

Confessing Jesus is the Lord

Friday evening, 2nd February 2018

‘No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.’ 1 Corinthians 12:3

The Corinthian church had written to Paul asking him some questions. He starts to reply to these questions at the beginning of chapter 7, ‘Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me.’ (v 1) Paul goes on to deal with those things. Each time he starts a new subject, a new query raised by the church, he begins in the same way. In chapter 8: ‘Now as touching things offered unto idols.’ (v 1) Then in this chapter he comes to deal with the question concerning spiritual gifts, ‘Now concerning spiritual gifts’ (v1).

The church at Corinth had written to him asking him concerning spiritual things. You will notice that the word ‘gifts’ in the first verse is in italics, to show that it has been supplied by the translators, it is not in the original. They had written to Paul to ask him about ‘spiritual things’. What does it mean to be spiritual? What are the evidences that we are spiritual? What are the evidences that we are born again? Paul therefore speaks here concerning the spiritual things which are wrought in and brought forth from the Lord’s people.

Paul speaks firstly of the great spiritual change they had undergone. He tells them that they had been gentiles, ‘carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led.’ But things had changed with them. They were no longer gentile idolaters. ‘Such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.’ (1 Corinthians 6:11) A change had been brought about. They were no longer carnal (though they still carry about a body of sin), but now spiritual. How are they spiritual? Because the Holy Spirit indwells them. Consequently they have this testimony, ‘that Jesus is the Lord.’

Paul is teaching them this: all true religion begins with the work of the Holy Spirit. There can be no religion without the Holy Ghost. For no man can confess that Jesus is the Lord, unless he has the Holy Spirit. Unless the Spirit has passed by and regenerated them, unless the Spirit has made them feel their need, and caused them to see the blessing of the provision that has been made in the person

of Jesus Christ, they have no real religion. It is the Spirit who works in us the faith that lays hold on the promise. It is the Spirit who forms Christ in us the hope of glory. It is the Spirit who sanctifies and prepares us against the solemn day of our death. What a blessed friend the Spirit is to us! 'No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, *but by the Holy Ghost.*'

Jesus emphasised the spiritual nature of true religion when he said, 'God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.' (John 4:24) That must be the question for us this evening: *are we spiritual?* 'For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.' (Romans 8:6) It is the hope of glory to come. It is *everything!* Is that a question to you this evening: *Are you* spiritually minded? *Have you* passed from death unto life? Here we have an evidence that we have true spiritual life, an evidence that we have the Spirit with us: the confession of Jesus Christ.

As the Lord would help me this evening, in coming to these words, I want to notice,

I. Firstly, what it is to say that Jesus is the Lord. What it is to truly confess Jesus as our Lord.

II. Secondly, the vital necessity of this confession. What an essential thing it is to be able to confess to one another tonight, and to our God, that Jesus is the Lord.

III. Thirdly, to notice how we come to make this confession – by the Holy Ghost. No exception! Nobody – no man, woman or child – can make this confession, but by the Holy Ghost. Our salvation, our religion – all true religion – is divine in its origin. It springs forth from God. Has your religion got the hallmark of divine religion this evening? If it has, it did not begin with you. It will not end with you either. It begins with God, it ends with God. That is salvation. Each saved soul is a brand plucked from the burning, not left there: he takes us to himself.

IV. Finally, to make some comments by way of application.

'No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.'

I. Firstly, what is it to be enabled to say that Jesus is the Lord?

Well, we must begin by pointing out that it is very easy to trip these words off our tongue. It is very easy to say, 'Jesus is the Lord.' There are many in the world, Jesus tells us, who in the great and solemn day of judgment will call him, 'Lord,

Lord.' Yet the Lord will say, 'I never knew you.' Didn't they confess that Jesus is the Lord? Not in the sense found here in our text. The Word of God divides the sinner from the saint. The Word of God sets a standard that marks out very clearly what is true religion, and what is false religion. Here in our text we have both the negative and the positive marks of true religion. The solemn negative precedes our text: 'I give you to understand that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed.' That is the what true religion does *not* do. The positive, what true religion *does*, is to say that Jesus is the Lord, by the Holy Ghost. Many will be found short in the final judgement, because they cannot truly say, 'Jesus is the Lord.'

