

**Series: Called to Follow**  
**“The Confession of a Disciple”**

**Matthew 16:13-20**

Today we continue our study through the gospels as we are learning what it means to be a follower of Christ. There are many confused today about what it means to follow Jesus. Many assume because of their religious upbringing, their general sense of right and wrong, their love for their fellow man, or perhaps even their respect for Jesus, that this must mean that they are a “Christian.” It is important to note that the term “Christian” was first given to a group of believers in the city of Antioch in **Acts 11:26**. It was as these individuals followed Jesus and studied the Scriptures that their lives began to emulate Jesus Christ. It was then the pagan culture around them identified this changed group of individuals as Christians. In other words, we are not merely Christians by outward activity but by our inward faith in Christ that transforms us from the inside out. Throughout this series, we have been studying the lives of the original disciples and learning how Jesus called them to Himself, transformed them, and gave them a new purpose and mission. As we study how they followed Jesus, we learn many characteristics that should be present in our own lives as we seek to follow the Lord today.

In recent weeks, we have seen large crowds of people coming to Jesus. This is not surprising when we consider the nature of the miracles that Jesus performed, the depth of His teaching, and the fleshly nature of many who were intrigued by Jesus and longed to have more exciting experiences. Jesus, however, was not impressed by the crowd because He knew the hearts and minds of every person present. As the crowds grew, Jesus began to call the few to truly follow Him. Like a farmer sifting the good crops from the rotten crops, Jesus was in the process of sifting through the crowd. Last week we saw the sobering image of the large crowd turning away from Jesus and missing their opportunity for salvation. In John 6, Jesus made some very strong statements about His body and His blood that would be shed. They were so difficult to receive that even many who claimed to be disciples turned their back on Jesus, leaving Him behind. It was then in that moment that Jesus turned to the 12 disciples and asked, “Are you also going to leave Me?” Simon Peter spoke up for the whole group with deep conviction and declared in **John 6:68b-69**, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life. We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God.” Because of Peter’s deep conviction, he was able to confess who Jesus is with confidence and boldness. As we open God’s Word, today we pick up with the same theme of confession in Matthew 16. As we dig further into the disciples’ confession of Jesus, I pray that we will see the incredible blessing it is and discover why it is so important in our lives.

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As we begin this message, we need to make sure we understand the meaning of the word “confession.” It is common to hear this word and think of the importance of confessing one’s sins. To “confess” in this sense is to acknowledge and admit one’s guilt. This is the word that was used in **1 John 1:9**, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” This is a wonderful promise of Scripture, but that is slightly different from our use of “confession” today. A “confession” is “an open profession of faith, a public declaration or statement of belief.” Throughout the history of the Church, there have been

various councils and groups that have declared an official confession, or statement of beliefs. For example, there is the Augsburg Confession that came out of the Protestant Reformation in 1530, and the Westminster Confession of Faith that was orchestrated in 1643. These are just a few examples that have taken place throughout the years. However, far more important than these official confessions throughout church history is the fact that we each must give a personal confession of Christ. Your good feelings about Jesus, your good attitude towards Him, and even your respect for Him are not enough. Your outward activities of church attendance and being kind to others are not enough. To be saved and rescued from our sins we must know who Jesus is and confess Him as Lord. **Romans 10:8b-10** says, “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart - that is, the word of faith which we are preaching, that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.” For us to be rescued from our sins and enjoy a relationship with God we must confess Jesus as Lord. There is no shortcut and no other way. This is the importance of confessing Christ. We see a similar confession of Christ in our text today. As we study, we quickly realize that this is not Peter’s first confession about Jesus. Even as we saw last week, Peter has already declared his faith in who Jesus is, but now here in this passage, Peter is affirming that this confession is still true, and as we dig into it I want us to make three observations about the confession of a disciple:

## **I. The Incredible Privilege of This Confession (vs. 13-17)**

As the scene unfolds, we see Jesus spending personal time with His disciples, pouring into them and preparing them for the future. As usual, Jesus used the immediate surroundings as a part of the lesson He presented. He and the disciples were in the Gentile region of Caesarea Philippi, about 120 miles away from Jerusalem. This area was noted for all kinds of religions. The city was infamously known for its Baal worship and even hosted a shrine to the Greek god Pan. The people in the city also boasted about their temple which Herod the Great built to honor Caesar Augustus. This was a very mystical and religious community that Jesus and the disciples were visiting when Jesus asked a few questions: 1) Who do *people* say that I am? 2) Who do *you* say that I am?

