Confronting Sin in the Church
Scripture: Galatians 6:1-4
Code: 80-155

The Lord's Table is certainly a time for remembering; a time for remembering the death of our Savior the Lord Jesus Christ. A time for considering the great realities of the cross, substitution, atonement, satisfaction, propitiation, expiation; all of those terms that define some aspect of the great work of Christ on the cross.

And in fact the theological glories of the cross have been the inexhaustible theme of millions of sermons for 2,000 years. The cross and the remembrance of our Lord's work there certainly draws us to a very careful consideration of the nature of God as He reveals in one great event both His wrath and His mercy.

A consideration of the cross causes us to look at the person of Christ to consider His humanity as He dies as a man. And consider at the same time His deity as He forgives the sin of the one dying beside Him and promises Himself to rise from the dead.

Looking at the cross also points out the horrible plight of lost sinners who are so deep in sin that one must pay such a penalty to free them from it. It is also a time to consider the hope of saints, who in the death of Christ find their great release and hope of eternal glory.

There's much to remember and when you look back at the cross, and we do time and time again, you must consider all of those wonderful realities that are part of the death of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But it's also a time to look at our own lives, to consider the sin in us. The apostle Paul laid down a very straightforward command for those who come to the Lord's Table. This is what he wrote: "Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord, but let a man examine himself and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup for he who eats and drinks eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not judge the body rightly. For this reason many among you are weak and sick and a number sleep (or literally are dead) but if we judged ourselves rightly we should not be judged. But when we are judged we are disciplined by the Lord in order that we may not be condemned along with the world."

Paul says, when you come to the Lord's Table it is a time for self judgment. It is a time for self examination so that you can avoid the discipline of God. It is a time to come in a worthy way and that means having confronted and dealt with sin in your own life.

Here is a call to self examination. And every time we come to the Lord's Table we not only look back but we look in. It's a time for us to examine our own hearts. It's really reminiscent of the words of our Lord Jesus in Matthew chapter 5 verses 23 and 24 who said, "When you come to bring an offering or when you come to worship if there's something that isn't right between you and someone else, leave, make it right then come back."

It is to that theme of self examination, that theme of dealing with sin in our lives, that theme of worthiness and the avoidance of judgment and chastening, that I want to call your attention this morning.

We are called not only to remember but we are called to be holy. We are called not only to proclaim the cross but we are called to live a godly, virtuous, holy life. We are called to bring heaven down. We pray thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven and there's only one place where that can happen and that's the church. The church is the only heaven the world can see and heaven is a place of holiness and the church must be as well.

If we are to bring down heaven we have to bring down what's going on in heaven. And what is going on there is the worship of God, the exaltation of Jesus Christ and holiness. The church of the redeemed should be a holy place and coming to the Lord's Table forces us to deal with those issues because we cannot participate unless we have.

In 2 Corinthians chapter 7 some of you will remember a few weeks ago when we were studying that great chapter. And we were reminded of the words of Paul who said, "Let us cleanse ourselves from our defilement of flesh and spirit perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

Each of us personally must attend to the matter of holiness by bringing our sin before God, confessing it, repenting of it and seeking a path of obedience. We are called to deal with sin. Sin is a reality in every Christian's life. We don't deny that. Because we're Christians doesn't mean we deny sin. Quite the contrary, we of all people confess it.

To deny sin is foolish particularly in the light of the Scripture, 1 John 1:8, the apostle John writes, "If we say that we have no sin we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us." Verse 10, "If we say that we have not sinned we make him a liar and his word is not in us".

Two things happen when you deny sin, you deceive yourself and you make God a liar because God affirms that indeed we are sinful. James 3:2 says, "We all stumble in many ways." Paul said, "Oh, wretched man that I am. Who will deliver me from the body of this death?" We have not been freed.

James 1:21, "From all that remains of wickedness," we still have remaining wickedness to deal with. And in order for us to let our light shine so that men can see our good works and glorify our Father in heaven, in order for us to be useful to Him in serving Him, in order for our worship to have any meaning at all we have to deal with sin.

We all know what the Bible says. Sin devastates us in our worship, in our service. It takes our joy, our peace, our love, our assurance, our usefulness. It poisons the church with its permeating influence like leaven as Paul discusses it in 1 Corinthians 5:1-5 and says, "You've got to put out that sinning person because a little leaven leaven's the whole lump."

Sin weakens our confidence in God. It weakens our trust. Sin steals our anticipation of the return of Christ and robs us of the hope of heaven. Sin destroys our ministry because we become vessels unfit for the Master's use.

