

FAITH AND COFFESSION ... the Siamese twins of Scriptue
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(Romans 10:9,10)

These verses are among the best-known Bible texts. Here the heart of the Gospel is presented; here one meets the Siamese twins of Holy Writ. Faith and confession belong to each other. To separate them is to run the risk of losing them. If faith brings eternal life, confession brings joy. If faith opens the door of a man's soul, confession invites the Saviour to enter. When certain Bible stories are brought together, the composite picture becomes most illuminating. The purpose of this study is to compare and contrast lessons which have already found individual places in Bible Pinnacles and Bible Treasures.

A Captain Condemned

The scene was resplendent yet strangely bewildering. The Syrians were eager, excited, thrilled. Their master, the famous Naaman, had been cleansed of his leprosy. They had seen what humanly speaking was impossible. A miracle had been performed before their eyes. Naaman was a man in a dream! His anger had gone. Clothed with the garments of humility, he returned thanks and commenced his homeward journey. A new faith filled his soul; the eternal God had become his Saviour. His return to Syria was hailed with delight; but soon the priests of Rimmon were proclaiming far and wide that their god had answered their prayers. The increasing fervor of the crowds reached a climax when the temple was packed with excited worshippers. Rimmon, sombre, silent, still, seemed to look down on the specially convened thanksgiving service, and even the king was grateful as he stood before the high altar. Naaman, in pensive mood, also was present. The voice of the presiding priest was animated: "People, our great god Rimmon has performed a miracle. Before us stands Naaman. He was a leper; he was in danger of death. Look at him now, and return thanks to our god." A glad cry echoed through the temple as the entire audience bowed before the sightless idol. When Naaman bowed, he ruined for ever his chance of becoming God's messenger to Syria. He believed in his heart (2 Kings 5: 15), but he never confessed with his mouth (v. 18). And although the prophet gave the customary farewell blessing, his heart surely grieved that a man who had received so much, should be content to return so little.

A Parent Petrified

The street was filled with arguing people; the situation was almost out of control. Demonstrators were waving their arms, voices were unnecessarily loud. A buzz of excitement at the corner of the street announced the arrival of the ecclesiastical leaders. They were obviously annoyed. This situation was outrageous! Had the people forgotten the sanctity of the Sabbath? Even the healing of a blind man was no excuse for undignified conduct. Of course it was all stupidity. They would settle the matter at once. "Woman, are you the mother of this fellow? And is that your husband? Then tell these fools they are mistaken. They have allowed themselves to become bewitched. Tell them this is not your blind son, or explain 'how then doth he now see His parents answered them and said, We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind: but by what means he now seeth, we know not, or who hath opened his eyes, we know not: he is of age, ask him; he shall speak for himself. These words spake his parents

FAITH AND COFFESSION ... the Siamese twins of Scripture because they feared the Jews . . . " (John 9: 18-22). The doorway of their home might have become a pulpit that day; they might have been prophets indeed! Their faith was stifled by fear.

A Disciple Determined

Peter's conscience was aflame. He would remember eternally the night of shame when he had failed his Master. Grim lines of determination were now upon his face as he stood before the crowd. He knew this was one way to atone for his former failure. "Ye men of Judaea," he cried, "know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2: 14 & 36). The epic story of Peter's preaching makes good reading. In retrospect, we rejoice as we see thousands of people responding to the new message. Yet we do well to consider that when the other disciples stood up with their preacher, they were unaware of the success to attend his efforts. Earlier the crowd had crucified the Lord; later that same crowd would consent to the stoning of Stephen. Yet, unafraid and unashamed, the eleven stood with Peter during that memorable meeting, and when the flood-tides of Pentecostal blessing brought thousands of souls into the kingdom of God, the men who had probably expected stones, grasped the chance of leading people to Christ. Their faith was wedded to confession, and it is written that great grace and much joy was among them an.

Please Can You Sell Me a Miracle?