To truly say that Jesus is the Lord is not an easy or a light matter. What it costs to make this confession! In our lives so far, we live in times when it has not necessarily been a shameful thing to own the Lord Jesus Christ as Lord. We fear what the future may hold. We don't know how easy it will remain for us to make this confession. But if it is a confession truly wrought by the Holy Ghost, we will have to make this confession whatever it costs us. When Paul was writing, making this confession had solemn consequences. When Polycarp, the church father, was brought before Caesar, they tried to get him to say, 'Lord Caesar,' or 'Caesar is Lord.' The Roman emperors were considered as deities. But all Polycarp would say was, 'Jesus is the Lord,' 'Lord Jesus.' That confession took him to the martyr's death. Polycarp could not give up this confession. Why? Because it was the confession that was brought forth from the witness of the Holy Spirit who indwelt him. The blessing is, if the Holy Spirit indwells us, he who has begun a good work in us must perform it to the day of Jesus Christ. If we are enabled once in our life to truly confess that Jesus is the Lord, he will be with us till we see him face to face. That is what Polycarp proved. Jesus was his Lord. Jesus sustained him in life and in death.

But although this may be a costly confession, it is a blessed confession. If it is our testimony this evening that Jesus is the Lord, we won't have any other wants. 'The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want.' (Psalm 23:1) 'Jesus Lord' is the Good Shepherd. 'Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.' What a difference it makes when we can truly say, 'Jesus is the Lord.' It puts everything else in its right perspective. 'Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.' You know, if we can

confess that this evening, we are the happiest, the richest, the most blessed people on this earth. But, if it is not our confession, where are we?

Now, what does it mean to confess that 'Jesus is the Lord'?

(a) The first thing is this: **it is to confess his divinity**. This man – a real man – Jesus – that baby that was laid in the manger at Bethlehem – the man who lay in the tomb – he is Lord.

Now we do not acknowledge the divinity of Jesus by carnal reason. The Pharisees, when Jesus was here in the days of his flesh, what was the one thing they hated? It was this: that Jesus confessed he was Lord. That he was the Son of God. That the Father had sent him. That he came not to do his own will, but the will of him who sent him, that is, the Father. The Pharisees hated him for this. They called him a blasphemer. You look at the charges that were made against him when he was before the Sanhedrin, in the Judgement Hall, before Pilate. What was the charge? 'This man is a blasphemer.' Why was he considered a blasphemer? Because he called himself God. But he was God. He really was God, though the Pharisees could not receive it. They confessed with their lips that they knew God. They knew his Word inside-out and back-to-front. The scribes had written out God's Word so many times that it must have been imprinted on their memory, yet they could not confess that Jesus is the Lord. Why? Because they did not have the Holy Ghost. Nothing short of that will bring forth this profession of faith.

But mark the difference in those who were blessed with the Spirit. Officers were sent out by the Pharisees, the leaders of the temple, to go and try to trap Jesus in his preaching. They are granted the Spirit. When they came back to the Pharisees, they asked, 'Did you not take him?' No, they had not taken him! What was the only thing they could say? 'Never man spake like this man.' (John 7:46) What were they confessing? That Jesus is the Lord. They saw in that man, more than just a man – this is the Son of God.

Take the centurion who stood at the foot of the cross. When Jesus gave up the ghost, when he cried, 'Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit,' the earth trembled, and the skies darkened. That dear centurion, blessed by the witness of the Spirit, said, 'Truly, this man was the Son of God.' (Mark 15:39) He was confessing that Jesus is the Lord.

Take the woman sitting by the well in Samaria. Her confession concerning this man was, 'Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the

Christ?’ (John 4:29) What was she confessing? This was no mere man. Jesus is the Lord.

Take the disciples sailing on the Sea of Galilee. The winds and the waves came. They thought they were about to perish. They cried, ‘Master, carest thou not that we perish?’ (Mark 4:38) And Jesus arose and rebuked the wind and the waves. Calm ensued. What did the disciples say? ‘What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!’ (Matthew 8:27) What were they confessing? Jesus is the Lord.

Take Mary, at the tomb. She thinks she sees the gardener – just a man. He says unto her, ‘Mary!’ What does she do? Blessed by the Spirit, she confesses that Jesus is the Lord. ‘Rabboni,’ she said, ‘which is to say, Master.’ (John 20:16) In other words, ‘Jesus is the Lord.’ Thomas initially doubted the resurrection of his Lord. Yet, when his Lord drew near to him, and when he was blessed with the Spirit, what did he say? ‘My Lord and my God.’ (John 20:28)

Or take the Apostle Peter. Jesus asked, ‘Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? ... But whom say ye that I am?’ Peter responded, ‘Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.’ ‘And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee.’ (Matthew 16:13-17) How was Peter able to make that testimony? Because he had the Spirit with him. It is a proof of our text: ‘No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.’ ‘Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee.’ It is not your chapel going, not your natural hearing of the Word, not your reading of theology at home, or any other good books, it is not hearing what your parents might teach on the subject. Alone those things will never lead you to this conclusion. But when the Spirit draws near, all those things fall into their right place. The Spirit can bring a soul through even a few words of the Scriptures to this confession. Something here, something there, and the Spirit blesses it to the soul of one here and one there, bringing them to confess, ‘Jesus is the Lord.’