And we must add that sin cannot easily be dealt with. Paul said, "I have to die daily. I have to constantly beat my body into submission." And he said, "I can't do it in the flesh. Having begun in the spirit I can't be made perfect in the flesh," Galatians 3:3. It is a supernatural, spiritual divine matter to battle this remaining wickedness. It does not rest easy. It fights all the way but it must be dealt with. This is true individually as we well know and we are all before God called to deal with the sins in our own lives.

But I want to go beyond that if I may this morning and remind us that it is also a corporate issue. It is also a corporate issue. We all know that a chain is not stronger than its weakest link. And the testimony of a church is no greater than its weakest member.

We all collectively have to demonstrate to the watching world the power of the saving gospel; the power of the transforming God who has changed us and put His Spirit within us. We must do that collectively if we are going to let His glories shine. And so then I must be concerned not only about my sin but I must be concerned about yours as well because your sin may debilitate my testimony as much as my own.

We must be concerned about our own holiness. We must be concerned about the holiness of the church. Back in 1 Corinthians a little earlier then where we read in chapter 11 in the 5th chapter which I referred to a moment ago. Paul says in verse 7 of 1 Corinthians 5, "Clean out the old leaven that you may be a new lump." Wherever there is sinful influence in the church, clean it out, he says. So you are unleavened. So there's no sin in the church. Clean it out.

What do you mean Paul? Verse 9, "I wrote to you in my letter," the first letter which we don't have. It wasn't inspired and included in the canon of Scripture but it was written nonetheless. "I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people." You have to make a break with immoral people and I did not at all mean with the immoral people of this world or with the covetous and swindlers or with idolaters, and...for then you would have to go out of the world.

I'm not talking about not associating with unbelievers in the world but, verse 11, actually I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he should be an immoral person or covetous or an idolater or a reviler or a drunkard or a swindler, not even to eat with such a one. In other words, you've got to make sure that you deal with sin, that you put out the evil influence of a sinning person and that you have nothing to do with an immoral person.

Verse 12, "For what have I to do with judging outsiders. Do you not judge those who are within the church?" We're not sitting in judgment on the world. We've got to deal with the church. In all honesty, I grieve in my heart that Christians can get so upset, and so anxious, and so distressed, and so disturbed, and so militant, and so aggressive, and so involved in dealing with the sins of non-Christians, but they do.

They create major enterprises to deal with the sins of non-Christians. Getting involved in matters with regard to pornography, matters with regard to homosexuality, matters with regard to a...social injustice; problems in the court system, inequities, matters in regard to the pollution of the minds of children in the education system.

They get involved with all those kinds of things; trying to stop abortion in our society. And people become militantly involved in those things who wouldn't turn a finger to deal with the sin of a believer in their own congregation. And yet that is the priority. That is the priority.

We are to be so much heaven on earth that people look at us and see holiness, something that is utterly other-worldly and completely uncommon and unfamiliar to them. The Lord is not asking us to deal with the sins of the unconverted first but rather to deal with the sins of the Christians, who thus through their holy living can become a shining light and the testimony of the power of God of forgiveness, and thus have impact on the Christian...on the non-Christians who've sinned.

Jesus even gave us a pattern for this in Matthew 18. He said, "You go to your brother if he sins and confront him. If he repents you've gained your brother. If he doesn't you take two or three witnesses. If it still doesn't work tell the church," which means you send the whole church after them. If they still don't repent you put them out of the church.

That is a pattern for dealing with sin in the church. It is absolutely crucial we do that. It is a rare communion service when we don't have to do that publicly, isn't it? And this morning, thank God, is one of those rare occasions. That's... That's a good indication that we're doing our best to deal with sin. We do it communion, after communion, after communion.

And that's only the end of the process. If it ever gets here it's a step three or step four. Steps one and steps two are going on all the time as believers confront each other with the issues of sin. When you come to the Lord's Table, beloved, you must come here having dealt with sin in your life and done everything you can to deal with sin in the lives of others so that we help them, so that they don't come in an unworthy manner, so that they don't desecrate the Lord's table and harm the testimony of His beloved church.

Now there are a lot of passages of Scripture that we could look at to address this issue of dealing with sin in each other's lives but I want you to turn to Galatians chapter 6, Galatians chapter 6, a very familiar text. And briefly in the time of meditation before we share in the Lord's Table I want to make a few comments about this passage.

