

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.

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; not a rescue to be followed by other trials, but one that offers final, absolute, 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 and confess Christ.

Here is a personal promise of pardon and power, recorded for you by Paul in this text. ~~"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. His own promise to you, that despite your sins and sorrows you can go to heaven, is outlined in the clear, unmistakable words of the text.

The masses want to do something, say something, offer something, give something, or sacrifice something to secure salvation and divine blessing. They want to earn their way into the next life, purchase the forgiveness of their sins, and by their own good deeds, noble thought, unselfish actions and generous contributions make God smile upon them.

That is man's way of securing salvation, but it is the road to ruin. How deceptive and destructive is this attempt to earn your salvation! It always leaves people in the dread of doubt that they have not done enough to satisfy God's justice and righteousness. This entire delusion that only by being good and doing good can we enter the kingdom is a source of torture to all those who, despite their best intentions, slip back into sin and keep on breaking the divine law. Above all, this claim that men must save themselves by their own characters and achievements, by their service and sacrifices, is a direct and continued contradiction of our heavenly Father's glorious grace.

By contrast, God's way to salvation, His own promise to you, that despite your sins and sorrows you can have heaven, is outlined in the clear, unmistakable words of our text, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus Christ, and shalt believe in thine heart thou shalt be saved." Accept that glorious truth and act accordingly and heaven will be yours without doubt or question, your personally and yours eternally.

To "confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus" fully means that you accept Him not only in His divine might, but also as your Saviour from sin, your Redeemer from ruin, and your Deliverer from death. At the cross Jesus suffered the curse, the shame, the agony, the darkest and most dismal of all deaths because He loved you with endless, depthless devotion. Willingly and gladly He gave Himself for you. He went to the cross in your place, suffered in your stead, and died as your Substitute.

His marvelous compassion is directed to each one who hears the invitation to accept the Lord Jesus Christ, regardless of where they may live. When John Dillinger was a boy he was taken to court once on a minor charge, but released on probation. When some of the parents in his town heard that he was attending Sunday School, they went to his teacher and protested, "If John Dillinger continues to be in your class, I shall have to withdraw my son." The perplexed teacher, eager to retain the support of these so-called better-class parents, told John what they had said. He left Sunday School, never to return, and started on the criminal career that ended with a G-man's bullet. Christ bars no one. His Gospel pleads with all men to come to Him for cleansing grace.

Have you confessed the Lord Jesus? Have you told the world He is your Redeemer? If not, what is keeping you from the Saviour? False pride, love of sin, unwillingness to humble yourself before the Lord? Ask the Lord to help you sweep all this aside and to find peace, joy, strength, love, contentment in this life and hope of the glories of heaven in the next. Tell the world today, "Jesus is my Saviour!"

To be saved, however, you must not only confess Christ with your mouth as our text emphasizes, but you must also "believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead." Our faith must be far more than lip service. Jesus Himself had to say of the crowds that came to Him, "This people draweth nigh unto Me with their mouth, and honor-eth Me with their lips; but their heart is far from Me." Since that time there have always been too many who are just Christians in name, people who rely for their salvation on church membership, church attendance, family faith, etc., without a deep, personal conviction of their own sin and the assurance of the Saviour's grace.

I. Why should we confess Christ?

1. It is a duty.

- (1) Faithfulness to Christ demands it.
- (2) Christ Himself demands it.

Our Lord, in Matthew 10:32-33, 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 also confess 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."

(3) Gratitude demands it.

He left all for us, became poor, toiled, wept, suffered, bled and died for us. He gave up all for us. Therefore, we ought to rejoice to confess Him everywhere and always.

2. It is a necessity.

(1) As an accompaniment of salvation.

Saving faith will appear in confession with the mouth. Confession is an evidence of saving faith.

(2) As a means of victory over Satan.

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

(3) As a means of spiritual development.

- a. Confession brings deeper convictions of God's favor.
- b. Confession increases and develops faith.
- c. Confession increases our love for Him.
- d. Confession aids in keeping us separated from the world.

3. It is a privilege.

(1) A great honor to be permitted to confess Christ.

(2) In that it leads to rewards.

(3) In that it enables us to assist in winning others to Christ.

II. How Does Christ Expect Us To Confess Him?

1. With our lips.

"If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus."

2. In baptism.

Baptism is a symbol of a spiritual experience.

3. By joining the church.

4. By consistent Christian living.

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and confess Him as your Saviour now. Do so for your own sake, for the sake of others, and for the sake of Christ.