

Msg #153 of *Scripture Beneath The Surface*

“What Is True Confession?”

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Hello! Thanks for being with us. Today I would like to talk about confession. Confession is when you own up to something by acknowledging your participation in it. It is when you admit that you are or were in league with something. Confession is an interesting word. I suppose you realize that you cannot make a confession for someone else. If you confess, you can only confess what you yourself have done, are doing, or will do in the future. Confession isn't speaking what someone else has done, but what you yourself have done. When you confess to something, it has to be you yourself that is involved in the act. If it wasn't really you who has done something or is doing something, then you lied. Anyone can confess to something, but unless that confession is true, it is thrown out.

I suppose you've heard of people who have confessed to a crime that they really didn't do. As I understand it, it is not uncommon for a person to walk into a police station and confess to crimes, even the crime of murder, which they really didn't do. And, nobody really understands why someone would confess to a crime they didn't do, but for sure, there is something within that person that is abnormal. If a person confesses to a crime, policemen and other law enforcement officials will cross examine the person to make sure that they really do know what they're talking about. When a person is found to be confessing falsely, they are not convicted. Their confession is rejected. If a confession is proven to be false, the person who confesses falsely will be turned away. We don't like it when a person confesses falsely. I mean, what if we punish that person and then find out later that they weren't really guilty? Of course, the person who falsely confessed has to bear most of the responsibility for lying, but I'm sure you wouldn't want to

punish someone for doing something if they haven't actually done it. It's like disciplining your children for something you thought they did and then finding out that it was your other kid that actually did it.

When someone confesses, this means that what they are speaking is supposed to be true. If someone confesses falsely, then they didn't actually confess. They lied. A confession is only a confession if the person owns up to what is really true.

It's the same thing for people who confess Jesus Christ as Lord, but who don't really believe that Jesus Christ is Lord. Anyone can repeat a sinner's prayer, but that doesn't mean that they really believe what they are saying. They might not even realize the implications of what they are saying. And it is very important to know what you're doing if you decide to confess Jesus Christ as Lord.

A few weeks ago I mentioned in one of my messages that no one can just say the sinner's prayer and expect to be saved. I received a phone call that week from a listener who disagreed with me. He was right. But then, so was I. Although what I had said in the message was, "no one can be saved just by saying the sinner's prayer," I had not emphasized the word 'just' quite enough, and it apparently sounded like a sinner's prayer was unacceptable. After the caller and I had talked for a few minutes, it was clear that we agreed, but I still realized that I had not made myself very clear when I had recorded the sermon.

But again, making yourself clear is very important when you make a confession concerning Jesus being both Christ and Lord. However, it is also important to make sure that you don't lead someone in the sinner's prayer without ensuring that they really do believe that Jesus Christ is Lord. If you lead someone in the sinner's prayer, and they repeat the words after you that Jesus Christ is Lord, but they don't really have any intention of making Jesus Lord of their life, then you are actually helping that person to be deceived.

Sometimes we want so much to see someone saved, that we concentrate more on getting them to say the sinner's prayer than in making sure they really do understand the implications attached to it. If the sinner's prayer is repeated, but the person doesn't really understand what he's doing, then that person won't really be saved. If this happens, you won't see any subsequent fruit in that person's life. I'm fairly certain that most of you have been in situations where someone said the sinner's prayer by repeating someone else's words, but you noticed that there was no evidence that the person really understood the implications of what they were doing. This is the time to take the time to make sure so that the person won't be deceived into thinking he has something that he really doesn't have.

You see, Romans 10:9 tells us that we must confess the Lord Jesus. It doesn't say that we only need to confess that we believe Jesus Christ is the son of God, but it says that Jesus is Lord. Acts 2:36 records Peter as saying plainly that God has made Jesus both Lord and Christ. Jesus is not just Jesus, but he is the Christ, the Messiah, the Savior of the world. In addition, God has also

made him Lord. When a person repeats the sinner's prayer, then that person has to recognize and believe that Jesus is also Lord. The word, Lord, means master. If Jesus Christ is your Lord, then he is also your master. And if Jesus is your Lord and Master, then you must serve him like you would serve someone who is master over you. 1 Corinthians 6:20 tells us that we have been bought, we have been purchased. Jesus gave his blood for us, and therefore, we are not our own. We do not belong to ourselves anymore. If you repeat the sinner's prayer, you must believe that Jesus is the Christ who came to save the world, and you must also acknowledge that Jesus Christ is your Lord. If you don't believe that Jesus Christ is Lord and Master, than I'm sure you will have no desire to serve him.

