit, that's actually my favorite definition for sin, to forfeit, because that's the part that we don't always get. We sort of shrug our shoulders and go, "Well, I can't be perfect, I can't be holy anyway, and God knows I can't 'cuz I'm an imperfect human, and so He's gonna forgive me anyway and so I should just go out and sin anyway." And that - we're gonna see in a moment is really what - we are forfeiting something very, very important.

But Original Sin comes from Adam and Eve. I don't have the time to kinda go into why that's true. But the effects of Original Sin are lasting. There is this wrongness of orientation, and then concupiscence, which is the inclination to sin. That's another big Church word, but concupiscence means the inclination to sin. So Original Sin has sort of wounded us. We're not totally corrupt, as the reformers sort of went off the deep end and then proclaimed that every human being is completely corrupt. But we are weakened, and we are inclined to evil and subject to error.

So the Catechism, then, says that "man - I'm in 1707 - man, enticed by the evil one, abused his freedom at the very beginning of history. He succumbed to the temptation and did what was evil. He still desires the good, but his nature bears the wound of Original Sin. He is now inclined to evil and subject to error. Man is divided in himself. As a result, the whole life of men, both individual and social, shows itself to be a struggle, and a dramatic one, between good and evil, between light and darkness."

So why shouldn't we sin? Well, first of all, if we sin, we transgress against an eternal God. And a single sin, then, warrants an eternal punishment. To sin against - even one time - to sin one time against an eternal God, means an eternal punishment.

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That's the part, obviously that we cannot pay. That's called the eternal, or the eternal consequences. There are actually two consequences for sin. One of them is eternal. That is the part that we could not pay and that's why Jesus came, is to save us from that eternal damnation that sin requires, by sinning against an eternal God.

Then there are the temporal consequences. That just means - a good way to look at that is just, sort of, the earthly consequences. If you speed and do 90 miles an hour down the highway, you'll get a ticket. That's not revenge from the law, because you have transgressed the law. It's just the way it is. If you get a ticket and you're caught, then you - I mean, if you speed and you get caught, then you get a ticket.

So there are eternal consequences that we cannot pay and then there are temporal consequences that we can pay. We'll get to that in a moment. Every single sin brings forth death. Romans 6:23 says, "The wages of sin is death. But the gift of God is eternal life." So every single sin causes a death. Sometimes they're small, but they still do. That's actually a great indicator of whether or not sin is actually present. If you think that something that you're doing is not sinful - or maybe it hasn't gotten out of hand or whatever yet. If there comes a point where it is destructive to either you, your health, a relationship that is important to you, or anything else relating to that kind of destruction, then it is sin. That's the best indicator. The wages of sin is death.

So I'd like for you to think, then, of grace, the grace of God, and this spicket of grace. Imagine that there is this spicket of grace that God is showering the whole earth with all the time. Imagine that you are standing specifically under this spicket. Like, each of us has an individual spicket, too, and God is showering us with grace all the time. When you sin a mortal sin - which we'll talk about in a few moments - but when you sin a grave sin, you have stepped out from under the spicket of grace. That means that you have separated yourself from eternal life, because grace is the life of God. And that is what He is showering us with.

When we sin gravely, we step out of that grace. So it's not a matter of losing your salvation. It's not like a penny that you're carrying and then, whoops! You drop it and "Oh my gosh, I lost my salvation." It's not like that. You forfeit it. That is one of the definitions - probably, in my opinion, one of the most important definitions of what sin means, to forfeit.

So you don't lose it like it's an accident. In order to forfeit through sin, you do it on purpose. It's presumptuous, and I'll show you that in the Scriptures in just a moment. But when you do that, you cut yourself off from the grace of God, and that grace is where eternal life comes from. If you pursue that absence of grace long enough that you die in it, then you are eternally separated from God and that's why Adam and Eve were not allowed to eat of the Tree of Life after they had eaten from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, because God did not want them to then eat of eternal life in the condition of their sin because they would have lived forever in cond - in damnation. He protected that tree so they could not forever be damned through their sin.