This confession is to own that this dear Saviour, this one who came into the world to preach peace to them that were near and to them that were afar off – he is God. The divine Son of God. It is to confess that unto him is given all power in heaven and in earth. It is to confess that Jesus is the Lord – that he is God – therefore we worship him. ‘Worship thou him.’ (Psalm 45:11) You see, friends, that is an evidence of the reality of this confession – we have to come and worship him. Do you have to come and worship him this evening? Do you have to say with

Peter, 'Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.' (Luke 5:8) What was Peter doing? He was confessing that Jesus is the Lord. He had a realisation that the one whom he was coming to was not just a man. No! He was the Son of God. He was his Lord. He was the anointed Christ. He was his Saviour.

(b) Now, let's just move on a little. To confess that Jesus is the Lord is firstly to own that he is the divine Son, that he is God. Secondly, **it is to confess that he is the Christ**. He is the anointed one. He is the one who was sent into this world, bound by the bands of the everlasting covenant, ordained to the offices of prophet, priest and king, for his people. Let us just take each of those offices in turn for a moment.

1. *His prophetic office*. The Father said of him: 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.' (Matthew 17:5) Now, 'hearing him' is a mark that we can confess that Jesus is the Lord. Do you hear him this evening? Do you own him as your teacher, your guide? Is his Word delightful unto you? For,

The Scriptures and the Lord
Bear one tremendous name;
The written and the incarnate Word
In all things are the same. (Joseph Hart)

Is his Word that of which we find: 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.' (Matthew 4:4) Friends, if the words of Jesus are precious to you this evening, if you can see some delight in him who is the Father's beloved Son, if it was your desire this evening as you came up to the house of God that the Lord would speak to you, 'Be not silent to me: lest, if thou be silent to me, I become like them that go down into the pit,' (Psalm 28:1), then, you know, that is a testimony that you are making this confession, that Jesus is the Lord. You do not want to hear merely the words of the minister. You do not primarily want to hear what another man or woman in the congregation may say to you. You certainly do not want to hear the useless, pointless chatter which goes on in the world outside. But one word from the lips of this precious one, blessed to your soul by this revelation of the Holy Spirit, it is all you want, all you need, all you desire! 'Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth.'

2. *His priestly office*. Christ was ordained a priest. Do you accept him this evening as your priest? 'For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.' (1 Timothy 2:5) The precious advocate. He is the one who

God has ordained. He is the one to be your daysman, to stand between you and God. He is not only the priest, but the precious sacrifice too. 'Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.' (John 1:29) I ask you this evening, can you leave your offerings? Can you leave your gifts at the door of the chapel? All your 'fancied meetness to approach the dread I AM.' (Joseph Hart) All your righteousness, all your good deeds. Can you leave everything that you have got any hope in? Can you leave them there and confess there is but one thing needful for your soul?

Assure my conscience of her part
In the Redeemer's blood;
And bear thy witness with my heart,
That I am born of God. (Isaac Watts)

Is that your cry? Do you own him as your Lord through the witness of the Holy Spirit? 'Jesus is the Lord.' He is the one that has been appointed as both the priest and the lamb, both the offerer and the sacrifice. He is the only one by whom we shall find remission of our sins. That is what it is to confess that Jesus is the Lord.

The Word of God compares the relationship between Christ and his people to the marriage union. In Isaiah we read: 'Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate: but thou shalt be called Hephzibah, and thy land Beulah: for the Lord delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married.' (Isaiah 62:4) That is the description of the bridegroom's relationship with his bride: 'the Lord delighteth in thee.' Christ and his church are married to one another. Our marriage service says, 'Wilt thou ... forsaking all other, keep thee only unto him, so long as ye both shall live?' Leaving all other, we should cleave to our spouse. That is what people do when they confess that Jesus is the Lord. They leave everything else. Including themselves! That's the hardest thing, isn't it? To leave old self, self-righteousness, to put it entirely aside, and to be brought by grace to say:

Nothing in my hand I bring;
Simply to thy cross I cling. (Augustus Toplady)

That is owning that Jesus is the Lord. To know no other sacrifice, no other plea, than this which has been provided.

3. *His kingly office.* Then there is the office of king. We might say, this is perhaps the pre-eminent office in our text this evening, 'Jesus is the Lord.' Can you confess this evening that he is your king? Can you sing this evening:

Reign o'er us as King, accomplish thy will,
And powerfully bring us forth from all ill;
Till, falling before thee, we laud thy loved name,
Ascribing the glory to God and the Lamb. (Joseph Hart)

That is what it is to say that 'Jesus is the Lord.' To know no will but his. To be able to leave all the outcomes of our life's tomorrow. To be able to leave our situation in grace and in providence in the Lord's hands. To look to him alone for safety, our defence, and our victory over all our enemies.

