

Dealing Rightly with Our Sins

Preparatory 2018

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Read together from Proverbs 28. Proverbs 28.

1 The wicked flee when no man pursueth: but the righteous are bold as a lion. 2 For the transgression of a land many are the princes thereof: but by a man of understanding and knowledge the state thereof shall be prolonged. 3 A poor man that oppreseth the poor is like a sweeping rain which leaveth no food. 4 They that forsake the law praise the wicked: but such as keep the law contend with them. 5 Evil men understand not judgment: but they that seek the LORD understand all things. 6 Better is the poor that walketh in his uprightness, than he that is perverse in his ways, though he be rich. 7 Whoso keepeth the law is a wise son: but he that is a companion of riotous men shameth his father. 8 He that by usury and unjust gain increaseth his substance, he shall gather it for him that will pity the poor. 9 He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination. 10 Whoso causeth the righteous to go astray in an evil way, he shall fall himself into his own pit: but the upright shall have good things in possession. 11 The rich man is wise in his own conceit; but the poor that hath understanding searcheth him out. 12 When righteous men do rejoice, there is great glory: but when the wicked rise, a man is hidden. 13 He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy. 14 Happy is the man that feareth alway: but he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief. 15 As a roaring lion, and a ranging bear; so is a wicked ruler over the poor people. 16 The prince that wanteth understanding is also a great oppressor: but he that hateth covetousness shall prolong his days. 17 A man that doeth violence to the blood of any person shall flee to the pit; let no man stay him. 18 Whoso walketh uprightly shall be saved: but he that is perverse in his ways shall fall at once. 19 He that tilleth his land shall have plenty of bread: but he that followeth after vain persons shall have poverty enough. 20 A faithful man shall abound with blessings: but he that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent. 21 To have respect of persons is not good: for for a piece of bread that man will transgress. 22 He that hasteth to be rich hath an evil eye, and considereth not that poverty shall come

upon him. 23 He that rebuketh a man afterwards shall find more favour than he that flattereth with the tongue. 24 Whoso robbeth his father or his mother, and saith, It is no transgression; the same is the companion of a destroyer. 25 He that is of a proud heart stirreth up strife: but he that putteth his trust in the LORD shall be made fat. 26 He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool: but whoso walketh wisely, he shall be delivered. 27 He that giveth unto the poor shall not lack: but he that hideth his eyes shall have many a curse. 28 When the wicked rise, men hide themselves: but when they perish, the righteous increase.

The text we consider is verses 13 and 14 of the chapter,

13 He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy. 14 Happy is the man that feareth always: but he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief.

Beloved people of God in our Lord Jesus Christ, self-examination is a vital part of the life of a healthy Christian. In the Lord's Supper form we find that taught to us as well. The Lord's Supper form says that it is necessary for the Lord's Supper to be celebrated to our comfort, that we examine ourselves. Take note of that once again that we may now celebrate the Supper of the Lord to our comfort, it is above all things necessary and then, first of all, it's mentioned rightly to examine ourselves that we may now celebrate the Supper of the Lord to our comfort, we need to examine ourselves.

Self-examination involves introspection. Introspection, the word is made up, really, of two words, on the one hand "intro," which means into, and the second part of the word comes from a word which mean to look. So the idea is to look into and specifically now to look into one's self. Introspection, to look into one's self.

There is, of course, an unhealthy looking into one's self. If one looks into himself to find his own salvation, that is, of course, extremely unhealthy and will be to his own destruction. If one looks for things that will not be there, imagines that they will be but they are not going to be there, the word of God doesn't instruct him that these things shall appear within him but he's busy looking for them, this will be harmful and unhealthy. If one is looking into himself and only looking for his sin, all of the time focused upon his sinfulness within himself, that is, of course, an unhealthy looking into one's self. If one even looks into himself too much and without looking at Jesus Christ outside of himself as he is exalted in heaven, this is, again, unhealthy and the Lord's Supper form warns us against that as well. It calls us not to focus in this instance upon the bread and wine but lift our hearts up on high where Christ Jesus is in heaven certainly, but there is an introspection that is healthy.

