Rom. 10:8-13; The Blessing of Profession I. The Condition Given II. The Promise Received

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, this morning we celebrate a wonderful moment in the life of our congregation. Christ, by His Spirit and Word, is gathering and preserving His people. The Holy Spirit is making His work evident in the hearts of our covenant children. Now church membership has fallen on hard times- the idea of actually keeping a membership roll in a church is frowned upon today. The mentality of most churches today is simply this- if you show up, you are a member. But today we see that simply showing up is not enough- there is a visible and verbal aspect to church membership that should be encouraged, guarded and celebrated! In other words, the church is not a social club that is nothing more than a society of people who have similar interests. No, the church is the local, visible gathering of the people that have faith in and are being saved by Jesus Christ! This means that people are not free to come and go as they choose- becoming a member is both a joyful and serious event! There are rights and privileges reserved for only those who are professing members- or communicant members- of the local church! So today as we celebrate the work of our God in the hearts of His people, we will consider this theme: Jesus Christ calls His people to confess and believe the truth. As we look at Rom. 10 this morning, I hope that a few aspects will sound very familiar to these young men. As they were preparing for this day, we met together in our New Member’s Course. We learned LD 7- what is true faith; and LD 23- what is justification. Today, both faith and justification will be found in these verses.

**I. The Condition Given**

In our first point, we consider the condition that is given in v. 9. If you confess and believe. Paul starts this verse with what we can a conditional clause- part of an if/ then statement. If the first thing is true, the second is also true. If the first events happen, the second will follow. So if you confess and believe, then as v. 9 concludes- you will be saved- as we will see in our second point. But what must we do in order to be saved? Well, the “if” in v. 9 is followed by the call to confess and believe. To confess is to state something- to declare something to be true. To confess is to unify your voice with others- to agree and state freely. In other words, a Christian is not someone who is secret and private alone- not just something in your heart- but something that is visible and verbal. There is corporate and confessional nature to Christianity. You confess a certain truth with your mouth. There are times in our lives when we are called to give a clear affirmation- to give a simple declaration. Like when you get married- you have to say “I do” which is a declaration and promise. Well, today we are witnessing what is an even more important declaration. We have witnessed a serious and devout verbal commitment to Christ! Our world encourages young men to remain immature- to put off responsibility- to remain like a child as long as possible. But when you become a man, you put childish things behind you! Maturity- being serious and devout in your faith- is something that we should all strive for because these matters are of eternal importance! Those who would be joined to Christ are called to be audible- to be heard by others. One of the reasons that we stand and confess the AC every week is so that this unified and audible nature of our faith would be evident! But what are you to confess? Well, you confess that Jesus is Lord. A Christian is one who confesses to the Lordship of Christ! Not only is Jesus the Lord- He is my Lord! He is the master and ruler over all, and He is sovereign over me and my life! I am His- He has purchased me! To be clear, someone who is a Christian is someone who acknowledges that Jesus Christ has absolute claim on their lives. Every part of life and all that they do falls under the reign and rule of Christ! But what do we hear in our world? Well, our world tells us that you can have personal faith without that faith changing how you live. Politicians tell us- my faith journey is intensely personal. They also tell us that that what they believe personally has no bearing on the decisions that they make. In other words, the world would have you believe that it is possible to disconnect your internal beliefs and your external witness and words. But that is nothing more than hypocrisy! So God’s people are to confess the truth- that Jesus is Lord! Your life is to be consistent- your words consistent with what you actually believe! So confess with your mouth- but also believe in your heart. As v. 9 continues- believe in your heart. Or as BC art. 1 starts- we all believe in our hearts and confess with our mouths! So we are to confess and believe- note that both aspects come together. Internal and external- heart and mouth. To believe here is the word “pistis.” To have faith- to believe. As our Catechism students will remember, true faith is not only a knowledge and conviction, but also a deep-rooted assurance created in me by the Holy Spirit. I believe that not only others, but I too have been granted forgiveness, righteousness and salvation. Or as Prov. 3 puts it, trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. As you know, the heart is the center of a man and the seat of emotion- but the heart stands for the whole of the person. So the heart is to be engaged- beyond just a knowledge in your head – the heart is convinced and assured! And the specific doctrine to be believed is this- that God raised Jesus from the dead. The resurrection of the dead is a salvation issue- to deny that Jesus lives is to deny the very foundation of true faith! So those who believe and confess must be assured that Jesus does in fact live- not only that He was raised but that He is living! One of the reasons that the apostolic witness needed to be recorded and preserved is so that we might hear from those who actually walked and talked with Jesus after he was raised again. So the “if” of v. 9 is clear- the conditional phrase is this- if you confess and believe. So those who want to enjoy the benefit- the blessing of receiving what was promised at the end of v. 9- will be committed to believing and confessing! We will then confess before God- who knows what lives in our heart. We will confess before the church- standing before God’s people as a sign of unity and to be encouraged. And we will confess before the watching world- knowing that some will hate us and reject us because of the One in whom we have placed our faith! Becoming a public, professing member opens us to persecution- because we are now clearly identified as a follower of Christ! Now that we understand the condition- what we are called to do- we move on to reward- what is promised.

