

Salvation According to Scripture

Responding to the Gospel

Zion's Roar Holy Spirit Ministry
Bixby, Oklahoma



Book 2 - Chapter 02 – Study 05

Confessing Christ According to Scripture

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READ THIS FIRST

There are some words in Scripture that people use often without stopping to ask what they actually mean. Confession is one of those words.

Ask ten Christians what it means to confess Christ, and you may receive ten different answers. Some will say it means believing in Jesus. Others will say it means praying a prayer. Some will say it means attending church. Others will say it simply means telling God privately that you believe.

Yet before we accept any of those answers, we should ask a simple question.

What does Scripture mean when it speaks about confession?

That question is important because confession appears repeatedly in passages connected to salvation. If Scripture includes confession as part of a person's response to Christ, then we should understand what God means by it rather than assuming we already know.

As we have done throughout this series, let us set aside assumptions and allow Scripture to define its own terms.

CONFESSION IS MADE WITH THE MOUTH

After reading Christ's words about confessing Him before men, I found myself wondering how Scripture describes that confession taking place.

The answer is found in a passage that many Christians know well.

Romans 10:9-10 (KJV) That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Christ, 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.

These verses are often quoted during discussions about salvation, yet many people read them so quickly that they overlook something important.

Paul mentions two different things.

He speaks about believing in the heart.

He speaks about confessing with the mouth.

Those two things are closely connected, but they are not identical. If belief and confession were exactly the same thing, there would be no reason for Paul to mention both. Yet he deliberately speaks about the heart and the mouth. One concerns what a person believes. The other concerns what a person openly acknowledges.

This helps explain why confession cannot be reduced to a private experience that remains hidden within the heart. The heart believes, but the mouth confesses.

The order is also worth noticing. A person first becomes convinced of the truth. He comes to believe that Christ is who Scripture declares Him to be. Then, rather than keeping that belief hidden, he openly acknowledges it.

In other words, biblical confession is the outward expression of an inward conviction.

That does not mean a person is saved by speaking words alone. Empty words accomplish nothing. Scripture never teaches that simply repeating a statement guarantees salvation. Genuine confession must arise from genuine belief.

At the same time, Scripture does not separate confession from belief. The person who truly believes does not seek to hide Christ. He is willing to acknowledge Him.

As I reflected upon this, I could not help thinking about a practice that has become common in many churches. During the invitation, people are often asked to bow their heads and close their eyes while those wishing to receive Christ raise a hand where nobody else can see. I understand the desire to remove fear and embarrassment, and I do not question the sincerity of those involved. Yet it raises an interesting question.

If confessing Christ is something honorable, why is it often done in a way that hides it from others?

If confessing Christ is something to celebrate, why is it treated as though it should happen where nobody is looking?

When I read the words of Christ, I do not see Him describing a hidden confession. I see Him speaking about confessing Him before men. When I read the words of Paul, I do not see confession remaining silent within the heart. I see confession being made with the mouth.

The issue is not whether a hand was raised. The issue is whether Christ was confessed.

Scripture presents confession as an open acknowledgment of Christ. It is not something hidden, concealed, or kept private. It is a willingness to identify oneself with Him before others.

This does not mean a person must stand before a large crowd to prove his sincerity. The issue is not the size of the audience. The issue is whether Christ is being openly acknowledged rather than quietly concealed.

The more I considered these passages, the more I realized that Scripture does not leave us guessing about what confession looked like. God has provided an actual example of confession taking place in the life of a man who was responding to the Gospel.

That example is found in the account of the Ethiopian eunuch.

THE EUNUCH'S CONFESSION

After considering the words of Christ and Paul, I found myself asking a simple question.

What did confession actually look like when someone was responding to the Gospel?

Thankfully, Scripture does not leave us guessing.

One of the clearest examples is found in the account of the Ethiopian eunuch.

Acts 8:35-37 (KJV) Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Christ. And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?

And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest.

And he answered and said, I believe that Christ is the Son of God.

There are several things worth noticing in this account.

First, Philip preached Christ.

The conversation was not centered upon church membership, religious tradition, or a sinner's prayer. Philip preached Christ.

Second, the eunuch desired baptism.

As they traveled together, the eunuch saw water and immediately asked what prevented him from being baptized. This tells us that whatever Philip taught about Christ included instruction concerning baptism.