There is always the threat, I suppose, and the real threat that if you get engaged in the confrontation of sin it can become ugly. It can become pharisaical. It can become humanly judgmental. People can

abuse the privilege of doing that and can be conducted in the wrong manner and with the wrong attitude. In Galatians 6 is a corrective to all of that in sets that frame of mind in place for how we are to deal with sin in the lives of other. "Brethren, even if a man is caught in any trespass you who are spiritual restore such a one in the spirit of gentleness, each one looking to yourself lest you too be tempted. Bear one another's burdens and thus fulfill the law of Christ." We'll stop at that point.

Paul says, "If a man is caught in a trespass." A *paraptma* is the Greek word, a fall. The Bible talks about sin as a fall. The Bible talks about sin as a stumbling, tripping up, that's simply a term for sin. Someone is in sin. You know it. It says, "You who are spiritual restore such a one."

The responsibility for dealing with sin in the church belongs to those that are spiritual. That's very important. The responsibility for confrontation belongs to those who are spiritual. The spiritual have to go to the fleshly or carnal. You who are spiritual, who are they? Who are the spiritual?

Well, let me help you to understand that because it's very important. Being spiritual has nothing to do with how long you've been a Christian. It has nothing to do with whether you've been a Christian for ten minutes or fifty years. Being spiritual is not something relative to time or knowledge or experience or exposure. Being spiritual is something absolute.

From the moment of your conversion, at any point in time till now, you were either spiritual or carnal. Being spiritual simply means you are walking in the Spirit. And he picks it right up from the passage just prior in chapter 5, verse 16 where he says, "Walk in the Spirit." Verse 25, "If we live by the Spirit let us also walk by the Spirit." That means to walk in obedience to the Holy Spirit; to walk in obedience to the Word which the spirit has given us in Scripture. To be filled with the Spirit. If you desire you could even add to bear the fruit of the Spirit, verses 22 and 23, "Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control." A spiritual person is simply an obedient believer. A Spirit-controlled, Spirit-filled, selfless believer walking in obedience to the Word of God and the will of God in the power of the Spirit of God.

And that can be true of you at any time. It's not the same as being mature. Maturity is relative to time, and knowledge, and experience, and exposure. Spirituality is an absolute. You either are spiritual or carnal depending on whether you are obedient or disobedient, whether you are God-centered, Christ-centered, Spirit-centered or self-centered.

But only a spiritual believer can be of any help to a carnal one. So when a believer falls into fleshly conduct, fleshly behavior, which is described for us earlier, the flesh manifests itself in things like

"immorality," verse 19, "impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these."

When people fall into that, those are evidences that they are walking in the flesh. Spiritual believers must come to their rescue. That's basic in the church in the family of God.

Go back to 1 Corinthians chapter 3 for a moment and just another look at this concept of spiritual. In the words of Paul as he writes to them in chapter 3, verse 1 he says, "I couldn't speak to you as spiritual. I had to speak to you as fleshly. I couldn't give you solid food. I had to give you simple things; milk. I had to treat you like an infant." Why? Verse 3, "You're still fleshly." And how does that manifest itself? "Jealousy, strife." And he says, "You are walking like mere men." That's what it is to be fleshly. It's to just conduct yourself like an unconverted person.

Paul says, "You are fleshly rather than spiritual." But only a spiritual believer can help a fleshly one. That's why we want to take care of our own lives and deal with the sin in our own lives so that we can be of benefit, encouragement, strength to other believers.

Romans 15:1 says, "The spiritually strong have to bear the weaknesses of those without strength." 1 Thessalonians chapter 5 and verse 14 says that we are to admonish the ruly... unruly, encourage the fainthearted, and help the weak.

James, at the end of his epistle, speaks to those who are weak and says, "Is any among you weak," that term meaning weak rather than having some illness, "call for the elders of the church, let them pray over him, massaging him with oil in the name of the Lord." In other words, when you're in a spiritually weak condition you go to the spiritually strong for strength and intercession on your behalf.

The spiritual pick up the fleshly. That's how it is in the church. We have to be all about that. Church isn't something you attend. Church is a way of life. It's living in a community of people who are concerned about holiness enough to confront sin. But you do it with the right attitude.

