

Series: Acts

Lesson #67

Title: Confessing Christ

Scripture: Acts 16: 35-40

Date: April 30, 2009

Place: Sovereign Grace Baptist Church in Princeton, New Jersey

Acts 16: 35: And when it was day, the magistrates sent the serjeants, saying, Let those men go.

Lord willing, next week we will look in greater detail at the fact that it was the Lord Jesus Christ who turned the hearts of these magistrates to give this command to free Paul and Silas. We will look at why and what the Lord did for the brethren by using the magistrates the way he did.

However, tonight I want to look at what it is to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and to confess him. **Romans 10: 8: But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, *even* in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; 9: 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. 10: For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. 11: For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.**

Like all other aspects of truth, sinners have conjured up many false ideas of what a confession of Christ really is. But we can learn something about confession by looking at the magistrates and what they did. Pastor, "Are you saying that the magistrates believed on Christ from the heart and confessed him?" I am not saying they did anymore than those who do what the magistrates did and yet claim to confess Christ.

I. A TRUE CONFESSION OF CHRIT IS PRODUCED BY CHRIST JESUS THE LORD.

Acts 16: 35: And when it was day, the magistrates sent the serjeants, saying, Let those men go.

It would be supposition to say that the earthquake, which occurred the night before, caused these men to have this change of heart. It would be supposition to say that some kind of legal evidence was brought to the magistrate's attention so that they decided Paul and Silas were innocent. It would be supposition to draw any conclusion than the obvious one given.

From what is recorded, it is obvious fact that their change of heart was the product of something other than the grace of God working to bring them to Christ. That is plain to see by their rejection of Christ's messengers.

A. Natural causes may produce a mere change of heart but a mere change of heart produced by natural causes is not true repentance and faith and therefore results in a false confession.

Be sure you get this now: repentance and faith is the gift of God through Christ Jesus the Lord and Savior. **Acts 5:31: Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.**

Ephesians 2: 8: For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9: Not of works, lest any man should boast.

Therefore if we confess with the mouth it must be because Christ has given us a new heart through the Holy Spirit. **Romans 10:10: For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.**

Matthew 15: 7: Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, 8: This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with *their* lips; but their heart is far from me. 9: But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. 10: And he called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear, and understand: 11: Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.

II. CONFESSING CHRIST MEANS STANDING FOR THE GLORY OF GOD OUR SAVIOR.

Acts 16: 36: And the keeper of the prison told this saying to Paul, The magistrates have sent to let you go: now therefore depart, and go in peace. 37: But Paul said unto them, They have beaten us openly uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast *us* into prison; and now do they thrust us out privily? nay verily; but let them come themselves and fetch us out.

A. Paul believed God from the heart. So what he did here shows us what it is to confess Christ.

What they did to Paul and Silas publicly was the same as doing it to Christ Jesus, Paul's Lord. Therefore if Paul accepts release, privately, then the public will surely take for granted that he is guilty and that their accusers were just in condemning them. It would be the same as exalting the magistrates while dishonoring Christ Jesus himself. Faith in Christ would not allow Paul to go out of that prison without the glory of Christ being upheld. That is confessing Christ Jesus the Lord before all.

B. Confession is much more than walking an aisle or going to some closet-booth to tell your sins to some man, confession is bearing witness of Christ from the heart before God and men, even in the face of opposition.

Christ Jesus the servant of God is called in Revelations: THE Faithful...Witness. "Faithful" because as the servant of God he believed God from the heart--faith. "Witness" because he

told the truth of God to everyone he came into contact with--even unto death--that is true confession.

John 18: 33: Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto him, Art thou the King of the Jews? 34: Jesus answered him, Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me? 35: Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me: what hast thou done? 36: Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence. 37 Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.

John 19: 5: Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. And Pilate saith unto them, Behold the man! 6: When the chief priests therefore and officers saw him, they cried out, saying, Crucify him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Take ye him, and crucify him: for I find no fault in him. 7: The Jews answered him, We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God. 8: When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he was the more afraid; 9: And went again into the judgment hall, and saith unto Jesus, Whence art thou? But Jesus gave him no answer. 10: Then saith Pilate unto him, Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee? 11: Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power *at all* against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin.

That is why Christ Jesus is called: **Revelation 1:5:...the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us,...Revelation 3:14: And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;**

C. It is through Christ the exalted Prince and Savior that sinners receive boldness to stand before all and confess Christ from the heart.