So, eternal life, then, comes from God and we separate ourselves from that when we sin gravely. Eternal life is not - we like to think of - because we hear the word eternal, we think of increments of time like a timeline, for eternity in the future and eternity in the past. Instead, eternal life is a quality. Eternal life is a quality of life. It is God's own life. Imagine the kind of life that God lives. Does He live in purpose? Does He live in goodness and love and virtue? Is He happy? Is He fulfilled? All of those things? That's what Jesus called the abundant life. He said, "I came to give you life and give it to you more abundantly." That's why we shouldn't sin because we forfeit something of that eternal life every single time we sin. Sin is a leach. It leaches away that eternal life from the natural life that we're living.

After we've been baptized and we are receiving the Eucharist, then we have been reborn and we ha - we are being nourished. And then if we sin gravely, we must go to Confession to restore ourselves in that spicket of grace so that we can receive that shower of grace that God has - is in, Himself, in His presence, giving to us all the time. More when we get back.

Because of the way I grew up, I understood sin very well. I knew I was bad. In fact, I had this interior - it was an absolute conviction that there was something wrong with me at the very core of my being. I was just inherently bad. I had that - that was actually something that my dad, sort of, instilled in me the way he parented. When we come to God and we come to a subject like sin with that sort of lens, we have missed it completely. We're seeing it erroneously. That in itself is a sin. We think of sins as something we do or don't do, but we can actually - and part of the definition is even to make a mistake. You can accidentally wander off the road and wreck your car. Of course, that's not a sin in the sense of a moral kind of thing, but you can see how an accidental detour can still be destructive. It's the same in the spiritual life. That's what I'm trying to say.

God has no reason to punish us over and above what sin already does, because sin has its punishment built in. It says, "The wages of sin is death." So every single sin brings with it a little death. A big sin brings a big death. A little sin brings a small death. Sometimes we don't see those exteriorly, but they happen on the interior, in the spirit, in the soul, and even in the body. A lot of times we're sick and we have disease and we die early or something because we've been carrying this guilt and this sin for so

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long. Sometimes it's sin that we have committed, and we have not confessed it. Or we, maybe, have been sinned against and we have not forgiven it. That in itself is its own sin, which we'll look at later.

My point is that punishment for sin is built in to the doing of it. Wisdom 11:6 says that, "One is punished by the very things through which he sins." And Jeremiah 2:19 says, "Your wickedness will chasten you, and your apostasy will reprove you. Know and see that it is evil and bitter for you to forsake the Lord, your God." So there's a warning there. Sin, if you like. You know? You have free will. Sin, if you like, but - my Momma used to say this to me all the time, "Be sure your sin will find you out. God is not mocked. That which you sow you will also reap." So we reap what we sew. That's sometimes called the law of the harvest. My point is that punishment for sin is built into it. God has no - He has no desire, He has no motivation at all to punish us on top of what's already built into sin, the punishment for sin.

That brings us, then, to what a covenant is. There are blessings in every covenant, remember? And then there are curses with every covenant. The blessings of the covenant, of Confession as a sacrament, is forgiveness and eternal life. The curses that are included in that covenant of Confession, then, are the consequences of sin, which can lead eternally to hell. And so there are eternal consequences. But, "The gift of God," Romans 6:23 says, "is eternal life." The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life.

The temporal consequences - if you think that Jesus paid it all, which is how I grew up hearing. Jesus paid it all and I don't need to do anything else. I accept Jesus as my Savior and He cleanses me, and He makes - He saves me and I go to heaven. There are no more consequences to sin. Well if that's the way you think, then tell me why you die. Why does every human being die if Jesus paid it all? The truth is, we know in our own experience, that we incur the consequences of our sin. Jesus only paid the eternal consequences because that's the part we could not do for ourselves.

He knows that we can, and we should, incur the temporal consequences, or the earthly consequences, because they are what teach us to choose better. Ultimately, the final consequence is death itself. Because Adam and Eve sinned originally in the garden, every human being after them must die. The soul and the body must be separated. That is a consequence of sin. That's a temporal, or earthly, consequence that we can still pay, and we do pay. Every human being sins. How do we know? Because everyone dies.

So now that we've sort of laid the foundation and we've looked at sin, which is the reason why we need Confession, let's find out where the Sacrament of Confession is in the Bible. Let's start with the Old Testament.