Let's go back to Galatians and begin to look at the attitude that is required in this confrontation. "Restore," an interesting verb, that *katartiz* verb means to mend or to fix or to repair. You go to this person; you help them see their sin. You bring them to confess that sin and to repent of that sin. That's the three-step process. You help them to see the sin, confess indeed that they have committed

it, and repent of it, which is a determination to turn from it and walk in obedience. But you must do that with a right attitude and that attitude is indicated there. "Restore such a one in a spirit (or an attitude) of gentleness (in an attitude of gentleness) each one looking to yourself lest you too be tempted."

There's no place for abuse, cruelty, harshness, unkindness, maliciousness. And I suppose there's no better illustration of how this works then John gave us in the 8th chapter of his gospel; a graphic scene that shows us the spirit of Jesus in restoring the sinner.

Jesus went to the temple, verse 2, after a night at the Mount of Olives. And all the people were coming to Him and He sat down and began to teach them. And typically the scribes in Pharisees wanted to capture Him and catch Him in His words.

So they brought a woman caught in adultery. They literally went somewhere and the question has always been asked how did they know where to go find a woman in adultery. They may have known well. They brought a woman caught in adultery and they just threw her into the middle of the group Jesus was teaching.

And they said to Him, "Teacher, this woman has been caught in adultery, in the very act." This is a sordid scene. This is a pretty potent, powerful moment. This is a captivating, traumatizing event. They've yanked this woman right out of an adulterous act, thrown her right into the temple ground in the front of Jesus in the midst of the crowd. And they said in verse 5, "Now in the law, Moses commanded us to stone such women, but what do you say."

And again they probably have been staying up nights trying to conceive of this plot because if Jesus says, don't do what Moses said, let her go, then Jesus is in violation of the Mosaic law and is self-condemned with the Jews. If on the other hand, Jesus says grab some stones and kill her He will be condemned by the Romans because the Romans have taken away the right to take a life from the Jews.

So He is between those two alternatives and they were saying this testing Him in order that they might have grounds for accusing Him. They were either going to accuse Him before the Jews for denying the Mosaic law or accuse Him before the Romans for calling for an execution but Jesus stooped down and with His finger wrote on the ground. It doesn't say what He wrote. He might have written a few sins there, one after the other perhaps. Or He might have just patiently doodled. We

don't know. That's hard to imagine, frankly. But some have suggested that. It's hard to be sure.

When they persisted in asking Him he straightened up and said to them, "He who is without sin among you let him be the first to throw a stone at her." This is again divine brilliance. And He stooped down and wrote on the ground some more. It may have been that He was writing sins.

When they heard what He said they began to go out one by one beginning with the older ones because they had more sins to remember. And they knew they were not without sin. And He was left alone. And there was the woman right in the middle.

And straightening up Jesus said to her, "Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you?" She said, "No one Lord." And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you. Go your way." "From now on," what? "Sin no more." That's how you pick somebody up. That's how you do it, considering yourself. Those Pharisees and scribes knew they had no right to throw a stone. They just turned and walked away. They knew their own lives. Before you get abusive, judgmental, condemning, malicious, unkind towards someone else consider yourself.

Jesus did not destroy this woman. He just picked her up and restored her. And then told her don't sin anymore.

Sometimes the church can be pretty malicious. Someone wrote, "I have often thought that if I ever fall into such a trespass like that woman I pray that I don't land in the hands of the censorious, critical, self-righteous judges who are in my church. Let me fall into the hand of the bartender, street walkers or dope peddlers rather than church people who tear me apart with their long, wagging, gossiping tongues cutting me to shreds."

It shouldn't be that way. I suppose it is. It's not that way here. Thank the Lord. But we come, we mend, repair, fix, lift up in a spirit of gentleness. That very gentleness mentioned back in chapter 5 verse 23 is a fruit of the Spirit. We treat people with tenderness, with gentleness as the Scripture continually commands us to do. Looking to ourselves, considering our own lives, and realizing that we really could fall just like they did to the same temptation. Jesus obviously couldn't do that but He does demonstrate to us how to restore.

And it reminds me of Matthew 12:20 where Isaiah the prophet is quoted and Isaiah says of the Messiah this magnificent statement, "A battered reed He will not break off. A smoldering wick He will

not put out." Both the battered reed and the smoldering wick are metaphors. They are pictures. They're illustrations of broken people. And the Messiah when He comes isn't going to destroy broken people.

Shepherds in ancient Israel used to take reeds that they would find growing in the land and they would cut them and make them into flutes. Reed flutes were the common musical instrument used often by shepherds and they would play them and play them.