The Lord's Supper form leads us to do this in preparation to the celebration of the Lord's Supper to our comfort. In fact, the examination and preparation of ourselves is specially and particularly involves introspection, involves looking into ourselves. We see that if we look at the Lord's Supper form which is our authoritative guide in preparation and

examination, and we recognize that the first part of examination of ourselves is, first of all, that we consider by, everyone considers by himself alone his sins. We consider our sins. Certainly we look at our life and we see the sins of our life but we see those sins as we see our life inside of our mind and inside of our memory. In fact, to many of the sins that we're going to discover as we examine ourselves, are sins that occur only in our mind. They don't come out into our life in words or in actions but are found there alone in our minds, so we're going to examine ourselves and perform that first step of examination, we need to look into our mind.

Secondly, the Lord's Supper form begins this way, "That everyone examine his own heart." Let everyone examine his own heart, "whether he doth believe this faithful promise of God," and we know how the rest of it goes, but I draw your attention now this evening to the fact that we're called to examine our own heart, to look within our heart to see that we believe.

In the third place, the Lord's Supper form goes on to say, it begins this way again, "That everyone examine his own conscience." Again, of course, a conscience isn't something that's outside of ourselves that we can hold in our hand, our conscience is within us and everyone must examine his own conscience and see what he finds within himself.

Then also later in the form, the form says that we feel this testimony in our hearts, that we're disposed properly to come to the table of the Lord, again something that is discovered within.

Then again we feel, though we feel not in infirmities and miseries in ourselves, and of course, the sentence goes on that again teaches us, instructs us that there's something within ourselves that we look for as we examine ourselves, and all of that, of course is with a view to looking at our Savior Jesus Christ and his perfect sacrifice and at his feeding, nourishing our hungry and thirsty souls mercifully with his word and by his grace. We look into ourselves, then, not to end there but we look into ourselves so that we might see the mercy of God in Jesus Christ our Savior.

So let us look this evening at this text and use it as a spiritual mirror to see into ourselves, and then, too, that it may lead us to be properly prepared to partake of the Lord's Supper, Lord willing, next Sunday morning.

We consider the text under the theme "Dealing Rightly with Our Sins." Dealing rightly with our sins. First of all, holy activity; secondly, greatly important; and thirdly, daily conduct. When we speak of dealing rightly with our sins, it is implied that there's a wrong way to deal with our sins and that is certainly true. The text speaks of that as well. The text speaks of both the right dealing with our sins as well as the wrong dealing with our sins, but the text speaks of only those two possibilities. The text doesn't offer a third possibility that there are those who are without sin so that they need not deal with their sin rightly. All have sinned. That the text assumes. It's implied and implied very very plainly and that, too, on the basis and in harmony with all the rest of the word of God. All have sinned, that's the truth. All have fallen at once in Adam when he fell in the garden,

so that by nature every single person, of course our Lord excepted, but other than that every single person by nature is depraved, is totally depraved.

We are sinful. Out of that nature that we've inherited comes sin so that we must say not only we are sinful but we are sinners. We're sinful and we sin and everyone knows it. Everyone knows it. In particular we mean everyone knows it about himself. Each individual in this world knows that he is a sinner. God puts that knowledge even in the heart of the unbeliever, even within the ungodly. Not graciously, that's not a work of God's grace, but God does write the working of the law in their heart so that they know what's required of them and they know that they have not done what is required and they know that they stand exposed to the judgment and condemnation of God, but they know in all of that that they have sinned. They know it. All know that they have broken the law of God. We know that. Everyone in the world knows that.

The requirement to love God is a requirement that we have not met. The requirement to love the neighbor, to love God by loving the neighbor, we know we have not done that. In fact, we have broken that law, that requirement of God. All know that they are rebels and we know that too, that we are rebels. Literally the word for sins in the text refers to transgressions or even literally rebellions, rebellions against God.

Everyone knows deep within this truth but not all deal with that knowledge in the same way. There's two ways of dealing with that knowledge of sin, that deep knowledge of sin. To understand the right way of dealing with sin, we need to understand, first of all, the wrong way. There are two ways we've said and they're antithetical to one another. There's an antithesis to this right dealing with our sins that the text speaks of. The text speaks of both but it speaks of the wrong way so as to draw out sharply the right way and to give us warnings over against the wrong way of dealing with sin. The text speaks of that wrong way when it speaks of he that covereth his sins. He that covereth his sins. That means to conceal sin; to literally spread something over something else, in this case to spread something over one's sin, to put a covering over one's sin so that he conceals it, hides it from view and does not admit that it exists. To cover one's sin means to refuse to see it or to refuse to see it as it really is, as sin.

