

The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 7 April 2024. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced and see the context for yourself. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.

Confessing Jesus before Men

Matthew 10:24-33

Throughout the Middle Ages, and continuing through the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries in both Europe and the Americas, born-again, Bible-believing Baptists were persecuted bitterly for their faith in Jesus Christ. They were especially hated for their insistence on baptising *believers* (instead of infants), and for baptising by *immersion underwater* (instead of by sprinkling). Even after some of the more “tolerant” countries had stopped burning Baptists at the stake, Baptists were still subject to imprisonment, discrimination, and vicious slander, which often moved hateful mobs to assault them. Baptists were frequently accused of baptising both men and women in the nude, or of baptising people in filthy water, or in freezing water, so that people died as the result. They were accused of *murdering* people by means of their baptism, or of causing apoplexies (strokes), lethargy, palsy, comas, fevers, dysentery, diarrhoea, colic, spasms, and tremors, through their “dangerous” practice of immersion underwater.¹

In those days, new believers often paid a high price for declaring their faith in Christ through biblical baptism. Yet, on rare occasions, the Lord would literally perform a miracle, just to show His approval of their obedience. For instance, during the regime of Oliver Cromwell, a Baptist pastor in Plymouth named **Abraham Cheare** received a request from a captain named **Francis Langdon**, who had recently been saved, to baptise him. However, there was a problem: Langdon was in the last stages of tuberculosis, and was at the point of death. He could scarcely speak; and he couldn’t stand up or walk without being held. His head hung down to his chest; he coughed relentlessly; and he got only an hour’s sleep at night. At this point, he couldn’t even eat! Needless to say, Pastor Cheare was fearful to baptise this man—not only because he feared for his health, but also because he knew what consequences might befall him, and the members of his flock, if the word got out that he had baptised a man in this condition, and had thus sped his death! (It also happened to be in the middle of January when he received this request!) Cheare declined to baptise Langdon; but another pastor, named **Muckle**, agreed to do it.²

Well, on the day of the baptism, it took three men to lead Langdon to the river, and to put him under the water; but after he came up out of the water, he didn’t need anyone to hold him! He charged up out of the water, and virtually *ran* up the sixty-foot hill by the riverbank! From that point, he was able to speak, eat heartily, and sleep eight hours per night! Though his strength was still not yet 100%, it swiftly improved; and as he was recovering, he couldn’t keep his mouth shut about Jesus. Whenever visitors came to see him, he was “unwilling to have the friends depart till he had spoken of the salvation of God.”³

Now, please don't misunderstand: though things like this still happen at times, God doesn't *have* to cure people of illness if they follow Him in baptism. In most cases, He doesn't. (For every person who experiences this kind of miracle, there are hundreds of thousands more who *don't*.) However, God, in His sovereignty, *does* sometimes do something like this, just to show that He honours those who will confess His name before men! This morning, we will be learning about what we, as believers, can expect when we decide to be "all in" for Jesus. The title of this message is "***Confessing Jesus before Men.***"

Read Matthew 10:24-33.

I. The certainty of mistreatment (vv. 24-25)

Over this past month, we've been focusing on the instructions that Jesus gave to His twelve Apostles as He commissioned them to go out and preach the "Gospel of the Kingdom" in the cities of Israel. Jesus warned them that they would experience opposition during their preaching tour; and He used the occasion to foretell of actual persecution—*severe* persecution—which would be coming to them in the not-distant future. Ultimately, Jesus prophesied of the persecution that will befall Jewish believers during the Tribulation period, shortly before His Second Coming. He said, "***But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come.***" This prophecy is yet to be fulfilled, after we New Testament-age believers are removed from this earth in the Rapture, and the Tribulation period begins.

However, Jesus wasn't finished talking about persecution. He had just given the disciples a little glimpse into the distant future; but now, He was bringing them back to their own day. He reminded them that "***The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord.***" In other words, "Don't expect to be treated any better than *I*, your Master, have been treated!" Jesus then specifically reminded them of the accusation that the Pharisees had made against *Him* only a short while earlier. Remember when Jesus healed the dumb man who was possessed with devils? How did the Pharisees explain away *that* miracle? They said that "***He casteth out devils through the prince of the devils.***" Think of that! These men actually had the *chutzpah* to accuse Jesus, who had just healed a dumb and demon-possessed man, of doing this loving deed through the power of the Devil himself! "Beelzebub" (which means "lord of the flies") was the name of one of the false gods of the Philistines. The Jews applied the name of this heathen god to Satan himself; and now, they were applying it to the sinless Son of God!