You see, a confession must be true in order to credit the person properly for that confession. If someone confesses a transgression against you, you can forgive them. However, if their confession is not true, then it really isn't a confession. Therefore, how can someone be forgiven if they don't first repent? Jesus said in Luke 17:4 that we should forgive those who repent. It's the same way with God. God doesn't forgive sins unless the sinner repents first. There is no blanket forgiveness. God forgives those who come to him in repentance.

The sinner's prayer is valid only when the confession is true. And it can only be a true confession if the confession tells the whole truth. If you confess that Jesus is the Christ, you aren't really doing any more than an unclean spirit would do. We have this example in the first chapter of Mark where there was a man in the temple who had an unclean spirit. The Bible says that the unclean spirit spoke to Jesus and said, "Let us alone. What do we have to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? Art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God."

Here was an evil spirit who believed that Jesus was the Holy One of God who was to come and save the world. In Mark, chapter 5, we have another example of the evil spirits in the man of Gadera. These evil spirits also referred to Jesus as, "the Son of the Most High God." Therefore, it is simple to see that just believing that Jesus is the Son of God is not enough to be saved. The real difference between believers and non-believers is whether or not Jesus Christ is truly accepted as being Lord. If Jesus is not accepted as being Lord, than there is no salvation for that person. The Devil believes that Jesus is the Christ, but he does not believe that Jesus is his Lord. Satan refuses to accept God as his Lord and Master. This is the rebellion of Satan from the time that sin was initiated. Therefore, a person who confesses Jesus Christ must also believe that Jesus is Lord, and the confession must include a determination in the heart of that person to accept Jesus as Lord and Master. Unless the person reciting the sinner's prayer is in agreement with Jesus being their Lord, there is no valid reason to believe the confession is true.

When we read Romans 10:9, and it says that salvation comes by confessing Jesus Christ with the mouth, we must also read the next verse which tells us that although confession is made with the mouth, believing must come from the heart. If a confession is not heartfelt, if the acceptance of Jesus as both Lord and Christ does not come from the heart, than there can be no deliverance

from sin and no subsequent salvation. Jesus can only save those who look to him as Lord and Master.

Now this is what I really mean when I say that a person can't just repeat the sinner's prayer and expect to be saved. The sinner's prayer must be a heart felt prayer, and the person must truly believe that Jesus is both Lord and Christ, and that God really did raise him from the dead. A confession must be a true confession in order to be valid.

We all need to confess Jesus Christ as Lord. We all need to repent of our sins. And you see, to repent of sins is as necessary for the sinner's prayer as believing that Jesus is both Lord and Christ. Salvation means saving someone from their sins. If you want to be saved, then you have to realize that you are a sinner. Jesus came to save sinners, not the righteous. If you don't acknowledge your sins, then you haven't truly confessed Jesus as Christ. Christ means Savior. Christ is the New Testament word for Savior, just a Messiah is the Old Testament word for Savior. If you want to be saved, this means that you want to be delivered from that which will condemn you. If you don't confess that you are a sinner, then apparently you don't believe that you are a sinner. And if you don't believe that you are a sinner, then you don't believe God's word after all. If you did, you would be convicted of the truth, for the Bible clearly tells us that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. If we all have sinned, then we must all come to confession. Jesus is the Christ, the Savior of the world, but only to those who acknowledge the truth of God's word that says we are all sinners. Jesus is Lord, but only to those who acknowledge his authority over them. God is love, but only to those who love him in return, for those who hate him will be hated in return. Confession must be true, and it must include a confession that Jesus is not only Christ the Savior, but that you also intend for him to be Lord of your life.

The Bible tells us in 1 Corinthians 15:22 that in Adam we all die. Adam was the first man, and he was made as a living soul. However, as the apostle Paul explains in verse 45, Jesus Christ is the last Adam, and rather than being just a living soul, he is a life giving Spirit. Adam sinned, and by this, sin came into the world. Therefore, all who are in the flesh, as Adam was in the flesh, are sinners by inheritance. We were born with the nature of sin. Anyone who remains a physical human being will die because of the curse of sin. However, Jesus knew no sin. Therefore, as it also says in 1 Corinthians 15:22, all those who are the seed of Adam will die, but all those who are in Christ will live. In short, if you are in Adam, you will die, but if you are in Christ, you will live forever. This doesn't mean that we must be good like Jesus was good, but it does mean that we must put on Christ.