It is in these things that we prove it is a spiritual work to be able to truly make this confession. How hard it is to give up our own will! How hard it is to give up what *we* want! How hard it is to give up the things that we love and desire to hold on to! But when the Lord takes these things away from us, when he causes us to walk in dark paths, they are the tests as to whether we can continue to say, 'Jesus is the Lord.' Where we can confess, 'Even so, ... for so it seemed good in thy sight.' (Luke 10:21) That is what it is to have Jesus as a king. To know no will but his. To find that godly conformity to him. To be able to say with Augustus Toplady,

Sweet to lie passive in thy hands,
And know no will but thine.

What does Jesus say? He says, we should take no thought for tomorrow. We should trust in him. He is the Lord of tomorrow and he will provide for us. He will not forsake his people. Friends, can you trust him this evening for all things in providence? If he has granted you a hope in grace, can you not believe that he will 'also freely give us all things?' (Romans 8:32) He is 'able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.' (Ephesians 3:20) What wretched creatures we are! How unbelieving! How unwilling to be faithful subjects of this king, to sit under his sway, to own him as our Lord! But when the Spirit is in exercise in our soul, he brings forth this sweet submission. We confess,

It is the Lord, enthroned in light,
Whose claims are all divine,

Who has an undisputed right
To govern me and mine. (Thomas Greene)

That is what it is to confess that Jesus is the Lord.

(c) Thirdly, to say, 'Jesus is the Lord,' is **to confess that he is our all in all**. You see, this is the one in whom it pleased the Father that all fullness should dwell, and that there it should dwell for the poor and the needy that knock by the way. That in all things – nothing excepted – Jesus should have the pre-eminence. Do you know what it is to get a sight of that? When we are humbled in the dust, when we are willing to be nothing, that Christ might be all in all. They are rare occasions in our soul's experience. But when we have one of those sweet instances of seeing our all in Christ, we then say with conviction, 'Jesus is the Lord!'

Compared with Christ, in all beside
No comeliness I see;
The one thing needful, dearest Lord,
Is to be one with thee. (Augustus Toplady)

When we can really say that, we confess that 'Jesus is the Lord.'

John Ryland reminds us:

While Christ is rich, I can't be poor;
What can I want beside?

Are you enabled by grace and faith this evening to trust the Lord Jesus for all? He holds the whole earth in his hands. He is the creator, the Lord of the heaven and the earth. He sees the sparrows as they come to the earth to pick up food. He supplies them with food. You are more precious than the sparrows. The very hairs of your head are all numbered. Your heavenly Father and this precious Christ know everything that you have need of. He will supply. 'My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.' (Philippians 4:19) O to be enabled to see him as our all in all! To be able to confess him as such. To be able to live as though *he is Lord*. That's the difficult thing, isn't it? It is easy to be a Christian when we have got a bank balance. It is easy to be a Christian when everything is going well for us. But those who can say that Jesus is the Lord, when do they most clearly confess it? It is when they are brought into straits. When troubles come. When the Lord empties their bank account. When he takes away their props, but when they prove,

He never takes away their all—
Himself he gives them still.

(Joseph Swain)

That brings us to his feet, doesn't it? That is what makes us cry the loudest that Jesus is the Lord.

(d) Fourthly, **to confess that Jesus is the Lord is to name him as our only hope of heaven.** The Holy Spirit forms Christ in us the hope of glory. We see him as the one that has gone before us to heaven to make a way. 'Because I live, ye shall live also.' (John 14:19) He 'was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.' (Romans 4:25) That is our hope of glory – that we will be with him, we shall see him, we shall be like him. Our hope rests on this, that 'Jesus is the Lord.' If he were but a mere man. If he were not the Son of God. If he were not all in all. If the Father had not given unto him all power. If it were not that he was that precious prophet, priest and king. If he was not that one sacrifice for sins. If he could not remit our sins and take them away by his precious blood. What hope would we have of glory? But because he is, because he is all these things, because he is all these things in super-abounding glory, we have got a precious hope of heaven. He will live to bring us there. He has prayed for it: 'Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me.' (John 14:24) That is the desire of this precious one, the Lord Jesus Christ. When we find a portion in this precious Christ, when he gives us a hope of heaven, we have to own that Jesus is the Lord.

