

## CHAPTER TWELVE

### **THE WAY OF SALVATION— NOT BEING CONFESSION OR PRAYER**

We have seen in the past few evenings that the way for a person to be saved is not through law-keeping, good works, or repentance. I must make one point clear; that is, we are only discussing the way of salvation and not the condition for salvation. This is due to the fact that there simply are no conditions required of man for him to be saved. God has fulfilled all the requirements. The question before us tonight is this: What is the way for us to be saved? We are not dealing with the matter of condition, for that implies that one has to work for his salvation.

### **THE WAY OF SALVATION NOT BEING CONFESSION**

Tonight we are going to consider the fourth "not being." We thank God that in recent years He has moved in many places to make many people realize in their conscience what sin is, and thus their need of the Lord Jesus to be their Savior. However, without an understanding of the Bible, they often add their own words to those of the Scriptures. In so doing, they invent different ways to salvation, such as the keeping of the law, good works, repentance, and so forth. A popular method happens to be the confession of one's sins. There are those who advocate that salvation is by confession, that it is necessary for man not only to repent, but to confess his sins. I once heard one who was quite used by the Lord say that when Jesus died, He plastered onto the cross pieces of paper on which one of our sins was inscribed. He said that when we receive the Lord Jesus as Savior, we must confess our sins either before God or before men. Once a confession is made regarding a certain sin, the record of that sin would be removed from the cross. Each additional confession would remove another piece of paper. You would finally be saved when you had finished confessing all of your sins and all the sheets of paper had been torn away. What this man preached was not the gospel of God nor that of the New Testament; he had brought in a human gospel which asserts that unless a person makes confession to man and to God, his sins have yet to be removed from the cross. He utterly failed to realize what the Lord Jesus has accomplished.

I can still remember the case of a rather uneducated brother from Kuling who happened to be in Shanghai a few weeks ago. He is an electrician who installs light fixtures. He was hardly literate until recent days. Some time ago he could identify only the character "I" and not "We." He was unable to recognize most of the words in a Bible verse and needed to ask for help seven or eight times in reading a single verse. Once he said to me, "I went to listen to a sermon by a very famous person. This man maintained that we must confess our sins in public so that each sin we confess will be nailed to the cross. If we do not confess our sins openly to crucify them, we cannot be saved. He said that we must believe in the word of the cross, and that if we did not nail our sins to the cross by way of confession, there would be no way for us to be saved, for that would mean that we do not trust the cross. After his sermon, the speaker sought questions from the audience to see if there were things we were unclear about."

"Mr. Nee," the brother continued, "I am uneducated. If I were to stand up in that meeting to read a verse from the Scriptures, the people would probably have to adjust me seven or eight times. But the more I listened to the man speak, the more I felt something pounding in me. I felt that the Holy Spirit would not let me go unless I stood up. But I really did not know what to say. Eventually, I rose up. The speaker was on the platform, and I was standing on my chair! I asked, 'Sir, according to your speech, are we saved by our own cross or by the cross of Christ?' Then I sat down. Mr. Nee, can you tell me if I asked the right question?"

I told the brother that neither a doctor of divinity nor an overseer of a parish had that kind of clarity. This is the key question: Are we saved by our own cross or the cross of Christ? Does Christ's cross or my own cross save me? That sermon was undoubtedly a word of the cross, but whose cross was it? When Paul said, "For I did not determine to know anything among you except Jesus Christ, and this One crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2), he did not allude to Christ and a cross but to Christ and His cross. Dear friends, we are not saved by our own works but by the cross of Christ. Yet man equates confession of sins with works and attempts to be saved through such confession. This is the reason we must see what the Bible says regarding confession. We shall look into the Scriptures thoroughly to find out the proper position we should take in this matter.