In Leviticus 5:4, we see that when the guilty person recollected himself, or came to himself, he was bound to confess his fault to the priest in the following manner according to the rabbis. They were to place their hands between the horns of the animal victim and say, "I beseech you, Lord, I have sinned. I have committed iniquity and prevarication. I have committed such a fault. I repent. I am filled with sorrow and confusion for having done so. I will relapse no more." So the rabbis taught that without confession and sorrow, no animal sacrifice would remit sin. That's why all of those sacrifices had to be repeated, really daily. That's why so many animals were sacrificed in the Old Testament. If you have questions or concerns about animal sacrifices, please get my book *Fulfilled* where I talk about all of that sacrificial stuff in great detail. It does disturb some people. But just remember that was a temporary way that God could forgive sin until the Messiah would come, the true Lamb of God.

We also know, from the historians, the Jewish historians, Philo and Josephus, that to preserve the secret of confession, the priests were ordered to eat the victims alone. So when there animal sacrifices, a portion of them were reserved for the priests. That was part of the priests' income, we could say. My point there in that verse specifically - although the entire book of Leviticus talks about sin and the consequences and the offerings that should be made for those, the sin offerings, grain offerings. If you look at the chapter and paragraph headings throughout Leviticus, it just reads like this whole big list of all the ways the people have sinned and what they need to do to have their sins forgiven. So it can be very depressing. Just remember that Leviticus as a genre is sort of the worship manual of the people. It's not meant as a - to be a comparison, strictly, to the way we do things in the Sacrament of Confession. I'm showing you the foundation was laid for the confession to a priest in the Old Testament. Because the people, when they brought their offerings, whether they were burnt offerings of animals or grain offerings or peace offerings or sin offerings.... Whatever they were bringing, they brought to the priest. If it was an animal, they laid their hand on the head of the animal between its horns and they confessed their sin to the priest over the animal so that what they were saying, symbolically, is that my sin is transferred to this animal. And then they would sacrifice it because a life - the Old Testament says that "a life is required for a life." That goes back to the eternal consequences that I talked about that every sin incurs.

A life is required for a life. The animal, then, took on the sin of the person and the animal was sacrificed and the blood was poured out. That is why Jesus, the Lamb of God, had to die for our sin in order to win for us the eternal life that He promises us.

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That's why it's such a priceless gift that we just take for granted and we go off and sin without even really thinking about what's happening and what we've done.

Every single one of our sins requires a life. It requires a life for it. So Jesus was that life, but also, in turn, we offer our daily lives back to God as the temporal offering that we can also make.

We also see throughout Leviticus 5:5, it says, "When a man is guilty in any of these, he shall confess the sin he has committed." Leviticus 5:6, "And he shall bring his guilt offering to the Lord for the sin which he has committed, a female from the flock, a lamb or a goat, for a sin offering, and the priest shall make atonement for him for his sin." Now, because I had never even heard of Confession as a sacrament, I just assumed that meant that he confessed it, the sin, to God privately in prayer or something. But this was a communal action. You did not make a sacrifice at home. You went to the temple, or the tabernacle before it was the temple. You took your animal to the priest and the priest sacrificed it. You had to be the one to cut its throat. When you confessed your sin over the animal and you put your hand on its forehead and you confessed your sin over the animal to the priest, then you were the person with the knife who cut the throat of the animal and bled it out. Then the priest would sacrifice it on the brazen altar in the tabernacle first and then later in the temple.

The person who was confessing was doing it publicly. That's my point. It was a communal confession, it was a communal sacrifice. When I say that, I shouldn't say communal, I should say public. It was a public confession and a public sacrifice. Imagine standing up in front of everybody and making your sin public. Well, they did it in the early church. I'll show you that in a few moments.

Leviticus is full of each of these offerings and the fact that the priest made the atonement and heard the confession. So we hear from Josephus that confession to the priest was necessary before all the other sacrifices for the sin. That's in - Josephus - his antiquities, 3:10. Then we have the matter of confession and restitution. In Numbers 5 - these are the best examples I can find. I mean, there are a bunch of them, but I had to choose the ones that were the most relevant here to our discussion. But in Numbers 5 - I'm actually gonna read through verse 10, but I'll have to do it after the break. Right now, we're out of time. I'll be back in a moment.

