

**Mark 8: 27-30 and Matthew 16: 13-20; "Confessing Christ" (Part 2),  
Sermon # 49 in the series - "Astonished at His Teaching", Delivered  
by Pastor Paul Rendall on September 20th, 2009,  
in the Morning Worship Service.**

We have been looking at the 5 Elements which make up a true Confession of Jesus Christ. Last Sunday we looked at the Elements of Recognition, Revelation, and Response. We saw that it is absolutely necessary to the salvation of any thinking and reasoning person's soul that they come to see the uniqueness of Jesus Christ; that there is no one like Him in all of human History. Because of the work of the Holy Spirit in His incarnation, He is fully God and fully man; two natures in one blessed Person. He alone is the only Mediator between God and men. There is no other way to come to God or to know God. He alone was born of a virgin and did not have the effects of Adam's sin tainting and corrupting his soul like we do. He alone could fulfill the righteousness of God in the way that obeyed God's law perfectly and He alone died a sinless sacrifice on the cross for all who will believe in Him. We saw that it takes God the Father's revealing Jesus to be the Christ so that a person can spiritually see and desire to receive Christ and confess Him as their Savior and Lord. Confessing Christ is not a mere acknowledgement of His being sent from God. It is not merely making a decision to recognize Him for who He is. It is the revelation to our soul that His mission was to save sinners like me, and that I, myself, must have the benefits of His life and His death applied to my soul by God Himself so that my mind, my heart, and my will are all changed to begin to see spiritual truth and do the things which are commanded in the word of God. That is what it means to become a Christian and that is what it means to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. You are making a confession of your need for Christ's grace to save you from your sins and to give you eternal life. You are confessing that this is why He died, and this is why He lives forevermore. You are confessing that only in the Lord are righteousness and strength. As we begin this morning I would have you ask yourself, "Have I come to this place in my life where I have begun to make my confession, or am I only close to the kingdom? Being close will not do it; you must be in His blessed kingdom or perish forever. Oh, may the Lord Himself convince you of your need of Him so that you can make this blessed Confession. This confession brings a two fold Response. There is the Response from Christ Himself saying that He will build upon our confession of Him. As you begin to confess Him He will begin to build upon what you give to Him and what you say about Him to others. I personally find it very strange that so many persons who call themselves Christian say so very little about their Lord to people around them. What can Christ build with in your life if you say nothing at all to others of what He means to you? What has the Lord done for you? You should declare it. And when you declare it, He will build upon it. How do I begin to declare it? I declare it by being baptized with believer's baptism. That is the right response to Christ. That is a right confession of Him.

That is where you begin as a new believer. You publicly declare through the ceremony which He Himself has instituted; your faith in Him and what He has done for you. And then there is the Response of obedience to His blessed word. This begins on the day that you first believe and it continues to the day that He calls you home to be with Himself. His Response to your Confession of your intention to follow Him and to obey His word, is to build upon it. What you give to Him He will build upon. What you hold back from Him hinders that building. But when you do give Him everything in your life to work with; He will work with it. In Romans Chapter 12, verse 1, the Apostle Paul says, "I beseech you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service." "And do not be conformed to the world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." God's grace in Christ is strong and powerful to change you over and make you into a new creature in Christ; but you must respond to it, and to Him personally, to learn to obey His commandments. If any person loves the Lord Jesus, they will keep His commandments. Now the 4th and 5th Elements of a True Confession of Christ are Resistance and Responsibility. There will be resistance coming from Satan, and also from unbelieving people around you, to your making your Confession of Christ, but it will not prevail. And there will be the responsibility attendant upon your Confession of Christ to become involved with His Church and submit to Apostolic teaching. Let us pray, as we listen now, that Christ will give us a teachable heart.

#### **The 4th Element of a True Confession of Christ is Resistance.**

Verse 18 of Matthew 16 says, "And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of Hell (or Hades) shall not prevail against it." The gates of hell, here, is a phrase which indicates resistance to the true Confession of Jesus Christ. The Church is built on the rock of the confession of Christ, but the gates of hell would pull it down or destroy it that confession. The true Confession has been made by Peter and included in his confession was the agreement of the other Apostles with him, and further yet; every other person who would ever believe in Christ Jesus as Lord in every generation. Peter is the spokesman for us all. We who believe are in total agreement with his confession. Every generation of true Christians since Peter uttered these words has experienced this resistance to their confession of Him, but the "gates of hell" have not prevailed; they have not been victorious. The word translated Hades here is one that many have stumbled over. It can be translated Hell or the grave as well; depending upon the context in which it is used. The word does have reference to the unseen world of the spirits of men who have died and have perished in their sins, as it is also the place where the fallen angels have their conscious existence. The Rich Man of Luke 16 died and found himself in Hades, it says in verse 23, and in that place he was in torments. "And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom." Abraham's bosom is the word picture of the place where all believers went after they died. But the word Hades should not be