### **Confession in the Bible**

Let me first say a few words lest you think that I do not believe in confession or restitution. Christians ought to confess their sins and make restitution. I admit that these are truths in the Bible, and as such, they should be applied. But I must add that the Bible never considers confession to be a way of salvation. If we think that we can be saved through confession, then the solution to the problem of our sins is still not clear to us. We are presuming that there is another method of redemption apart from the cross of Christ. We may even surmise that we can deal with our own sins before God and man without the cross of Christ.

#### **1 John 1:9**

Let us come to a verse many love to quote, that is, 1 John 1:9, which says, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." There are a number who, based on this verse, state that confession is indeed a requirement for salvation. However, I must draw your attention to several points in this verse. First, what is mentioned here is definitely not public confession. First John 1:9 deals with our problem before God when it says, "If we confess our sins." This differs from the current practice of open confession before men. First John 1:9 does not say anything about open confession.

Second, the pronoun "we" in this verse is not like the same pronoun used in the books of Romans and Galatians in that it has nothing to do with the Jews. The Epistle of 1 John is also different from the Gospel of John. John's Gospel shows us how an unbeliever can obtain life, whereas his Epistle tells us how one who has life proves before man that he possesses that life in fact. His Gospel reveals the way to receive life, whereas his Epistle

discloses how one who possesses such a life goes about demonstrating what he possesses. Thus, properly expounded, the "we" in this verse does not refer to sinners, but to believers. The Gospel of John describes the way a sinner is justified by God, but 1 John indicates how a Christian may restore his fellowship with God. The Word here does not discuss how the world can believe in Jesus to have eternal life. It indicates how a person who has eternal life and is a child of God can have his sins forgiven by God and have his unrighteousness cleansed when he fails. Hence, this verse makes reference to the believers alone, those who have been saved and justified, those who possess eternal life.

Remember that, whereas an unsaved person is forgiven of his sins by faith, a saved one is forgiven by confessing his sins. Sinners are pardoned by believing in the Lord, and Christians are forgiven by confessing their sins before their Father. First John 1:9 does not deal with the sins of a sinner but with those of a believer, not with the sins committed before one's salvation, but with those committed after one has been saved. Consequently, this verse has nothing to do with our present subject.

I would not be so strict as to say that this verse can be applied only to Christians. Rather, I would admit that one may borrow from a host of Scriptures and utilize them to get people saved. Recently a sister told me that a lady was saved by reading the phrase, "The seed is the word of God" (Luke 8:11). I do not know how this could have happened. When I first preached the gospel, I was convinced that it takes clear gospel Scriptures to get people saved. However, much experience in recent years has taught me, and I say this reverently, that many are actually saved by strange verses. One cannot imagine that verses as strange as some are can save people. I am not insisting that no sinner could be saved by 1 John 1:9. I am saying that when John was moved by the Holy Spirit to write his Epistle, in his mind the ones referred to in this verse were Christians and not sinners. He originally intended them to be for Christians. Although one may temporarily borrow this word and apply it to a sinner, he should not keep on borrowing it. Strictly speaking, such a verse refers to Christians and does not imply that one must confess his sins publicly and make restitution to others in order to be forgiven.

### **Matthew 3:5 and 6**

There are another two verses which seem even more obvious than 1 John 1:9. They are Matthew 3:5 and 6, which say, "At that time Jerusalem and all Judea and all the surrounding region of the Jordan went out to him, and they were baptized by him in the Jordan River as they confessed their sins." We are told when the people heard John's testimony and realized their own sinfulness, they went out to be baptized by him and confessed their sins while they were being baptized. Again, a few matters should be noted in these verses. First, neither of the two verses indicate that the people took confession as their way to salvation. They did not try to obtain salvation through confession. We are merely told that when they heard John's preaching of repentance, they were compelled by the Spirit to be baptized and to confess their sins. They were in fact looking to the very Lord who was to pass through death and resurrection, and in whom they hoped for their salvation. Though John did baptize, his hands were actually pointing them to the Lord Jesus who was among them. It was he who said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29). In baptisms of the church, and in the baptism of John the Baptist, the Christ

who died and rose is referred to. John readily admitted how little he was worth by declaring that "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30), and that the people should not believe in him but in the coming One. Although he did prepare the way, he was not the way; the way was the coming One to whom he pointed.

