

Title: Confessing Christ
Text: Matthew 10: 32-33
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Matthew 10: 32: Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. 33: But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.

In the context, the Lord is speaking to his preachers. But this applies to all who believe on Christ. He is forewarning his ministers and his people that we can expect to be hated and persecuted by those who hate Christ. The passage around this text will help us understand what the Lord means by “confessing him.”

Matthew 10: 24: The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. 25: It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household? 26: Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known. 27: What I tell you in darkness, *that* speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, *that* preach ye upon the housetops. 28: And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell....34: Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword...37: He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. 38 And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.

So we see the context. Christ is speaking to his witnesses, his preachers. But it applies to all believers. It even applies to those who refuse to confess Christ.

I. FIRST, WILL A TRUE BELIEVER BE ASHAMED TO CONFESS CHRIST BEFORE MEN?

According to the scriptures, the answer is no.

Romans 10: 10: For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. 11: For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

The believer will not be ashamed to confess Christ nor will he be hasty to retreat from sufferings which he encounters for the sake of Christ. Why?

When a sinner has been regenerated and made to see their sin: that they are totally ruined in Adam and in their sin-nature, that they are without God, without Christ, without hope in the world, unable to do a thing to make God accept them then they will have a true need.

Then God shows that sinner that Christ is All—complete salvation of his people—of that sinner in particular: that Christ is God in the flesh--“Thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins” then they will be interested. When they hear Christ say, “I lay down my life for the sheep” then his power shall persuade them. (Jn 10: 15) By Christ’s blood the Holy Spirit purges the conscience to behold that Christ “put away sins by the sacrifice of himself.” (Heb 9: 26) When Christ, who said “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand” (Jn 10: 26-30) speaks then they will be made willing in the day of his power. When the sinner is made to behold the risen reigning King, successfully calling out each redeemed, who said, “Thou hast given [me] power over all flesh, that [I] should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given [me]” (Jn 17: 2) then the sinner will bow in surrender and submission. When that helpless sinner is

made to believe Christ is the Righteousness of God will you have to coax that sinner into confessing Christ before men?

Illustration: The little hole in my boat and my sinking boat.

The perishing sinner who beholds Christ is all his salvation, shall not be ashamed to confess Christ before men because God has made him see his need in the face of Christ and his ability to save to the uttermost. True faith is not silent or hidden; true faith confesses Christ before men.

But there is no middle ground between no-confession and denying Christ. Scriptures speak of a head knowledge which is cowardly:

John 12: 42: Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: 43: For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.

The blind man's parents are another example.

John 9: 20 His parents answered them and said, We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind: 21: 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. 22 These *words* spake his parents, because they feared the Jews: for the Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue.

This was their son who was born blind but now was given sight by Christ. How dead and cold and calloused you have to be not to confess Christ when such a divine miracle had taken place! The last phrase reveals they knew Christ opened their son's eyes. But they feared being excommunicated from the synagogue.

Yet, the blind man confessed that he at least thought Jesus was the Christ. He said

John 9: 25:...one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see....[when they reviled him]...30: The man answered and said unto them, Why herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence he is, and yet he hath opened mine eyes. 31 Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth.

He is saying this man, Jesus, was no phony, imposter, not a sinner but a righteous man, because God answered him. He goes even further.

John 9: 32: Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. 33: If this man were not of God, he could do nothing. 34: They answered and said unto him, Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us? And they cast him out.

Here was a man, in whom Christ had only begun to work. Yet, he was not ashamed to take sides with Christ before the opposition. And when Christ revealed himself fully to him

John 9: 38:...he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him.

Likewise, Christ's preachers are not afraid to confess Christ before men. Peter stood up on the day of Pentecost amongst the very mob that crucified Christ.

Acts 2: 22: Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: 23: Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: 24: Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.

Peter confessed before his enemies that Christ condemned sin in the flesh, removed the sting of death, satisfied holy justice, worked out righteousness for his people so it was not possible that death could hold him. This is what Christ's preachers do by his grace working in them.

Christ's preachers declare that hated doctrine of election, confessing Christ is he in whom God's elect are chosen so that all spiritual blessings shall be given to each and every one of his elect in time. We preach that hated doctrine of predestination, confessing it is by Christ that God predestinated the exact time his people shall be given the Spirit of his Son, the Spirit of adoption. We preach that most hated doctrine of particular redemption, confessing Christ did not fail but accomplished the eternal redemption of all them that are sanctified.

God's preachers confess Christ in the gospel because we have been called in power and see the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus.

2 Timothy 1: 7: For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. 8: Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God; 9: Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,..

Despite the rage of men, God set his King on his holy hill! Despite my own rage my King arrested me through the confession of Christ! Why would I reverence powerless sinners? By his power and wisdom, I reverence the King!

II. SECONDLY, IN THE SCRIPTURES, AS SOON AS GOD PERSUADED A SINNER THAT CHRIST IS THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD, THEY BELIEVED AND WERE WILLING TO CONFESS CHRIST BEFORE MEN IN WATER BAPTISM, IMMEDIATELY?

Philip confessed Christ to the Ethiopian Eunuch. Christ gave him a heart of faith. Immediately, he asked to confess Christ before all his entourage in water baptism.

Acts 8: 36...See, *here is* water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? 37: And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. 38: And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.

Paul confessed Christ to the Philippian jailor, along with all the members of the jailor's house. Christ gave them all a heart of faith.

Acts 16: 33...the same hour of the night,...[he] was baptized, he and all his, straightway.

