

A Faith That Confesses

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A persistent, jabbing pain in the lower abdomen sent a cold wave of fear through my sister-in-law.

"It's my appendix," she groaned to her pastor. "I'm afraid it's going to burst!"

"It will not!" he retorted emphatically.

The assurance in his voice startled her. Then, as he prayed, she felt her fears giving way to an uplifting sense of confidence.

"It will not!" And it did not.

The Bible has much to say about our words. Words can curse or bless, discourage or encourage, kill or make whole.

This is especially true of what we confess. Our confession is our declaration of what we believe. It implies our certainty of our beliefs, our acceptance of them, our confidence in them, and our obedience to them.

So it is crucial that what we believe is the truth: for if our believing is wrong on a matter, our confession and our living on that matter will be wrong also.

And where do we find the truth? In God and His revealed Word. So then, what God says should be the determining factor in what we believe, confess, and do.

The Old Testament Hebrew word for "confess" is yadah, and it means literally "throwing out the hand." Most often it is translated "praise" or "give thanks."

This is exactly what we do when we lift our hands in praise and worship to the Lord. We openly express the confession of our hearts that God is who He is and that He is worthy of the full outpouring of our whole being to Him. It is the posture of total surrender and confidence.

The New Testament Greek word for "confess" is homologeo. It means literally "to speak the same thing." In other words, admit the truth; agree with the facts; acknowledge that the Bible is the Word of God.

Affirm the authority of Scripture and declare its promises. Say what God says and mean it. Then act upon it.

Now an honest heart is essential to true confession. A confession by the mouth that does not have the heart with it is as phony as the proverbial \$3 bill. Real confession is clean confession. It goes all the way to the truth.

Confess Sin To God

What has been said is particularly so with respect to confession of sin. It must be sincere. David said, "I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,' and You forgave the iniquity of my sin" (Psalm 32:5).

The people who came to be baptized by John came confessing their sins (Matthew 3:6). And in Acts 19:18 we read that confession of sin was a feature of Paul's great revival in Ephesus: "And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds."

The Bible assures us that genuine, sincere confession of sin will bring a divine pardon. In Proverbs 28:13 God promised, "He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy." And in 1 John 1:9 we are assured, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Confess Sin To Others

Honest confession of sin requires that we clear the record with all parties we have wronged. So James 5:16 directs us, "Confess your faults one to another..."

The prodigal son realized he had to face both God and his father before the matter would be cleared up. So he confessed, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight..." (Luke 15:21).

Confess Christ Before Men

Jesus said, "Whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 10:32). And in Romans 10:9, 10 we read, "If you

confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

Salvation is received by faith, and it is confirmed and preserved by faith, a faith that confesses.

Confession springs from a right relationship with God. So we read in 1 John 4:15, "Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God." It is the natural product of the faith that overcomes the world (1 John 5:4). The person who cannot face the world with a clear testimony that Christ dwells within has not overcome the world.

Right here is where Peter lost the victory. A servant girl said to him, "You also were with Jesus." And Peter, overcome with fear, denied his Lord. He had confessed great confidence in himself, but that is not where the victory is. Had his confidence been in the Lord, his confession would have been different. Had he followed by faith the example of Christ, "who witnessed the good confession before Pontius Pilate," he would have stood (1 Timothy 6:13).

Christ is "the Apostle and High Priest of our confession" (Hebrews 3:1). "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession" (Hebrews 4:14). "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful" (Hebrews 10:23).

So the overcomer confesses Christ by faith. That faith is the "victory that overcomes the world." And it results in Christ confessing us before the Father and His angels (Revelation 3:5).

Confess The Word Of God

It is important to say what God says about doctrine. Without sound doctrine we cannot have a true confession. John warned: "Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God" (1 John 4:2 and 3). "For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist" (2 John 7).

It is important to say what God says about Christian living. Never contradict the Word of God on any point of morality or conduct. Accept the whole truth and submit to it. Real faith obeys the truth that it believes and confesses. So the Psalmist said, "Therefore I esteem as right all Your precepts concerning everything; I hate every false way" (Psalm 119:128 Amplified).

