

**Mark 8: 27-31 and Matthew 16: 13-20; "Confessing Christ", Sermon
48 in the series - "Astonished at His Teaching", Delivered by
Pastor Paul Rendall on September 13th, 2009,
in the Morning Worship Service.**

The question of all questions which must be answered in this life; answered exactly, answered sincerely, and answered with real knowledge and understanding is this - Who do you say that Jesus is? Your answer to that question is all important because the final answer you give will determine your eternal destiny. Romans 10, verse 9 says, "If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved." "For with the heart man believes resulting in righteousness and with the mouth he confesses resulting in salvation." The mouth always speaks that which the heart believes if it is sincere. We have, here, the confession of Peter regarding who the Lord Jesus is, and the confession of Jesus regarding Peter as to what would come out of Peter's confession. And I think we can say that it is this confession is the foundation stone and the model of every true Christian and every true church. The question we will ask this morning will be this: What are the elements which make up a true confession of Christ by men and churches? For the elements of a true confession are found here in these passages that I have read to you. The elements which I would like to lay before you are five. I want to look at 3 of them this morning, and the other two next Sunday morning. The Elements of a true Confession of Christ, which we will look at this morning, are 1st - Recognition; 2nd - Revelation; and 3rd - Response. The 4th and 5th Elements of a true Confession of Christ, which we will look at next Sunday, are Resistance and Responsibility. As I speak of these elements to you, I think it will do much to tell us whether we are true Christians; whether we know Jesus as He really is....

The 1st Element of a true Confession of Christ is the Element of Recognition. (Verses 13-16 of Matthew 16, and verses 27-29 of Mark)

It is essential to becoming a Christian and being a Christian that we recognize who Jesus is. I believe that there are many persons who think that they are Christians, but they could not tell you much about Him. The question that Jesus asked His disciples here was who do men say that I am?" They answered, "Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." It seems that many of the rabbis of that day and many of the common people believed that the spirit and power of Elijah, the weeping earnestness of Jeremiah, and the strength and preaching of John the Baptist might all be seen in the Messiah." Luke Chapter 9, verse 7 says that Herod heard of all that was done by Jesus and he was perplexed because it was said by some that John had risen from the dead, and by some that Elijah had appeared, and other others that one of the old prophets had risen again. Many people were confused about who Jesus was. They thought he was very powerful and very spiritual, but , but that it was the

spirit of the prophets that animated him. Thomas Scott says in his commentary, "They had good thoughts of Him, but not right ones; a high opinion of Him, but not high enough." I wonder how it is with you today? Perhaps you are confused about Jesus. You believe what men say rather than what the Bible teaches. You think of Him as a prophet or a great man, but not as He really is. In order to be saved and follow Him as His disciple, you must have more than impressions of His power and greatness, or even His kindness. You must see His uniqueness. "Who do you say that I am?," Jesus asked His disciples. Simon Peter said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God."

Now Peter (I am quite sure) did not understand many evangelical truths that are clearly written down in the New Testament today, and I would assert to you that he even had thoughts quite contrary to Christ Himself when he made this great statement. He did not understand the plan of salvation; the plan in the holy mind of God, that Jesus would accomplish redemption through the shedding of His blood at the cross of Calvary. He did not understand just how much his eternal salvation would depend upon the grace of Christ, the strength of Christ working for him and in him by the Spirit of God. But he did recognize the uniqueness of the person and nature of Christ. He did realize that Jesus was anointed by God and sent from God, just as the word "Christ" means. How precious this is! You too; even if you don't recognize anything else; you must recognize that Christ Jesus is the Messiah sent down from God, the Son, the only Son; the only-begotten of the Father. Oh the mystery of Christ! It cannot be comprehended. But it must be apprehended. That there could be such a being as Jesus Christ who was born of a virgin, who was and who is the exact representation of the true and living God; who dwells in inapproachable light. (1 Timothy 6: 15) Jesus Christ has revealed Him. He is the radiance of His Father's glory. He is of all men without sin, and pure and holy. Peter recognized the uniqueness of His person. Very God of very God; very man of very man; two natures in one person, begotten not made. Two natures without confusion or conversion (without one being changed into the other), yet without division or separation. The divine ever remaining divine; the human ever remaining human, and yet the two natures have continually one life and interpenetrate each other; like the persons of the divine Trinity. Peter could not explain it all; but He recognized Christ in this way.

Peter recognized not only the uniqueness of Christ's nature and person; he also recognized the uniqueness of Christ in relationship to men. He is not only the Son of God, He is also the Son of Man. As the Son of Man, He has relationship to all men, authority over all flesh; that He should give eternal life to as many as the Father should give to Him. He is the beloved of believing in Him. He is the lover of our souls. As the Son of Man He has relationship to all men, authority over all flesh that He should give eternal life to as many as the Father should give to Him. He is the beloved of all believing in Him. He alone has the words of eternal life. In the picture language of Song of Solomon 5: 9, it is said, "What king of a beloved is

your beloved?" "My beloved is dazzling and ruddy and outstanding among ten thousand." "His head is like gold, pure gold, his locks like clusters of dates...." His mouth is full of sweetness and He is wholly desirable." "This is my beloved and this is my friend." He is, my friends, the one and only spiritual Bridegroom to your soul. You must recognize the uniqueness of Christ alone to save your soul and to satisfy your soul with the fullness of grace and blessing that is found in Him.