Brethren, think of the most gracious, selfless, Christ-like thing that you have ever done for someone: and then imagine if someone were to accuse you of doing that loving deed through the power of the devil! Well, that's exactly what they said about our Master; and Jesus is giving us fair warning that "What they've said about me, they will say about you." Christian, as you show Christ's love to people, you may be sure that people will accuse you of the worst kinds of evil. Get used to it! Jesus promised that the world *will* hate you.

Read John 15:18-25.

Why does the world hate believers? For the same reason that they hate Christ. Jesus said that the world hates both Him *and* us, because **they don't know the Father**. The world hasn't a clue what it means to have a personal, loving relationship with the Father, because they are separated from Him. Therefore, when the world sees believers *acting upon* their faith in God, and showing God's love toward others, they react in anger and hatred. Why? Because our love for the Father demands that we *reject* their sinful ways. When the world sees us going *upstream* against the world's sinful culture, it infuriates them. More and more, we hear reports of Christian business owners who are sued by customers because they couldn't, in good conscience, bake a cake for, or print an invitation to, their "gay wedding." The customers are "shocked" that those "hateful" Christians wouldn't bake a cake to celebrate their sin. They have no understanding of the relationship that Christians have with their Father. They do not understand that to do this thing would be to spit in the face of the God who loves us, and saved us; and the reason they don't understand this is that they do not know God.

Secondly, the world hates Christ, the Father, and God's people, **because they love their sin, and don't like having their sin exposed and condemned**. When Christ came into our world, He took away people's excuses for remaining in sin. He ripped away the "cloak" of false righteousness with which they tried to hide their sin, and told them that they needed to repent and believe on Him. They had no excuse for rejecting Him; yet, most of them *did* reject Him, because they loved their sin, and did not wish to depart from it. The light of Christ's righteousness had shone on them, and exposed their sin; and rather than coming to the Light, they recoiled from Him, and stayed in darkness.

Read John 3:18-21.

The world hates Christ's grace, love, and mercy, because it makes their sin and pride all the more obvious. For the same reason, the world hates Christians. By living righteously, Christians cause lost people around them to feel "judged." New believers soon come to realise that their unsaved friends now view them as "judgmental." **Noah** found this to be true. The Bible says in **Hebrews 11:7** that "**Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house, by the which he condemned (or "judged") *the world.*"** Simply by living a life of faith and obedience to God, Noah "judged" the world. Lost people's reaction to the Gospel is similar to the reaction of a man who *doesn't like* how he looks in the mirror, and who therefore *smashes* the mirror. Instead of going to Jesus Christ for forgiveness and cleansing, and asking Christ to remove their filthy, ugly sin, most lost people say "Down with the Bible! And down with those who try to tell us what the Bible says!" This has *always* been man's reaction to God's Word; and it always will be.

In 1529, in Basle, Switzerland, nine Baptists were arrested by the authorities for refusing to baptise their infants; for preaching in the fields and forests; and for refusing to attend the state church, and receive sacraments. One of these believers (a miller) made this defence before the senate: “Since I heard the Word of God, renounced my irregular life, and was baptized on confession of sins, I have been persecuted by everybody: while before, when I was plunging into all manner of vice, *nobody* chastened me, or put me in prison. I am confined in the Tower like a murderer; and what is my crime? What evil have I done? None. God be praised, in your conscience, I know you are convinced of my innocence.”⁴ This miller knew what his accusers’ *real* problem was: their problem was that they loved their sin, and felt “judged” by his life of obedience to God. By the way, three of these nine Baptists recanted, and went back to their old lives; but the six who stood for Christ were exiled. The world said, “Conform to *us!*”; but these six believers were determined to be conformed to the image of God’s Son.

