

Confessions of the Christian

What does the Bible say about confession?

- Paul told the church in Rome that their willingness to confess Christ before others was essential to their salvation (Romans 10:5-17) - **confession is a representation of one's faith** in the saving power of the Gospel of Christ (Luke 24:44-48, Acts 26:12-18).
- Paul told Timothy to conduct his ministry in faithfulness to the character of Christ and the confession that he had made at the beginning of his walk with Christ (1 Timothy 6:11-16) - **confession is felt in word and action** and is a reflection of one's desire to bear witness to Christ in all aspects of life (Galatians 6:14, 2 Timothy 2:19-22).

What confessions does the Bible ask people to make?

- The speeches of the apostles in the book of Acts are unanimous in their confession of Christ as the Son of God and Savior of mankind (Acts 2:36, 3:13-16, 4:11-12, 10:34-43, 13:23, etc.) - **confession of Christ as the Son of God and Lord of one's life** is necessary in order to be a faithful witness to the Gospel and God's plan of salvation.
- According to the apostle John, the cleansing power of Christ's blood is accessed by walking in the light with Him, including bringing our sins into His light so that they may be undone (1 John 1:5-10) - **confession of one's sins to God in prayer** is necessary in order to walk in the light of the Gospel and adopt the holiness of Christ before God.

What does Christian confession look like today?

- When one becomes a Christian, he or she must be willing to **confess that Jesus Christ is the Lord of his or her life** and back up that confession by sharing it with others and seeking to be transformed into the image of Christ's righteousness (Romans 11:36-12:8).
- **Confession of sins to both God and fellow Christians** is upheld in the New Testament as a way to strengthen the unifying bonds of faith, protect the purity and transparency of the church, and promote encouragement and the outpouring of love among the brethren of Christ (James 5:16).

Key Verses and Ideas:

- **Exodus 15:2** - **“The Lord is my strength and my song, and He has become my salvation; this is my God, and I will praise Him, my father’s God, and I will exalt Him.”**
~ This statement of praise is found near the beginning of the song sung by Moses and the Israelites in their joy at being rescued from the Egyptians through God’s parting of the Red Sea (Ex 14:1-15:21). In this moment, God’s chosen people recognize the fact that in addition to being incredibly fortunate for them, their salvation is a manifestation of God’s power and reflection of His divine character (Ex 34:6-7, Deut 33:26-29). Their responsive confession of His power and character is itself powerful and characteristic of a response to the greatness of God, as every confession of God’s people should be (Acts 3:11-16, Heb 12:1-2).
- **Psalm 32:5** - **“I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,’ and you forgave the iniquity of my sin.”** ~ The Psalms are a collection of individual human expressions of emotion and thought, with the goal of forming and/or strengthening a connection with God through these expressions. In this Psalm, David the king acknowledges the fact that forgiveness from God is among the greatest blessings one can be given and says that he has sought and found this forgiveness through prayers of confession to the God of comfort (Ps 32:1-11; cf. Ps 130:1-8, Neh 1:4-2:8). This beautiful picture of a prayerful child of God highlights both the importance of confession in fostering one’s relationship with God and the understanding of God as a strong and loving Father within such a relationship (Is 63:14-16, Jas 1:13-21).
- **Proverbs 28:13** - **“Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.”** ~ The Proverbs are another collection of separate but similar ideas for God’s people, but these are less emotional than the Psalms and focus on capturing the wisdom of God’s people in the form of proverbial statements which are generally true. The truth of this proverb, and of the surrounding proverbs which contrast the man of integrity and the man of iniquity (Prov 28:1-28), is borne out both within the Bible and across human history (Ecc 12:13-14, Jn 3:19-21, Acts 5:1-11). The Bible therefore accurately casts confession of sins before God as a benefit to humanity, as the possibility of God’s graceful forgiveness creates the possibility to avoid some negative consequences of one’s sins in the future (1 Kgs 8:46-53, Heb 10:19-31).
- **Matthew 16:15-16** - **“He said to them, ‘But who do you say that I am?’ Simon Peter replied, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’”** ~ Having asked His closest followers about who the people understood Him to be at the time, Jesus then makes the question personal and receives this response from Peter (Matt 16:13-16). Peter’s confidence in his belief that Jesus is the Christ earns the Lord’s praise and blessing, which would later be reflected in Peter’s role as the deliverer of the first Gospel sermon at the beginning of Christ’s church (Matt 16:17-20, Acts 2:14-41). In a similar way, those who believe in Jesus’s roles as the Christ, the Son of God, and the Savior of the world are challenged to bear witness to Him as such so that they themselves may become a reflection of His majesty and love to the world around them (Rom 8:9-17, 1 Tim 3:14-4:6).

- **Luke 12:8-9 - ““And I tell you, everyone who acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man also will acknowledge before the angels of God, but the one who denies me before men will be denied before the angels of God.””**

~ In leading up to this truth, Jesus has been discussing the freedom from fear that comes with the abandonment of hypocrisy and the recognition of one's incredible value in the eyes of an all-knowing and all-loving God (Lk 12:1-7). It is evident based on this context that both acknowledgement and denial of Christ before others is a matter of word, deed, and thought, as Jesus has said and responded to elsewhere (Matt 7:21-27, 12:33-37, Lk 5:17-26).

- **Philippians 2:9-11 - “Therefore God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” ~**

Paul's exaltation of the humility of Christ reflects the central themes of Christianity, as does the eventual exaltation of Christ by all of Creation that he looks forward to here (Lk 14:7-11, 1 Cor 1:18-31). Jesus's role as the Christ is already well attested by the whole of Creation, and even by those spiritual beings most adamantly opposed to Him (Mk 3:11-12, Rom 1:18-20, Jas 2:19). However, at His return, mankind will finally be united in their confession of this truth, albeit with differing results for those who were already faithful to this confession as opposed to those who were not (Matt 25:31-46, 2 Pet 3:8-13).

- **1 John 4:14-15 - “And we have seen and testify that the Father**

has sent His Son to be the Savior of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.” ~ In

these verses, a confession of Christ is paired with a statement about the results of confessing Christ. The confidence that enforces one's confession is found in the union and abiding presence shared by God and His people, which is itself only possible through one's acceptance of Christ's Gospel (Acts 2:36-38, 2 Cor 5:1-10). It is in this union that Christians find peace, and through this union that the world may find Christ (Matt 28:18-20, Phil 4:6-9).

- **Revelation 3:4-5 - “Yet you have still a few names in Sardis, people who have not soiled their garments, and they will walk with me in white, for they are worthy. The one who conquers will be clothed thus in white garments, and I will never blot his name out of the book of life. I will confess his name before my Father and before His angels.” ~** As He dictates His seven letters for the seven churches of Asia to John, Jesus identifies a positive within the church at Sardis: some of them still have pure garments resembling His own (Rev 1:9-20; cf. Mk 9:2-3). This distinction reflects the purity of a holistic confession being maintained throughout one's life (Jas 1:27, Rev 7:9-17). It is to these faithful witnesses that Christ promises reciprocal and eternal faithfulness, a faithfulness that is described in the New Testament and recognized as one of the great benefits of one's relationship with God through Christ (2 Tim 2:11-13, 1 Jn 2:1-2).

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