



“The Test of Our Courage”  
(Matthew 10:32-33)

Introduction: Our Lord Jesus Christ has been exhorting us not to fear in the face of the world’s hatred, and He has given to us many good reasons why not to fear. He told us we should not be afraid because He has gone before us and endured the same kind of hatred. It can be done, and He will help us to do it, if we trust in Him. We should not be afraid, secondly, because the benefits of following Christ. If we follow Him, we will become like Him, and this is worth whatever risks are involved. We should not be afraid, thirdly, because the Father will not allow any of their mistreatment to go unpunished, if not in this life, certainly in the next. We should not be afraid, fourthly, because anything which man can do is nothing compared to what God will do if we fear man and turn away from Him. And we should not be afraid, lastly, because if even the smallest and most insignificant of God’s creatures do not fall to the ground apart from His will, then how much more will He be careful to watch over us who are worth much more to Him.

Now these are all very good reasons why we should not be afraid. But the question still remains as to whether or not we will believe what Christ says, and act upon it. We often hear what He says and think that simply because we have heard it and agree with it and even think it’s good, that this is enough. But is it? James writes, “But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; for *once* he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the *law* of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man shall be blessed in what he does.” (1:22-25). We must not only hear, we must also do. But how will we know whether or not we have? And how will Christ know? Jesus tells us this morning what our response should be, as He now says,

***We can know that we have overcome this fear of man when we become willing to confess Him publicly as our Lord and Savior.*** We must confess Him publicly, and Jesus tells us now why it is important that we do so.

**I. First, Jesus tells us that it is only those who own Him that He will own. He says, “Everyone therefore who shall confess Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven” (v. 32).**

**A. Let’s think first about what it means to confess Christ.**

1. A confession is something you say that you believe to be true. It is something that you reveal about yourself not only through your words, but also through your life.
2. Applying this to confessing Christ means to acknowledge Him through your life that He is to you what He claims to be.
  - a. It means to confess Him as your Lord and Savior and to live accordingly.
  - b. It doesn’t mean to confess Him to be what you would like Him to be. It doesn’t mean, as many professing Christians seem to think today, to confess Him as your Savior and not as Lord, or to confess Him as Lord, but not to obey Him. To do this is to confess and deny Him at the same time.
  - c. No. To confess Him at all you must confess Him as He offers Himself to you. He offers Himself as Savior, but only if you submit to Him as Lord. Christ does not save any who continue to rebel against Him. He saves those who surrender and submit to Him. You must take Him as both, or you will have Him as neither. Christ came into the world as a servant to work out the salvation of His people, but now He is exalted above every principality and power and every name that is named in this life and the next, in order that every knee should bow to Him (Phil. 2:9-11). He will not save those who continue to fight against Him. Those who truly confess Him humbly submit to Him that He might use them for His glory and for the furtherance of His kingdom.

**B. But there is something else that Jesus says is important for us to realize about confessing Him. This can’t merely be the confession of our hearts, or our confession in private, it must be public. Notice He says, “Everyone therefore who shall confess Me before men.”**

1. What does He mean by “before men”?
    - a. Does He mean that it must be done before the church? When you become members of this church, we have you stand up in front of God’s people and make your confession of faith. You confess that the Bible is true, that there is salvation only in Christ, that you have forsaken everything to follow Him, and that you will obey Him in everything, no matter what the cost. But is this all that Jesus is referring to?
    - b. I think we would have to say that this is certainly included. But this isn’t all He wants from us. *The reason Jesus says this when He does in this passage is that He is showing us that we must also profess Him in the face of those who hate us. The question is whether or not we will still confess Him even when it is not popular to do so or when we might be injured or killed.*
  2. This is where the rubber meets the road, so to speak; this is how we can know that our confession is true: that we are willing to confess Him in public, and not just before the church, or in private.
- C. Now Jesus tells us here that if we will do this, if we will confess Him with our lips and with our lives, before all men, then there is something that He will do for us: He will confess us before the Father.
1. He will confess us as His children, His dear ones, those for whom He died. He will plead the merits of His work before the Father on our behalf. He will tell the Father that He has taken away all of our sins and delivered us from judgment. He will even claim us as His reward for His work as Mediator. If we own Him before men, He will own us before the Father.
  2. When will He do this?
    - a. Certainly He will do so even now, as He pleads the merits of His work on our behalf, as our Intercessor, in order to keep us reconciled with the Father.
    - b. But more importantly, He will confess us on the day of judgment and will not allow us to be swept away with the wicked into eternal perdition.
    - c. That will be a time when the only thing that will matter is whether or not He does confess you. Everything else that you might have thought was important in this world -- your sports, your entertainment, your money, your health, or whatever else it may be -- it will not matter at all. Make sure that you are in Christ and that He will confess you on that great day. It is the only thing that really matters in this world.
- D. And lastly, on this point, I want you again to notice who it is that Christ will own. He says, “*Everyone* therefore who shall confess Me before men, I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven.”
1. He says that this is true of everyone, everyone who will meet this qualification.
    - a. This again shows us the universality of the Gospel call, “Whosoever will.” Jesus said to His apostles, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned” (Mark 16:15-16). John writes at the end of the book of Revelation, “And the Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come.’ And let the one who hears say, ‘Come.’ And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost” (Rev. 22:17).
    - b. Everyone who hears the Gospel, who is thirsty, who is willing to take hold of Christ and confess Him before men; everyone who does these things, Christ will confess before His Father who is in heaven.
  2. But will everyone do these things? No.
    - a. Only those whom the Father has chosen and whom Christ came into the world to save will do so and no one else.
    - b. Remember, Jesus has been telling us that if we follow Him, all men will hate us. Why? Because they hate Him and they hate His Father (John 15:24). This is what all men do by nature. This is the condition they are in when they come into the world. If this is the case, then how will any be saved? It is only by the grace of God. He alone can change a man’s heart and make him willing to come to Christ. Remember what the apostle Paul wrote to the church at Ephesus, “And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly

walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)” (2:1-5).