II. Our confidence in midst of persecution (vv. 26-31)

(Read verse 26 again.) Jesus had just gotten done assuring His disciples that they would *not* be popular—that they would, in fact, be hated, and called “Beelzebub,” just as He had been called. Jesus now goes on to say, **“Fear them not therefore.”** And *why* do we not need to fear those who falsely accuse us? Because, He says, **“There is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known.”**

Now, what does Jesus mean by this? What are these things that are “covered,” which will one day be “revealed”? Well, this statement applies in a couple ways. First, **Jesus is talking about the “uncovering” of men’s sins.** He’s talking about the Judgment Day, when the hidden iniquities of men will be revealed: and He is especially talking about the *false accusations* that wicked men have made against God’s people.

For centuries, God’s people have been accused of the most outrageous crimes; and they have been imprisoned, tortured, and put to death for their “crimes.” In the Apostles’ day, Christians were accused of being atheists, insurrectionists, and traitors against Rome. Nero accused the Christians of burning Rome to the ground; and as their punishment, they were thrown to the lions, and used as fuel to light Nero’s gardens. In the Middle Ages, the Roman Catholic Church accused the *real* Christians (groups such as the Waldenses, Albigenses, Paulicians, Bogomils, and Anabaptists) of everything from Manichaeism (which was an ancient Gnostic heresy), to railing against the Virgin, to witchcraft, to civil insurrection, to sacrificing children and drinking their blood. They accused them of “adultery” (since their marriages had not been performed by Catholic priests); and they accused them of practicing secret orgies. In communist lands today, Christians are accused of insurrection against the state; conducting subversive meetings; smuggling contraband; and committing any and every crime imaginable (whether it be murder, theft, prostitution, or drug dealing). In Muslim lands, Christians are accused of blasphemy, idolatry, “disrespecting Mohammed,” “disrespecting men,” adultery, fornication, incest, etc.; and they usually are not allowed to speak in their own defense (if they have a trial at all). Today, in the Western world, we are falsely accused of being “bigots,” “homophobes,” “haters,” “racists,” “antisemites,” “mysogenists,” and a thousand other

outrageous things; and it is easy to see that in the not-distant future, we will be facing real consequences for being Bible-believing Christians (such as heavy fines, and imprisonment). No matter how much we show Christ's love, mercy, and forgiveness to the lost world, we are hated. Yet, our Lord says, "Don't fear being maligned. Don't be afraid of having your character assassinated. If they have accused me of being 'Beelzebub,' then they will accuse you of outrageous crimes, as well. But don't worry: one day, you *will* be vindicated—whether it be in this lifetime, or in eternity!" One day, the plots of wicked men against God's people *will* be uncovered; and our righteousness *will* be brought to light!

Read Psalm 37:5-11.

Read 1 Timothy 5:24-25.

Now, let's move on. **(Read Matthew 10:27 again.)** I mentioned earlier that Jesus' statement in **verse 26** had a couple different applications. On the one hand, Jesus was saying that "One day, your enemies' false accusations against you will be revealed." Now, in **verse 27**, we see that His words have another application. Jesus was also talking about the "uncovering," or "revealing," of His words, and His truths. You see, during Jesus' earthly ministry, He spoke in parables; and oftentimes, these parables were not understood by the people. However, to those who were truly hungry for truth, the meaning was freely revealed. Oftentimes Jesus' disciples came to Jesus afterward, and asked Him to show them the meaning; and He always did. Jesus wasn't trying to hide the truth from people: He was simply putting forth a test, to reveal those who *didn't* really want to know the truth, and those who did. For the time being, many of Jesus' truths were concealed in parables; but it wouldn't remain this way. Jesus was revealing these mysteries to His disciples, and equipping them to teach it to others; and finally, the day came when He commissioned them to go throughout the cities of Israel (and, eventually, the whole world), and proclaim "upon the housetops" what He had taught them in private.

My friends, Jesus did not come to establish occultic "secret societies" such as Freemasonry, Rosicrucianism, The Society of Jesus, The Knights of Columbus, Opus Dei, The Priesthood of Melchisedec, and other secretive "priesthoods" and lodges. On the night of Jesus' trial, He said, ***"I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing... ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said."*** Brethren, we should shrink in horror from the very thought of being led blindfolded, with a rope around the neck, into a dark room, and standing in the middle of a pentagram, and being made to repeat a secret "blood oath" that you will not reveal the secrets of the organisation, on pain of having your throat slit. This is of the devil! Our Master does *not* hide truth from people, because He is Light. He does *not* give a false meaning to the "unworthy," and the true meaning to those who have "moved up the ladder" of secret knowledge. He has revealed the truth to His servants; and He has sent them into the whole world to proclaim it to all. Christian, don't *ever* accept an offer to join a secret society, no matter what material benefit it may promise you in this world!

