

Back to Basics: Confession Unto Salvation

We will continue this evening on our series of back to basics lessons by examining confession and the part it plays in the Gospel plan of salvation. Although the Bible states that confession is made unto salvation that does not mean that confession is the only thing necessary to be saved. Consider also that in the context of Romans 10:1-10, Paul was writing about Jews who were zealous for God, but would not confess Jesus as Lord. If they were to put Jesus as Lord over their lives, because of their zeal for God they would have also obeyed His commands of repenting and being baptized for the remission of sins.

In the first place, what is meant by confession? What is to be confessed? Man should stand ready to confess God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, as well as all truth. But are all these things included in the confession here contemplated? The confession that is **"unto salvation"** must necessarily relate to that which procures salvation. But Jesus Christ is the Savior of men. Hence, the confession here meant must relate to Him. It must not only relate to Christ, but it must relate to Him as Savior. Faith that stops short of accepting Christ and Him crucified as man's Redeemer cannot save. Confession, then, must relate to Christ crucified for man's sins. But let us note what the Scriptures say:

"Because if you shall confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and shall believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved: for with the heart man believes unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." (Romans 10:9-10)

In this passage confession is made, by divine arrangement, the accompaniment of faith. ***"If you shalt confess . . . and believe."*** Thus confession is associated with faith and it is made a condition of salvation. Man believes ***"unto righteousness"*** and confesses ***"unto salvation."*** We learn, also, that the object of confession is the object of saving, obedient faith. We must confess ***"Jesus as Lord."***

With these facts in hand, let us see what can be learned concerning confession. Inasmuch as confession is an accompaniment of faith and the object of confession is the object of faith, we naturally conclude that faith and confession are not mere accompaniments, but are essentially related as to their meaning. In fact, it is my hope that by now you should have seen that this is the case with all the steps in the Gospel plan of salvation: Each item is intricately related to the others. This conclusion is demanded, not only by the context, but by the fact that faith, in the sense of trust, is the only proper response to the blood of Christ. Now if confession has a meaning different from obedient faith, if it introduces a new significance, then another cause than the blood of Christ is required in order to obtain salvation. Faith accepts all that the grace of God offers. If, then, confession has not the meaning of obedient, saving faith, it cannot relate to grace, and would consequently be ruled out as a condition of salvation. Rather

let us say it would never have been given a place as a condition of salvation, for certainly God would not have joined to obedient, saving faith something incompatible with faith. Confession is an accompaniment of one's obedient, saving faith. It is, as to meaning, part of having obedient, saving faith in the Lord. It is a statement in words of the belief that emanates from the heart in response to hearing the word of Christ (Romans 10:17). Confession, therefore, is obedient, saving faith spoken.

As we consider the biblical subject of confession, there are three observable areas involving confession. Let us now consider these particulars and see what Bible truths we can glean from them.

First of all, there is **confession of sin**. The confession of sin is an act and situation that abounds in the scriptures and involves different circumstances and particulars. Two pertinent verses are: ***"I acknowledged my sin unto You, and my iniquity have I not hid, I said, 'I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord'; and You forgave the iniquity of my sin"*** and ***"He that covers his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesses and forsakes them shall have mercy"*** (Psalm 32:5 and Proverbs 28:13).

There is confession of sin to God and God alone seen in the scriptures. David wrote in Psalm 51:1-4:

"Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness: According to the multitude of Your tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions; and my sin is ever before me. Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done that which is evil in Your sight; that You may be justified when You speak, and be clear when You judge."

Sin that is private and only involves the sinner and his God should, as a rule, be kept private, involving only God. It is sometimes unwise to parade or make public knowledge of this type of private sin. Notice John's teaching in connection to confessing sin. John wrote, ***"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"*** in 1 John. 1:9. Notice the action: we confess our sins to God. He is then faithful and just in forgiving us. And notice, too, what else John said in verse 8: ***"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."***

It is interesting to note that the Christian confesses by admitting that he has sinned and the Christian obtains forgiveness this way. Those who have never submitted to the Lord secure forgiveness of past sins through following the Gospel plan of salvation, which includes confession of Jesus as Lord, and the forgiveness occurs when one is baptized or immersed into Christ (Acts 2:38 and Acts 22:16). Hence, man cannot have forgiveness unless he agrees with God in

the matter of his sin, and that man is a sinful creature who needs forgiveness through Jesus Christ.