At Pentecost, Peter confessed Christ before men and Christ gave them a heart of faith:

Acts 2: 41: Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. 42: And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

I know folks who privately say they believe Christ. They have heard the gospel regularly for 10, 15, 20 years. Yet, they never have confessed Christ publicly before men in water baptism. But when irresistible, sovereign, drawing grace, persuades the sinner then he will confess Christ before men, immediately.

III. ANOTHER WAY CHRIST'S WITNESSES CONFESS CHRIST BEFORE MEN IS BY UNITING WITH HIS PEOPLE IN A LOCAL CHURCH.

Shortly after Pentecost, the rulers arrested Peter and John—

Acts 4: 18: And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. 19: But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. 20 For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard...23: And being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them.

See where they went? They went to where their brethren—the church—were gathered; they went to their own company. And did the church hide when they heard how the rulers commanded them to stop confessing Christ before men? Absolutely not! On the contrary...

Acts 4: 24: And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is: 25: Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? 26: The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. 27: For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, 28: For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done. 29: And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word,...

Who controls men? God does!

Proverbs 21:1: The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will.

So Christ commands his witnesses,

Matthew 10: 28: And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. 29: Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. 30: But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. 31: Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.

Brethren, the GodMan has all power in heaven and earth. He is ruling all things. Therefore, even in persecution, Christ is accomplishing his purpose of drawing out his lost sheep.

By assembling together the local church—who confessed Christ before men through the gospel—Paul was beaten by Christ's enemies then thrown in the jail at Philippi. But that was Christ's way of putting his preacher right there to preach to one of his lost sheep.

When Paul was persecuted to Corinth:

Acts 18: 9: Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: 10: For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city. 11: And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

It was faith in Christ's sovereign ability to save that made Paul confess Christ at Jerusalem, when he was arrested and brought before the governor and chief rulers. He said,

Acts 24: 13:...they [cannot] prove the things whereof they now accuse me. 14: But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets: 15: And have hope toward God,...

Believer, just imagine if these early believers would have been afraid to confess Christ before men, afraid to assemble together in the church. We would not have the scriptures; we would have never heard the gospel; we would have no brethren; no gospel would be preached to us and we would have no place to meet together. Our case would be sad indeed. But thanks be unto the grace of our holy Redeemer, he sees to it that he always has witness confessing him before men.

III. LASTLY, CONFESSING CHRIST MAY INVOLVE BODILY PERSECUTION LIKE THE EARLY BELIEVERS ENDURED.

It is not unheard of in our day. Have you heard the news about Mariam Yahya Ibrahim? In January of this year, in Sudan, a Muslim country, she was first charged with adultery because she married a Christian man. She was sentenced to 100 lashes by the rod. Then when she was brought before the court she confessed Christ before men. They added the charge of apostasy and sentenced her to death by hanging. Then they gave her 4 days to think about it, to renounce Christ, but she refused. But her lawyers had enough time to appeal. How? She was pregnant. Though Sharia Law regards the child of a Christian illegitimate, it also forbids execution until 2 years after child birth. So not only was she not ashamed to confess Christ, she arrived in Philadelphia this week and went home to Massachusetts. "Boy, she was lucky!" some might say. No, there is such thing as luck! God did it on purpose. That's why Christ said, "Do not fear men, fear God."

Romans 8: 28: We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

Hebrews 11: 35...others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: 36: And others had trial of *cruel* mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: 37: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; 38: (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and *in* mountains, and *in* dens and caves of the earth.

Hebrews 12: 1: Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset *us*, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, 2: Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of *our* faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3: For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. 4: Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.

The cure for our fear of man is to behold Christ bearing our shame on the cross. He had his beard plucked out. He was stripped naked. "His visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men." (Is 52: 14) Worst of all he was forsaken of God.

Lamentations 1: 12: Is it nothing to you all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the LORD hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger.

Christ did that for you and me who have been washed in his blood! So brethren, are we're going be fearful of powerless God-hating men or confess Christ who took up his cross for us? That is why our Savior says that "He that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me."

"Clay, this is easy to say while we were not suffering." Yes, and we have no strength in ourselves when we do suffer. Christ is our only Strength. So we pray to him,

Psalm 25:2: O my God, I trust in thee: let me not be ashamed, let not mine enemies triumph over me.

And God promises his people in Christ,

Isaiah 45:16: They shall be ashamed, and also confounded, all of them: they shall go to confusion together that are makers of idols. 17: But Israel shall be saved in the LORD with an everlasting salvation: ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end.

Now, if you have no saving interest in Christ, if the Holy Spirit has not given you life, if the blood of Christ has not washed away your sins, if you are yet looking to goodness in you then don't you dare take a form of godliness while you deny the power thereof! Don't touch the waters of baptism or the Lord's Table! You can't confess someone you don't know! Christ's word to you is, "Repent ye, and believe the gospel." (Mk 1: 15) May the sovereign Redeemer grant you repentance today!

But to us who profess to believe Christ, to me his preacher, and to all rebels who refuse to confess him, Christ says,

Matthew 10: 32: Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. 33: But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.

One old preacher said, "What Christ is to you on earth, that you will be to Christ in heaven in the day of judgment." If he is dear to you, you will be dear to him. It will be to the praise of the glory his grace. But if you think he is unworthy of confessing before men, you will be unworthy of Christ in that day. There will be no one to blame but yourself. May his grace and power make us confess him even in the face of the fiercest opposition!

Amen!