As Jesus asks the first question of the disciples, we begin to get a glimpse of the mindset of so many in the crowds who had been following Jesus. **Matthew 7:28-29** says, “When Jesus had finished these words, the crowds were amazed at His teaching; for He was teaching them as one having authority, and not as their scribes.” **Matthew 9:6b-8** tells the story of Jesus healing the paralytic man, “Then He said to the paralytic, ‘Get up, pick up your bed, and go home.’ And he got up and went home. But when the crowds saw this, they were awestruck, and glorified God, who had given such authority to men.” **Mark 6:54-56** explains that just about everywhere He went, crowds gathered and brought their sick and laid them in the streets, with just a hope that if they touched the fringe of His garment, they would be healed. Here in Matthew 16, the disciples’ answer to Jesus’ question gives us a glimpse of what the people were thinking about Jesus. They knew that they had never seen anyone work these types of miracles or teach with this kind of authority, but this did not mean that it led them to the right conclusions and convictions about who Jesus was. The disciples tell Jesus plainly that the vast majority didn’t truly know who He was.

### **A. The Confusion of the World**

The disciples' answers indicate that the world didn't know what to think about Jesus. He told them who He is, that He had come down from heaven as God in flesh, and that He came to seek and save the lost, but they could not accept that. They concluded that there must be some other logical explanation for who Jesus is. So, they came up with all sorts of ideas.

Some concluded that Jesus must be **John the Baptist**. This idea was led by Herod Antipas, the wicked ruler who beheaded John. John was the forerunner who called Jesus "the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world." After beheading John, he lived with a guilty conscience from that day forward. As Jesus was teaching with authority and sending out His disciples, **Mark 6:16-17** says, "But when Herod heard of it, he kept saying, 'John, whom I beheaded, has risen!' For Herod himself had sent and had John arrested and bound in prison on account of Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip, because he had married her." Herod was doing his best to try to forget what he had done to John the Baptist, but when Jesus came along teaching with authority, he was immediately reminded of the man that he had wrongly killed and assumed that John the Baptist had risen from the dead and was now ministering again.

The disciples continued, "Lord, some say that You are Elijah." All of the Jews understood who the great prophet Elijah was. In the Old Testament, God performed many miracles through him i.e. stopping the rain, multiplying the oil, bringing a boy to life, and even bringing down fire on the altar. Surely the miracles of Jesus reminded the people of the miracles of old. Interestingly, remember that Elijah did not die because God took him to heaven in a chariot of fire, and even though some of the people looked for Elijah for three days, they did not find him. **Malachi 4:5** prophesied that Elijah the prophet would come again, so many of the people in the crowd concluded that Elijah must have returned now from heaven to come and work more miracles and that Jesus must be Elijah.

Others determined that Jesus must be the prophet Jeremiah. This is interesting because it indicates an aspect of Jesus' character that we don't often think of. Jeremiah was known as the weeping prophet because his tender heart was broken and burdened over the spiritual condition of his people. When he saw the hard-hearted ways of God's people, he wept over them. Certainly, we see glimpses of this in Jesus. He was not weak, but He was certainly meek. He was sensitive to the needs of the people, and broken over their lostness. **Matthew 9:36** says, "Seeing the people, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd." Jesus was moved with compassion for the crowds of people who were lost. Even though so many had hardened their hearts and rejected Him, He was still burdened for them. In **Matthew 23:37** He said, "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling." **Luke 19:41** tells us the summary as Jesus looked on the results of their rejection, "When He approached Jerusalem, He saw the city and wept over it." I'm not trying to paint Jesus as a constant crier, but I do want us to see that His heart was moved with compassion for the lost, and this was so evident that some in the crowd concluded that He was Jeremiah brought back to life.

