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“All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth, Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to OBSERVE all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world,” Matthew 28:18-20.

Confession

Aim: To consider that which should be our early works of righteousness.

Covenant: . . . on the profession of our faith, having been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost . . .

Text: I John 5:1-3; Matthew 10:32-42.

INTRODUCTION—What is the first step of obedience required of the person who has just trusted Jesus Christ as Saviour? The Bible says that the very first act is to be confession of his new relationship with God. This confession may be done by word of mouth and by symbol. It is to be a subject of private conversation and also of public demonstration. It is both demonstrated and commanded in the Bible. Confession is an act of obedience. To fail to confess the Lord Jesus is rebellion against His will. Confession should be made by personal testimony. Perhaps the reader has heard someone praise God for salvation and felt his own heart strangely warmed at the experience. The experience of one person has been known to lead another to repentance and faith, when repeated. The Bible has commanded *“Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy,”* Psalm 107:2. Moreover, the repeating of one's experience of salvation will bring a thrill to his own heart. Try it.

Confession can be made through the symbol of baptism. Indeed, one has not fully followed the Lord until he has been baptized. This baptism is to be a public ceremony, administered by a New Testament church, and performed by immersion in water of a candidate to demonstrate death to the

old life of sin and resurrection to new life in Christ. How shameful that many church members make no effort to attend a baptismal service in their own church. The beauty of its symbol and the purpose of its administration make it most important. No believer should refrain from being baptized. Let this lesson be studied with an attitude of self-examination. Is your confession of Christ so real that men are clearly convinced that your allegiance is to Him alone?

EXPOSITION

I. Basis of Confession, I John 5:1-3.

The kind of confession which God demands is not a mere quoting of old statements. It is much deeper than mere speech and more meaningful than pretty phrases. The kind of confession which God calls for must have a three-fold basis. Otherwise, it is false and hypocritical.

1. Confession is based upon faith, 5:1a. The person who is qualified for baptism is one who has exercised faith. This is a faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God who is able to forgive sins. Moreover, it is a faith that accepts as reality that "Jesus does now forgive my sins." It is a faith which is accounted for righteousness and which brings the blessed experience of being a child of God. He who has persisted in unbelief is alienated from God until he is willing to turn from sin through faith in Jesus. "*Whosoever believeth, that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.*" This means the purpose of confession is to acknowledge that one has become a child of God and the center of his life is in his Heavenly Father.

2. Confession is based upon love, 5:1b. Faith is not mere intellectual assent (such as agreement with doctrines) but carries a moral and spiritual power. He who has truly exercised faith in Jesus as Saviour will find his life interests have changed. The confession of faith means to say to men that this person is a "new creature" in Christ. Now he is marked by love to God and men. The confession of faith is also a confession of the beginning of a life motivated by love.

3. Confession is based upon obedience, 5: 2-3. Love does not find a burden in obedience. He who has truly trusted in Jesus and has thereby shared in the love of God (Romans 5:5) will find the laws of God a delight. The commandments of God are not grievous because they are padded with love. Obedience to these commandments is not grievous because it is prompted by love. He who refuses to confess the Lord Jesus as Saviour is denying the faith, love, and obedience which God demands.

II. Importance of Confession, Matthew 10:32-33.

The Bible gives no countenance to the person who wants to be a “secret” Christian. In fact it takes the position that he who does not have a faith real enough that it leads to confession does not have a faith that saves. The statement of Jesus in Matthew 10:32-33 should be read in this light. He is not referring to a person who may, in a given circumstance, be overcome by temptation so as to fail to confess Christ. He rather refers to those whose whole life is set by the course of refusing to confess allegiance to Jesus Christ.

Confession is to reveal a man's relationship to God and God's relationship to that individual. He whose spiritual experience is so shallow that it does not lead him to confess Christ publicly is seriously lacking. Remembering that faith, without works, is dead (James 2:26), it is reasonable to assume that the person whose faith is not strong enough to lead him to confess Christ is not truly saved. Therefore, he who fails “to confess Christ before men will also find Christ will deny him before the Heavenly Father of the redeemed. Confession without faith is useless. Faith without confession is also useless for the faith which is so weak it does not lead on to confession is not the faith that saves. No wonder Jesus says He will confess or deny knowing men according as each one has confessed or denied knowing Him. Thereby they have revealed the reality of their experience with God. (See Matthew 7:21-23.)