(e) Finally, we need to be clear that **a true confession that Jesus is the Lord cannot just be confined to what we say.** It is not something we just say. It is something that affects our entire walk and conduct. 'Forsaking all other.' Cleaving only to him. Looking away from all our earthly props. Looking to him to provide all in time, and in eternity. Leaving all hope of salvation in ourselves, our self-righteousness. To be self-renouncing, grace-admiring. This confession is not just made with the lips, it is a confession we make in our walk and conduct. This is what the Lord's people see when the Lord begins a work in a soul. The tongue may often be silent. The poor tried child of God hardly dare speak. They don't feel they have anything to confess, other than that they are a sinner. But the Lord's people, they see the change in walk and conduct.

I was told earlier today about someone who was called by grace when he was 15, now he is an old man, and since that day he said, 'I have not been my own.'

That's a testimony that for him, Jesus is the Lord. You are not your own this evening if you can say, 'Jesus is the Lord.' You are bought with a price. And if you have a sense of that, that you are not our own, then you will know you are no longer a free agent to do what you want. We are in the service of King Jesus. Therefore, if we are enabled by faith and grace to own Jesus as our Lord, it must have an effect in our lives. This confession cannot just be made with the lips. We must walk it out. Here we confess we are strangers and pilgrims, but we seek a city. A city which is to come, which hath foundations, whose maker and builder is God. A kingdom of immense delight. A kingdom where pleasures will never decay. But what is the chief thing?

There shall your eyes with rapture view
The glorious Friend that died for you,
That died to ransom, died to raise
To crowns of joy and songs of praise. (Anne Steele)

There we will for ever confess, 'Jesus is the Lord.'

II. Now I want to come on to notice in the second place, why is it so important that we are brought to this confession?

Well, if we are not brought to own him as Lord, it shows that we have got no spiritual life in us. We are spiritually dead!

This confession comes from the work of the Holy Spirit. It is the fruit of regeneration. What does Jesus tell Nicodemus? 'Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, *he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*' (John 3:5) That is the solemnity of being without this confession. Of not having the Spirit's work in our soul. This confession is the essential fruit of the Spirit's work. If we do not know this work of the Spirit in us, we have no life in us. We have no hope of entering into the kingdom which is to come.

Then Jesus said elsewhere, 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.' (John 6:53) That is not a literal eating. It is a spiritual eating of Christ. It is a spiritual partaking of Christ. It is a spiritual living on Christ in all his perfections. Jesus is the Lord.

Then we can consider the testimony of John. John's first epistle is a commentary on this subject. 'Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.' (1 John 5:1) 'He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in

himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.’ (1 John 5:10-12)

Then more solemnly, we are told that the antichrist ‘denieth the Son.’ (1 John 2:23) If we do not confess that Jesus is the Lord, we deny the Son. We tear him from his throne. We don’t put him in the place he should have. The carnal mind is enmity against God. It is enmity against this one that God sent. We will not have this man to reign over us. ‘Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father.’ but, ‘he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also.’

What a terrible thing that spirit of antichrist is! John tells us that those that have the spirit of antichrist will not overcome at last. ‘For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.’ (1 John 5:4) We only overcome because we have the Son. ‘Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.’ (1 Corinthians 15:57) Unless we have this confession wrought in our heart by the Holy Spirit, we will be overcome. In that great day, death will swallow us up. In the moment we depart out of this life we will enter into the blackness of darkness forever. There is no grey area. No purgatory. No place where there can be movement after death. No place where we might be taught and where we might repent. No! As a tree falleth, so shall it lie. If death should come to one of us this evening, where would we be? Unless we are taught by the Holy Spirit in this life to confess that Jesus is the Lord, there is no hope for us in death. We will be overcome. But! If we are enabled by the Holy Spirit to confess that Jesus is the Lord, we will be ‘more than conquerors through him that loved us.’ (Romans 8:37)

Through him that loved us and gave himself for us, we will not simply overcome. We will not just be overcomers. Not just conquerors. But ‘more than conquerors’!

We shall be conquerors all ere long,
And more than conquerors too. (Joseph Hart)

The force of the original is difficult to express in English. What is a ‘more-than conqueror’? It is a precious picture for the tried child of God who feels often overcome here below. When an invading army overtakes a country, it can annex it and put a regent over it. It can leave it with its language, its customs, and everything

going on as it was prior to the invasion. For much of the history of Israel and Judah, under the later kings, this was their position. Their kings were left to rule, although they were under the control of the nations that conquered. It was a real conquest. Those foreign armies had come, they had seen, they had conquered, but they had left them to continue much as they were, even though they were now under foreign dominion. They were ‘conquerors.’ But then there are ‘more than conquerors.’ When these come and invade, they wipe out the culture, they eradicate the language of the local people, they try to change the local customs. The invaded country is utterly subsumed, becoming nothing more than a part of the invading power. That is what it is to be ‘more than conquerors.’ That is the idea in the original. When those armies in Ancient Rome came, their ideal was to establish Rome in every land and to utterly wipe out what had existed before. Friends, that is what we will be through Christ, ‘more than conquerors.’ If we are able to confess that Jesus is the Lord, we will be ‘more than conquerors.’ Mortality shall put on immortality; corruption, incorruption. We shall live in him. There won’t be a whiff of corruption, not even the smallest trace of sin about us in heaven. ‘Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.’ (1 Corinthians 15:57)