There are situations that involve the confession of sin to others besides God. In circumstances involving a personal sin against another, there is to be confession of wrong. As Jesus said in Luke 17:4, **“And if he sins against you seven times in the day, and seven times turns again to you, saying, ‘I repent’; you shall forgive him.”** On perhaps a broader scale, James wrote: **“Confess therefore your sins one to another, and pray one for another, that you may be healed. The supplication of a righteous man avails much in its working.”** (James 5:16)

It is necessary that all men realize that they are sinners and be willing to confess this fact (1 John 1:8-10). Sin can interfere with the fellowship one enjoys with the local church, as with the man in Corinth who had his father’s wife, and Paul instructed the church to withdraw from that individual (1 Corinthians 5). Those walking disorderly are not to be fellowshiped according to Paul in 2 Thessalonians 3:6. In the event of a public sin, the Christian may privately pray to God, but there can be attendant responsibilities involving his brethren. In this vein, the confession of sin can be just as public as the sin itself, but that is left up to the individual and his or her own conscience to decide. (1 John 1:7; 1 John 1:9; and 2 Corinthians 2:6 and following). In the matter of the confession of sin, though, it is strikingly evident that the scriptures do not even contain a hint of some denominational practices of going to a priest to make confession of sins and be forgiven by the priest.

Secondly, there is confession viewed as a profession of life. The concept of confession is sometimes used to suggest a way of life that imbibes and acknowledges Jesus as the primary focus. Consider Jesus' teaching in Matthew 10:32-33:

“Whosoever therefore shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before My Father Who is in Heaven. But whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father Who is in Heaven.”

To confess Jesus is to make Him the object of our faith and life. It is to own Him as a Savior. It is to honor Him with one’s life. It is to espouse His cause and to face opposition and reproach for His sake. It is to do just as Jesus said to do in Luke 10:27, **“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind.”** In other words, our entire being, our entire existence, is given over to Him as our Master. This confession is ongoing and must stand for the Christian's entire life. Jesus said, in Revelation 3:5, **“He that overcomes . . . I will confess his name before My Father, and before His angels.”** The King James sometimes, in this vein, translates **confesses** as **profession**, as it does in Hebrews 3:1, Hebrews 4:14,

and Hebrews 10:23. This “profession” involves assenting to what God has said and taught and then acting it out in our daily lives.

Thirdly, there is confession of Jesus as the Christ. One of the greatest acts of which the human mouth is capable of performing is the confessing of Jesus as the Son of God. An important text is Romans 10:8-10:

“But what does it say? The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart (that is, the word of faith which we preach); because, if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For man believes with his heart and so is justified, and he confesses with his lips and so is saved.”

The salvation being contemplated by Paul in this passage of scripture is "unto salvation," meaning one is moving in the direction or reaching toward salvation. It is evident that the salvation here considered is the salvation of the non-Christian, for Paul begins this chapter by stating in verses 1 and 2, ***“Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved. I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but it is not enlightened.”*** So we can tell that Paul is discussing those who are not saved but his hope is that they would be saved.

We can read of confession of Jesus as a prerequisite to salvation elsewhere, too:

“And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, ‘See, here is water; what hinders me to be baptized?’ And Philip said, ‘If you believe with all your heart, you may.’ And he answered and said, ‘I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.’” (Acts 8:36-37)

This confession of Jesus declares belief in Jesus as God or deity (Acts 8:37; John 10:33; John 10:36). The statement, "I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God" preceding baptism acknowledges the Lordship and rule of Jesus. It is best for one to begin in this life acknowledging the Lord as Who He is for eventually all will do so, as Paul says in Philippians 2:9-11, ***“Therefore God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in Heaven and on Earth and under the Earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”*** But as Jesus proclaimed in Luke 6:46 it is vain to claim Jesus as your Lord if you will do not do as He has commanded: ***“Why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do what I tell you?”*** So it is easily discernible that confession of Jesus Christ and obedience to Him are intricately tied together, for Jesus said in John 14:15, ***“If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.”*** Confessing Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior is a declaration of unqualified confidence in Christ, and of surrender to His services and mastery.