Others simply said He was one of the prophets. They didn't know what to make of Him. They knew He was a good man, an outstanding teacher, one whom they should emulate, but they were not able or willing to acknowledge Him as the Son of God. Perhaps they would hold Him

in high regard as another great prophet, but they were not willing to fully accept that He is the King of all kings and Lord of all lords, the Savior of the world. The people were greatly confused about Jesus, but they all agreed on one thing – the miracles that Jesus performed and the teachings that He gave could only be performed by someone living in resurrection power.

It is interesting that we still deal with the same aspects of Jesus. There is an enormous amount of evidence for Jesus' life, so we can't dismiss His existence. The questions then become, "Who is Jesus and what does it mean?" The vast majority are as confused today as they were in Jesus' day. Perhaps He was a good man, a great teacher, a loving example, a miracle worker, or even a prophet, but if one's perspective of Jesus puts Him in any place less than God in the flesh and Savior of the world, then that place is insufficient. **\*\*ILL:** I was reminded of this recently while in desperate need of a haircut. I found a place that I had never been to before. As I talked to the barber I learned that he is not from America and has been here less than a year. He asked, "What do you do?" I explained that I'm a pastor. He seemed a bit confused by the title, so I explained that I tell people about Jesus. He immediately responded with excitement, "The prophet?" I said, "Yes, the man that you call the prophet." There was an awkward silence as we both waited to see where the conversation went. Then he asked, "Why do that?" It was like the Lord was giving me a softball. I just smiled and very kindly explained, "Because I desire that people have a relationship with God where their sins are forgiven and they have the assurance that heaven is their home." After another pause, I then asked, "Do you have that?" Eventually, our conversation came to an end, but he gave me his card and told me that he would like to talk more about the "prophet." I am praying that the Lord brings him to salvation, but my point is simply that while many respect Jesus, they remain confused about Him.

## **B. The Conviction of the Saints**

After the disciples explained the various perspectives of others, Jesus then looked directly at them and asked a probing question, "But who do you say that I am?" We must understand that we don't determine God's path to salvation by popular opinion. The world is confused about many things, and this is especially true when it comes to the things of God. The important thing is not what others are saying about Jesus but what you and I personally confess about Jesus. We need to hear this today. Sometimes we get so caught up in what other people are saying and doing that we miss the importance of our own personal response. We may look to this religion and that religion, this denomination or that denomination, but when all is said and done the real question is "What do you believe about Jesus? Who is He to you?" Once again, Simon Peter answers personally and publicly, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." This is a very simple confession, but it was entirely accurate and authentic. Peter is saying "Jesus, You are the Messiah, the Anointed One, the Savior, the long-awaited Redeemer that we have been looking for. You are the Christ!" This must be the confession of our lives, or we are not truly with Jesus. We may be in the crowd hearing about Him, and we may even be like those who are drawing close because we are intrigued and excited about Him, but we will not truly be a follower of Christ without confessing that Jesus is Christ, the Son of the living God. This confession was not an emotional response from one who had seen a miracle or simply an intellectual response from one who had heard a great teaching. This was the convictional response of a man who had studied the claims of Jesus and sincerely believed in who He was.

It is important to note that other confessions of Christ had already taken place among the disciples. When Jesus calmed the storm in **Matthew 14:33** they declared, “You are certainly God’s Son!” Last week in **John 6** we saw Peter give a clear confession of faith in Christ and the implication is that the others affirmed the same. Here, Jesus directly and strategically calls for this confession to explain how this confession takes place and why it is so significant.