Secret societies are being used of the devil to prepare the world for the Antichrist. Reject them as the darkness that they are, and boldly proclaim the Light of Jesus Christ, and His Gospel!

Jesus has commanded His people, and His assembly, to renounce the secret things of dishonesty, and to proclaim His truth in the light. However, Jesus warns us that there *will* be a consequence for doing so: namely, you just might get killed for it! Yet, even if this should happen, Jesus has given us a promise. **(Read Mathew 10:28 again.)** The enemies of the Gospel may kill the body; but they cannot kill the soul. And what is the “soul”? By biblical definition, the soul is the body and spirit of man *together*—our whole being. The Bible says that when God breathed into Adam’s nostrils the breath (or “spirit”) or life, **“man became a living soul.”** Yet, oftentimes in Scripture (such as in this verse), the word “soul” speaks of just one part of man’s being—namely, the spirit. Why is that? Because when our body dies, our spirit lives on; and until the resurrection day, that one part of us (our spirit) represents our whole being. However, on the Resurrection Day, when our spirit is united with our resurrected, glorified body, we will again be a “living soul” in the fullest sense of the word. This is why we need not fear those who may take our life for Jesus’ sake! Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life; and though our bodies die, they *will* live again! The one we *need* to fear is God—the one who can destroy both the body *and* soul in hell. My friends, nothing is more important than knowing for sure that you are saved. Do *you* know that you are saved? If not, what are you waiting for? Repent of your sin, and trust in Jesus today, while you still can!

Brethren, we can truly have confidence in the midst of persecution! We may have confidence in knowing that the false accusations of our persecutors will one day be brought to light, and judged. We may have confidence in knowing that our persecutors cannot kill the soul. Our spirits will be immediately with God in Heaven after we die; and we *will* receive glorified bodies one day! However, there is one other thing that Jesus said, which gives us confidence: and that is **that we are infinitely valuable to God!** **(Read Matthew 10:29-31 again.)**

In the Greek language, the word for **“farthing”** is *assarion*. An *assarion* was a small bronze coin; and it was worth one-tenth of a *denari*. A *denari* was about one day’s wages for a poor person; thus, two *assarion* was about 20% of a day’s wages. Two farthings could buy a sparrow, which was food for the poorest people. Are you getting the idea? A sparrow was small and insignificant. It was the food of the poorest peasants. Yet, Jesus says that this small, insignificant bird cannot fall to the ground without His Father. Likewise, God knows the smallest details about each one of us—including how many hairs are on our heads at any given time! *That* is how valuable we are to God, brethren! No matter what suffering we may go through for His sake, we may take confidence in knowing that our God cares for us! By the way, look again at what Jesus said. Jesus didn’t say that the sparrow *doesn’t* fall to the ground: He said that no sparrow falls to the ground *without His Father*. In other words, nothing can happen to even a tiny sparrow without the Father’s permission! Likewise, any harm that befalls us befalls us only when God allows it. Let’s see what Peter said about this.

Read 1 Peter 3:12-14.

What does Peter mean when he says, “***And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?***” At first glance, it may seem that he is saying, “No one can harm you.” But *is* that what Peter is saying? Not at all! If that *were* what Peter is saying, it would mean that God failed the millions of Christians down through the years who have suffered and died for Him. Obviously, that is not what Peter is saying, because Jesus assured us that we *shall* suffer persecution for His sake. What *does* Peter mean, then? Well, look again at what Peter is saying. (**Read 1 Peter 3:13 again.**) You’ll notice that Peter didn’t say, “No one will *harm* you”: he said, “***And who is he that will harm you?***” The Greek literally reads, “And who is the one *harming* you?” The obvious answer is: “They are nothing!” They may *seem* powerful and intimidating in this world: but in God’s sight, they are nothing. Their actions against you are fruitless. Remember what Jesus said? He said, “***Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do.***” No enemy in heaven or earth can take away your salvation, nor your loyalty to God, Christian. Furthermore, no one has the power to do you any harm *unless God grant it*. If harm befall us while we are trying to obey God, it is not evidence that God has failed us: rather, it is evidence that God allowed the enemy to attack us in order to accomplish *His* plan—which is far higher than we can comprehend!