taken to mean "the nether world", as though things are in a great fog in the spiritual realm, or that you cannot tell where you are when you die; and everyone is supposedly in this same foggy place. That is simply not true spiritually. Paradise and Abraham's bosom are not in Hades. They are not a compartment in Hades. They are the separate place of blessing which God has prepared for those who believe in Him and love Him. Hades is the unseen world of devils and the damned in all generations since the beginning of the World. When Christ returns and the last Judgment takes place; after that, it says in Revelation 20, verse 14, "Death and Hades will be cast into the lake of fire."

The way that the word Hades or Hell is being used in our verse here in Matthew, is that it refers to the activity and strategies of the Devil and all his hosts to keep the confession of Christ from taking place. The "gates of Hell or Hades" shall not prevail against the Church's confession of Christ. It shall not overcome it; it shall not so overwhelm it in any generation so that it will cease to exist or fail to be declared by that generation of Christians. This is a promise given not only to Peter and the Church in those days; it is a promise given to us now in our generation. The "gates" in the sense that our Lord was using it, indicate the place where decisions are made, where leaders made their plans and set their policies, and where men concentrated their strongest forces and power in battle." I want to show you a couple of verses to prove to you that this is so. Turn to Genesis 22, verse 15. This is a promise of victory to Abraham's descendants over all the schemes of their enemies to destroy them; not only his physical descendants, but also those who have the same faith as Abraham had. Abraham had offered up his son; now God promises that He would offer His. "Then the Angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time out of heaven, and said: 'By Myself I have sworn, says the Lord, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son--blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants (your seed) shall possess the gate of their enemies.'" This is a promise that all who are in Christ (who is the promised seed) shall gain the victory over sin and death and all the trials and testings that they will undergo. The blessings purchased by Christ on the cross shall enable Christ's people, both Old Testament and New to have the ultimate victory over all their enemies.

Look also at Genesis 24, verse 60. Rebekah has been asked whether she will go with Isaac to be his wife; to the leave the city of Nahor in Mesopotamia and dwell with him in the land of promise. After she agrees to this, her relatives give her this blessing: "Our sister, may you become the mother of thousands of ten thousands; and may your descendants possess the gates of those who hate them." They meant by this --may you have dominion over all your enemies, over all their schemes, and strength, and plans against you." In applying this to the verses that we are studying in Matthew 16, we should understand that Peter's confession of Christ as the Son of the Living God was and is the Rock that would be assailed by all the power and policy, all the craft and rage and cunning of Satan, and all the forces of darkness. But

- Because of Christ's word and power they would not prevail against the successful building of Christ's Church. I hope that you are seeing from this study that Christ uses simple men like Peter, ordinary men who are pastors and teachers, and even all the rest of us who believe in Christ, to build His Church upon, their confession of Him.

I want to further explain this resistance to the gospel of Christ, and the Church's Confession of our Lord, by giving you a brief overview of how Satan opposed the progress of the gospel since the days of the Apostles. Turn with me to Hebrews Chapter 2, and verse 14. "Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is the devil, and release all those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." We see here that in Christ's coming into this world, in His taking upon Himself a true human nature and a body, that He went to the cross and there destroyed the awful power which Satan wields so successfully over the minds and hearts of fallen men. All our lives before we trust in Christ, we are subject to the fear of death and the prospect of God's righteous judgment against us because we have broken His holy Law. What the Devil did in the beginning was that he set before Adam and Eve in the garden the whole idea of sin and temptation; that they would disobey God's one good commandment to them. "You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." "In the day that you eat of it, you shall surely die," God had said to them. Satan had the power of death in that he through his cunning scheme persuaded Eve to eat of the forbidden fruit and she gave some to Adam, and they both died spiritually that very day. Satan's power was that through their disobedience that death would spread to all men and that all would die eternally, and thus God's creation would be ruined. It was only the promise of Christ which God gave them and which they believed that became the basis of their salvation. It was only the fulfillment of that promise in the death of Christ that "crushed the Serpent's head". Christ did not destroy the being of the Devil at the cross. He destroyed his power over all of God's Elect; over everyone who would believe in Him at the cross. Christ was raised from the dead to show forth His victory over Satan who had the power of death, but now the prey was snatched from his hands. We who were once captives of sin and all our lifetime before conversion, subject to death, have been set free forever.