Now 2ndly - The 2nd Element of a true Confession of Christ is Revelation. (Verse 17 of Matthew 16)

Jesus answers Peter and says, 'Blessed are you Simon Bar-Jonah for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.' A man is only truly blessed when something has been revealed to him. Revelation from God is absolutely essential to recognize and to truly confess Christ. To see Him in His unique saving ability; to see that God sent Him into the World for this very purpose; this requires that the Father reveal it to you. Eternal life is the gift of the Father, revealing truth, opening the eyes of the understanding; opening minds naturally blinded by sin so that they can perceive the glory of Christ. The knowledge of God can be inculcated in a hearer by conveying the information to the ears, but something far greater is needed for sinners to embrace and to confess Jesus Christ. That something is revelation. The revelation spoken of here is not the revelatory gift of prophecy given to men to speak the words of God. It is that granting of grace to a sinner to spiritually see and understand as true, desirable, and necessary; Jesus Christ as the Son of the living God. This is not something which flesh and blood can discover; it is not something which man in his fallen, natural, sinful state can discover or confess unless his eyes have been opened spiritually; unless God shines in his heart to give him the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

The way that the Father reveals this to us today is by and in the preaching of the Word. He uses the Word as an instrument, and He opens men's eyes by His Spirit, and He gives them the New Birth; draws them to desire and to see as absolutely essential - Christ - The Son of God. This Peter understood by revelation given to Him by the Father and worked upon his mind by the Spirit. But he did not understand why Christ would have to suffer to bring salvation to him. The knowledge that Christ would suffer was very shocking and very horrifying to Peter. Verse 31 of Mark says, "And Jesus began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again." "He spoke this word openly." Now, you can understand why this saying was offensive to Peter. He did not want to have Jesus suffer. He knew that Jesus was the Christ, the most beautiful and wonderful person in the whole world; in all of life. Being divine, and being a man without fault; as far as Peter could see; it was his duty to prevent such a thing; to prevent Jesus having to suffer and die. And he made this his steadfast and earnest purpose from this moment on. He rebuked Jesus for it here, and he cut off the high priests

ear with a sword in the garden of Gethsemane later on. There was some revelation that was given to him and some very important things that Jesus said; that Peter didn't understand. "Far be it from you, Lord, that this should happen to you, Lord; that you should go to the cross." What amazingly contradictory things can reside in the breast of even the best of men; the most zealous of men; the most fervently earnest men! They can go from a true Confession of Christ straight into reasoning how God's whole purpose for Christ's coming into the world is going to be derailed by the strength of their reasoning. The suffering of Jesus, who was the Christ, who was God made manifest in the flesh; cannot be right. Jesus goes from saying, "Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, to a short time later saying, "Get behind Me Satan!" "For you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men." This is how it often is, even with the best of men. And this rebuke came from Jesus to one of His foremost disciples; even a leader among them. We will have more to say about this in a later sermon. But what I would like to ask you now is this. Do you see that it must be revealed to you by the Father that Jesus is the Christ; that He is the unique and sinless, only-begotten of the Father; that you must have Him to be your Savior and your Lord if you are ever to have eternal life? And do you see that it has to be revealed to you by the Father that Jesus Christ must needs have suffered for you; died for you; that your sins were so bad, and so heinous, that this sinless and beautiful Son of God had to die for you; that there was no other way that you could be saved? You could never do it yourself. You could never cry enough over your sins; you could never pray and confess your sins enough to merit God's grace and favor; you could never be zealous enough or fervent enough to purchase this great pardon of your sins and these great and eternal blessings of salvation which you will rejoice over countless millenniums of time from now. "Could my tears forever flow, could my zeal no respite know; all for sin could not atone; Thou must save, and Thou alone." Has this been revealed to you, so that you can freely confess it before men?

And then 3rdly - The 3rd Element of a True Confession of Christ is this - Response.

We now turn a corner in our passage from Peter's confession of Christ, to Christ confession of Peter. Verse Matthew 16: 17 - "Jesus answered and said, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven." "You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." When we confess Christ before men, when we publicly and openly recognize Him, having had His unique nature and identity revealed to us; then He also will give us a response. And His response to our confession is to build upon it. A true Confession of Christ will be built upon. This is the promise of the text. Christ is saying to Peter in effect, "Peter, you have truly confessed who I am, and I want you to understand Peter that I will build My church upon it." "Upon the rock of your confession of Me," Jesus says, "the building of the Church will take place." "I will use you, Peter, Just as your name means "a rock", to be a foundation stone, and I

will use the same confession of the other Apostles to work together with yours to become the foundation upon which the entire Church that I build, will rest upon." It is as each believer confesses Christ that the Church is built. You can see this blessed truth clearly taught in the epistles of Peter and Paul.