‘Jesus is the Lord.’ Friends, this is a solemn matter! How essential it is to have this confession this evening! With it we shall be more than conquerors. ‘When he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.’ (1 John 3:2) Without it, we shall be cut off from him forever. The eternal burnings of hell will be our desert. That is the vast, eternal difference between what belongs to us by nature, and the blessings that flow from the gospel of Jesus Christ. ‘No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.’

III. Now in the third place, let us note how we are brought to make this confession.

(a) Firstly, we would notice that **the work of the Holy Spirit is essential in bringing us to this confession.** ‘No man can say that Jesus is the Lord *but by the Holy Ghost.*’

Why is it essential? Because the Holy Spirit is the one who was sent forth by the Son to be the witness to the Son. The Son prayed to the Father that he would send the Spirit. The Spirit came to take of the things of Jesus and reveal them to us. ‘When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he

will shew you things to come.’ (John 16:13) The Holy Spirit speaks of Christ. It is the Spirit who witnesses in our hearts concerning Jesus. It is the Spirit who takes of the things of Jesus and shows them to us. It is the Spirit who opens our eyes to behold Jesus. It is the Spirit who works the faith that savingly lays hold on Christ. It is the Spirit that looses the tongue to confess that Jesus is the Lord.

What a precious witness the Spirit is! He is the faithful and true witness. Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ was anointed by the Spirit. At his baptism the Spirit was seen in the form of a dove descending on him. He was endued with the Spirit without measure. The Spirit was with him in his darkest moments. ‘Who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God.’ (Hebrews 9:14) The Spirit was there with Christ at Calvary. A witness is someone who has actually seen an event. One who was there when it happened. They can truly tell what happened because they saw it. Once it becomes second hand, it is no longer the evidence of a witness. In that sense the Spirit is the ultimate witness. That is the blessed nature of this witness. The Spirit speaks first hand of what he saw about Jesus. The Spirit did not need to see, in order to know; but having seen, he is rightly described as a witness to these things. And everything the Spirit says is true. There is nothing the Spirit reveals to a poor sinner concerning Christ that has any doubt or question about it. It is a perfect witness.

What does the Spirit witness to? He witnesses to all the things already mentioned. He witnesses to the fact that Jesus is the Son of God. He witnesses to his precious humanity; he witnesses to his holy divinity. He witnesses to his anointing to the mediatorial offices of prophet, priest and king. He witnesses to Jesus’ perfect work, his fulfilling all righteousness. He witnesses to the fact that Jesus is the precious lamb, the holy sacrifice made for sin. He witnesses to the depths of mercy and the sufficiency in that sacrifice. He witnesses to the fact that the sacrifice still has power. He witnesses to the blessing of the call of the gospel, ‘Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.’ (Isaiah 55:1) He witnesses to the fact that in him, the Son, the Father has been pleased to put all fullness. He witnesses to the fact that through him we have an all-prevailing plea at the throne of grace. The Father can never turn away one of his dear children who comes with that all-prevailing plea.

This is the name the Father loves
To hear his children plead;

And all such pleading he approves,
And blesses them indeed. (Samuel Medley)

How are we taught to plead in this way? By the witness of the Spirit. It is the Spirit who witnesses that Christ is a friend in time of need; a refuge when we find ourselves utterly overwhelmed. It is the Spirit who witnesses that underneath our sinking head, Christ lays his loving arms.

Yea, when thy eye of faith is dim,
Rest thou on Jesus, sink or swim. (John Kent)

He shall be the peace – the Spirit witnesses to this.

The Spirit witnesses to the truth that Christ is our hope of glory. And what is it that will make a dying saint's bed so precious? The Spirit's witness to the fact that this precious one – Jesus the Lord – stands to receive us on the other side of Jordan. This will make the waters of Jordan seem to be low, the lowest they ever come in drought. It will make the bottom of the river to feel sound and good. All through the witness of this precious Spirit.

Without this witness we have nothing. But with it our tongues cannot begin to tell the beauties we see in Christ. The poor bride in the Song of Solomon, she tried to tell something of the beauty she saw in Jesus the Lord, but she ran out of words. In the end, all she could say was: 'Yea, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.' (Song of Solomon 5:16) The chiefest amongst ten thousand, the altogether lovely. Is that how you find yourself this evening, poor soul? Words have run out to describe the beauties you see in this precious Saviour, Jesus the Lord? If so, it is only by the Holy Spirit.