We must understand, however, that there has been an immense spiritual battle going on between Satan and Christ, ever since Christ's ascension to glory, so long ago. God the Father said to God the Son, as it is recorded in Psalm 110, "Sit at My right hand, until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet." Christ's enemies are those fallen men and fallen angels who together form schemes of opposition to the advancement of the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. We who confess Jesus Christ as Lord are the ones who want to see His cause of truth, and meekness, and righteousness conquer the hearts of fallen men everywhere so that the nations will be brought to the feet of Jesus. Our battle is not against flesh and blood; it is not found in fighting against people per-se. Our battle is "wrestling against the principalities,

against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places." You see, Christ's Lordship over all men and nations is opposed by the Devil and by all those people who the Devil has pulled the spiritual wool over their eyes. Our confession of Christ is saying that they need to be converted. It is saying that their being religious without conversion to Christ, only displeases and dishonors God. This is a truth that is steadfastly resisted by many unbelievers, and all false religionists. Satan has used all his power and corrupt wisdom to try to work through their opposition and dissatisfaction with God's righteous government through Christ; to move them to set up systems of false religion that will oppose the truth of Christ and counterfeit His gospel and His kingdom so that men will be deceived and in the final analysis lose their souls. But the Lord Jesus overcame Satan at the cross, and now is destroying his works through the preaching of the gospel and the confession of Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ gave this commission to His Apostles and to His whole Church in every generation in Matthew 28: 18: "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth." "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." For those of you who may not understand, we need to understand what Satan's object has been in this battle since his defeat at the cross. It has been to attempt in every way to destroy the witness and testimony of the Church; to blind men to the truth of their need to believe in Christ alone for salvation and by persecuting those who do confess Christ, or finding some way to suppress that confession so that it cannot be built upon by Christ.

Truly, it has been a great spiritual battle, but the gates of hell have not prevailed. In the days of the early church, when Christ and His Apostles were still on the scene, it was Satan who was at work in the minds of some of the leaders of the Jewish people. They blasphemed and persecuted the Lord of Glory and put Him to death on the cross. They paid the guards at the tomb who witnessed our Lord's resurrection, to say that thieves had come and had stolen the body. When the Apostles began to preach and teach salvation by faith in the Lord Jesus, they brought them before their courts and ordered them not to speak at all in the Name of Jesus. They persecuted and hounded the Apostles and put many of them to death as well. They propounded a false doctrine of works-righteousness where if a person did believe in Jesus, they had to be circumcised and to keep the Law in order to be saved. But the gates of hell did not prevail. The Lord Jesus spoke to John in the book of the Revelation, Chapter 2, verse 9, and He said to the church at Smyrna - "I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich) and the blasphemy of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan." "do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer." "Indeed the Devil is about to throw some of you in prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation 10 days." "Be faithful unto death and I will give you the crown of life."

We can also be certain that it was Satan's power and rage at work in the lives of 10 successive Roman Emperors who put to death, tortured, and persecuted Christians who confessed Christ instead of the Caesar. Jesus says of this, in Revelation 2: 13 - "I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is, and you hold fast My Name (the Confession of Christ) and did not deny My faith, even in the days of Antipas, My Witness, My Faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells." How many multiplied thousands upon thousands of Christians made the good Confession before the eyes of their cruel and tyrannical rulers; we shall meet them in glory and hear them tell it in their own words. No doubt it was also the gates of hell which crafted the false religion of Islam which has taken over the minds and hearts of about one-third of mankind; Satan wanting to bring them to the bottomless pit. But even with such great numbers being deceived, this false system with so many murderous adherents shall not prevail against the Church of Jesus Christ ultimately. Christ will sit at God's right hand until all Christ's enemies are put under His feet.

But by far the greatest scheme which Satan has come forward with, to prevail against the true Confessing Church was to take this very promise that was made to Peter, in this text that we are studying, and to warp it and twist it, and give to it a meaning which is blasphemous in the highest degree. In the Roman Catholic Church, which was the only visible church in the Western World from about 400 A.D. to the time of the Reformation, men began to consider the Bishop of Rome to be the primary Bishop, the primary leader amongst the Bishops and Priests, and all questions of major doctrinal concern were referred to this particular Bishop of Rome who came to be known as the Pope. The Scriptural foundation of their doing this was this verse that we are studying. "You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church". It was falsely said by a few, and then believed by many, that Christ conferred upon Peter not only the headship amongst the Apostles, but also the headship over the whole Church, in the place of Christ when He ascended to heaven. They believed and taught that Christ in this passage was actually delegating the power to Peter to take His place as the earthly visible Head of the Church, and then that this office and authority would be passed on through successive generations. The Pope would speak infallibly concerning the interpretation of Scripture, and his pronouncements would dictate the policies of the church worship, and practice, and doctrine.