When the text speaks of one who covers sin, it means covering sin, first of all, from himself. That is what the unrepentant unbelieving and ungodly individual does. That's what we sometimes do too when we walk according to our old nature. We cover the sin over from ourselves and we think in vain, vain folly that if we can cover our sin over to ourselves, perhaps then God cannot see it either. So we hope and we expect or the one who covers his sin hopes and expects that covering the sin over in his own mind, in his own conscience he can cover it over from God. Complete vanity and complete folly but very often done. That is what we seek to avoid in this week of examination in preparation. We seek to avoid covering over our sin. That's dealing wrongly with sin but we're very prone to that, aren't we? I admit that and we can all admit that about ourselves, we're very prone to that, we're very prone to cover over our sins. Our heart is very deceitful and by nature, according to our old sinful nature, we love to cover over our sin.

So we watch out for that, we're aware of that in this week as we examine ourselves that we don't give into that even slightly within our hearts and within our consciences as we examine ourselves and prepare ourselves to come to the table of the Lord, but how does one cover sin? How does one hide it from himself so as to hide it from God? Good to ask that question and to contemplate that for a few moments too so that we can be warned how we often do that and how not to then also in this week. Many ways, many ways that we do that and we cannot possibly list every single way that that's done but we contemplate a few of them now for a few moments and as we do that, each of us must think of our own sins. We're gonna do that throughout the week but already now we know our sin and our sinfulness, we know our besetting sins, we know sins that we're prone to, we know sins that we struggle against, we know sins that we like to cherish and cover over.

We think of our sins now and we be sure that we do not simply put our sin out of our mind. That's a way that one covers over sin, simply ignore it. "I won't think about it. If I can put it out of my mind, then I can, in a sense, cover it over, not deal with it, not be aware of it." Ignore it, or perhaps we can, we do distract ourselves from our sin. "I know I shouldn't have done that," but then we rush off to quickly do something else. "I know I shouldn't have thought that but," and we distract ourselves with something else and the world is full of distractions today so that we do not seriously deal properly with our sin, or perhaps we excuse our sin. "I know I did this or that or thought this or that, but I couldn't help it. There were certain reasons why I did that. My situation, you have to understand. Normally it's sin but in this situation it's understandable, in this situation this sin is excusable."

So we tell ourselves. We seek to cover over sin by blaming someone else for our sin. How often don't we do that? We learned that well from our first parents, didn't we? Already very very at the beginning, the very first sin, that was exactly the response, that was exactly the way that Adam and Eve sought to cover over their sin. Perhaps we blame the devil. "The devil made me do it." Or, "You know, he's powerful, therefore it's not that serious that I sinned this sin." Or, "It's someone else's fault. Because of what they did, this person or that person provoked me and therefore I have the right to behave in this or that way. Because of them. I blame them. My sin is not that serious." Or perhaps we'll even blame God. "God made me this way." Or, "The Lord providentially brought this into my life." Or, "He didn't give me the grace that I needed."

Another way to cover sin. Perhaps we hide behind custom or tradition. "It's always been done this way. People have always thought this way and therefore how could this be sin?" Or we hide in the multitude, "Many others do it too. It's very very common." Sometimes children will do that to their parents. Their parents say, "You know, you shouldn't do this or you shouldn't say that." "Well, everyone does that. Everyone says this," as if somehow that justifies the sin. Or perhaps one will say, "We're all sinners. No one's perfect," in an attempt to cover over sin. Or say, "My sin at least is less serious than others' sins," so that we look at others' sins and we hold them up high in our mind and we point at them and we act shocked and dismayed to see or to know of that sin, and all the

while so as to minimize and cover over our own sin, to say that our own sins are small, not that serious.

Or one of the worst ways to cover over sin is to claim that our good that we have done outweighs the sins that we have done, as if there's any way to argue or think along that line in harmony with the Scripture which clearly speaks over against that, but how often isn't that the thinking? It's the thinking often of money in the world when they're told that this or that was sinful and you did this or that, "Yes, but overall I'm a good person," they say. Do we sometimes let that thinking come into our minds so as to cover over our sin? We think with the amount of good that we've done which outweighs and covers over our sin.

