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A Free Choice?

What is making profession of faith?

In this book we address young people who “make profession of faith”. What does that actually mean, “make profession of faith”? It is an expression taken from the Bible. Making profession actually means: to *openly declare for something or someone*. In his first letter to Timothy, the apostle Paul says that Jesus Christ in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession. (1 Timothy 6:13) There it is said that even the Saviour himself made confession! The Lord Jesus before the Roman judge openly declared that he was the Son of God. He had publicly testified that he had come into this world to save sinners from perdition. He frankly declared what his calling was. Jesus himself testified the good confession. But Paul says this in the same breath with the calling of Christians to make confession; just before this he wrote to Timothy: “Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.” (1 Timothy 6:12) So Timothy, too, has made confession. He declared that the Lord Jesus was his Redeemer, his Saviour. And that did not happen in private.

This was not just a matter between Paul and Timothy. There were many people present. It happened in the presence of many witnesses, publicly. Timothy had confessed his faith openly. In Acts 16:1 he is called a disciple. And then it is added that he was well spoken of by the brethren at Lystra and Iconium. (Acts 16:2) Timothy had not been ashamed of his faith! The faith, of which he made confession, concerned Jesus Christ, the Lord, whom he confessed as the Son of God, and the Saviour.

I believe

The person who makes confession says: “I believe”. And that belief is always belief in the LORD God. We already find a confession like this in the Old Testament. In the book of Ruth, we read that this pagan woman from Moab wants to accompany her mother-in-law Naomi to Bethlehem. She does not want to return to Moab’s paganism, saying: “Your people shall be my people and your God my God.” (Ruth 1:16) Ruth openly declares the God of Israel to be her God. And she also wants to belong to the people of Israel, to the *Church* of those days.

We come across a confession more than once in the New Testament as well, especially in regards to Jesus Christ as the promised Messiah, the Son of God. When the Saviour sent out his disciples, he himself called people to this confession: “So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven”. (Matthew 10:32) Here the Lord Christ is saying: “He who openly acknowledges me and his faith in me, for him, I in turn, will plead his cause before my Father in heaven.” The Saviour also shows us the reverse, “Whoever denies me before men, I also will also deny before my Father who is in heaven.” (Matthew 10:33)

In the latter part the Lord Christ means: he who does not confess me proves thereby that a real, deep union between us never existed. The Lord Jesus openly expresses this, as he said earlier: “then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’”(Matthew 7:23) Thus, the Saviour only gives two options: to confess or to deny. To deny means: denial of a close relationship of unity. Shortly after this passage we find the description of Peter’s confession. Christ had asked his disciples what kind of person the people thought he was. The replies were quite varied. One said: He is John the Baptist; another called him some sort of prophet. When they were asked the question on a more personal level, Peter became the mouthpiece for the other disciples: “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” (Matthew 16:16) Jesus and the Messiah are one and the same, says Peter. But he also says: He is the Son of God, with whom the Father is well pleased. He is the Son of the God: Christ the Messiah is not a dumb image of wood and stone. No, he is a living reality! Peter, in the New Testament, is first in the line of all those who confess their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God.

There are other places in the New Testament that mention such confessions, for instance in the Acts of the Apostles. There we read about the Ethiopian