

CONFESSORS VERSUS DENIERS

Three times in the context of emphasizing the cost of discipleship, Jesus says not to fear (cf. Matt. 10:26, 28, 31). He caps off His exhortations to not fear with this “therefore” promise.

Matthew 10:32 (NKJV)

32 “Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven.

To confess means “**to agree with**” or “**to affirm**”. It is more than merely intellectual recognition. Even the demons believe intellectually, as seen in James 2:19, but obviously are not saved. To confess means to openly identify with what is being affirmed – in this case the truth of the Lord Jesus Christ. To confess Christ before men is to take your stand with Him in spite of the hatred and hostility you will experience. Note the emphasis on “before men” is in the context of hostility.

We do not confess Christ simply by acknowledging that He is Lord and Savior but by acknowledging and receiving Him personally in truth as our Lord and Savior, which then demonstrates itself in the life. That is why Paul in Romans 10:9-10 says not only do we confess with our mouth that Jesus is Lord, but also that we believe in our heart. It must be real in the HEART; otherwise, it is just an empty profession (cf. Matt. 7:21-23).

We are not saved by mere empty confession. It must be real in the heart, and if it is real in the heart, it will show in the life. When the Bible says if we confess Christ we are saved, it assumes a confession that is REAL, which is seen in being willing to confess Him before men.

1 Corinthians 12:3 (NKJV)

3 Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord [**and mean it**] except by the Holy Spirit.

1 John 4:15 (NKJV)

15 Whoever confesses [**genuinely**] that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.

The literal language here in verse 32 is very intimate. “**Confesses Me**” is more literally “**confesses in Me**” with the construction emphasizing a confession that is borne out of union with Christ. This implies a “life-confession” that is a pattern of life based on union with Christ.

Those genuinely identified with and thus confessing Christ will also be confessed by Christ before His Father in heaven.

The believer testifies out of union with Christ, and Christ will affirm union with this person before the Father. The true believer openly confesses Christ in life before a hostile world, and therefore Christ will openly confess union with the believer before the Father. The one goes with the other.

The word “therefore” (Gk. “oun”) links what is being said about confession to what has just been said in the preceding context. In other words, a true confession openly identifies with the truth of Christ and therefore can expect to suffer persecution for it. (cf. 2 Tim. 3:12)

And the promise of assurance is that those who so confess Christ will have Christ confess them before the Father on judgment day. Again, it will all come out. Ultimate reality will be revealed right there in the very presence of God the Father as to where we stand.

But on the flip side, there is also this warning...

Matthew 10:33 (NKJV)

33 But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven.

As confession in context is a life-style affirmation so also is denial. This is not a momentary slip up like Peter experienced when he denied the Lord three times on a certain night. Yes, Peter messed up royally on that occasion but that was not the rule or overall pattern of Peter's life. It was the exception.

Peter did not characteristically as a lifestyle pattern habitually disown Jesus Christ. In fact, just the opposite. The overall pattern of Peter was that he openly confessed Christ. Tradition says Peter in the end was crucified upside down at his request because he said he was not worthy to be crucified in the same manner as his Lord.

Those who openly disown Christ as a lifestyle pattern can expect Christ to disown them on judgment day. He will say, “***I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!***” (Mt. 7:23)

This hits right at the heart of “***Easy Believism***” which says faith doesn't have to change your life. You can live any way you want and still have faith

without any serious ongoing confession of Christ. I don't see either Christ or the NT teaching this. I see that true saving faith results in a life-style pattern of confessing Christ. It's a life thing where one's whole being and life is identified with Christ. Those that have a lifestyle that in effect disowns Christ will in truth be disowned by Him before the Father because in truth they never really belonged to Jesus.

An example of "denying" or "disowning" Christ is Judas! That is precisely what he did.

"This warning applies [in context] to a person who makes an outward profession of Christianity but turns away when hard testing comes."

– **John MacArthur**

Hard times are testing times and they are proving times.

If we disown Christ here, He will disown us before the Father. Expositors well says, "***We cannot reject Christ without being rejected ourselves.***"

When the going gets rough phony professors abandon Christ showing that they were never really there to begin with. They were professors but never true possessors. Apostasy is a real thing, and the hardness of persecution tends to sift out who is real and who is not (cf. Heb. 10:38-29; 1 Jn. 2:19; Rev. 21:8).

Christ is teaching that those who genuinely belong to Him can expect to be abused and mistreated just like their Lord was with varying degrees of intensity. However, such a confession comes with the promise that true believers will likewise one day be confessed/acknowledged by Him before the Father. But in contrast is the warning that whoever disowns Christ will also likewise on judgment day be disowned by Him.

Pliny (c. 61-113 AD) was governor of the Roman province of Bithynia in the days of the early church. In those days he wrote a letter to the Roman Emperor seeking to explain why he had been unsuccessful in stamping out the sect called Christians.

"He had tried arrest, fines, imprisonment, beatings, torture, and various forms of execution in order to get them to renounce Christ and to burn incense to Caesar as an act of worship, but to no avail. In trying to excuse himself before the emperor, he wrote, '***None of these acts, those who are really Christians can be compelled to***

do.' – Quoted from **John MacArthur's** commentary on Matthew, p. 228

What a powerful testimony not only by those early Christians but even by this pagan ruler. None of those who were really Christian could be compelled to worship Caesar – so said Pliny. For them it was all about Jesus! Persecution is used by God to reveal and to refine.

Jesus said in a context of persecution...

Matthew 10:32–33 (NKJV)

32 “Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven.

33 But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven.

Note the double emphasis on “before men”. This is the testing place! Before men do we openly confess Christ or do we deny Him? This is the ultimate issue!

How about you?

Is your life a true confession of Christ or are you a denier of Him? Your true testimony “before men” is what will come out on judgment day.

What do your lips say and what does your life say? True confession involves not merely the lips but also the life.

May faith in Christ be the true measure of our lives and not the fear of man. This is the stuff of a true confession that Christ will one day honor before the Father.

Be among the true CONFESSORS of Christ before men!