Alright, before we get back into Confession, I want to shout out my Friends of the Show that I haven't done in a couple weeks, because it is so important I thank you, personally. Cindy R., Nora A., Bonnie S., Ruth F., Liz B., Karen M., Joseph T., Amanda F., Mitchie H., Diane C., Maureen A., Maria M., Ashley B., Cindy G., Kelly K., Jeffrey P., Marabel M., Mary L., and Carl T. Thank you, thank you, thank you for being Friends of the Show. You have no idea how much it helps, especially in times like last week when I've had all these tech problems. Just, thank you.

So, we left off talking about Numbers 5 and the matter of restitution. "The Lord said to Moses, 'Say to the people of Israel, "When a man or woman commits any of the sins that men commit by breaking faith with the Lord, and that person is guilty, he shall confess his sin which he has committed and he shall make full restitution for his wrong, adding a fifth to it and giving it to him to whom he did the wrong. But if the man has no kinsmen to whom restitution can be made for the wrong, the restitution for wrong shall go to the Lord for the priest. In addition, the ram of atonement, with which atonement is made for him. And every offering, all of the holy things of the people of Israel, which they bring to the priest, shall be his. And every man's holy things shall be his. Whatever any man gives to the priest shall be his.'""

So restitution is where we get our penance. It was not sufficient to merely confess the wrongdoing, or even offer the sacrifice. They had to also offer restitution. You had to repay, in full, and then add a penalty of a fifth of the value of the person, or the thing, to the person who was wronged, the one that you sinned against or defrauded. If they were no longer alive and did not have a relative surviving, then the debt had to be paid to the priest.

Look at how complicated this matter of confession was in the Old Testament. There had to be a confession, there had to be a sacrifice, and then there had to be restitution. You gave back whatever it was you took, and then a penalty of a fifth more. I remember being taught that sin is sin. Every sin is just sin, and each is equal and none is worse than the other. But that is the silliest thing I ever heard, first of all, because all of the sacrifices in the Old Testament, first of all, some were more expensive and worth more, we'll say, in monetary terms than others. You had pigeons, you had turtle doves, you had grain, and then you had heifers. I mean.... And the difference in the cost of them to the person that owned them was a huge difference, depending on what the sins were.

Here's what I would say to that. First of all, the offerings varied according to the different sin. Secondly, saying that sin is simply sin is like saying money is money. Of course that's true. But let me ask you, is one cent worth the same amount as a hundred-dollar bill? Of course not. And so to say that every sin is equal is - first of all, it betrays a lack of knowledge of the Scriptures. Secondly, it makes no sense, just experientially. We know better.

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In Numbers 15:22-30, there - this was actually - this flabbergasted me as a non-Catholic coming into the Church. When I started to see this, I was like, "Holy cow!" Because I had already learned, or was learning, I should say, about venial and mortal sin. If those terms are new to you, or maybe you're non-Catholic.... A venial sin is a sin that is unintentional, accidental, or minor. It could be all of those things. A mortal sin is one that cuts you off. It's a grave sin because it cuts you off from the grace of God. There are degrees of sin, we say. We ha - we know this is true because the Bible says it here in chapter 15 of Numbers. I don't have time to read it all, but there are laws concerning unintentional sin in verses, chapter 15:22-29 and then there are laws concerning presumptuous sin, verses 30-31.

So we see that there are two different kinds of sin. The venial sin, or the unintentional sin - there could be atonement made. In verse 25, it says, "The priest shall make atonement for that sin and for the whole congregation. And it shall be forgiven them because it was unintentional. And they shall bring their offering...." Blah blah blah. Like I said, I don't have time to read it. The law concerning presumptuous sin - a presumptuous sin is one that sinned knowingly and defiantly, and it is a grave matter. It's exactly the same definition that we give to a mortal sin and its difference between it and a venial sin.