How then were the confessions made? Since John did not tell them to come and confess their sins, his listeners must have done it on their own. Let us assume that one of us who is a worker has just finished witnessing for the Lord, and without any kind of urging, charging, demanding, or suggesting, the audience has been deeply enlightened by God in the conscience concerning their sins. They are compelled to rise up to admit that they have committed certain particular sins. To this I would surely say, "Amen" and "Hallelujah!" I would speak praises and never oppose this sort of open confession before men. If John were to say that a man could not be saved or forgiven unless he confessed his sins, and if John actually encouraged, prompted, commanded, and induced the people to confess their sins, then his actions would hardly match the record in Matthew 3:6. According to this verse, his listeners confessed their sins on their own; they were not encouraged by John.

Do not presume that I do not believe in the confession of sins. We have often encouraged the brothers and sisters to make confessions to others. Yet we refuse to accept confession as the means to be saved. There is only one means of salvation prescribed in the Scriptures, and that is faith. The ancient John the Baptist never urged anyone to confess his sins. Neither should any modern John the Baptist urge man to do the same. Of course, if a person, upon realizing his own sins, should stand up to make a confession on his own, we have to let him do so.

You may have heard of the great Welsh revival. I had occasion to study in detail reports on that revival. Many have made studies on it. This greatest of all revivals began between the years of 1904 and 1905. A correspondent of a well-known British newspaper actually went to Wales in 1909 to conduct an investigation of the event. Wales was not a small place. The pastors of one of the cities told the reporter that the number of souls saved had declined to almost nothing during the previous two years. When the correspondent inquired whether the revival was in recession, they replied, "Yes. There is no one around here any longer who is asking to be saved, because everyone has been saved already!" Knowing that the revival began with Evan Roberts, he then asked concerning his whereabouts. They answered, "We have no idea." When he asked them about their meeting time, they said, "We do not know." Likewise, when he questioned them about the meeting place, they repeated, "We do not know." They did not seem to know who the leader of a revival meeting was, nor the time and place of the meeting. The reporter then asked what he should do, to which they responded, "We meet anywhere at anytime, even at midnight or the early hours of the morning. We do not know where Evan Roberts is, but he may appear at anytime. There is a revival gathering in almost every home. You find people praying in different homes at different hours through the night. But it is difficult to find Evan Roberts. Nobody knows where he will be." The reporter remarked that he had never witnessed revival like this in his entire life. He was determined to find Evan Roberts. His efforts in the next few weeks, however, failed to yield any results.

One day, when someone told him that Evan Roberts was in a small chapel, the reporter dashed off immediately to the place. He remarked that the meeting he came upon was most chaotic. A mother was breast-feeding her baby; a few were running in and out of the meeting as if they were salespersons of some sort; another mother was comforting a crying child, while yet another was using a chair as a cradle, rocking her child to sleep. The place was in a mess. And yet there seemed to be an inexplicable and unique element in the atmosphere. "Where is Evan Roberts?" the reporter asked. "The fourth man on the third row," someone answered. "Mrs. Penn-Lewis is also here. There she is on that row." They were all silent in their seats. Once in a while someone would stand to call a hymn, or another might rise to read a few verses from the Scriptures. When one or two hours went by without a single word from the people, no one dismissed himself. At times some would stand to confess their sins on their own without being admonished to do so.

Friends, such a work is the work of God. It is different from platform sermons concerning deathbed stories with an intention to convince the audience that they must either confess their sins or else not be saved at all. I am not forbidding confession. There are times when one should confess his sins. At times one might even declare to a crowd what kind of person he once was and how God had worked in him. However, none of these should be the result of a preacher's prodding from the platform. Sometimes there is more than prodding; it is as if some are commanding. What is in Matthew 3:6 is indeed public confession, but it is the spontaneous result of the work of the Holy Spirit and not an outcome of John's charge. I am not opposing open confession; I am merely opposing this kind of confession. Much more, I am not opposing the work of the Holy Spirit; I wish there were more of such works! If a person is led by the Spirit to confess his sins, we all have to say, "O God, we thank and praise You, for You have worked among us." But we have to oppose any teaching that says confession must be done in a certain way and to a certain degree before certain results will be achieved. We cannot exchange confession for salvation. We must not take confession of sins as our way of salvation.