Jesus explains, “Peter, you are blessed.” I realize that we live in a culture that does not like the word “privilege” and it is often used for political purposes, but here we find that this conviction of Christ is indeed a privilege. The word “blessed” means “happy or enlarged” and it describes those who receive “favor” from God. In essence, Jesus is saying, “You have been blessed by God to be in this position. You do not deserve it, cannot earn it, cannot achieve it, and you can’t win it. It is only by the grace, mercy, and kindness of God that He has brought you to this place.” Jesus then explains, “Flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.” Great men like John the Baptist could certainly proclaim the truth of who Jesus is, but flesh and blood alone would never draw people to a place of conviction of sin and confession of Christ. That could only be accomplished through the working and power of God. It is by God’s grace that He opens man’s eyes, convicts us of sin, and quickens our hearts to respond to receive Christ by faith. Jesus said it plainly in **John 6:44a**, “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him.” Often when talking about our testimony of coming to faith in Christ, we begin the conversation with “us” – where we were, what we were doing, how we repented, what changes we’ve made, etc., but Jesus shows us emphatically that salvation did not begin with man but with God. It was God who convicted us of sin and drew us to Himself. It was God who convinced us of our need for a Savior and assured us that Jesus is the only way to heaven. Our actions of faith and repentance were merely the response to the work He had already begun. If this has already taken place in your life, then rejoice for what God has done. If you have not yet taken that step of faith but today God is convicting you of sin and convincing you of your need for Jesus, then I invite you to confess Jesus as Lord today. What an incredible opportunity God has granted us through faith in Jesus! **Ephesians 2:8-9** says it best, “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.”

## **II. The Beautiful Picture of This Confession (vs. 18a)**

It is in this context that Jesus now explains something new that was very important for the disciples to know and understand. The message that follows is a direct application to those who share the same confession of Christ. All of those who have confessed faith in Christ as Lord and Savior together make up the “Church.” This is the first use of this word in the New Testament. The Greek word simply means “an assembly of called-out ones.” When you put your faith in Christ and confess Him as Lord, you are called out of darkness into light. You are brought from death into life, and together we now make up this assembly called the Church. In one powerful statement, Jesus reveals three key truths about the Church:

### **A. The Foundation of the Church**

If something is going to be built strong to withstand the test of time, it must have a firm foundation. **\*\*ILL:** Without a firm foundation, it will not last. This is true for physical structures, but it is also true for the Church. I believe it is sad that many people have misread

and misunderstood this verse of Scripture, concluding that Peter is the rock upon which the church is built. After all, Jesus changed Simon's name to Peter which means "a rock" and here addresses him directly with a statement about the building of His Church. Without digging into the verse, our conclusions can be unfortunate and very dangerous. Why? Because the Church was not built upon any other man but the Son of Man, Jesus Christ. If Peter was indeed "the rock" upon which Jesus built the church, then we have great reason for concern. Peter was an imperfect man with faults and flaws just like you and me. In fact, before this chapter even comes to an end, Jesus turns and says to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's," **Matthew 16:23b**. If he was meant to be the foundation, it is strange that within a matter of moments Jesus is calling him Satan. And of course, this would not be the last time we see Peter's humanity unfold in Scripture. My point is simply that the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ has one foundation: Jesus. If we make the foundation of the Church any other but Jesus, then we open the door to just about anyone, i.e. Mary or a host of other "saints." There is only one foundation for the Church – Christ, and Christ alone. Jesus claimed this in **Matthew 21:42** saying, "Jesus said to them, 'Did you never read in the Scriptures, "The stone which the builders rejected, this became the chief corner stone; this came about from the Lord, and it is marvelous in our eyes"?' " He is referring to Himself as the chief corner stone, the foundation stone by which every other stone was placed and aligned. The apostle Paul affirms that this is true, saying in **1 Corinthians 3:11**, "For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." And if this is not clear enough, even Peter explains this in **Acts 4:11-12**, "He (Jesus) is the stone which was rejected by you, the builders, but which became the chief corner stone. And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved." Peter certainly had a significant part to play in the furthering of the Church, but the foundation was Jesus alone. If you know Christ as your Lord and Savior, be encouraged, friends. Our faith is anchored in Jesus, not in a fallen, sinful man.