Third, and most important for our study, the eunuch openly confessed his belief.

Notice that he did not merely think it.

He did not merely feel it.

He did not merely agree with it internally.

He spoke it.

"I believe that Christ is the Son of God."

That statement was not made silently within his heart. It was spoken with his mouth. It was heard by another person. It was an open acknowledgment of who Christ was.

This is important because it provides a living example of the very principle we examined in Romans 10. The heart believed, and the mouth confessed.

The confession also occurred at a significant moment. It was not years after his conversion. It was not something added later after he had already entered into a covenant relationship with God. It appears as part of his response to the Gospel message being preached to him.

The more I studied this account, the more difficult it became to view confession as something optional or unimportant. Scripture presents it as a natural response of a person who has come to believe the truth about Christ.

The eunuch was not ashamed to acknowledge what he believed. He confessed Christ openly.

That observation raises another question. Is confessing Christ only about acknowledging who He is, or does Scripture also require us to acknowledge something about ourselves?

CONFESSING CHRIST ALSO REQUIRES HONESTY ABOUT OURSELVES

As I reflected upon the eunuch's confession, another thought came to mind.

Confession is not only about acknowledging who Christ is. Scripture also speaks about honestly acknowledging who we are.

That may sound obvious, yet it is something many people struggle to do.

Most people find it easier to discuss the sins of others than to admit their own. We naturally want to justify ourselves, explain our actions, or compare ourselves to people who seem worse than we are. Yet genuine conversion requires honesty.

A person cannot truly understand his need for salvation until he first recognizes that he needs saving.

One passage that illustrates this beautifully is found in a parable spoken by Christ.

Luke 18:10-14 (KJV) Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican.

The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.

I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.

And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.

I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other...

The difference between these two men is striking.

One spent his time talking about his own goodness.

The other acknowledged his need for mercy.

One justified himself.
The other confessed his condition.

The publican did not pretend he was righteous. He did not compare himself to others. He did not offer excuses. He simply acknowledged the truth.
"God be merciful to me a sinner."

That statement contains something that every person who comes to God must eventually face.

Before we can honestly confess Christ, we must honestly confess our need for Him.

A person who sees no sin within himself sees little need for a Savior. A person who believes he is already righteous will rarely seek mercy. Yet the person who recognizes his guilt begins to understand why Christ came.

This does not mean a person must publicly announce every sin he has ever committed. Scripture is not teaching public humiliation. Rather, it teaches honesty. The sinner must stop pretending he is spiritually healthy when he is not.

The more I examined passages like this, the more I realized that biblical confession involves two acknowledgments.

It acknowledges the truth about Christ.
And it acknowledges the truth about ourselves.

Only when both are faced honestly can a person fully appreciate the salvation being offered.

LET US NOW RETURN TO JOHN DOE

As we have done throughout this series, it is now time to return to the question that has been guiding our examination from the beginning.

Has John Doe confessed Christ according to Scripture?

At first glance, some readers may feel inclined to answer yes. After all, John Doe has already come a considerable distance in his journey. Previous studies have shown that he believes Christ is the Son of God. He believes that Christ died and rose again. He has responded to the truth that was presented to him, and he has shown evidence of repentance. These are not small matters, nor should they be dismissed lightly.

Yet this study was never intended to determine what John Doe believes. Those questions have already been examined. The purpose of this study is to determine whether he has fulfilled the specific requirement of confession as it is presented in Scripture.

That distinction is important.

Throughout this study, we have seen that biblical confession is more than a private conviction hidden within the heart. Christ spoke about confessing Him before men. Paul spoke about confession being made with the mouth. The Ethiopian eunuch openly declared his belief in Christ before continuing toward baptism. In every example we examined, confession was not merely something a person believed. It was something a person openly acknowledged.

When we compare those observations to what we presently know about John Doe, a problem emerges.

While we have found evidence that John believes certain truths about Christ, we have not yet found evidence that he has openly

confessed those truths in the manner described by Scripture. We have seen conviction. We have seen belief. We have seen repentance. Yet the evidence presently before us does not establish that John has publicly identified himself with Christ or openly confessed Him before others.

The same difficulty appears when we consider the second aspect of confession discussed in this study. Scripture not only calls upon a person to acknowledge Christ, but also to honestly acknowledge his own condition before God. The publican did not justify himself. He did not compare himself to others. He simply cried out for mercy as a sinner in need of God's help.