We have to note that in the sentence, "And they were baptized by him in the Jordan River as they confessed their sins," the main predicate according to the original language is not "confessed" but "were baptized." Thus, the people were being baptized by John in the Jordan River, and while they were being baptized, they also confessed their sins. We may say that "he spoke, walking," which would mean that the person was speaking and walking at the same time. While both "spoke" and "walking" are verbs, "spoke" is the main predicate and "walking" the subordinate verb. Hence the man was speaking, but he was doing so while he was walking. Similarly, in Matthew 3 they were baptized in the Jordan River as they confessed, meaning that while they were being baptized, they were simultaneously confessing their sins. Such is the original sense in Greek. So you see, the confession there was absolutely not a method, but an action which took place. While the people were being baptized, they were admitting that they were wrong in this and in that. The picture here is one of the Holy Spirit working among them, rather than a work of regulation. They were being baptized and confessing, just like our example of someone speaking and walking at the same time. In any case, public confession was never treated as a way to be saved in this verse.

## **Acts 19:18 and 19**

There are only three places in the New Testament which record this matter of confession of sins. We come now to the third place, which is in Acts 19:18 and 19, which says, "And many of those who had believed came, confessing and making known their practices. And a considerable number of those who practiced magic brought their books together and burned them before all; and they counted up the price of them and found it to be fifty thousand pieces of silver." Although there is only the word "confessing," without the mentioning of "sins," the same thing is referred to. In 1 John 1 it says "confess our sins," in Matthew 3 it says "confessed their sins," and here it says "confessing" and "making known their practices." First, the confession and the divulgence of their practices were not reckoned as a way to be saved. Second, those who confessed and recounted their practices were not sinners but believers, people who were Christ's. This can be compared to some brothers and sisters standing up in the meetings to give a testimony acknowledging what they have done in times past. It can also be compared to some who testify at their baptism of things done in the past. We are altogether not saved through this kind of confession. Some have believed and have become the Lord's. They now confess their past history. They admit that they were evil. They are no longer afraid to tell the saints that they have been transferred from the miry clay onto a solid rock. When the Ephesians burned their magic books, they were making an open demonstration that though they had practiced these things, they now belonged to the Lord. Third, "And many of those who had believed came." Not all came. Not every saved person needs to confess in the meetings. It is because the Holy Spirit moves strongly to prompt people that they rise to disclose their practices that they may glorify God by showing the extent of God's salvation in them. Friends, you can discover from these three portions of the Word that the way of salvation is through faith and not through public confession.

These are the three portions of the New Testament where confession of sins is specifically covered. There is one other place, in James 5:16, where confession of wrongdoing to one another, rather than confession of sins, is mentioned. James tells us when a brother or sister is sick, the elders of the church should be called to pray over the sick person and anoint him. And if any wrongdoings are involved, there should be mutual confession and forgiveness. This is a different matter from our subject today. We have looked into all the verses in the New Testament concerning the confession of sins. Do you now see the way for one to be saved? It is through faith and not through the confession of sins.

## **CONCERNING THE PRACTICE OF CONFESSION**

Let me say a few words concerning the practice of confessing sins. We all know whom we have offended and defrauded before we were saved. After we were saved, we felt sorrowful in our heart and wished to confess to those same people. This is something that we should do. God commands, even compels us to do so. It is something taught in the Scriptures. Having seen God's righteousness and the glory in His presence, we now realize that it is unrighteous to be indebted to others. What then shall we do? We refuse to be unrighteous persons. We even tell ourselves, "I am saved. I will be a righteous man. I will thoroughly deal with all the areas in which I have been unrighteous or not right with others so that they may forgive me." There is no problem with your sins being forgiven before God, but you must make confession to men of your offenses to



men. However, confession and restitution are absolutely not the way of salvation. You do not need to make confessions and recompense before you can be saved. As a saved person, and one who is just, you are merely asking pardon from people you have wronged.