It is important also to say what God says about His grace and power on our behalf. Confess God's promises.

We all encounter needs and problems, both in ourselves and in those we know. In these situations a variety of thoughts can address our minds. We hear what people say, what the suggestions of Satan say, what symptoms say, what our own thoughts and fears say.

Then we open our Bibles, and there we read what God says.

Now comes the important question: What do you say? What do you choose to believe and confess? Will you give expression to despair, unbelief, and self-pity? Or will you say what God says?

No, real faith does not deny the facts. Rather it recognizes and confesses the full facts, including the greater facts of God's sovereign wisdom and power, and His unfailing love and promises.

Armed with the greater facts contained in God's Word, we are prepared to face the problem with full assurance of victory.

When we take our position firmly on the Scriptures, we know exactly where we are standing. Confusion ends. Wavering ceases. We are prepared to say something positive and concrete—something God is prepared to confirm by His power.

In Mark 11:23 Jesus said, "Whoever says to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says" (see also Matthew 17:20).

Now that's a powerful statement. And it's the truth. But what we say must be what God wants. Most of the mountains are where God wants them, and He is not interested in throwing them around.

Spiritual mountains are a different matter. When our own will is completely aligned with the will of God, then and only then do we have the confidence that what we want is the very thing God wants.

And when we are scripturally sure of what God wants done and how He wants it done, we are prepared to speak with authority in Jesus' name with full confidence that He will validate our words.

This is exactly what 1 John 5:14, 15 teaches us: "Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him."

This is no light, easy matter. It is not for the careless, the shallow, the frivolous. On the contrary it is rooted in a deep, stable relationship with Christ and His Word. So Jesus taught us, "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you" (John 15:7).

Some have experienced this mantle of divine authority. All of us should.

Moses did. Exodus 8:13 informs us that "the LORD did according to the word of Moses."

Samuel did. "So Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground" (1 Samuel 3:19).

Elijah did. In 1 Kings 17:1 we read, "And Elijah... said to Ahab, As the LORD God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, except at my word."

Peter did. At Lydda he said to palsied Aeneas, "Jesus the Christ heals you. Arise and make your bed. Then he arose immediately" (Acts 9:34). He commanded dead

Dorcas, "Arise. And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up" (Acts 9:40).

Paul did. He said to Elymas the sorcerer, "You shall be blind, not seeing the sun for a time. And immediately a dark mist fell on him" (Acts 13:11). At Philippi he said to the demon inhabiting a girl, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out that very hour" (Acts 16:18).

These were men who did not live cheap, trifling lives. They did not play the fool before the Majesty in the heavens! With them, faith in God was serious business.

What a profound effect our confession has upon our hearers!

When Sennacherib's armies threatened Jerusalem, King Hezekiah assured the people of the city that God was with them to fight their battles. "And the people relied on the words of Hezekiah" (2 Chronicles 32:8 NASB). And God delivered them.

When the ship was about to sink and fear tightened its iron grip on the hearts of hundreds of soldiers, sailors and prisoners, Paul stood up alone against the consensus of despair and declared, "There will be no loss of life among you... I believe God that it will turn out exactly as I have been told... not a hair from the head of any of you will perish." And that is exactly the way it happened. (Read about it in Acts, chapter 27.)

Having described the coming rapture of the church, Paul commanded, "Therefore comfort one another with these words" (1 Thessalonians 4:18).

Proverbs 12:25 says, "Anxiety in the heart of man causes depression, but a good word makes it glad." And in Proverbs 15:23 we are told, "A man has joy by the answer of his mouth, and a word spoken in due season, how good it is!"

The Psalmist knew the importance of saying what God says. He declared, "My tongue shall speak of Your word" (Psalm 119:172).

And Paul, by the Holy Spirit gives us this benediction: "Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father... comfort your hearts, and establish you in every good word and work" (2 Thessalonians 2:16, 17 KJV).

Amen. So be it.