1. He gives us the charge that he works within us through his word through his messengers: **I Timothy 6: 13: I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession;**

2. He gives us the words to speak when we need them through the Spirit. **Matthew 10:19: But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak.**

3. Through the Spirit, God strengthens us to stand firm by Christ--Remember Stephen--**Acts 6: 13: And set up false witnesses, which said, This man ceaseth not to speak**

blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law: 14: For we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us. 15: And all that sat in the council, looking stedfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel. Even when they stood with rocks in hand ready to stone him he never ceased declaring the sin of man and the righteousness of Christ. Where does scripture say this came from? **55: But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, 56: And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.**

When the Spirit of God fills you so that you behold the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus, your face will shine before all and you will stand for the glory of Christ Jesus your Savior. You will do it by his sufficiency of grace!

III. CONFESSING CHRIST IS NOT ONLY PRIVATE BUT ALSO PUBLIC.

Acts 16: 37: But Paul said unto them, They have beaten us openly uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast *us* into prison; and now do they thrust us out privily?

A. God will not allow anyone to reject Christ publicly and confess Christ privately.

Paul says, they beat us OPENLY now do they seek to make amends PRIVATELY. They condemned us who stood uncondemned, this they did OPENLY. Now do they seek to confess our innocence and their wrong-doing, PRIVATELY?

In another place Paul says concerning Christ: **this thing was not done in a corner.** Oh that God would make you to see sinner that in all your rebellion all these days: YOU beat Christ openly; YOU have laid unjust charges against Christ the Righteous; YOU have cast him away from you. Now do you thrust him out privetly?

These words "cast" and "thrust" convey the heart of the matter. First, it is the work of their own hand-- Those who are attempting to make amends to God for their sinfulness by an act of religion, with no work of grace in the heart, are trying to fix something with the same stinking hand which they defiled themselves with. Secondly, this word means to throw out with disregard like you would throw a piece of trash in the trash can. These men regarded Christ and his gospel when they were releasing Paul the same way they regarded Christ and his gospel when they threw his servants into prison.

Christ did not save his people in a corner, we did not reject him in a corner, and we will not confess Christ in a corner. God raised Christ up before all declaring loud and clear that he is both Lord and Christ. God is pleased to save sinners by the preaching of the gospel--because it is the public proclamation that God is well-pleased with the person and finished work of his only begotten Son. Those who he grants repentance and faith will confess him publicly as well. Because God will have men to confess Christ openly he ordained for those whom he has given faith in the heart to confess Christ in water baptism. But baptism is just the

beginning of the believer's confession. By faith in Christ we continually confess that we renounce the hidden things of dishonesty and now walk openly with Christ our Lord and our Savior.

B. You sinner, must come to Christ and confess him openly.

Listen to Paul's answer. **V37:...nay verily; but let them come themselves and fetch us out.**

And fetch us out--the meaning is not conveyed by the word "take", or the word "bring", or even the word "lead." It means let them walk with us out of the prison confessing their agreement with us--confessing that we are righteous AND that they are wrong in everything they have done. The God with whom you must face says to you who attempt to confess him privately, "Nay, verily, but let you come yourself and walk out of the prison with him."

A man spends his whole life sinning against God openly for all to see. Then something happens in his life which causes him to fall under conviction. So he seeks to do something--to use the same hand--same flesh to make up for his guilt. He begins to privately read the bible. Maybe he takes a few trips to church with his wife. He is well-received so he begins to feel like he has made up for things. But he never confesses Christ publicly? **John 12: 42: Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess *him*, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: 43: For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.**

On the other hand, you have someone who makes a profession to believe on Christ. They publicly want everyone to see, they desire it, they wear their religion on their sleeve, they profess to rejoice in Christ, but then this world gives them a little resistance, and they prove to be the "stony ground hearer": **Matthew 13: 21: Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.** Or a thorny ground hearer, **Matthew 13: 22: He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.** Work or play puts pressure on them to make a choice between those things and worshipping Christ they choose work or play, Or when the doctrines of men are set forth in error and they receive it before men as if there is no difference between truth and error because of some personal gain

Listen to what the Lord says: **Matthew 10: 32: Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. 33: But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven. 34: Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. 35: For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. 36: And a man's foes *shall be* they of his own household. 37: He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.**

Are you afraid that you will be cast out by those former friends who yet exalt their will and their self-sanctifying works? You will. Are you afraid your personal gain will be lost? It must be? Are you afraid momma or daddy will take away your inheritance? The man whom the Lord gave sight had that happen to him. **John 9:22** *These words spake his parents, because they feared the Jews: for the Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue.* But the Lord says in **Matthew 10: 38: And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.** Only the sinner who bears witness before God and men of the absolute unworthiness of himself is truly worthy of Christ.

None will be exempt from confessing Christ publicly. **Isaiah 45:23: I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth *in* righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear.**