The thief on the cross must have robbed many and sinned against many. However, he had no opportunity to confess and make recompense to anyone, because he could hardly move on the cross. He was not able to return any item which he had plundered from others. Yet, without any confession or restitution, he still could be saved. The Lord Jesus said to him, "Today you shall be with Me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43). We may consider this robber as the first person to be saved in the New Testament. He was the first to be saved after the Lord's death. Hence, the problem is not one of confession. The thief on the cross, though deprived of the opportunity of making recompense, was nevertheless saved. If he had lived on, he should have made recompense for righteousness' sake. But the question of his salvation was resolved on the cross in an instant. Confession is something that follows salvation. He was already saved on the cross; his salvation was altogether not due to any kind of confession or restitution. If he confessed his sins again at some later date, it would not have saved him more. Here we are clearly shown that salvation is by faith, whereas confession is a spontaneous expression of Christian living. Since we now know our righteous God, we desire to clear up the problem of our sins before man. Our salvation is totally a matter between us and the Lord Jesus; it is resolved through Him alone.

There are three things here which we must be clear about. First, we confess our sins before God, judging ourselves, repenting, and acknowledging that we are sinners. All these are done before God. This causes us to have faith to receive the Lord Jesus as our Savior. Second, after we are saved, we become aware of our offenses towards others and wish to clear them up. We wish to make recompense and to confess to those whom we have defrauded so that we may live a righteous life on earth. Third, after we are saved, as the Holy Spirit works in us, we want to tell others what kind of sinners we were and how many sins we have committed. We may do this during our baptism, and we may do this after baptism.

I do not know if you are clear or not. Never deem the confessing of sins so highly. We must put it in the place accorded by the Scriptures. Since the Bible never considers it as a way to salvation, neither should we. Thank God it is the Lord Jesus who saved me. I did not save myself. Thank God it is the cross of Christ that saved me. I am not saved by my own cross; the cross of Christ did the saving work.

## **THE WAY OF SALVATION NOT BEING PRAYER**

We come now to the fifth "not being." There are many people who will add another condition to salvation. It is not law-keeping or good behavior, nor is it repentance or confession. They say that a person must pray in order to be saved. They base their claim on Romans 10: "Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (v. 13). As a result, some believe that they must beseech God before they can be saved. On a number of occasions I have encountered some people who wanted to be saved. They said, "Daily I plead with God to save me, and I still do not know when He will do so. I have been praying for three months without any inward sensation. I just do not know if God will

see fit to save me." I have also met some others who said, "I am waiting for the Holy Spirit to come and move me to my knees to ask Jesus to save me. I am not saved as yet. I must wait for the Spirit to inspire me to pray before I can be saved." For this reason, we need to see whether a man needs to pray before he can be saved.

First, one seeks to be saved through praying and begging because he is entirely ignorant of God's love and God's grace. He thinks that God hates man, and therefore he must pray for God to change His mind before He will save him. He gives himself to pray, without knowing how much he has to pray before God will hear him or listen to him. Remember how Elijah challenged the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel? He challenged them to ask their god to send down fire. The prophets "cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them" (1 Kings 18:29). They supposed that Baal would listen if they would only inflict more pain upon their own bodies. Today there are those who also think that if they bring distress upon themselves and plead enough with God, He will have compassion on them. These kinds of people have never seen the gospel. Because they have never seen God in the light of the gospel, they believe that their begging before God will turn His heart towards them. Actually there is no need for God to turn His heart. His heart has long been turned. We are the ones who need a turn of heart, because we rejected and opposed Him, and we did not believe in Him.