So, we have unintentional sin, which is venial in Numbers 15. And then we have presumptuous sin, which is mortal in Numbers 15. Here is the law concerning presumptuous sin, verse 30. "But the person who does anything presumptuously, whether he is native-born or a stranger, that one brings reproach on the Lord and he shall be cut off from among the people because he has despised the word of the Lord and has broken His commandment. That person shall be completely cut off. His guilt shall be upon him." There was no atonement; there was no forgiveness. Not in a sacrificial economy way. Not in the way of the sacrifices of the Old Testament tabernacle. There was no atonement made for a sin that was purposeful and presumptuous. Only unintentional, we could call it venial sin, could be atoned for.

That means that if you sinned a mortal sin, you stayed in it for the rest of your life. And it was nothing but calling on the mercy of God that could have possibly offered atonement for that sin. Isn't that interesting? Thank goodness it's not that way now and we have Jesus as our Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

So we see, then - here's what I'm trying to lay out for you. The Old Testament talks about sacrifice, confession, and both, into the context of the priesthood. Here's where we get into why a priest is necessary for Confession. A sin is not just sin between you and God. Every single sin affects every other person in the community. Sometimes that is invisible, but it is still a reality. St. Paul talks about it. Every member that suffers, they all suffer with it. Everyone that rejoices, they all rejoice with it. Everything is connected in ways that we cannot necessarily see or discern, but it's true.

When you sin, you can't just get individual forgiveness from God because you've sinned against the entire Church. So the priest is the one that Jesus forgives you on behalf of the whole Church. He forgives you through the priest on behalf of the whole Church. If you don't go to Confession and you, instead, confess privately, then you've only gotten half of it. That's why, as a non-Catholic, it was really a good thing for me to see these church splits that happened twice. I've shared that story extensively, so I won't do that now. But it drove me crazy over that second split, when the people who had devastated our church, devastated our leadership - almost bankrupted our pastor. I was so angry. They stood up in the congregation and said, "Listen, I have confessed to Jesus and He has forgiven me and all is well, so you're just gonna have to get over it." That's basically what they said. And I'm telling you, that made me so mad. I wanted to hurt somebody.

They didn't just hurt God. They hurt that family. They devastated the church. I was personally hurt and devastated. It made me so angry. When I, then, started to discern the Church and the teachings of the Church, I could see why this Confession to a priest was absolutely necessary on behalf of the whole Church. It's not just about you and God. I'm sorry if you're one of those people that's been taught that, but the Bible itself has laid out the foundation for Confession for us in the Old Testament. It was never just about the person and his sin and God. It was *always* about the person and the priest and his sin and the community and God. It is still that way today.

You can, of course, receive individual forgiveness, especially for those venial sins which we'll talk about in a moment, how that works, but you can receive forgiveness for those venial sins without going to Confession because they're not presumptuous, they're not mortal sins. They're not grave matters. But if you do sin mortally, you are required to go to Confession because it has separated you, first of all, from God. Secondly, it has separated you from the Church. It is necessary that you receive that forgiveness on behalf of the entire Church and not just God Himself. Of course, God is the one Who forgives us through the priest, but the priest does it on behalf of the entire Church, the entire community and not just you. That is a very important point that is completely missed by non-Catholics and it's a sad thing because Confession is just so good for you, is it not?

Restitution was absolutely necessary. We talked about the fact that sin is not just sin. In Nehemiah we can actually see that - another example that the people had to confess to the priest in public. I alluded to the fact that the early church did this as well, and they did and I'll prove it to you as I get to the writings of the Church Fathers. But I wanna get to the New Testament.

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The New Testament, we see, that in Matthew 3:6 and Mark 1:5, the people are used to doing this. So when they want to go confess, where do they go? They go to John the Baptist. They go to be baptized. He can't forgive sin, but he preaches a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. So he is telling them, "You must repent of your sin to be forgiven." Of course, they went to him to be baptized for that. Penance is not forgiveness. Penance is that restitution idea that we talked about earlier. More on that when we get back. Right now I gotta take a break.

We laid the Old Testament foundation for Confession to a priest. Now we're looking at New Testament Confession to a priest. Where is that in the Scriptures? First of all, I want to just mention - one of the things that a non-Catholic will say to you is that, "When Jesus came, He did away with all of that Old Testament stuff." That is true. Well, in the sense that He fulfilled them. He fulfilled them, but then He brought them forward, just as He does each of the sacraments in His own person. Jesus himself is the High Priest, and He is the One who, ultimately, we are confessing to and whose sacrifice we are depending on to give us forgiveness and give us the eternal life that He promised us so that we don't die in our sins eternally.

