

“What Shapes Your Faith?”—Romans 10:8-10

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “What Shapes Your Faith?”, is Romans 10:8-10 → *“The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart” (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

How do you confess your faith? The answer to this question for many Christians may take them into their “formal” worship settings where they confess the Christian faith to God and one another together with each other by the use of either the Apostles’ or Nicene Creeds. Some may think about their confirmation day when they publicly acknowledged belief in and commitment to the Triune God. It could also refer to speaking openly about Jesus in daily conversations or even the behaviors you display. Seldom do people think of confessing their faith as an action in silence.

Our text speaks about confessing *with your mouth that Jesus is Lord*, implying that it is a visible, audible confession of your faith in Jesus Christ for

salvation. Thus, your confession is determined by that which “shapes” your faith.

Upon what is your faith based? There are many factors which may “shape” people’s faith. Aside from rigid religious upbringing they might include ideas about “religion” or “God” or “church” received through the media or “religious” experiences. You see, your faith, no matter what kind of faith it is, must have an object. You have to have **faith in** something or someone. From God’s perspective idolatry is determined by the object of your faith. Saving faith is trusting in Jesus as Lord. Thus, it is impossible for a Christian to make a clear confession of faith without talking about Jesus.

Our text talks about the importance of confessing Jesus as Lord of our lives not just with lip-service but with trust in and dependence upon Jesus in His Person & Work. According to verse 8 of our text this trust and dependence is shaped by the proclaimed *word of faith*. To the Jews this word was also *near them, in their mouth and in their heart* because they had God’s Law in the written Old Testament Scriptures which pointed them Jesus.

Jesus pointed this out to the experts in that Law in John 5:39-40 → *You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about Me, yet you refuse to come to Me that you may have life.* What was the issue? That they didn’t believe in God? No,

they believed in God. That they didn't read their Bibles? No, they read the Word. What was the problem? They refused to trust and believe in Jesus. They refused to recognize their sin and their need for His saving activity in their life. The Word was in their mouths but they refused to confess Jesus as Lord!

Too often what is merely in one's head regarding Jesus is just that—stuff in the head. One may be able to say, "I learned all that 'religious church stuff' when I was a kid in Sunday School!" and still refuse to repent of his sins and say, "Jesus is Lord!" in faith. Sometimes what is mistaken for faith in the heart is only lip-service from facts about Jesus. Verses 9-10 of our text is describing both belief and confession in the relationship of grace **which God has established with us** in Jesus Christ. It says: *if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.*

Notice that which shapes your faith—the Person & Work of Jesus! It recognizes that you don't have to *ascend into heaven . . . to bring Christ down* (cf. Romans 10:6) because He came into our sinful world to save sinners by dealing with your sin once and for all! Neither do you have to *descend into the abyss . . . to bring Christ up from the dead* (cf. Romans 10:7) because God has

already raised Him from the dead and He lives for you today! Faith shaped by experiences, things, education, systems, stuff, even people in the church will leave you despairing and lacking in the end. Why? Because they all make lousy gods! Only the righteous accomplished work of Jesus shapes your faith for eternity!

Saving, life-renewing, Christian faith is shaped by *the word of faith*. It's the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The Gospel is meant to be displayed in your life, expressing outwardly a conviction of what Jesus has done for you! As you confess with your mouth the trust in Jesus which the Holy Spirit has placed in your heart, *the word of faith* continues to be proclaimed so others can come to know and believe in Jesus too! Such confessing with the mouth is intended to be an outward, public expression of faith. When told not to speak and teach in the name of Jesus this is why the apostles said in Acts 4:20 → *We cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard*. They couldn't stop themselves from expressing their faith!

As God's Word shapes your relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ, that message **will** flow over into other peoples' lives so that their faith can also be shaped by the Holy Spirit working through the Word. As Paul said in Romans 10:17 → *Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ*. Thus, the purpose of your faith is not self-serving. Since you have

received the *riches* of God's grace, confessing with your mouth proclaims that Jesus is Lord for all people! Jesus is *the same Lord Who is Lord of all, bestowing His riches on all who call on Him. For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."* (cf. Romans 10:12-13) The Lordship of Jesus is for everyone, not just for you!

Faith is shaped by the Holy Spirit working through *the word of faith*. He's working through the Gospel of Jesus Christ everyday as you read that Word. He's working through the Gospel of Jesus Christ in worship together as it is proclaimed through the liturgy and sermons. He's working through the Gospel of Jesus Christ as it is confessed with the mouth in the midst of conversations as we try to bring the lordship of Jesus into the perspectives of life we encounter. Believing with the heart and confessing with the mouth always go together as God's grace shapes our faith and lives.

This proclamation on your part in the everyday conversations, relationships and vocations of life is crucial. It **needs** to be displayed not just in comfortable "religious" settings. It is actually meant to be displayed in "non-religious" settings. It is meant to be displayed in those places where people are telling you that you can't display it. It is meant to be displayed amongst those people who don't want to hear it and in uncomfortable circumstances so the Holy Spirit can work contrition and repentance through this means of grace and

people can be saved! Jesus put it this way in Matthew 5:16 → *Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father Who is in heaven.* Good works are both actions and words.

This confession is actually an acknowledgment that Jesus Christ is God in the flesh. This was the point Jesus made with His disciples in their confusion about His Person & Work according to John 14:6-9 → *Jesus said to Thomas, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also. From now on you do know Him and have seen Him." Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us." Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know Me, Philip? Whoever has seen Me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? You cannot talk about a relationship with God as your loving *Father* without talking about faith in Jesus Christ.*

Faith that is shaped by *the word of faith*, the Gospel of Jesus Christ, recognizes the on-going, life-changing work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. The message of the Lordship of Jesus Christ and His resurrection tells us not only that Jesus lived at one time in a historical period. It tells us that He still lives today! He lives to shape your life according to God's purposes and will! He lives as Lord of all today because He wants to shape the lives of people who

don't' know Him . . . **according to His purpose and His plan.** As the Word is unleashed among us and the Holy Spirit works so that all people will submit to Jesus Christ as Lord, come to Him in repentance and see they are sinners in need of the Person & Work of Jesus, they will experience new life! When they know in their hearts that without Him they are lost, they will be lifted up in that faith by the power of the Holy Spirit and see their life shaped in both their faith and their actions! Amen.

I want you to understand that

no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says “Jesus is accursed!”

and no one can say “Jesus is Lord” except in the Holy Spirit.

(1 Corinthians 12:3)

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