What was set up in the church over the succeeding centuries was an Antichristian authority within the visible Church itself, where ritual religion and the traditions of men brought multitudes to darkness and ignorance and error, in regard to true Christianity. The true Confession of Christ became submerged under this false representation of Christ, and the Scriptures and the true Church was in the wilderness in those days as Revelation 12: 6 pictorially describes. It is the doctrine of Papal authority and Apostolic succession that currently road-blocks in a very large way, the progress of the gospel among the nations. The nations as they look at Christianity and consider it, do not see Christ; they see a Pope; a man who is being

called "Your Holiness" in the place of King Jesus, who is the only man who is perfectly holy. But take courage, my Christian friends. This is where our Confession of Christ works wonders. Ours is to faithfully confess Christ as the only true Head of His Church. He is alive, and He is presently ruling over His true Church. No other man can be His vicar. No other man can take His place. This scheme of the gates of hell shall not prevail either. The end of it is prophesied in the book of Daniel, Chapter 7, verse 25 and following. "He shall speak pompous words against the Most High, shall persecute the saints of the Most High, and shall intend to change times and law." "Then the saints shall be given into his hand for a time and times and half a time." "But the court shall be seated, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and destroy it forever." "Then the kingdom and the dominion and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High." "His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him."

What is our part in these things of which we speak this morning? Our part is to understand that this passage does not teach Apostolic succession or a Papal authority. It is teaching faithfulness in confessing Christ even when others are twisting the truth. Our duty is to keep Jesus Christ as the head of the Church- to confess Him faithfully and not allow men to deceive us with smooth words. We must not adopt concepts of primacy in leadership, but rather a servant attitude. Luke 22: 25 - "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who have authority over them are called benefactors." "But it shall not be so among you.." "On the contrary," Jesus says, "He who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves."

**Now Finally - Let us look briefly at the 5th Element of a True Confession of Christ; that of Responsibility.**

Matthew 16, verse 19 says, "And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." Here we have laid before us the authority given to the Apostles to by their doctrine and the holy example of their words and their actions, to define, to teach, to place under discipline all disobedient, unrepentant believers if necessary. Theirs was the responsibility to state the way of salvation and was evangelical obedience; the obedience of a true Christian who was not under Law but under grace. They unlocked the mysteries of God and opened the doors of faith to us Gentiles. We have the results of their binding and loosing in the Scriptures. We are not infallible, but they were in what they wrote down in the Scriptures. Our responsibility, flowing out of our Confession of Christ, is to be faithful to Apostolic teaching. We are acting responsibly if we are abiding in Christ's word, and prayer, and Fellowship with other Christians, and participation in the breaking bread. Let the purity and simplicity of your devotion to Christ be seen in your faithfulness to His Church. A Confession of Christ is a confession before the Church in the giving of your testimony and being baptized. But your Confession of Christ continues on in your becoming a member of a local church of Christ's people.

It is not God's will that you be an independent free-wheeling Christian who cannot and will not submit to the authority of a pastor or love and serve other Christians. That is not the way that Christ and the Apostles taught. It is not the way that you should live. Acts Chapter 2, verse 41 says, "Then those who gladly received Peter's word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them." Who is the "them"? It was the church at Jerusalem. Those three thousand who believed Peter's gospel message all confessed Christ and were baptized, and were added to the Church. Then what did they do? Verse 42 says, "And continued steadfastly in the apostle's doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers." It does not say that they continued to live their lives as they had done before; not going to any church, not submitting to any church authority, and living their lives to God as they pleased. No they continued steadfastly in their church attendance. That is how you glorify God. It is by keeping up your attendance at the church, receiving and thinking upon the word of God; learning to pray; learning to seek out other Christians in your local church to have fellowship with them, and Remembering Christ. You have a responsibility to Confess Christ by joining a local church and then continuing steadfastly in the Apostles doctrine. Will you not remember this when you grow weary of coming to church? Remember the words of the Psalmist in Psalm 87. "The Lord loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob." "Glorious things are spoken of you, O city of God!" "I will make mention of Rahab and Babylon to those who know Me; Behold O Philistia and Tyre, with Ethiopia: 'this one was born there.'" "And of Zion (that is the Church of Jesus Christ) it will be said, 'This one and that one were born in her; and the Most High Himself shall establish her.'" "The Lord will record, when He registers the people; this one was born there." "Both the singers and the players on instruments say, 'All my springs are in you.'" Let us confess Christ by fulfilling our responsibility to not only continue steadfastly in the Apostles doctrine, Fellowship, the breaking of Bread, and prayers. But let us find all of springs of happiness and joy in following Christ by loving to be with His gathered Church.