And eventually because of the fact that they were exposed to the weather and they weren't particularly valuable and maybe not cared for as you might care for something precious, and because of the saliva from the mouth of the shepherd blown into them, they would eventually become soft in the middle and they would lose the ability to make any music.

Perhaps a time would come when they even became brittle and cracked or a portion of them broke and the shepherd might just take such a useless flute and snap it in half, break it in half and toss it away because it couldn't make any music anymore. But when the Messiah comes he won't take the flute that can't make music and break it. He'll restore its song.

In those times, they had little oil lamps with oil in them and the wick would float on the surface of the oil. The wick occasionally would get down to the place where all it did was smolder with smoke and someone would reach over and extinguish that irritating, smoking, flickering wick. But when the Messiah comes He doesn't do that. He doesn't extinguish the bear light. He fans it back into full flame.

That's the tenderness and the compassion and the grace and the kindness that the Messiah will exhibit in restoring. And that's exactly what He did with the women there when He picked her up, forgave her sin, and restored her.

That's what we're called to do beloved. That's how we do it in the church. And verse 2 defines that for us in some very simple terms. That's called bearing one another's burdens. That's what it's called.

I think sometimes we assume that bearing one another's burdens is sort of sharing prayer requests about things that aren't quite intimate. I think sometimes we think bearing one another's burdens is helping each other financially to be able to get through a difficult time. And certainly there is truth in that but bear one another's burdens here has to do with something very specific.

The word “burdens” here is heavy loads, hard to carry. It's not even the same, for example, as down in verse 5 where it says, "Each one shall bear his own load." There you have a word “load” that simply means duty. It doesn't particularly mean something really heavy just the normal, routine, generic deals of life.

But here we're talking about a different issue; heavy, heavy loads. And when you bear one's heavy, heavy load you really fulfill the law of Christ. And what is the law of Christ? The law of Christ is John 13:34, Jesus says, “A new commandment I give unto you that you," what? "love one another." That's the law of Christ. That's the new law.

That's what James called the royal law or the law of liberty; the new law. It's the law of loving one another as I have loved you. And that loving one another means that after you have lifted up and restored this person you continue to be there to help them shoulder this heavy, heavy, heavy load. And that's how you share your love. You, like those elders in James 5, you massage that person. You rub that person, as it were, infusing strength into them and you continue to do that.

Now, what is that heavy load? Well, very simply two things, two things. One, it is inordinately, familiar temptation. It is that same old temptation that always comes and comes and comes. And we all know that we have patterns of temptation; those temptations to which we have fallen many, many times, those temptations that we just can't seem to conquer.

There are some temptations that are weak in our lives. We have strong resistance to them for whatever reasons. But there are other temptations to which we have great susceptibility. They become our heavy burdens. They become our heavy loads, hard to carry on our own.

And they lead to the second part of the heavy load and that is habits of sin. There are familiar temptations that have led to habits of sin. We feel the same temptations coming and we feel weak before them and they push us into the same habits of sin; very familiar temptations, habitual capitulations to sin, those oppressive temptations that regularly pull us down to familiarly sinful habits.

If we're going to help each other, we have to stick around long enough to bear those burdens. We have to be there not only to pick that person up, not only to restore that person and to bring them back to spirituality, but we have to stay there in some kind of accountability, in some kind of love, and

some kind of commitment to sustain the strength they need.

That's what the church is. It's not something you attend. It's a life you live. Church... Church doesn't fulfill its responsibility when it sits and looks up here. It fulfills its responsibility when it turns and faces itself; the royal law of love. We have to be there. And we have to stay there to hold them when the heavy burden comes, establish a pattern of prayer, establish a pattern of accountability.

I remember a young man came into my office and he had come to Christ. And he said, "I'm so tempted. I was a homosexual," and he said, "I'm so tempted." He said, "I don't know if I can bear it. Those habits are so ingrained into my life and the power of that homosexual temptation is so strong I don't know if I can deal with it."

So I spent a prolonged period of time in prayer with him in the office after which I said here's what I want you to do. I gave him a little pad of paper and I said every time you fall to the sin of homosexuality, whatever expression of homosexual sin might occur, I want you to write it down. And I want for you to write a detailed account of it. I want you to write a detailed account of the battle of temptation in your mind and when you fell I want you to write it all down. And then I want you to come back here in a week and we're going to read it together.

He came back in a week later, I'll never forget it, and he walked in and he sat down and he was absolutely ecstatic and overjoyed. And he said, "I didn't have to write anything." And I said, "That's amazing, why?" He said, "Because I knew anything I did I'd have to write. Anything I wrote you'd read. And I didn't want you to have to read that."