The Apostle Peter made a great confession of faith in Jesus when he said in Matthew 16:16, **“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”** Jesus Himself made this confession in Matthew 26:63-64: **“But Jesus was silent. And the high priest said to Him, ‘I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.’ Jesus said to him, ‘You have said so. But I tell you, hereafter you will see the Son of man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of Heaven.”** We know that Jesus confessed His Lordship in front of Pilate, for Paul tells us in 1 Timothy 6:13, **“In the presence of God Who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus Who in His testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession.”** The confession also emanated from the mouth of the Father Himself Who declared in Matthew 3:17 and Matthew 17:5, **“This is My beloved Son, with Whom I am well pleased; listen to Him.”** This confession accents the centrality of Jesus as the **“only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth”** (John 1:14). This confession that precedes water baptism that is **“unto salvation,”** is a test to determine the eligibility of the candidate to be baptized (Acts 8:35-38).

As noticed, this requisite confession to baptism is **“unto salvation”** (Romans 10:10). Since baptism is the actual act in which forgiveness of sin is experienced, the fact of this confession being **“unto salvation”** is consistent throughout the scriptures (Acts 2: 38). Confession that Jesus is the Son of God involves a relationship, both in the anticipatory and the realized sense (1 John 4:15).

As has been seen, confession begins with the person initially coming to God. Confession is an ongoing part and act of the Christian throughout his spiritual journey and is necessary in order for man to be acknowledged before the Father (Matthew 10:6-34). The fact of the matter is, **“‘As I live,’ says the Lord, ‘every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God’”** (Romans 14:11). However, at the time of the final judgment, it will be too late to make the confession that leads to salvation. It is most desirable and advantageous, then, to confess Jesus now and enjoy being a Christian in this life and in the world to come, in which you will be rewarded with eternal life (Mark 10:29-30).

The significance of confession must, therefore, be derived from faith. And as we have seen one’s faith comes by hearing the word of Christ (Romans 10:17). Apart from faith confession could not be made. There would be nothing to confess that relates to salvation. Hence, with Paul, confession is comprehended in obedient, saving faith. Note that in the passage from Romans 10 both confession and faith are named as conditions of salvation. Faith is said to be **“unto righteousness.”** This is equivalent to saying that obedient, saving faith reaches salvation. Confession is **“unto salvation”** – that is, confession saves as it is so intricately tied in with the Gospel plan of salvation.

To be justified is to be saved. Hence, the two expressions are equivalent. Is man, therefore, saved twice? No, if faith and confession have the same

meaning; yes, if they do not have the same meaning. If faith differs in significance from confession and yet reaches salvation, and confession differs from faith and yet reaches justification, then there are two salvations, or, what would be as unreasonable, two methods of reaching salvation. The apostle most certainly considers obedient, saving faith and the confession of Jesus Christ as Lord two aspects of the same thing. That this is true can be seen by Paul, immediately after having asserted that ***"with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation,"*** appeals to the prophet Isaiah for proof of his statement thusly:

"For the scripture says, 'Whosoever believes on Him shall not be put to shame.'" (Romans 10:11) That is, when the prophet said the ***believer*** should not be put to shame, Paul had proof that both obedient, saving faith and confession are conditions of salvation. But how did he have proof if confession has not the same significance as faith? What amounts to this conclusion is conceded by almost everyone. While admitting that confession is a condition of salvation, almost everyone sometimes omits confession in naming the conditions.

Now, these facts involve an important principle. It is admitted on all hands that salvation is by faith; yet we have just seen that salvation by faith does not forbid confession as also a condition, just as hearing, repentance and baptism are, too. They are all intricately bound together in the "faith package." Now, if confession can be admitted as a condition of justification, might not something else be admitted also?