Second Corinthians 5:19 says, "God in Christ was reconciling the world to Himself." God did not wrong man; it is man who has wronged God. There has never been a need for God to be reconciled to man. Rather, man has to be reconciled to God because it is man who is totally at fault. The problem is not with God, but with man. Everyone who desires to understand the gospel ought to know that God is love and that He loves the world. He has no problem with us, and neither do we need to plead with Him.

Second, man thinks that he must pray and plead before he can be saved because he simply does not realize that the Lord Jesus has come; He has died and resurrected, all of sin's problems are solved, and all obstacles to salvation are removed. Not only has the Lord Jesus come, but the Holy Spirit has also come. He came to make manifest in man what God and the Lord Jesus have accomplished. Many sinners pray for their salvation as if they were asking the Lord Jesus to die for them again. They do not realize that He has completely finished the work of redemption. Since He has finished His work, there is absolutely no reason for us to plead with Him. Today is the time for thanksgivings and praises; it is not the time for filing requests and petitions. Suppose your parents have brought you something that you asked for. You may perhaps, out of sincerity, bow to thank them. Certainly you would not kneel down and beg to have that item, saying, "Please give this to me because I need it." It is simply pointless and senseless for you to continue to beg after your parents have already given the item to you. Today God is not speaking about the severity of your sins. If He were, then there may be a reason for you to plead. Rather, God is now saying that He has freely given you His Son. It would be a strange thing indeed if someone gave you something and you were still begging instead of thanking! If you know God's heart, and if you are clear about the Lord Jesus' work, you would never attempt to be saved through prayer. Prayer has no place in this matter. It is better for you to kneel to thank God.



Once after I had shared the gospel with a man, I asked if he would believe. He replied that he would. When I said, "Let us kneel down," he asked if we were going to pray. I told him, "No." He asked, "For what purpose then?" I answered, "Simply to inform the Lord Jesus." There is no need to ask Jesus to die again or to ask God to love, to be gracious, or to forgive us. The Lord has already borne our sins on the cross. Now our only need is to notify Him by saying, "I have believed the Son of God, and I have received the cross of Christ. O God, I thank You." Is this not easy? Yes, to receive salvation is an easy matter. It was, of course, not an easy thing for God to accomplish salvation; it took God four thousand years to accomplish it. After man fell, it took God four thousand years to cause man to realize his sins. He then caused His Son to be born of a woman and to hang on the cross to be judged for sin. In the end He also sent the Holy Spirit. It is only after God has done so much work and expended so much effort that we can receive salvation in such an easy way. He has paid the greatest price to accomplish everything. Now if you have believed and received, all you need to do is to say, "Thank You." This is the way of salvation. There is no place for prayer here.

Why then does Romans 10 bring up the matter of prayer? Romans 10:5 through 7 reads, "For Moses writes concerning the righteousness which is out of the law: 'The man who does them shall live by them.' But the righteousness which is out of faith speaks in this way, 'Do not say in your heart, Who will ascend into heaven?' that is, to bring Christ down; or, 'Who will descend into the abyss?' that is, to bring Christ up from the dead." Two kinds of righteousness are mentioned here. One is the righteousness which is out of the law, and the other, righteousness which is out of faith. The righteousness out of the law results from one's works before God, and the righteousness out of faith is accomplished in us through our believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. The former has everything to do with us, and the latter, everything to do with Christ.