He is the victim. He is the priest. He is the forgiver. We go to Him for that. But He himself, as soon as He rose from the dead, He brought His apostles this gift of this breath. He says, "As the Father has sent me, even so, I send you." And just as Jesus was sent by the Father to reconcile the world to God, Jesus sent apostles to continue that mission. Then He breathed on them. This is a verse that's - a lot of times it's glossed over, but it's very significant because it's the only - only the second time in all of Scripture where God breathes on anyone. The first one, obviously, is Adam where He breathed into Adam and He made him a living soul. And then He breathes - Jesus breathes on the apostles and says, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven. If you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

Just as the natural creation, God breathed into it and gave it life, He is now giving us new birth through His Spirit in Confession. He says to them, "If you forgive the sins, they're forgiven. If you retain them, they are retained." And He is giving them that power and authority himself. Jesus himself gave them that power and authority. Every single bishop who has been - who has received ordination and Holy Orders, receives that same power and authority. Of course, then, the bishop can turn around and give that authority to the priest. That's exactly what happens in the Church, which we'll talk about when we get to Holy Orders.

Right now, we can see, in the New Testament, here is where they receive the power and authority to forgive sins. Notice, He's not just commissioning them to preach the Gospel. He's not just telling them to tell people they can be forgiven. He's actually using this plural *you*. He's saying, "*You*, by the power of the Holy Spirit, have the power to forgive and retain the sins of men." Having the power to forgive and to retain sins implies that the apostle knows what the sins are. That, in turn, implies some sort of oral confession. Otherwise, how is the apostle supposed to know what to retain or what to forgive? It's the same way that Jesus gave His apostles those other supernatural powers.

Remember, that when Jesus healed people, He said to that paralytic, "What is easier? Healing him and telling him to take up his mat and walk? Or telling him his sins are forgiven?" Because those - the people thought and saw every disease, every disability, every calamity as punishment for sin. That's why He said, "Which is easier? To tell him he's healed or forgiven?" Because they thought that being sick, or being paralyzed, then, was a sign of sin. He was, then, saying that if that's what you believe, I can do both. He gives them the power to do the very same thing, the apostles. Remember, we just read this throughout the readings this week in the Church. The apostles went out and they performed miracles. Peter himself raised someone from the dead, and people were healed.

What that does is convey the authority of Christ, the - that is in the apostles. I can't talk. What we see there is that through the fact that they are able to heal people, and to even raise them from the dead, they have the same power and authority that Jesus had. In so doing, they are able to forgive sins because those things were related to those people.

He said, then, He gave them those other supernatural powers, like raising people from the dead and healing, and He gave them that power to absolve sins. Because that is raising them from a spiritual death. That is why Jesus said in Matthew 9 when He raised that paralytic, "That you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins." That's why He did it. After He exercised that power and authority as a man, the crowds glorified God because He had given, then, authority to men, He says in Matthew 9:8. "He gave such authority to men."

Of course, they meant Jesus, but Jesus gave it to the apostles and the apostles gave it to those that ordained. And on and so forth. Matthew, then, indicates that this power to forgive sins had been given to men and not just a man.

So healing in Acts, then, all of those healings, we see that the apostles also had the power to forgive sins. So why do we have to go to a priest instead of going straight to God? 'Cuz people will say, "Well the Bible says there's one God and one Mediator between God and man, the man, Jesus Christ." We - none of us Catholics would ever argue that point, of course. Jesus is the Mediator of everything that is eternal. The power to forgive sins comes from Him.

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That does not prevent other mediators, all right? For instance - now I'm speaking to non-Catholics because they are the ones who make this argument. Who taught you the Scriptures? Who taught you to read the Scriptures, first of all? Who taught you what they were? Who preached them to you? Who baptized? It's not just even the spiritual things that require a mediator. How were you even born? Did Jesus give birth to you? Did Jesus feed you? Did Jesus teach you your reading, writing, and arithmetic? Jesus didn't do all that. Jesus uses mediators. That's my point. You can see how ridiculous this argument is, if there's only one Mediator. Yes, there is one Mediator in everything eternal. But Jesus uses us. He uses people to accomplish His purpose and His will for us and the Church and the world.