At this point in our investigation, we have not yet established that John Doe has made that confession either.

This does not mean that John rejects Christ. Nor does it mean that he has abandoned his pursuit of salvation. It simply means that another biblical requirement remains unverified.

As with every previous study, our responsibility is not to assume that a requirement has been fulfilled. Our responsibility is to follow the evidence provided by Scripture.

Based upon the evidence currently available, we cannot conclude that John Doe has confessed Christ according to the pattern revealed in Scripture. Therefore, this requirement must remain incomplete until further evidence is presented.

Bring your check marks forward from the previous studies.

Based upon the evidence examined so far, which of the following statements can be verified from Scripture?

- ☐ John Doe has heard the Gospel.
- ☐ John Doe believes that Christ is the Son of God.
- ☐ John Doe believes that Christ died and rose again.
- ☐ John Doe has repented of his sins.
- ☐ John Doe has experienced God's patience, mercy, and provision.
- ☐ John Doe has been given opportunities to respond to the truth.
- ☐ We have established that confession is made with the mouth.
- ☐ We have established that confession involves openly acknowledging Christ before men.
- ☐ We have established that confession includes honesty concerning one's sinful condition before God.
- ☐ The evidence presently before us does not establish that John Doe has confessed Christ according to the pattern revealed in Scripture.
- ☐ Additional biblical requirements remain to be examined before a final conclusion concerning his salvation can be reached.
- ☐ At this point in the investigation, John Doe remains unsaved.

QUESTIONS THAT STILL REMAIN

As we conclude this study, several important questions still remain.

If confession is connected to conversion, why does Scripture place such importance upon it?

Can a person confess Christ and still refuse to obey Him?

Is confession merely a spoken acknowledgment, or does it carry covenant implications?

Most importantly, what is the relationship between confession and baptism in the conversion accounts found throughout Scripture?

These questions will become increasingly important as we continue following John Doe's journey.

For that reason, our investigation must continue before a final conclusion can be reached.

FINAL THOUGHTS

As we conclude this study, it may be helpful to reflect upon what we have actually learned.

Throughout this examination, we have seen that biblical confession is much more than a private thought or a silent decision. Christ spoke about confessing Him before men. Paul spoke about confession being made with the mouth. The Ethiopian eunuch openly declared his belief in Christ. In each case, confession involved openly acknowledging what was believed.

We have also seen that confession is not limited to acknowledging who Christ is. Scripture calls upon us to honestly acknowledge our own condition as well. Before a person can appreciate the salvation being offered, he must first recognize his need for it.

The publican understood this when he cried out, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

When we return to John Doe, the conclusion is straightforward.

We have found evidence of belief.

We have found evidence of repentance.

We have found evidence of God's continued patience and mercy throughout his life.

Yet we have not found sufficient evidence to conclude that John Doe has confessed Christ according to the pattern revealed in Scripture.

At this point in our investigation, this requirement remains unfulfilled.

Therefore, John Doe remains unsaved.

The studies that follow will continue examining the remaining requirements associated with salvation and whether John Doe ultimately fulfills them according to Scripture.

You Should Have Already Verified and Tested:

B2-C01-S07 - A Common Salvation Story Examined

B2-C01-S08 - Why Feelings Cannot Be Trusted for Salvation

B2-C01-S09 - When Doubt Is a Call to Examine, Not to Fear

B2-C01-S10 - Believing Nearer to Salvation, Not Saved

B2-C02-S01 - The Gospel of Christ and the Authority of His Name

B2-C02-S02 - Repentance: A Complete Change of Direction

B2-C02-S03 - Faith That Leads to Salvation

B2-C02-S04 - Grace and Mercy Within God's Conditions

You Are Here:

B2-C02-S05 - Confessing Christ According to Scripture

Your Next Study:

B2-C02-S06 - A Good Conscience Toward God

And Then:

B2-C03-S01 - Remission of Sins When God Erases the Past

B2-C03-S02 - Baptism God's Appointed Moment of Remission

B2-C03-S04 - Answering the Objections to Baptism and Salvation

B2-C03-S05 - Examining Your Salvation According to Scripture

B2-C03-S06 - Conversion from Belief to a Changed Life

B2-C03-S07 - Enduring to the End Salvation Maintained by Faithfulness

B2-C03-S08 - Measuring What You Once Believed Against Scripture

