

## CONFESSING CHRIST

"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Romans 10:9-10.

"Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven." Matthew 10:32-33.

One of the most startling records of rescue from the death sentence to be found in the annals of American courts is the case of Will Purvis. A Marion County, Mississippi, jury, overruling his claim of innocence, found him guilty of murder and condemned him to be hanged. While in jail awaiting death, Purvis was won to Christ by a minister who believed him innocent and organized prayer groups asking God to intercede. On the day appointed for the execution, this pastor accompanied him to the gallows, and while the black hood was being placed over his head, the preacher pleaded, "O Lord, if it be Thy will, stay the hand of the executioner!" Then the sheriff cried, "God help you, Purvis!" and pulled the lever. The trap door opened, the rope tightened, and Purvis fell -- but not to his death. For suddenly the hangman's noose swung high and empty.

In a way experts have not been able to understand nor an official state investigation explain, the noose had somehow slipped, and Purvis dropped to the ground uninjured. Now the court had decreed that he hang by the neck until he was dead; therefore, the sheriff, convinced of Purvis' guilt declared, "We will have to do it all over again." His two deputies dragged the bound man up the stairs and prepared to go through the whole ordeal once more. When the executioner reached for the rope, the minister who had brought the prisoner to Christ leaped to the scaffold and appealed to the crowd: "People of Marion County, the hand of Providence has slipped the noose. Heaven has heard our prayers. What do you say, friends? Shall Will Purvis be hanged again?" In a long roar they kept on answering, "No! No!" Then, as they began to sing hymns of praise to God, the bewildered sheriff took Purvis back to his cell. The governor was soon petitioned to commute the death sentence, but he refused; the Mississippi Supreme Court three times denied an appeal on Purvis' behalf; and again he was sentenced to hang. However, his friends rescued him from jail, the next governor changed the sentence to life imprisonment, and two years later Purvis was completely pardoned, not long before a dying plantation owner confessed that he had helped commit the crime for which Purvis had been sentenced. Thus was an innocent man marvelously rescued.

Now, I bring you the record of an incomparably greater deliverance which directly and personally concerns you. This involves not the innocent, but the guilty; not merely a sentence of temporal death, but of eternal separation from God; not a rescue to be followed by other trials, but one that offers final, absolute and eternal freedom; not an escape by accident, but a divinely ordained plan of pardon. I hark back to our deliverance from death and hell, and give you heaven's own glorious promise: You can be saved if you believe on Christ.

Most people want to do something, give something or sacrifice something in order to secure salvation and the divine blessings. They want to earn their

salvation or purchase the forgiveness of their sins by their own noble thoughts, generous contributions, unselfish actions or good deeds. While that is man's way of obtaining salvation, it is actually the road to ruin. How deceptive and destructive is this attempt to earn salvation! It always leaves people wondering if they have done enough to satisfy God. This attempt of people to save themselves by their deeds of service and sacrifice is a direct and continued contradiction of the glorious and matchless grace of our heavenly Father.

By contrast, God's way of salvation is clearly and unmistakably stated in the words "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Romans 10:9-10). If you will accept this glorious truth and act upon it, heaven will be your eternal home.

God's way of salvation is the only one. Some people think they can be saved by respectability, morality and culture, but that is in their imagination only. They are like the old Spaniard, Ponce de Leon, who hunted around among the Florida Everglades and thought he was going to find a fountain that would give him perpetual youth when he drank the waters. He believed that the wrinkles would smooth out, the gray hair would become black and the stooped shoulders would be straightened. But he did not find it. Why? Because such a fountain of youth was only the hallucination of a deluded imagination. It was only in his mind. Some of you who are not saved imagine you are going to find salvation for your souls in staying out of jail, being decent and paying your debts, but you will never be saved until you believe on Christ as your Saviour.

Of course, belief comes before confession. "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." A confession with the mouth that does not have its root in a believing heart is just so much hot air. It is both a mockery and an insult to God.

Note that the Word of God says, "If thou shalt believe in thine heart." There is a difference between head belief and heart belief. The person who believes in his head and confesses with his mouth is the one about whom Christ was talking when He said, "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46). The person who believes in his heart and then confesses with his mouth is the one who delivers the goods.

