

## **The Sacrament of the Altar (Part V)**

*Who, then, receives such sacrament worthily?* Fasting and bodily preparation is, indeed, a fine outward training; but he is truly worthy and well prepared who has faith in these words: "Given, and shed for you, for the remission of sins."

But he that does not believe these words, or doubts, is unworthy and unfit; for the words *For you* require altogether believing hearts.

1. How, first of all, does "faith in these words" show itself, at least to the one who believes them? How does the pastor assess and move His people toward this faith?
2. How does unbelief in these words show itself, at least to the one who disbelieves them? How does the pastor assess and move his people away from this unbelief?

### **From Luther's *Large Catechism* (V: Sacrament of the Altar)**

<sup>53</sup> For this is certainly true, as I have found in my own experience, and as every one will find in his own case, that if a person thus withdraw from this Sacrament, he will daily become more and more callous and cold, and will at last disregard it altogether.

<sup>54</sup> To avoid this, we must, indeed, examine heart and conscience, and act like a person who desires to be right with God. Now, the more this is done, the more will the heart be warmed and enkindled, that it may not become entirely cold.

<sup>55</sup> But if you say: How if I feel that I am not prepared?... <sup>57</sup> But if you are to regard how good and pure you are, and labor to have no compunctions, you must never approach. <sup>58</sup> We must, therefore, make a distinction here among men. For those who are wanton and dissolute must be told to stay away; for they are not prepared to receive forgiveness of sin, since they do not desire it and do not wish to be godly.

<sup>59-60</sup> But the others, who are not such callous and wicked people, and desire to be godly, must not absent themselves, even though otherwise they be feeble and full of infirmities, as St. Hilary also has said: If any one have not committed sin for which he can rightly be put out of the congregation and esteemed as no Christian, he ought not stay away from the Sacrament, lest he may deprive himself of life. For no one will make such progress that he will not retain many daily infirmities in flesh and blood.

<sup>61-62</sup> Therefore such people must learn that it is the highest art to know that our Sacrament does not depend upon our worthiness. For we are not baptized because we are worthy and holy, nor do we go to confession because we are pure and without sin, but the contrary, because we are poor miserable men, and just because we are unworthy; unless it be some one who desires no grace and absolution nor intends to reform. But whoever would gladly obtain grace and consolation should impel himself, and allow no one to frighten him away, but say: I, indeed, would like to be worthy; but I come, not upon any worthiness, but upon Thy Word, because Thou hast commanded it, as one who would gladly be Thy disciple, no matter what becomes of my worthiness.