That's how you begin to wean somebody away by creating a relationship of trust and accountability. Sometimes people don't want to do that. They think they're superior. They're not willing to stoop down to that level. Verse 3, "If anyone thinks he’s something when he's nothing he deceives himself."

Get a grip on it folks. You're not too good to do that. That's what Paul's saying. You're not too good to do that. You're not superior. Your sins are only different ones. There are some that may be socially despicable and generally speaking we like our sins better than we like other people’s.

We're certainly much more appalled at their iniquities than we are our own, and consider their temptations more heinous than ours. And if you think you're something when you're nothing you're in a situation of being self-deceived. You're not any better. You need to be willing to stoop down and lift

up that person who's fallen.

And verse 4 takes us right back to where we need to be. Let each one examine his own work. Don't you be looking at somebody else. That's not where you start. And you'll have reason for boasting in regard to yourself alone not compared to somebody else.

If you have any reason to boast, if you have any reason to rejoice it's because you alone have met God's standard. It's not because you're better than them. You don't compare yourself with them. You compare yourself with God's standard. Right? That's what verse 4 is saying.

So examine your own work. Examine your own life. Examine your own heart. And if you have reason to boast or rejoice, probably a better translation, if you have reason to rejoice it's because you alone have stood by the divine standard. It's not because somehow you're superior to someone else. You don't measure yourself that way. You are... You're no better than anybody else. The only cause for joy is that you've met God's standard. Get the log of pride out of your own eye and then you'll be useful to somebody else.

God doesn't grade on a curve. His is an absolute standard and if there's reason for you to rejoice it's because God has worked in you and done something through you not because of how you compare to somebody else. So you bear your own load. "You carry the weight of your own responsibility," verse 5 says. You deal with yourself. Deal with the reality of what you are. And don't consider yourself better than anybody else no matter what they've done. You get over there and you pick them up and you restore them and you bear their burdens.

Jesus wasn't too good to do that. He bore yours and mine on the cross. The shame of it was unspeakable but He was willing and He was perfect. And you're not and neither am I. And who are we to be unwilling?

As we come to the Lord's Table this morning, yes, it's a time to remember. Yes, it's a time to think of our own sin. But it's a time as well to remember our responsibilities to one another.

Father, thank you for your Word to us; how we are refreshed in our spirits. How we are confronted in our sin and how we are instructed to our responsibility. And we desire to fulfill it. As we come now Lord to this time of Communion, time of coming to your table, we ask, oh Lord, that you would cause

us to be honest in our own hearts. Make sure our lives are right before you. That you would remind us as well that we have a responsibility to those precious members of the church around us to come alongside them and lift them up and get under the load. We're not too good for that.

Lord just give us a passion for the purity of the church. May we be reminded that you want the church to be heaven on earth and heaven is a holy place. And this is the only place where holiness can come down because we're the only holy people. And we want to be holy as our Father in heaven is holy, so that the world in seeing us will not see anything they've ever seen before. And that means we have to care for one another.

Lord we pray that You might reveal sin in this fellowship, that we might see it and know it so that we can confront it. And gently considering ourselves who are so susceptible to temptation lift those people up and get under their load and carry it. Keep your church pure. That's what You died for. That's our desire.

Take this time now in prayer with me, prayer of confession. Forgive us Lord for sacrificing Your interests for our own, for selfish affections, being interested in our own good rather than the good of others. Forgive us for seeking the joy and the feelings that come from material things rather than enjoying the unchanging privileges we have in You.

Forgive us for lacking confidence and trust in Your wisdom and sovereign purpose. Forgive us for fear and worry and distrust. And on the other hand, forgive us for self-confidence in our ability to control our own lives. Forgive us for resentment in our suffering, for retaliation in our pain, for impatience, irritability and anger with your timetable.

Forgive us, on the other hand, in our suffering for laziness, and apathy, and indifference, and doubt. Forgive us for not being generous with money, time. Forgive us for hypocrisy, for being untruthful. Forgive us for not being dependable or faithful or following through on our promises to You and others. Forgive us for irresponsibility, half-heartedness.

Forgive us for pride and feelings of superiority, self-consciousness, self-preoccupation. Forgive us for an uncontrolled spirit, lack of discipline, the absence of willpower to do what is right.

Give us love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, and self-control. We confess all our sins Lord, known and unknown, felt and unfelt. We ask You to wash us as we come

now to Your table.

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