A belief in the heart always manifests itself in an absolute trust in the object of its faith. You can believe all you want to about Christ and go to hell with your head full of belief like that. It is believing on Him in your heart that leads you to trust Him and commit yourself to Him in order to be saved.

Alexander the Great had a favorite doctor who accompanied him in all his battles. Somebody, who was jealous of this doctor and wanted to get him out of the way, wrote Alexander a letter saying that his doctor was going to put poison in his cup the next morning. He thought the great general would order the doctor put to death at once, but the very next morning when they were all together Alexander read the letter to them and before the doctor could reply he seized the cup and drained it before their eyes to show his friend, the doctor, that he believed on him with all his heart and was ready to trust his life in his hands. A man can believe in his head and you will never know it unless he tells you, but when a man believes in his heart his life will speak louder than any words can sound.

What is one to believe in his heart? That God hath raised Christ from the dead and out of the grave. The resurrection of Christ is the heart of the gospel and the keystone of the Christian faith. No wonder Satan has been doing his best to give this glorious doctrine a black eye for more than nineteen centuries. Believing the record that Christ has risen from the dead, and that His living presence and power may be known and experienced in the life of one who is prepared to fulfil certain definite conditions, a person responds to this living Saviour in the deepest and most secret places of our being. By thus receiving, trusting or yielding to the Saviour one is happily saved.

## I. Why should we confess Christ?

### 1. It is a duty.

#### (1) Faithfulness to Christ demands it.

Most people do not trust and love Christ. They are ashamed to be considered as His disciples. To them becoming a Christian is a mark of weakness. Fidelity to our Lord in this Christ-rejecting world demands that Christians openly and constantly confess themselves as belonging to Christ and being on His side. If you do not confess that you are His, the world will count you as belonging to it. Faithfulness to Christ demands an open confession of Him as Saviour and Lord.

#### (2) In Matthew 10:32-33 our Lord tells us plainly that we must confess Him before men or be denied by Him at last before His Father. "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven." One should count it the highest honor to be able to acknowledge publicly, "I belong to Christ." It would be better to be able to say that truthfully than to confess having royal blood in the veins or great riches in the bank. It is often the fear of being an object of ridicule that keeps a person from confessing Christ. In other cases it is a fear of social exclusion that keeps one from it.

#### (3) Gratitude demands it.

For us Christ left all, became poor, toiled, wept, suffered, bled and died. Because He gave His all for us, gratitude demands that we confess Him everywhere and always.

### 2. It is a necessity.

#### (1) As an accompaniment of salvation.

Confession of Christ is an evidence of saving faith.

#### (2) As a means of spiritual development.

- a. Confession brings deeper convictions of God's favor.
- b. Confession causes an increase of faith.
- c. Confession increases our love for Christ.
- d. Confession helps to keep us separated from the world.

#### (3) As a means of victory over Satan.

"They overcame him (Satan) by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony" (Revelation 12:11).

3. It is a privilege.

- (1) In that it confers honor upon the one who confesses Christ.
- (2) In that it enables us to assist in winning others to Christ.
- (3) In that it leads to rewards.

II. How Does Christ Expect Us To Confess Him?

1. With our lips.

Confessing Christ is to acknowledge to others with the lips that He is our Saviour and Lord, that we have been saved by Him and that we are His disciples. It is a personal acknowledgment of the Lordship of Christ.

2. In baptism.

In our baptism we proclaim that Christ was buried and is now risen. It also implies that we have buried the old life of sin and have been raised to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus.

3. By joining the church.

Christ wants those whom He has saved to unite with the church, therein to be taught and trained for useful Christians. When united in fellowship and efforts with those whom the Lord has saved and added to the church we can do far more for Christ in preaching the gospel, teaching Christians, helping the needy and winning the lost.

4. By consistent Christian living.

Words without works will be recognized quickly by the world as being only a sham.

III. Where Should We Confess Christ?

1. At home.
2. In the church.
3. At our work.
4. In our recreations.
5. Wherever we go.

This we ought to do for our own sakes, for the sake of others and for the sake of Christ Who has saved us.