Here, let me explain this in more detail. This might help you to understand our salvation experience a little better. Galatians 3:27 says, "As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." You see, we are condemned in the flesh because all flesh is condemned. The only way to escape condemnation is to be perfect. If you could live a perfect life and keep all the laws of God, then you could escape death, and your descendants would also escape death as long as they continued to abide with you. However, we know perfectly well that no man could

live a perfect life. Because we are all born after the manner of Adam as flesh and blood human beings, we will all die. And when we die, there can be no salvation for us, not as long as we remain physical human beings after the manner of Adam. Of course the good news is that Jesus Christ was perfect. Therefore, he has shown himself to be seed of Abraham to whom God had made a promise. God had promised Abraham that all nations would be blessed in his seed. As Paul explains, the seed of Abraham was not many seeds, but one seed, and that seed was Christ. Therefore, because Christ is the only seed in which all nations can be blessed, we can only escape the condemnation that comes through sin by being IN Christ. We must escape our flesh and blood bodies. This is why we put on Christ.

When we make the decision to die out to the old man of the flesh, and live a new life in Christ in which we are guided by the Holy Spirit of God, we become born again. We are not born again into Adam as we first were, but are born again into Christ. This is symbolized by our baptism. Going down under the water symbolizes our intent to die out to the ways of our old man. Rising up out of the water signifies our change of heart and the beginning of a new way of life in righteousness. Now, notice that it is IN Christ that we have eternal life. Flesh and blood cannot enter into the presence of God because all flesh is sinful. But because Jesus Christ was perfect, he was resurrected in righteousness. Therefore, he is the only person who is acceptable in the sight of God. And, because he has been accepted by God, we can also enter into God's presence if we put on Christ. When we do put on Christ, we become members of Christ's body, and therefore we are joint heirs with Christ. As Romans 8:1 says, "There is therefore no condemnation to those who are IN Christ." There is only one who has overcome the sin nature, and that is Jesus Christ. If you want to escape death, then you must put on Christ in order to live forever with God. Once again, Galatians 3:27 says, "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." Our escape from the damnation that sin causes is through the body of Christ. However, we can only be IN Christ if we believe in him as both Savior and Lord. We certainly do confess Christ that he is Savior, but we must also make him Lord.

Jesus is Lord of all those who are in the body of Christ because Jesus is the head of the body. We Christians are the members of Christ's body. We are the eyes, the ears, the legs, the feet, the arms, etc. But Christ is the head. He is the head of his body. Christians make up the body of Christ. Jesus is the head of the body, and therefore the body is controlled and directed by the head. If Christ is the head of the body, and you're part of that body, then you will be controlled and directed by the head of that body. Jesus will be your Lord and Master. Anyone who will not be controlled by the head of the body will not be part of that body.

Every man who is flesh and blood has the very nature of sin in his mortal body. No matter whether we have been born yet or not, when we are conceived we are conceived in sin and when we are first born we are born into sin. Now, 1 Corinthians 15:50 says that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. And the reason that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God is that sin has corrupted the flesh. No man can come into the presence of God while still being flesh and blood. As the Bible tells us, we must be born again. And, not just born again, but born this time by life from the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit which will make us alive. It

was Adam which was made a living soul, but it is only Jesus Christ that brings us life in the Spirit.

If you have been able to follow today's train of thought, then you are now able to see that what God has been doing is showing us that there can be no righteous person except God himself. Jesus was righteous and overcame the nature of sin only because he is also God. And you can also see that in order to be in Christ and be inheritors of eternal life with Christ, you must be part of Christ's body.

Now, we all know that it is the head of a body from which the body parts take their direction. It is no different in Christ's body. Christ, who is the head of the body, is the one who directs us, who are the members of the body. When we acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord, we acknowledge that we are only members of his body, and do not have a body of our own. In our own bodies, we are both the body and the head of the body. But in Christ's body, we are many members of the body, but it is Christ who is the head.

As sons of Adam we first directed ourselves. We were the head of our body. We determined our own destiny and lived each and every day of our lives according to our own desire. However, when we forsook our body in order to live eternally with God, we not only gave up our own body in order to be in the body of Christ, but we also gave up our own head. This is what is being referred to in Revelation 20, verse 4. True Christians give testimony of Christ by being beheaded for him. We remove our head in order that Christ might be the head of the body. It is only by being beheaded that we can make Christ our head, and it is only by being beheaded that our witness of Christ is valid. If we have not been beheaded for Christ, then our confession that Jesus Christ is our Lord is a false confession. Being beheaded so that Christ can be the head of his body is our witness to the world that we are no longer in control, but that Christ is our head and therefore directs us according to his desire and not according to our desire.