It is absolutely impossible for a man to obtain the righteousness out of the law, because it requires him to be sinless in his thoughts, intentions, words, and behavior for every year, hour, minute, and second of his life from the time he was born. If he breaks any one item of the law, he transgresses the whole. For us, this is simply a hopeless proposition. Since we cannot have the righteousness out of the law, we need to have the righteousness out of faith. This righteousness, as we have mentioned, is the righteousness through which Christ was judged. Since Christ has suffered the punishment, we have this righteousness through faith. This righteousness has absolutely nothing to do with us. The Scriptures say, "'Do not say in your heart, Who will ascend into heaven?' that is, to bring Christ down; or, 'Who will descend into the abyss?' that is, to bring Christ up from the dead." There is no need for us to do this. There is no need to ascend into heaven. This means that there is no need to ask Christ to come to the earth to die for us. There is also no need to descend into the abyss. This implies that the resurrection of Christ is now the basis of our justification. God has already caused the Lord Jesus to die and resurrect, and His resurrection has become the basis of our justification. All that remains for us to do is to believe.

Verse 8 says, "But what does it say?" "It" refers to Moses' word. Paul quoted Moses to show that even Moses preached justification by faith. This is quite amazing, inasmuch as Moses was the promoter of the law and its requirements. But Paul introduced Moses, saying that Moses also spoke concerning justification by faith when he said, "'The word

is near you, in your mouth and in your heart,' that is, the word of the faith which we proclaim." Paul maintained that Moses' words refer to justification by faith. To understand this quotation we need to go back to Deuteronomy 29 and 30 in the Old Testament. There Moses passed on all of God's law and commandments to the Israelites, telling them that if they failed to obey those commandments and keep the law, God would punish them by scattering them among the nations; and if their hearts would draw near to God in the dispersion, the word would be near them, even in their mouths and in their hearts. Moses was saying that God's judgment would be present whenever man breaks the law and transgresses. What shall man do then? He needs to receive a righteousness apart from the law, one which is in his mouth and in his heart. Such a grace outside of the law is a gift to us. When Deuteronomy was quoted in Romans 10, a word of explanation was added. "'The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart,' that is, the word of the faith which we proclaim." There is no thought of work here. The righteousness which is out of the law has been thoroughly transgressed against. When the people were scattered among the nations of the earth as predicted in Deuteronomy 30, they could no longer claim to have any work. The question of work was over. The only word which they had then was the word that was in their mouth and in their heart. Formerly it was a matter of works, and the result was dispersion. Now there are no more works. Hence it is of faith.

Paul continued to define the meaning of "in your mouth" and "in your heart" in verse 9 by saying, "If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved." Dear friends, where is your mouth? Each one of us has brought our mouth to this place. None has left his at home. Where our body is, there our mouth is also. At the moment we believed in the Lord Jesus, we spontaneously confessed Him with our mouth. The first words out of Paul's mouth when the Lord confronted him on the road were, "Who are You, Lord?" He had not believed in the Lord before. But at that juncture he did believe. Our confession of Jesus as Lord is made spontaneously from our heart rather than before people. It amazes me to think that some illiterate country folk who have never been exposed to the gospel before can say, "O Lord," upon hearing the good news. This cannot be a work. It is a spontaneous utterance. For one to believe in his heart is not a matter of work. There is no need to take any steps or to spend any money. One only needs to say "O Lord" right where he is, and he will be saved. He can say it audibly or inaudibly. As long as he believes that God has brought Him down from the heavens and has brought Him up from Hades, everything will be worked out. This will prove that he is justified and saved. Our confession can never carry the element of merit. Confession is not a way to salvation; it is merely an expression of salvation. It is a very spontaneous thing. If we call Him Lord with our mouth and believe in Him in our heart, we shall be saved. There is no problem at all.

Verse 10 follows and explains verse 9. Why is one saved when he confesses with his mouth Jesus as Lord and believes in his heart that God has raised Him from the dead? "For with the heart there is believing unto righteousness, and with the mouth there is confession unto salvation." I was always perplexed as to how this matter could be put into people's hearts. I met two people today who consider this word of salvation too far from them. To them, this word is farther than the provinces of Yunnang and Tibet; it is farther than a foreign country. It is simply a word from the heavens. It seems that the word of salvation is so far away that it eludes them. Nevertheless, God says that the way of salvation is not in heaven nor beneath the earth. It is very

near, in our mouth and even in our heart. If we had to ascend into the heavens or descend under the earth, we would wonder how anyone could be saved. Today the word is in your mouth and in your heart. As long as a person opens his mouth and believes in his heart, he shall be saved. God has made this salvation so utterly available and convenient that if a person would believe in his heart and confess with his mouth, he shall be saved. Justification here is more a matter before God than before man. When men see you confessing, they will realize that you are saved. When God sees you believing, He justifies you. Verse 11 says, "Everyone who believes on Him shall not be put to shame." Faith alone is enough.