## **B. The Formation of the Church**

Some still struggle with this understanding because Jesus describes "the rock" upon which He is building His Church. Some will say, "But didn't Peter preach on the day of Pentecost, and 3,000 souls were saved? Wasn't Peter a leader among the apostles?" Of course, both of these things were true, but that does not dismiss what Jesus was saying in this moment. Jesus uses two Greek words that are closely related but distinct in our English language. They are both translated as "rock," but there is a distinction in the type of rock. The first word Jesus used is the word "petros." He looks at Peter and says you are "petros," which is best translated as "a rock or a stone." Let me illustrate this in a way that will help us understand this truth. **\*\*ILL:** Holding up a single stone, "Peter you are a stone." The second use of the word rock is the Greek word "petra" which means "a large rock, or a great rock" and would often be used to describe a large boulder. In other words, Jesus is using a play on words and describing a distinction between the two rocks. He is saying, "Peter, you are a stone and upon this boulder, I will build My Church." We have already seen that the foundation is none other than Jesus Himself. This "boulder" that He's referring to is one's confession of Christ. It is on the heels of Peter's confession that Jesus makes this profound statement. This is so clear in the original languages that some translations (like NASB and ESV) add the word "this" in **verse 18** to indicate the connection to this rock. What does Jesus do upon this rock? He builds His Church.

In other words, Jesus is building His Church, block by block, as men and women from every nation, every language, and every tribe confess Jesus Christ as Lord. Peter was an apostle of Jesus, but he, too, was just a stone. He looks at each of us who have believed in Jesus and reminds us that we have the same blessed standing in Christ. Years later, he penned these words in **1 Peter 2:4-5**, “And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God, **you also, as living stones**, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” Do you see what Peter is saying? Jesus promised He would build His Church, and like a beautiful building being constructed, His Church is still being built today every time a person comes to faith in Christ. Another stone is added and another and another and another. Do you belong to Jesus? Are you a part of His Church? Is your faith anchored in Christ?

### C. The Fellowship of the Church

Jesus makes it clear that the Church belongs to Him. He says plainly, “My Church.” All who believe in Jesus as Lord and Savior make up the Church of Jesus. As a pastor, it is not uncommon for someone to say, “Pastor, tell me about your church.” I was at a conference earlier this week where another pastor asked me to explain some things about “my” church. Of course, I understand what they’re saying, but we must remember that the Church does not belong to man but to Jesus. Our pastoral team is humbled to serve as under-shepherds, but Jesus alone is the Good Shepherd. He is the Head of the Church. **Colossians 1:17-18** says, “He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything.” Jesus is the Head of the Church, the One in charge, the One that we look to, and the One that we seek. As pastors, we are not called to follow the popular trend, to take a poll or a survey, or to check the wind of the culture, but to faithfully seek the Lord and His will because it’s His Church. Through confession of faith in Christ, we are brought into a right relationship with God and adopted into His body, the Church. This means that we don’t just enjoy a relationship with God, but we are now related to one another. In Christ, we are members of one another, adopted into God’s family as brothers and sisters. **Ephesians 2:19-21** says, “So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God’s household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord.” What a beautiful picture of our relationship to one another in the body of Christ. This means that what we do or don’t do in the church has a direct impact on the Church as a whole. Your actions in the body can bless the church or burden the church. Your words in the church can help the church or hurt the church. As disciples of Jesus, we must understand the impact of our actions on the body. So often we view the things of God from what we can get out of it without ever really considering how God may work through us to impact others. We often view church attendance as what we get out of it, think of serving opportunities as what we are comfortable with, consider small groups as to whether or not we are getting enough depth out of it, etc. The sad reality is that we often completely ignore and miss what others receive from our faithful involvement. What if your small group participation isn’t merely for how you feel but for the benefit of what God might have you share with someone else? What if your serving the Lord is not based upon what is convenient, but based instead upon how God wants to work through you to change or bless someone else’s life? What if your church attendance isn’t as much about how you might get blessed but how you might

bless the Lord and others? Can you imagine what the church would look like if every person who comprises the church was faithfully and joyfully fulfilling their purpose?