- c. God must make us alive before we will ever embrace Jesus as our Lord and Savior and confess Him before men. We may be able to say we believe in Christ, but we certainly can't do this from our hearts and show it in our lives, unless God changes our hearts by His Holy Spirit.
- d. If you are confessing the Lord Jesus in your heart, words and life, and in public, then you can know that He has done this for you. But if you aren't, then you need to reach out to Him in faith this morning and take hold of Christ and receive from Him the strength and the power to do so. You must certainly do so in light of the consequences of not confessing Him.

## **II. Let us look now at the consequences of not confessing Christ, of being so afraid of men that we turn from owning Christ publicly. He says, “But whoever shall deny Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven” (v. 33).**

- A. To confess Christ means to speak and live in such a way that shows others that you are His follower. To deny Christ means just the opposite: to speak or to live in such a way that leads others to conclude that you are not a follower of Christ.

- 1. This doesn't apply only to those who say that they don't believe in Him. I think it goes without saying that Christ will deny before the Father everyone who outright denies Him in this world.
- 2. The scary thing is that it also applies to those who may believe themselves to be Christians, and may even profess to do so in the church, but who live in such fear of men that they are not willing to let anyone else know about it.
  - a. There are many ways to deny Christ. We can deny Him simply by remaining silent when we should speak, or by not taking advantage of the opportunities we have to bear witness to the Gospel, or not speaking up to defend Christ's honor when He is spoken against by His enemies, and even by going along with those we're with when they are doing something wrong, for fear that we will stand out as odd. This last example we call peer pressure.
  - b. You don't have to be an outright enemy of Christ to deny Him. You can also deny Him by remaining silent when you should speak or by not living according to His will.
- 3. Now realize on the other hand that this doesn't mean that you must always speak about Christ in every situation.
  - a. In countries where you will be killed on the spot for confessing Christ, it is a little different. You don't need to walk around on the streets with a sign that says you're a Christian.
  - b. But on the other hand, you must still not live contrary to the teachings of Christ, nor refuse to speak when Christ gives you the opportunity to bear witness. You must live as a Christian, speak when you need to for His glory, and let the Lord work things out as He will. But you must never deny Him by your words, your silence, or the way you live.

- B. Jesus tells us this morning that if we deny Him, He also will deny us.

- 1. He will deny us when we need Him most of all, on the day of His judgment.
  - a. Remember it's His confession of us on that day that is the only thing that will save us. Our works will not save us. They only bear witness to whether or not we really believe in Him, whether or not our confession of Him is true.
  - b. If our works reveal that we are true followers of the Lamb, Christ will own us and confess us before the Father. But if they reveal the opposite, He will disown us.
- 2. One last thing I should mention in this connection is that it is also possible to confess Christ publicly, and yet to deny Him in private.
  - a. There are those who, for any number of reasons, want others to believe that they are Christians. There are also those who really think that they are Christians, but who really are not.

- b. For these, their true colors are not seen in public, but only in private, perhaps sometimes only in the privacy of their own hearts. In cases like this, their profession won't save them, but their hypocrisy will condemn them. Jesus will not own them on the day of His judgment. Remember what Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness'" (Matt. 7:21-23).
    - c. They may have appeared to be doing some of His works outwardly, but they did not do all that they should, nor from their hearts. Christ will disown these too on that day.
- C. Lastly, realizing that whether or not we confess Christ in this life will determine whether or not He will confess us on that day, let's consider where the strength and courage comes from to confess Christ in the midst of a world that hates Him.
  - 1. We would all have to admit that there are times when we have been afraid to confess Christ.
    - a. How many times have we found ourselves intimidated into keeping quiet when we heard others ridiculing Christ or Christians, or when we were in a group of people who were talking about things which are evil, or when we were talking with our friends or neighbors or family members, and we had the opportunity to say something about Christ, but we didn't?
    - b. And why didn't we? It was because we were afraid. We were more afraid of what they might think of us than what God thought.
  - 2. But brethren, it ought not to be this way.
    - a. Jesus says that those who confess Him, not just once, not just twice, not just for a few days or for a few years of their lives, but their whole lives, and not just in private, but in public, He will confess before the Father. All others He will deny. Where then will we who are so imperfect and timid find the strength to confess Him?
    - b. It is only in Christ.
      - (i) First, we must look to Christ as our example. I don't think we can say that He was never afraid. Surely, He feared the excruciating death of the cross. He wouldn't be human if He didn't. But He feared God more than man and what man could do to Him. Through this He was strengthened and given courage to face the danger. Remember that courage is not the absence of fear. If you were not afraid of anything, why would you need courage? Courage is rather the strength to face that of which you are afraid. Christ had that courage which comes from God. We must look to God for the same.
      - (ii) But will He give us that courage? Yes, He will, if we ask in the name of Christ. Remember, Christ did His work not only to save us in the future, but to save us now from our sins. He purchased for us the Holy Spirit who is able to free us from our fears and to give to us courage. Paul reminded Timothy of this, when he wrote to him to encourage him. He said, "For God has not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (2 Tim. 1:7). When the disciples were threatened by men, they called upon the Lord, and He sent forth His Spirit who gave them the power to bear witness to His Word with boldness (Acts 4:31). This is the same Spirit whom He gives us today, but we must ask for Him in faith and believe that the Lord will give us His influence in greater measure, so that we too might confess Christ before men with boldness.
      - (iii) Let us not be afraid then, but look to Christ for His help, for in Christ God has abundantly supplied for all of our needs. Let us look to Him now in prayer.