(b) Secondly I want to consider **how the witness of Spirit develops within the souls of the Lord's people when he brings them to make the confession that Jesus is the Lord.**

1. Where does it begin? *The Spirit's work begins by witnessing to the righteousness and the holiness of God as reflected in his law.* Why must it begin there? Because that is how the Spirit brings us to know something of God, and the demands that holy justice lays on sinners.

Then the Spirit begins to witness to us concerning our heart. He brings the law to our heart. He puts that light within us. He shows us that we are guilty, guilty, *guilty!* That is the witness of the Spirit. It is through the law the Spirit brings us to

know ourselves. Ultimately therefore, it is through the law the Spirit brings us to feel our need of Christ. To bring us to feel our unholiness and fallenness.

That we're unholy needs no proof,
We sorely feel the fall. (Joseph Hart)

Unless we have the witness of the Spirit within us, we will have no knowledge of sin. What does Joseph Hart say?

The sinner is a holy thing:
The Holy Ghost has made him so.

Friends, it is a precious thing this evening if you have some knowledge of sin. If you are convinced of sin, but as yet have no knowledge of the Saviour, you may not feel it a precious thing. But, you know, conviction of sin only springs forth from the witness of the Spirit within our souls. It is the work of God and therefore must be precious. But let us be clear on this point. The more valuable thing in experience is this: the Spirit doesn't leave a soul there. He reveals the law, he reveals we are sinners, but then he leads to a glorious Saviour.

Convince us of our sin,
Then lead to Jesus' blood.
And to our wondering view reveal,
The secret love of God. (Joseph Hart)

2. *He reveals Christ to us.* That is the ultimate aim of the witness of the Spirit: to show us Christ. He shows us Christ as an able and a willing Saviour. He shows that Christ has strength to save us, that he has got ability, and has got a right. He reveals to us that Christ has made a way, and he shows us that way.

Bring no money, price or aught,
No good deeds, nor pleasing frames,
Mercy never can be bought;
Grace is free; and all's the Lamb's! (John Kent)

That is the way the Spirit witnesses to Christ.

3. But it doesn't stop there. *The Spirit's witness produces precious graces*, which are called the gifts of the Spirit. Amongst them is faith. It is the Spirit who is the author of faith. We are not saved by works, lest any man should boast. We are saved by grace. The Spirit works in us the faith that takes hold on Jesus – Jesus the Lord –

and his precious grace towards sinners. We close with Christ by faith. We receive Christ by faith. ‘Forsaking all other,’ as I have already quoted to you from the marriage service, we cleave unto Christ. We lay hold on him. We find in him all we need. He is all our desire, the joy and rejoicing of our heart. In him we find a remedy for all our sins. In his death we find life. Death is no more a frightful foe. We find freedom there from the bondage of the law. Its chains are broken off, we go free.

We sing! What is our song? ‘Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.’ (Revelation 1:5-6) Here below we don’t know all the words of the song of Moses and the Lamb, but if a sinner has been brought to see Christ by the witness of the Holy Spirit, if the soul can even lisp these few notes, ‘that Jesus is the Lord’ – no more, but no less – then that confessing soul is beginning to sing the opening bars of the song of Moses and the Lamb. The new song which fills all heaven centres on this theme, ‘Jesus is the Lord.’ It gives us a hope that,

When this lisping, stammering tongue
Lies silent in the grave,
Then, in a nobler, sweeter song,
I’ll sing thy power to save. (William Cowper)

So the Spirit shows us the law, shows us our guilt, shows us Christ, and gives us the gift of his own graces.

4. But *then the Spirit also forms Christ in us*. He conforms us to the image of Christ. It is the Spirit’s work to sanctify us. It is the Spirit’s work to convince us day by day of our sin. It is the Spirit’s work to lead us after Christ as our example. O to breathe after holiness! O to desire to be like Christ! Is that your wish this evening? You feel yourself so wretched. You see Christ the perfect example set before you – he is holy, you feel yourself to be unholy – you come like Peter, ‘Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.’ (Luke 5:8) In such a state you are breathing after holiness. ‘Breathing after holiness’ are the words over Isaac Watts’ beautiful paraphrase of Psalm 119:

O that the Lord would guide my ways
To keep his statutes still!

O that my God would grant me grace
To know and do his will.

When we can truly sing that, it is because Christ is being formed in us the hope of glory. It will be our constant desire all our days to be more Christlike. I hope we will never be satisfied here below with how much we are conformed to Christ. It is a precious thing that we *cannot* be satisfied. Because if we ever got to a state of being satisfied here below that we now were sanctified enough, we would cease to witness with our tongue, and we would cease to witness in our lives, that Jesus is the Lord.

