

First Principles

Confess

After one hears the word and believes in Jesus as the Son of God, one must confess his belief before men. Notice again the Ethiopian eunuch's response in verse 37 of Acts 8. Philip told him that he could be baptized if he believed with all his heart. The eunuch voiced his belief in Jesus as the Son of God prior to being baptized. In this lesson we will look at the definition of the word "confess", review the New Testament scriptures dealing with confession, and summarize the role of confession in salvation.

DEFINITIONS

"Confess": "*homologeō*" and "*exomologeō*" are the Greek verbs used by the NT writers to convey the idea of "confession". Vine's lists definitions for both words.

SCRIPTURES

1. Romans 10:8-10: With the mouth confession is made unto salvation. (Vine's A-1c)
2. John 6:16-17: Use of the prepositions "into" and "unto" in the scriptures.
3. Matthew 15:9: One who worships according to the teachings of men is worshipping in vain.

SUMMARY

Confession is an oft-misunderstood concept in religion. Many people believe confession is sufficient for salvation. Once during a study of confession I had a student walk out as the study was taking place due to his misunderstanding of the word. What is meant by confession in the New Testament, and is it sufficient for salvation or is it a step towards salvation? We will answer these questions in this study.

First, what is meant by confession? The definition of *homologeō* is key to understanding confession. Notice what Vine's says above: *homologeō* is "to declare openly by speaking out freely, such confession being the effect of deep

conviction of facts" (Vine's A-1c). Confession is not a private act. When one confesses Jesus one verbalizes publicly his/her belief in Jesus as the Son of God. This profession comes as a result of deep convictions, and these convictions are based on facts. As you can see, confession naturally follows the acts of hearing the word and developing a belief in Jesus. One learns of the facts that lead to the deep convictions expressed during confession by hearing and studying the Word of God. Since the profession is based on facts, one must be certain that his/her belief is based on facts. Jesus warns us of the possibility of having a faith based on fables in Matthew 15:9. One who has a faith based on doctrines of men is worshipping God in vain!!

Next, let's consider whether confession is sufficient for salvation or is a step towards salvation. Romans 10:8-10 will answer this question. Please turn to Romans 10:8-10 and read closely Paul's words. Many people use these two verses as support for the doctrine that one who confesses Jesus and believes is saved. Did Paul say that? The key word in these two verses is found in verse 10. That word is *unto*. In Merriam-Webster you will find a link to the word *to*. Notice the word *to* suggests movement *toward* a person, place or thing. *Toward* indicates something that is coming soon, not something which has already arrived! A perfect example of the use of the prepositions *unto* and *into* is found in John 6:16-17. John tells us the disciples came *unto* the sea and entered *into* a ship. When they came *unto* the sea, were they *into* the sea yet? No! They were on the shore preparing to board a ship. Once they entered *into* the ship they sailed *over* the sea to Capernaum. We all understand the use of *unto*, *into*, and *over* in these verses. Let's apply the same reasoning to Romans 10:10. Paul tells us "with the mouth confession is made *unto* salvation." Is the person saved after making the confession? No! Just as the disciples were not yet *into* the sea when they went *unto* the sea, the believer who has confessed has not yet achieved salvation. They are on the path *toward* salvation, but are not yet saved.

The New International Version has a potentially serious flaw in its translation of Romans 10:10. It reads, "For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved." The NIV suggests that one is saved after confession, making confession sufficient for salvation! But why is this a potentially serious flaw? Don't many in the religious world today teach this doctrine? Yes, they do. For that reason it is important for us to determine why the NIV has mistranslated this verse. (If one considers the teachings of the NT in their entirety one understands that confession is not sufficient for salvation. That's why I said the flaw is "potentially" serious.)

In Ephesians 4:4-6 Paul gives us a list of things of which there is only one. There is only one body, one spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and

one God. Therefore, there is only one plan of salvation. Anytime we read of something one must do before entering a saved state, we know that particular action is part of the one plan of salvation that allows us to enter that one body and have that one hope. In order to properly understand that one plan of salvation we must look to the entire New Testament and identify those things that are necessary prior to salvation. In Romans 10:10, the NIV makes confession sufficient for salvation. But what does the NIV say in Mark 16:16? It reads, "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned." Here the NIV makes *baptism* necessary for salvation! If confession is sufficient for salvation there are either two plans of salvation or there is a contradiction in the NIV (if one understands Romans 10:10 to mean that confession is sufficient). This is true of any version that teaches that confession is sufficient for salvation. In any such version of the NT turn to Mark 16:16 and determine whether baptism is necessary for salvation. If that version teaches that it is, then confession cannot be sufficient for salvation.