**\*\*ILL:** When I think of the Lord building His Church, stone by stone, I look around this physical building that we sit in today. Years ago, the components that comprise this building were a large pile of materials sitting in this field. There was metal, rebar, wood, cables, etc. After much heartache, the Lord provided a contractor and a plan to start pulling all these things together, and finally, in July of 2017 we entered this Worship Center, and we have been worshiping together here ever since. I think of all the parts of this building and then I look at the people. Here in the church, we have all sorts of personalities, skills, experiences, resources, spiritual gifts, etc. and this is just the local church. There are even more in the big “C” Church, but God is showing us that our shared confession of Christ brings us into the right relationship with Him and with one another. What a beautiful picture! **\*\*ILL:** When I look back over my life and ministry, I am so grateful for how the Lord allowed Heather and me to start. We were a young married couple having young kids and we were nowhere near family. Family is a gift from the Lord, but we were 600 miles away from my family and 4 hours away from hers, and we often needed help. God provided that family for us in the church. I love all my family, but when your family is that far away you learn to do life with and depend upon others. For that reason, several of our friends in Christiansburg became our adopted family. We became extremely close to our brothers and sisters in Christ because we are family. I have often thought about this beautiful picture of the church. We are not to be a clique or a country club that is only for the few, but we are to be a family of believers in the way that we love the Lord, love one another, and fulfill His work and mission together. Jesus is building His Church, growing His family person by person, as individuals confess faith in Him.

### **III. The Powerful Promise of This Confession (vs. 18b)**

Jesus has another key statement to make about the Church. Yes, He is building His Church, but He is also protecting His Church, and the gates of Hades, or hell, will not overpower it. **Matthew Henry** summarizes it well, “Christ here promises to preserve and secure His church. The gates of hell shall not prevail against it; neither against this truth that Christ is the Son of the living God, nor against the church which is built upon it.” In Scripture, “gates” represent power and authority. The city gates were considered official places to transact important business and dealings. The gates of Hades then symbolize the organized power of Satan. Jesus is showing us clearly that Satan opposes the work of the Lord and wars against the name of the Lord and those who bear His name. **1 Peter 5:8-9a** instructs us, “Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in your faith.” **Ephesians 6:10-13** reminds us of the enemy’s attacks against us and of our responsibility in Christ to stand firm in the Lord and put on the full armor of God. Satan may rage against the Church, persecute the Church, and seek to deceive and divide the Church, but when Christ is our Head and our confession is faithfully fixed on Him there is nothing that Satan can do to overpower us. Why? Because Jesus has already won the victory. By His death and resurrection, Jesus conquered death, sin, and hell itself so that it would not lay hold on any of His people. Praise the Lord, He is building His Church, and praise the Lord His Church has overcome. What a powerful promise!

This doesn’t mean, however, that there is no hardship. It would not be much longer before the very same people who would crucify Jesus would be seeking to persecute these early disciples. Yet, even as they sought to exterminate the name of Jesus, God’s Word kept going forward, people



kept believing, and the Church rapidly began to multiply. Jesus explains to Peter, “I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.” Without explaining every detail of this verse, we quickly understand that a key has the ability to unlock and open a door. The entire context of these verses is speaking of one’s confession of Christ. Jesus is showing the apostles that He is giving the key that will open the door of faith to others, and as we study the book of Acts we find that this happens repeatedly. In **Acts 2** Peter preached and the door of faith was opened to the Jews. In **Acts 8** the door of faith was opened to the Samaritans. In **Acts 10** this door of faith was opened to the Gentiles. On and on we see the Gospel going forward, and everywhere it went some believed and confessed faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God.

Friends, it is a great joy and privilege to be a part of the body of Christ, the family of God, the Church. The only way we can be a part is through confessing Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God as Lord and Savior. Today, Jesus is building His Church person by person as we confess faith in Him, and He assures us that not even the gates of hell can stand against us. This doesn’t mean that we are to just sit around, waiting for the Lord to come. We are to be actively on mission, taking the good news of the Gospel everywhere we go. Peter understood that trials and difficulties would come, but also understood our beautiful position in Christ. Perhaps the best way to close this message is with his own words. Speaking to the believers who were facing intense persecution in Rome he said, “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; for you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy,” **1 Peter 2:9-10**. Friend, does this describe you? Have you believed in Jesus and experienced the grace and mercy of God? If so, are you sharing Him with others so that they, too, may hear and believe? I invite you to personally consider, “Who is Christ to you? What place does He have in your life? What are you doing to share Him with others?”