IV. I want to just briefly make a few points in application as we close.

(a) **Our salvation is a divine salvation.** It begins with God. ‘No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, *but* by the Holy Ghost.’ This is hateful to the carnal mind. It is hateful to old nature, which wants a religion produced by self, a religion in which self can do something. Old nature wants some legal working. Even the Lord’s people still have something of that old nature about us. Left to themselves, even the Lord’s people will be trying to work and strive to save themselves. But Paul is writing about true religion, ‘spiritual things’ – things to do with the fundamentals of our most holy faith. And true religion begins with God. Ours is a divine religion. There is no religion without God. You might say that all religion is to do with God. No! Only *real* religion has to do with God. Every other sort of religion has to do with self and the things *we* can do, the things we can present to try and merit esteem, or curry favour with God. But true religion begins with God. ‘No man can say that Jesus is the Lord *but* by the Holy Ghost.’ But because true religion begins with God, it must end with God, and it is God’s work throughout.

Each moment watered by thy care,
And kept by power divine. (Augustus Toplady)

That is the salvation of God. He will keep alive your soul in famine. Day by day he will grant you sufficient grace. Supplies will never fail, because ours is a divine salvation. This is what separates those that can make this confess from those who cannot. Those who can say ‘Jesus is the Lord’ have had to leave everything of their own doing that their all might be Christ. Their salvation is a divine salvation – it is a Jesus only religion.

(b) But then I must come to this vital question: **Can you say that Jesus is the Lord?** Don't try to duck it this evening, dear soul. Can you say, 'Jesus is *the Lord*?' As we have tried to trace out a little this evening of what it means to say, 'Jesus is the Lord,' can you join in? What a precious thing it is, if you can! It means you have a hope of heaven through the Lord Jesus.

But I want to come down low. Is there anyone here this evening who says, 'I desire to know him.' 'I want to know more of him, so that I would be able to say that Jesus is the Lord.' Friend, are you cutting yourself off because you feel you cannot yet say, as heartily and with as much assurance as you would wish, that 'Jesus is the Lord?' Well, I want to come to the lowest things. Can you come with the hymnwriter and say:

If ever my poor soul be saved,
'Tis Christ must be the way? (Daniel Herbert)

You might feel you don't know him well enough, you might feel you have not been able to lay hold on him as you would like, but can you testify to the fact that if you are going to be saved, it has to be by Christ? Are you sure of this one thing – that there is no salvation in anything or anyone else? If so, it means that you have come to an end of hope in self, and have proved,

The more you strive against sin's power,
You sin and stumble but the more. (John Cennick)

You have realised that your friends, your family, and your parents cannot help you. Their religion cannot help you either. You have tried the things of this world, and they have not brought any relief. Nothing can help you. Are you convinced this evening of the fact that,

If ever my poor soul be saved,
'Tis Christ *must* be the way.

Friend, if you are convinced of this, then you are witnessing to this truth, 'Jesus is the Lord.'

You see, it may seem to require a lot of boldness or assurance to say, 'Jesus is the Lord.' But sometimes we can only whisper or lisp that confession. Can you lisp it this way? 'Lord Jesus, I have got nothing but thee. If thou shouldst leave me I have got nothing, Lord. Don't leave me.' Go on, dear soul, in your desire to know the Lord. The Word of God encourages us to grow in grace, and in the knowledge

of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18). We will never grow of ourselves. Seek at the throne of grace, 'Lord, grant me thy Spirit. May he take of the things of Jesus and reveal them to me. May he work this precious faith in my heart, so that I would be able to lay hold on Christ, and so that I would be able to say, *nothing wavering*, that Jesus is the Lord.'

(c) One final point. **This confession unites all the Lord's people.** The rest of this chapter goes on to speak of the church as one body, with Christ as the head. There is something very precious about real religion. It levels everyone onto the same level. 'What hast thou that thou didst not receive?' (1 Corinthians 4:7) If you look round this evening, judging others – you have assurance, but that poor soul over there, they never seem to have any assurance, they always seem to be in darkness – I say, 'Who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?' All religion comes from God. It is worked in us by the Holy Spirit, through the grace of the Son, by the love of the Father. There is nothing outside of this, and all who have true religion share this confession with one voice, 'Jesus is the Lord.'

Do you desire to be saved this evening? Do you desire to be able to say, 'Jesus is the Lord?' There is only one way, and that is the strait gate and narrow way that leadeth unto life. Though few enter that way, it is a precious way. The entirety of that way can be summed up in this confession: 'Jesus is the Lord.' May we have the witness of the Holy Spirit. May that confession be ours. May Christ be ours. May Jesus be our Lord.

May the Lord bless his Word to us.

Amen.