

WHAT MUST I DO?

And he brought them out and said, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?' — Acts 16:30

Man's Part In Salvation

Required: Confessing Our Belief. If we get this far into what is necessary for our salvation, we are ones who have heard the gospel message and our hearts have convicted us of our sins, and we are convinced the gospel story is true. We believe Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and we believe that God raised Him from the dead. But are we saved? Have we had our sins forgiven at this point? Can we be assured of a home in heaven and eternal life? No, not yet.

Confession of our belief is also required of the one who seeks salvation. But what is confession? What does it mean to confess this belief? Well, in New Testament times the common usage was such that meant "indicating consent to what is found to be valid followed by the appropriate resolve and action; theoretical assent is not enough." [Kittel's *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (Abridged)*, p. 687] The usage of the word that has been translated as "confession" requires that one not only has to **mentally** assent [or agree] that certain facts are true, but must also then demonstrate — through his life — that he believes those same facts. Relating to the gospel, we can easily understand the necessity of confession, in this sense. One does not merely "agree" the Word of God is true to obtain salvation. Agreement does not mean one will **act** on that agreement. [If we saw a bull charging toward us, we might both agree that someone has to stop him, but who will stand his ground and do that?]

The confession that is required of us is **more than just a mental assent!** I am sure you have heard for yourself many of the religious teachers and preachers who get up in the pulpits and look out over their audiences and plead with the sinner, "Let Jesus into your heart and make Him your Savior." The plea then continues that they get down on their knees and pray the sinner's prayer [whatever that is]. Those same teachers and preachers will say that you are now saved simply because you made a mental assent that you believe in Jesus. Not so! The Bible does not teach such! The Bible requires that one who has actually heard the Word and is convicted by it [believes it] must then confess that belief! It is required for these reasons:

Our Salvation Depends On It. (Romans 10:9, 10) When Paul reiterated that the plan of man's salvation was for **all** men [to those who called on the name of the Lord, v. 13], he specified, "*that 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.*" Here, we find that is required of one who seeks salvation that they literally speak [state] their belief that Jesus is the Christ and that God raised Him from the dead. By doing this, Paul says, "*you will be saved.*" To further press the point, Paul says this confession is not some mere mental assent, but says, "*with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.*" A literal, oral [vocal] statement of our belief is **required**. Belief is necessary, for certain, but what you do **after** believing will determine whether or not you obtain salvation.

It Exposes Our True Feelings. (John 12:42, 43) No example could be clearer in demonstrating the need for confession of our belief that Jesus is the Christ than this. Here, we find that even among the [religious] rulers "*many believed*" in Jesus. But **they did not confess Him**. Why not? They did not because they knew that if they did, they would be thrown out of the synagogue. These men — who I must emphasize in the strongest terms were **believers** — would not confess Jesus as the Christ! Why? Because they "*loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.*" Even though **they believed in Jesus**, they were too cowardly to confess Him. They would rather stay with their friends in the synagogue than walk with the Lord in eternity! Can you imagine?!?

It Is God's Desire. (Philippians 2:9-11) In using Christ as an example of supreme humility, Paul writes that the end result was His exaltation by God, which was intended in eternity. After His resurrection, God exalted Him and gave Him the "name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should **confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of the Father.**" God **desires** that we confess our belief in Jesus Christ as Lord. We will either do it here on earth, or we will do it in the final judgment (cf. **Romans 14:10-12**). I urge you to do it now! It is **required**.

The confession that is required of one who seeks salvation is dependent on confession of certain beliefs about Jesus, too. Again, it is not merely a mental assent that you "believe in Jesus." [That may not even be understood in its proper context as is used in the Bible.] John wrote, "Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God." (**1 John 4:15**) Not only must we **believe** Jesus is the Son of God, we must **confess** it. Right along with that comes the necessity of our confession that we believe He came in the flesh (**1 John 4:2, 3**). This may sound like a given, but there are some who deny the deity of Christ simply because they refuse to believe God could come in the flesh (**2 John 7**). Though the Bible teaches it plainly (**John 1:1, 14**), some will deny it.

This confession is more than a one-time event, too. Some have a concept of getting up in front of an audience and saying, "I believe Jesus is the Christ," thinking that is all there is to confessing Jesus. Not so. Though that is certainly necessary (as the Ethiopian eunuch did, **Acts 8:35-37**), that is just the beginning! Confession means we do not deny what we believe and know when others ask (as the blind man's parents did, **John 9:22**). It means we are not ashamed of Him or ashamed to be called His people (**Mark 8:38; 2 Tim. 1:8**). It means we do not waver in our belief (**Heb. 4:14; 10:23**). It means we are ready with an answer for our faith when asked (**1 Pet. 3:15**). It means we back up our mental assent with not just words, but action (**1 John 1:6; 2:4**). And even then, we must realize that we **can** deny him by our actions, though we may **say** we follow Him (**Titus 1:16**).

The seriousness of this part of God's plan for man's salvation should not be overlooked. Jesus said, "Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven." (**Matt. 10:32-33**) If we deny Christ, whether through a refusal to say it or because we live an ungodly life, Jesus will stand with the Father on that final day and say, "I do not know you." Don't let that be you.

Questions _____



1. What does it mean to "confess" Christ? _____

2. In your own words, state why this is necessary of the one seeking salvation. _____

3. Why is mental assent not enough to obtain salvation? [Be as clear as possible.] _____

4. What part does our confession play in our life before the world? _____

5. What does confession require of us, if we do believe? _____

6. What may we expect, in the end, if we do not confess Christ? _____