**II. The Promise Received**

Confess and believe- and you will be saved. The promise given is this- salvation! And the recipient of this salvation is YOU- the one who confesses and believes. That one will be saved. This comes in the form of a promise- not that you have earned your salvation- but rather those who trust in Jesus Christ and confess their confidence in Him- will also be the ones that are saved. The word for saved is “sotzo”- to heal, make whole, rescue from judgement or deliver. And the important question that we have ask is this- what does it mean to be saved? What are we saved from or saved unto? Well, we are saved from our sin and death; and we are saved unto righteousness and life! We find the same thing listed in v. 10- with the heart we believe and are justified and with the mouth we confess and are saved. So to be saved is to be justified- to be declared righteous! Here again, our Catechism helps us. LD 23- how are we made right with God? The answer, God grants and credits to me the perfect satisfaction and righteousness of God! Being justified means that we are both declared not guilty and declared acceptable! Delivered from what we deserve and given what Jesus has earned for us! Being saved means that our sins are forgiven- we are pardoned- and we are granted eternal life!

Now that we can see the gift that this promised- the blessing that will be given to all who confess and believe; next we ask if this promise is only for a few people or for many? Is this some secret that the church has to guard- or it is good news that should be freely shared? Well, as v. 8 says, this promise is clear, and it is not hidden. The word is near- it is close at hand. It can be easily heard- as the word of faith that has been clearly proclaimed. So the gospel is not some obscure teaching that is difficult to grasp- it is clear and it has been proclaimed to you. Paul echoes this point again in v. 11- this promise is for all! Everyone who believes will not be put to shame. And again in v. 13- everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. So the good news is not some deep, hidden secret- it is not a mystery that needs to be unraveled- it is not some enigma that only the most brilliant minds can comprehend! No, it is a simple, child-like faith that saves. It is in the open for all to see and hear- meant to be shouted from the rooftops and proclaimed in the market places. It is also a promise that hold true for everyone. If you repent and believe, you will be saved as Acts 16 says. This is a promise to you! For your neighbor- for these 4 young men here- for all who hear, receive, believe and confess- these all will be saved!

Before we conclude, it is important that we understand what is happening here today. What have we witnessed- what did we see? Well, we saw the Holy Spirit at work. The Spirit using the preaching of the Word to open the hearts of His people. These 4 young men have heard the good news- they have believed that good news in their hearts and confessed their faith in Jesus as their Lord and Savoir. We are enabled to repent and believe- and we gifted with this glorious salvation from our sins. This faith and confession is proof of the Spirit’s work within. Trusting in Jesus is the pathway to salvation! Relying on the Son is the mark of those who are being delivered from their sins! This belief and confession is not a one time thing, however. It is a life long calling! You need to be committed to this! Not only committed to Christ’s church- but committed to Christ! You must remain in this way- being ever steadfast in your calling of faith and confession.

To conclude, declarations made in the presence of others indicate to us that this event is important! As in marriage, when each member says “I do.” Or in the court of law when a witness declares to tell the truth and nothing but the truth. So today, we have witnessed a verbal declaration of faith! I believe that Jesus is Lord and that God raised Him from the dead! As out theme states: Jesus Christ calls His people to confess and believe the truth. What Jesus calls us to do, He enables us to do by the inner work of the Spirit. So we rejoice with these young men- and we who have made Profession of Faith- and we join our voices to theirs. I believe that Jesus is Lord and that He has been raised from the dead! May we all make this profession our own- as we live and are justified by faith!