Or perhaps the worst of all is to say, "That sin actually is holiness. That sin which the Scripture is very plain to condemn, I, in my own mind, have reasoned out that it's actually good and godly, perhaps just in this situation, perhaps just for me or others like me, but certainly my case may be always, it's actually good to be found in this sin."

All of those, beloved, are ways in which we cover our sin and not deal rightly but deal very very wrongly with our sin. Dealing rightly with our sin is, first of all, confessing it. How very different, how utterly antithetical, the opposite of covering over our sin is confessing our sin. The original word means, at least at its most basic, means to throw, perhaps it means to throw off the cover, or we can think of it that way anyway, to confess our sins is not to put a covering over our sin but to throw off the cover of our sin.

To confess our sins means, first of all, to see them for what they are. To admit that, first of all, to ourselves soberly, humbly, as the Lord's Supper form says, that everyone consider by himself his sins rather than looking across the aisle, down the pew at someone else in the congregation, discovering their sins. That's not what we're called to be busy in this week but to consider our own sins and admit them to ourselves with a view to, then, confessing them to God, confessing them and throwing off the covering before God, confess that our sins then are inexcusable violations of the law of God.

We have to face that, first of all, ourselves. If we're truly confessing our sins, we have to stand before the law of God, hold up the law of God over against our sin and recognize there's no excuse for that sin. It is, indeed, a violation of God's good and holy and perfect law. We admit that to ourselves and then to our God. We admit to ourselves that we have transgressed against the holy God, not just against his law, really there's no distinction between God and his law, the law is simply the revelation of God and his mind and his calling to mankind, but it is good also to recognize very plainly that we transgressed against the holy God, the perfectly glorious holy God has consecrated himself and over against all that is sinful and we have transgressed against him. It is good when we confess. It is important. It is part of confession to recognize that our iniquities are against our Maker, the one who has created us, the sovereign, glorious, eternal, infinite God who has given us our life and being, and everything, including all the gifts of grace, we admit to ourselves that our sins are rebellions against the sovereign, the King, who has the right to rule over us and the right to command us to do whatever pleases him, and in fact his

commandments are for our good and yet we have rebelled against him. And that, again, without excuse.

We confess when we confess our sins, we confess that our sins are really hatred against the God who loves me. That I have to confess to myself and that I confess to my God. My sin is an intentional missing the mark. God says, "Aim at my glory with all your being," and not only do we fall short while attempting, but we turn around and we aim in the opposite direction and we say, "I will not, God. I will not for I hate thee." That's the depravity of our own hearts and that's the grievousness of our sin and we confess, then, to ourselves that's the reality, we confess that to our God and we say with the Psalmist, "Against thee have I sinned."

Confessing our sins includes seeing them as mine. There's a lot to that, not simply that sin is something that happens to me, sin is something that accompanies me but sin comes out of me and is mine. We confess that too. The text speaks of sin in that language, "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy." That is, his sins, his sins. We own our sins in a certain sense. We take responsibility for our own sin. It doesn't mean, of course, that we say, "I will take my sin and I'll take the responsibility for purging my sin upon myself." What nonsense. Of course not. It's not what "take responsibility for our sins" means, it simply means I acknowledge I'm responsible. I did it. No one else did it. No one else made me do it. I have no excuse. I did it.

Then confession includes that we confess what we deserve. That too. We think of that now as we think about our sins but we think of that also in this week of examination, confess what we deserve. The Lord's Supper form guides us in that as well. The true examination of ourselves consists of this, first of all, that everyone consider by himself his sins and then this, and the curse due to him for them. I consider the curse that's due to me that I deserve on account of my sin. We sing of that also and will presently in Psalter 140. In stanza 2 we sing, "My transgressions I confess, grief and guilt my soul oppress. I have sinned against thy grace and provoked thee to thy face," and then this, "I confess thy judgment just, speechless I, thy mercy trust." We confess that God's judgment of our sin is just and God's declaration of what we deserve is just and is true.