Of course there's more than one mediator. There's not one eternal - more than one eternal Mediator because only He could do what He did for us in winning redemption and winning eternal life for us through His blood. Jesus wants us to come to Him when we fall into sin. He wants us to be forgiven. He wants it so much that He gave the apostles the power to forgive sins. That power - and through the apostles and their successors - doesn't come from them, it comes from God. Throughout the New Testament, Jesus gave the apostles authority over unclean spirits, the authority to heal, the authority to raise people from the dead, etc., etc.

No Christian assumes that *those* powers come from men themselves, since God is the one that has chosen to use them to manifest His power and His mercy and His forgiveness. "Everything comes from God," as Paul says in 2 Corinthians. They are just the instrument that God uses. It's the same for forgiveness in the Church. We go to the priest, the priest hears our confession, and we are absolved of our sins and we're given a penance. He gave us a way to draw near Him and receive that grace. Why do you want another way? I mean, of course it can be difficult to go to Confession. That's why people sometimes wait forever and ever and ever before they do, but you shouldn't. It is such a great grace. It doesn't mean because we go to the priest that Jesus' work was somehow insufficient. I know that that's what people say, but they don't and I wish I had more time, but I don't because we're almost out of time here.

Confession to a priest is an apostolic tradition. It wasn't invented in the 1200s at the fourth Lateran Council like some people say. It was formally defined there because that's when it began to be challenged. But nobody objected that time because everybody had been doing it. In fact, the early Church in the Didache, we hear that they made them confess out loud. They made them do it in public. "Confess your sins in church," in the Didache 4:14, "and do not go up to your prayer with an evil conscience. This is the way of life. On the Lord's day, gather together, break bread, and give thanks after confessing your transgressions so that your sacrifice may be pure.

Then we see in Tertullian, "Regarding Confession, some flee from this work as being an exposure of themselves or they put it off from day to day. I presume they are more mindful of modesty than of salvation like those who contract a disease in the more shameful parts of the body and shun making themselves known to the physicians. So they perish along with their own bashfulness." Tertullian is saying, "Stop being bashful and just go."

Hippolytus says, "The bishop conducting the ordination of the new bishop shall pray, 'God and Father of our Lord, Jesus Christ, pour forth now that power which comes from you from your royal Spirit which you gave to your beloved Son, Jesus Christ, and which He bestowed on His holy apostles. And grant this, your servant, who you have chosen for the episcopate - or the Holy Orders - the power to feed your holy flock and to serve without blame as your high priest, and by the spirit of the high priesthood to have authority to forgive sins in accord with your command.'" That's the prayer that they pray for ordination.

Then John Chrysostom says, "Priests have received a power which God has given neither to angels nor archangels. It was said to them, 'Whosoever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in Heaven, and whatsoever you shall loose, shall be loosed.' Temporal rulers have, indeed, the power of binding, but they can only bind the body. Priests, in contrast, can bind with a bond which pertains to the soul itself and transcends the very heavens."

I wish I had more time, and I don't, but I want, very quickly, to leave you with the conditions for a mortal sin. A mortal sin is a serious sin. It is one that transgresses against the Ten Commandments, or is one of the seven deadly sins. You must know that the thing that you're doing is wrong, and you must freely choose it. It is a presumptuous sin. It's a rebellion. If you have sinned in that way, Dear One, get thee to Confession. Don't be bashful. Don't put it off. It's important to restore your relationship to God and the Church. You just don't know when your very last breath will be. You don't wanna be in a state of mortal sin when that occurs. You can confess venial sins and I would encourage you to do that as well because you receive grace. That was the only sacrament that I was able to receive as a non-Catholic and I went every single week because that's the only thing I could get. I absolutely loved it. I still love it. I still love to go to Confession because I know I'm receiving grace along with the Eucharist when I receive the Eucharist. That's another point. Never, never receive the Eucharist without having gone to Confession for a mortal sin first or else you are guilty of the body of Christ, the body and blood of the Lord according to Paul.

Until next week, I'm Sonja Corbitt, your Bible Study Evangelista.

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