III. Consequence of Confession, Matthew 10:34-36.

1. Confession brings a sense of inward peace. The Christian soon finds that there is a sense of well-being which comes in return for obedience. The peace of God surrounds the heart of the person who serves the Lord without hesitation or regret. Confession of faith helps to strengthen faith. Confession of loyalty to God helps one to be resolved to greater loyalty. It encourages growth in grace. The believer who takes every opportunity to speak of his love for Jesus Christ will find a growth in grace which qualifies for greater service. Those who confess the Lord Jesus as Saviour, following His example of obedience in baptism, find an inward delight which always accompanies devoted obedience.

2. Confession brings external opposition. The confession of loyalty to Jesus will not set the world at peace with a new convert. He may well find that temptations increase and problems multiply. The course of this world is

opposite from the way which God calls His children to travel. Jesus even warns that members of one's own household may reject them and become their enemies, Matthew 10:35-36. (This has been especially true of many Jewish converts to Christianity.) The proverbial "Bed of Roses" is hardly a true view of the Christian experience. Jesus has not promised freedom from troubles, but victory over them, to those who are obedient to Him, John 16:33. Freedom from temptation and opposition is evidence that one is walking in the way of the world (contrary to God). He who would become a Christian so that he may have life easy will soon find how false were his hopes. However, the temporary trials of a devoted Christian life are so slight in view of the eternal consequences of knowing Jesus as Saviour. "*For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us,*" Romans 8:18.

IV. Unworthy Confession, Matthew 10:37-39.

1. Confession is unworthy when love for Christ is secondary to love for other things, Matthew 10:37. Jesus does not forbid the Christian the delights of loving one's family and friends. He rather forbids an inordinate love of them. Let it be observed that Jesus demands a greater love to Him than to any other person or thing. To put anything before the Lord in our affections would be kin to idolatry. It would constitute a most serious sin against God. Love for members of our family is a holy and honorable thing. When that love is distorted, however, it becomes a base and vile matter. It is distorted when it is made paramount to our love for Jesus Christ.

2. Confession is unworthy when it shuns to take up a cross, Matthew 10:38-39. Love delights to serve. It exists upon what it does for the beloved, not upon what is done for it. Therefore, the person who confesses the Lord Jesus as Saviour and Lord is expected to assume a place of responsible service and serve faithfully. How disappointed the Lord must be in that person who pretends allegiance, even confessing his dedication to Him, but who then shuns service. Jesus warns, "*He that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me is not worthy of me.*" Again He says, "*Whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple,*" Luke 14:27. When a person walks down the aisle of a church to confess Jesus as Saviour, when he follows the Lord in baptism and becomes a member of the church, all the world has the right to expect him to be a different person. He is rightly expected to have no loyalty greater than his loyalty to Jesus. What a reflection upon that person and the sincerity of his profession if he does not take up the cross daily to follow the Lord. "*If any man will come after me,*

let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me,” Luke 9:23.

V. Faithful Confession, Matthew 10:40-42.

Confession of Jesus Christ involves much more than just telling a church congregation one has trusted Him and following Him in baptism. True confession of Jesus is a way of life, not merely a statement or a single deed. Matthew 10:40-42 reveals that way of life which confession brings. It is a life of identification with the Lord and those who belong to Him. True, it offers rewards, but the rewards are secondary. The devout disciple serves because of love, not for the sake of rewards. Whether the person in need be a prophet, a righteous man, or merely a common disciple, the person who lives like Jesus is willing to receive him as he would receive Jesus Christ.

Let the reader ponder well this thought. So often men are prone to think what they could do to serve the Lord if circumstances were only different. (Ever hear someone say, “If I were only rich I could . . .” Or, “If I could teach like So-and-so . . .”) This scripture says the one who will not serve Jesus as he is and as best he can is not a true disciple and therefore would not serve Him if circumstances were different! The true disciple is willing to care for those who confess Jesus. He is not ashamed to be identified with Him and His own.

CONCLUSION — Confession of loyalty to Jesus is the first step expected of one who is saved. The oral confession is to be followed by confession in the rite of baptism and thus by membership in the church. Then a whole life of service is to follow in which the believer daily bears his cross of identification with Jesus and His own. Only thus does the confession of baptism really have meaning. Only thus can one be a “true and faithful servant” of his Heavenly Father. Look at next Sunday's study. What follows the confession of faith and loyalty to Christ?

QUESTIONS

1. Describe baptism as a confession of faith.
2. Discuss Psalm 107:2.
3. What is the basis of a Christian confession?
4. Why is it important to confess our faith in Christ?
5. Discuss the inward peace which confession brings.
6. Discuss Romans 8:18.
7. Discuss an unworthy confession.
8. Discuss briefly “a life of confession.”

9. Explain Luke 9:28.

10. What is the relation of next Sunday's lesson to today's study?