Confessing our sins, then, includes also that we abhor not only our sins but ourselves who sin. That too, the Lord's Supper form teaches us. Let everyone consider by himself his sins and the curse due to him for them to the end that he may abhor and humble himself before God. It's not, of course, in conflict with the calling of the commandment that we love our neighbor as we love ourselves as a proper, godly, healthy love of ourselves as we view ourselves in Jesus Christ, but this now means we look at ourselves as we are by nature. We look at that sinfulness within us that is mine, that is me, and we abhor what we see, we abhor that part of ourselves and we humble ourselves before God, not claiming to find or have anything in ourselves to counteract or to speak over against the confession of our sin.

"I have sinned against thee and I deserve eternal everlasting punishment." That's confession. The text says that one confesses when he deals rightly with his sin but the text goes on to say also that he forsaketh his sins, "whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy." That too is in harmony with the Lord's Supper form as we might expect. The Lord's Supper form is solidly founded upon the word of God, but there in the third section of examination we read, "Let everyone examine his own conscience whether he purposeth henceforth to show true thankfulness to God in his whole life and to walk uprightly before him as also," this part now I especially draw your attention to, "as also whether he hath laid aside," that's the same as forsaking, isn't it? "Laid aside unfeignedly," that is without hypocrisy, "truly and sincerely laid aside all enmity, hatred and envy and have firmly resolved henceforward to walk in true love and peace with his neighbor."

The Lord's Supper form goes on to say then negatively about those who do not forsake their sin but make a feigned confession of sin all these while they continue in such sins, that is not forsake them, shall abstain from this meat which Christ hath ordained only for the faithful lest their judgment and condemnation be made the heavier. One confesses and forsakes his sin when he deals rightly with that sin. In fact, forsaking the sin, turning away, turning one's back on that sin, being determined not to continue walking in that sin, is proof of true confession. One confesses his sin and he believes he's made a true confession, then he looks at his heart and he says, "But I cleave to that sin. I'm going to return to that sin. I love that sin. I'm not going to fight that sin." Whatever sin it might be, he must begin again and seek to confess sincerely and honestly his sin and forsake that sin.

That, beloved, is dealing rightly with our sin. In a word, that's repentance. That's how we deal with our sin, repentently, in repentance before God, and that is greatly important to deal rightly with our sin and not to deal wrongly with our sin, greatly important. The text brings out that importance, "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy. Happy is the man that feareth always: but he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief." Negatively, one who covers his sin, hardening his heart regarding his sin, shall not prosper. He shall fall into mischief, the text says, that is, bad shall come upon him, evil shall come upon him, unhappiness and misery shall come upon him.

Covering sins, he will not prosper, he will not do well. He will not proceed on towards a good goal for that which he desires. Covering sins leads to misery. Covering sins leads to misery in this life and covering sins leads to misery ultimately in hell if one persists in covering his sins and that because of his sins and because of the wrath of God and the judgment of God the just, judgment of God upon one who sins and continues to cover his sins. He will not prosper. He will have misery. That's a good warning of God to us and we do well to take heed.

It's also the word that God speaks through the Psalmist in Psalm 32, again showing that someone who is regenerated and a believer can, at least for a time, cover his sins. The Psalmist speaks of his misery in covering his sins in verses 3 and 4, "When I kept silence,

my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer." The New Testament also, 1 John 1:8 and 10, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us." And the Lord's Supper form says, "For one who deceives himself, for one who speaks those untruths, he eats and drinks damnation to himself." Judgment to himself.

Confess, then, and forsake your sins and in that way, have mercy, the text says. Once again, that beautiful word of the text, "but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them," that is, his sins, "but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy." The word "mercy" there refers to the love of God, the mercy of God, the compassion of God, and that's what he's speaking of as well. One could say, "Well, one who confesses his sins to his fellow saints shall find mercy or have mercy given to him from that fellow's sake," and there's truth to that but the main point of the text is that one who confesses his sins uncovers them, confesses them within his own heart and before his God shall have mercy, the mercy of God, and not have the mercy of God because he was so very repentant, not on the basis of his repentance or on the basis of his confession. Of course not. How could anyone think such a thing?

Not on the basis of his repentance or confession but on the basis of the cross of Jesus Christ. He'll have mercy because Jesus Christ took his sins upon him and brought them to the cross and suffered and died for them there, for his sins there, and earned for him through all of his obedience the righteousness which he has freely imputed to him as his own. Not on the basis of our repentance or confession but it's on the basis of the cross of Jesus Christ that one has mercy, and not either because confession or repentance of sin is some kind of instrument by which one can earn for himself or appropriate to himself the mercy of God. Again, of course not. How could one think such a thing? How could one possibly think such a thing?