Although the Word of God is abundantly clear, there are still those who like to argue against it. They insist that confession is the way to be saved. I wish to ask them, "If so, what will you do with Romans 10:8: 'The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart'?" Here it says the word of faith, not the word of confession. The Scriptures say "believe." They do not say "confess." Verse 6 says, "But the righteousness which is out of faith speaks in this way." Verse 6 speaks of the righteousness out of faith, and verse 8, the word of the faith. There is one confession in verse 9 and another in verse 10. Both confessions are with the mouth. However, verse 11 does not say, "Everyone who confesses Him shall not be put to shame." Rather, it says, "Everyone who believes on Him shall not be put to shame." We must recognize the emphasis here. Verses 6, 8, and 11 mention "believe," and verses 9 and 10 mention "confess." Verse 9 first says "confess" and then "believe"; whereas in verse 10 it is first "believe" and then "confess." In this one portion "believe" is used five times and "confess" twice. At the end, the order of "confess" and "believe" is reversed. All this signifies that salvation should be due to faith and not to confession. Confession issues from faith. What one believes in his heart, he utters spontaneously with his mouth. A person will spontaneously say "daddy" when he sees his father. Where there is faith, confession follows immediately.

The end of verse 12 shows us that confession here is the confession of Jesus as Lord. This confession comes from faith. How can we prove this? We may not see this from verses 1 through 11. But verse 12 says, "For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord is Lord of all and rich to all who call upon Him." Verse 13 says, "Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Calling upon the Lord's name is equivalent to the confessing of the Lord Jesus in the previous verses. To call on the name of the Lord is to confess Jesus as Lord, to call Him Lord, and to address Him as Lord. By taking care of the context of this passage, we will realize that calling is simply confessing.

Verse 14 says, "How then shall they call upon Him into whom they have not believed?" This is a wonderful word. It shows that calling comes out of believing. Naturally, no one can call without believing. We can see that confessing with the mouth results from faith in the heart. Because a man believes in his heart, he calls with his mouth. He calls because he believes. Do you see this fact? Everything issues from faith; faith is the way of salvation. Although it mentions confession with the mouth, this confession is based upon faith in the heart. It is natural for those who believe to call.

I believe tonight we are all saved ones who have received the Lord Jesus. May I ask how you have received Him? We received Him by faith. Did you also pray? Salvation is due to

faith. Prayer is the expression of this faith. Everyone in the world is saved by faith. However, this faith is expressed in prayer. Faith is within and prayer is without. When you believe in your heart that Jesus is the Savior, spontaneously you will pray with your mouth that Jesus is Lord. Whoever believes in his heart will confess with his mouth. But we must always remember that confession is not the way to salvation. Although the word says "Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved," yet calling is not the way to salvation. The reason is that calling comes from faith; it is a spontaneous action, something uttered before God spontaneously.

Let us come back to verse 12: "For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord is Lord of all." I love the phrase, "There is no distinction." Romans 3:22 and 23 say, "Even the righteousness of God through the faith of Jesus Christ to all those who believe, for there is no distinction. For all have sinned." Here it says, "For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord is Lord of all." Each one must call upon the Lord, confess with his mouth, and believe in his heart before he can be saved.

May the Lord be gracious to us and show us that the only way of salvation in the Bible is faith and nothing else. Salvation is not by faith plus law-keeping, good works, repentance, confession, or prayer. This is the scriptural truth. We have to stand upon the Bible. The Bible reveals clearly to us that the way of salvation is faith alone.