I want you to turn over with me to Ephesians Chapter 2, verse 17. "And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near." "For through Him, we both have access by one Spirit to the Father." "Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the Chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit." The Apostle Paul is revealing to the Ephesian believers the glorious privilege that they who were Gentiles were no longer strangers and aliens to the covenants of promise which he had mentioned before in verse 12, but now they were united together with believing Jews into one body, and they were now members of the household of God. The foundation of this spiritual household is begun and laid by Christ Jesus Himself as the Chief corner stone, and then the whole rest of the house, or temple, is built upon the doctrine and preaching of the gospel, and the whole building being fitted and joined together grows into a holy temple in the Lord. But the words, "you also", mean that He is not only using the confession of Apostles and the Jews who believed in Jesus to build His house upon; it means that He is also using your confession and building upon your words of confession and your life of holiness. You see, you and I need to see that this building which Christ is building; His Church; is not complete without each Elect stone taking their place there. A building looks incomplete if the foundation is missing stones, and if there are stones missing here and there as the building goes up. You, who believe in Christ, need to see how important it is that you publicly confess Christ as your Savior and your Lord in a written testimony and publicly before the Church. Christ responds to do things in your life; and with your life, spiritually speaking, when you confess Him. He then responds to that confession and He builds upon it, and upon whatever holiness you cultivate in word and deed in your life.

Look also at 1 Peter 2, verse 1 with me. "Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious." "Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." "Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture, 'Behold I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious, and he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame.'" "Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious; but to those who are disobedient, the stone which the builders rejected has become the

chief cornerstone, and a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense." "They stumble being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed." "But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy." "Beloved, I beg you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation." Now you can see here that Peter speaks of Jesus Christ as being the "Living Stone", the "Stone of Israel", which believers come to looking for eternal life and the forgiveness of their sins. Jesus Christ was rejected by men, but He was chosen by God to be the Savior and Lord of all who will trust in Him. But then comes our response to our confession of Christ. It is that we will lay aside all malice; that is, all thinking bad thoughts about other people; thinking of what we have against them, and the ill-will that we hold toward them. We are to see our need of Christ to cleanse us from these kinds of sinful attitudes. We lay aside deceit; trying to be tricky in the way that we live our Christian life. We do not try to work out our salvation by playing little games with the Scriptures and God; rationalizing why we cannot serve God, or give our money, or spend time trying to befriend and help other people. We do not make up all kinds of answers for why we cannot do what God has commanded us to do, and then try to trick other people into believing that we are sincerely trying to serve Him. We put that off. We put off hypocrisy; coming to church and saying that we are Christians, and then living for every Worldly thing that is set in front of us; using worldly methods and tricky means in order to obtain what we want from life and from other people. We put that off. We put off evil speaking; speaking against people in order to gripe and complain about what they are doing that supposedly is the whole reason that things are not going well in our lives. God has everything in our lives in His hands; and He is building upon your Confession of Christ; not your complaining against others. Our response to our own Confession of Christ, which He builds upon; is to take in the pure milk of the word of God; to drink in all the truth of how we can live as a New Creature in Christ to the glory of God, and to realize how precious Christ is to me. Is Christ precious to you? Then you can stand up under whatever men can do to you. You are a living stone, and you are coming to Him as a living stone. The Stone which the builders rejected became the chief corner stone of the massive building called the Church that He is building. And He is intending to use you and build upon your life. His building will not be missing one stone in the Day that He completes it. He will put you in the right place in His building. He expects you to praise Him for it; day by day, week by week, month by month, and year by year. You once were not His people, but now you obtained mercy. Therefore, because you are strangers and pilgrims on this earth, He expects you to respond in terms of your Confession to Him; to abstain from fleshly lusts which

war against your soul. Fleshly lusts are those passions and desires of our hearts to do things and obtain things which will ruin our communion and fellowship with the Father and with the Son and with the Spirit. They could be selfish ambition and pride, or covetousness and greed, or sensuality and sexual compromise in our hearts. We think sometimes that if we just indulge in these things a little, that it will make our lives better. No, there is deception in that. God is glorified when we do not make provision for the lusts of the flesh; when we are tired and discouraged that we do not go to television or the movies for our solace, but we go to the Bible and to prayer and to our Rock, Jesus Christ for our strength and solace. Are you doing this dear Christian? How precious is Christ to you? Christ is building upon your confession of Him; not only at the beginning of your walk with Him, but also continuing on all the way through your life. Do not think that it is more money that you need in order to make a good confession of Him; it is only more of the riches of His grace that you need. I think that as I close this sermon that we need to hear and heed the words of the Apostle Paul in 1 Timothy 6: 10 - "For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." "But you, man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness." "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses." "I urge you to keep this commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ's appearing, which He will manifest His own time, He who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man can see or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power." "Amen."