Repentance and confession is not some kind of meriting instrument that one performs before God so as to earn for himself and gain to himself by his great good work of repentance the mercy of God, nor is repentance some kind of appropriating instrument. There's some other kind of instrument that I'm not aware of but those two are the only ones I could think of, whether a meriting instrument or an appropriating instrument, that is, the ability to take hold of the mercy of God and bring that mercy of God into his own soul. Of course not. Not repentance but faith, faith is the only appropriating instrument, the only instrument that's able to take hold of and appropriate the mercy of God and know that as one's own in one's own conscience. But to repeat, not on the basis of his repentance and not with repentance as some instrument, but in the way of his repentance, in the way of our repentance, beloved, we have mercy, we have mercy of God.

Not true simply but he that confesses and he that has mercy are the same person, of course that's true. Of course that's true. That's not the main or the only point of the passage to simply say the one who confesses and the one who has mercy is the same person, but the text means to instruct us that it is in the way of confession, in the way of repentance that we have the mercy of God. And beloved, that's true with regard to all of

our sins. On the one hand, covering the smallest sin, one will not prosper, but on the other hand, confessing the greatest sin, one has mercy, the free unmerited mercy of God in Jesus Christ. So long as we cover our sins, God will not cover our sins, that is, cover our sins with the forgiving blood of Jesus Christ in our hearts and in our souls. So long as we with our pride cover our sins, we cannot, we cannot with the hand of faith cover our sins with the righteousness of Christ and the forgiving mercy that is found in Jesus Christ, but in the way of repentance and in confessing our sins and laying them out before God and confessing them unfeignedly before the holy God, our God, we, as it were, tear off the cover of our sin and take hold of the mercy God in Jesus Christ that is, beloved, is ours because he earned it, he earned it for us. We are covered, we are covered in that way. 1 John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Again, Psalm 32:5 this time, "I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin."

Live that way, beloved. Live that way always. The other way, not dealing with our sins rightly but covering over our sins as a way of hardening, a way of growing more and more obstinate, more and more stubborn, more and more hardened against the word of God, the text speaks of that too. Verse 14, "he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief." But on the other hand, fear God. Fear God. Recognize him for who he is, the glorious great God and adore him at the same time as you stand in awe of him. Adore him for his mercy and his grace shown to us in Jesus Christ.

Fear him always. "Happy," or blessed, "is the man that feareth alway," that is, as an established way of conduct, as an established way of life. He fears the Lord always. That involves, then, a daily confession of our sins. It is good that we set aside a week to focus upon introspection, to focus upon examination and preparation. It's good that we set aside a week to recognize our sins and to confess our sins and to come before God believing in the mercy of God in Jesus Christ and finding and having that mercy of God by faith in Jesus Christ. It's good that we set aside a week for that but really, beloved, that week reminds us, doesn't it, we are busy this week examining ourselves rightly, it will remind us of how important that activity is every day. That's how we live as healthy children of God, examining ourselves every day, not covering our sins, looking for sins which we might be covering, tearing off the covering, confessing them before God and believing, embracing with that gift of faith the righteousness and forgiveness that is ours in Jesus Christ our Savior.

Do that daily but now especially let us give ourselves to that in this week, that when we come next week to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, we may be called by God, as the form puts it, worthy partakers of this heavenly meat and drink, those who are properly disposed, properly prepared to partake by faith in the mercy of God in Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

Father in heaven, we thank thee for thy word. It is a word which pierces into our hearts, a word which brings the knowledge of and conviction of our sin and the sorrow for our sins, a word which exposes us as we really are by nature, those who have sinned against

thee and thy grace. Grant us, Lord, also that we may even as we have heard the word tonight but also in this coming week and especially as we enjoy the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, have mercy and hear from thee that thou dost forgive us all of our sins and thou dost give to us freely the righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ as our own, so much so that it is as if we had kept by his work, as if we had kept all of thy good law. Fill us, Lord, with thy Spirit that we may properly prepare ourselves now and look forward, look forward to gathering together around the blessed table of our Lord Jesus Christ next week according to thy will. Hear us and answer us graciously. Amen.