J. B. Gough, in telling the following story, assured his listeners he was able to vouch for its truthfulness. A small child living with her family in one of the poorest quarters of a large city, heard the doctor saying that only a miracle could save her sick sister. Taking the pennies from her money box, she began a tour of the shops asking if they were able to sell her a miracle. Puzzled, the tradesmen told her that they did not sell miracles; but undaunted, the child continued her search, and coming to a chemist's shop made her request. Another gentleman heard her, and asked why she desired to purchase a miracle. He was a famous surgeon, and hearing the child's story accompanied her to the bedside of her sister. After examining the patient, he agreed that a miracle was needed, but added that this may be possible. He made the necessary arrangements for the child to be taken into hospital, and performed the operation himself. The child recovered. She owed her life to the doctor's skill and the believing petition of her small sister.

During an evangelistic crusade in Grahamstown, South Africa, several student teachers professed faith in Christ. I shall always remember one of the number. She was a fine young lady, who came forward at the end of a service, trusted Christ, and then went away radiantly happy. Yet when she attended the next meeting, I saw from the pulpit that she seemed intensely miserable. This continued for a week, and each night her gloom appeared to have deepened. To say the least I was very disappointed, and wondered what had happened to spoil the convert's happiness. Then one night she came into the church supremely happy, and again I wondered what had taken place. Immediately the service had concluded the young lady came into the vestry to tell her story.

"Mr. Powell, I was so happy when you introduced me to the Lord Jesus; but when I returned to the college, to the

FAITH AND COFFESSION ... the Siamese twins of Scriptue dormitory where several students sleep, I became afraid of one student teacher. She was always a bully, and I thought she would sneer if she discovered I had become a Christian. I slid my Bible into the locker, and said my prayers in bed! I knew this was wrong, but I feared that girl. Then last night, things came to a climax. I had just returned from the meeting and was about to put my Bible away, when she came down to my bed and loudly asked, 'What is this I hear about you?' I answered, 'What do you mean?' and immediately she announced for all to hear, that I had become a Christian, and had gone forward during one of your meetings in the city. 'Why didn't you tell us?' she demanded. Mr. Powell, I knew it was then or never, and confessed I had been afraid of her reactions. Oh, sir, she just lifted her hand and thumped me on the back, and then said, 'You little fool, if I had a courage I would have become a Christian long ago. Kid that is the best thing you will ever do.' Then she turned to the other girls and said, 'Listen, you lot. This kid has given her life to Christ. If I see any of you throwing a slipper when she kneels to pray, or if I hear any sneering at her, you will have me to deal with.' Mr. Powell, for a whole week I have been scared of her, but now she is my greatest champion. Oh, sir, I am so happy." This story perfectly illustrates the truths of Romans 10:9. Faith without confession is hardly faith.

On the eve of D-Day in World War 11, a young sailor came into my services in Exmouth, Devonshire, England. After surrendering his life to Christ, he returned to the hotel in which, with many others, he had been billeted. His comrades were amazed when unashamedly he confessed what he had done. While he was speaking a stranger entered. Actually the newcomer was a Christian who had been in the navy many years. Not knowing the new man was a fellow Christian, the convert said, "Yes, and you are just in time to hear it also," and the testimony was repeated. When the boy finished, the older man shook his hand and said, "Son, I trusted Christ years ago-aye, before you were born. That is the best thing you will ever do." Then from the rear of the long room came a tall thin recruit who faced the audience and said, "This kid makes me ashamed. Before I joined up I always went to church. Yes, I was a Christian; but when I met you lot, I had no backbone. I drank and gambled with you, but all the while I felt ashamed and condemned. Now this boy speaks about his faith in Christ and makes me feel a worm Fellow, let me shake your hand. You have courage."

In those moments the young convert discovered the truth-the twin truths-of Romans 10:9. Faith and confession are indeed the Siamese twins of Holy Scripture.

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