III. Our confession before men (vv. 32-33)

(**Read Matthew 10:32-33 again.**) Jesus has made it clear: those who believe on Him must endure suffering for His name. However, Jesus now makes a frightening statement. He says that those who confess His name before men, *He* will confess before the Father; but those who deny His name before men will be denied before the Father. Jesus doesn’t leave any room for “middle ground.” Either you’re “all in,” or you’re “all out.” This leads to an obvious question, though: what about Peter, who denied the Lord in a moment of fear, but later repented? Or what about other faithful believers, such as the Baptist preacher Balthasar Hubmaier, who, while being tortured, recanted—but soon repented, just as Peter did? Did these people lose their salvation? No. How do we know? Because *they did not continue to deny the Lord*: they got right. The fact that they turned back to the Lord shows that the Lord was truly in them, and keeping them, and drawing them back to Himself. Even when we doubt Him in moments of fear, He remains faithful to us. However, those who refuse to own Jesus before men, for fear of what others will think—or who, after making a profession of His name, turn away from Him, never to return—*are not saved*. There’s no getting around it, folks: those who truly belong to Jesus own His name!

Read 2 Timothy 2:11-13.

Read Luke 22:31-34. (Note that even when Satan “sifted” Peter, he was still grain, and not “chaff!”)

Before we close this morning, I would like to tell you about a man named **Musa**, who lives in a country in Northern Africa. In his twenties, Musa became repulsed by the bloodshed and violence of the religion in which he had been reared; and he began to look for answers in the Bible. He became a Christian; but at first, he was terrified to tell even his wife about his decision. However, he eventually began to bring Christian literature, which he had obtained one hundred miles away, into his house; and his family was exposed to it. When his wife found out that her husband was a *kafir* (“infidel”), she was terrified; yet, she knew that the change in her husband’s life was very real. In time, she, too, became a Christian. However, for the next two years, Musa and his wife told no one that they were followers of Jesus. Finally, though, the Lord brought Musa to the point of decision. Would he publicly own Him, or deny him? At work one day, a co-worker, suspicious of Musa’s unwillingness to pray toward Mecca, asked him why he didn’t do his prayers along with everyone else. At this point, Musa knew that it was time for him to decide if he were “all in” with Jesus, or “all out”; and by God’s grace, Musa owned his Lord! He said that “Prayer...is an intimate conversation with God, and it should be done all the time, in the heart, rather than at specific times using the same phrases and postures.”⁵ He then confessed that he was a Christian. As could be expected, his friend was furious. He called Musa a *kafir*; and disowned him as a friend.⁶

Well, a few days later, Musa’s construction site supervisor asked him if it were true that he were a Christian. When he confessed that he was, he was immediately fired for being a “traitor,” and for trying to convert a co-worker; and he received no pension, severance pay, or final month’s wages. A few days later, he received a call from a man who offered him a job at another construction site; and at first, the offer seemed providential. However, when he got to the shady-looking spot where he was told to meet the man, he realised that he had been tricked. A group of hostile men appeared, and fired questions at him about his Christian faith; and when he refused to deny Jesus, they began to punch him in the face, stomach, and ribs. It looked as if he might not get out of the situation alive; but suddenly, a car pulled up, and a man opened the door and yelled, “Get in! We will help you!” (It turns out that the word had gotten out to other Christians that their brother, whom they had never even met, might be in trouble; and they came to rescue him!) After that, Musa’s neighbours told him that he was not welcome in their neighbourhood until he denied Jesus, and returned to the mosque. However, his new Christian friends once again intervened. They brought a pickup truck, packed all his family’s possessions, and took him to a safer place to live. As for Musa, he felt actual *joy* after his persecution began. He said, “I felt *blessed* when this happened to me.”⁷

Conclusion: Brethren, Jesus promised that we can *rejoice, and be exceeding glad* when we suffer for His name. That doesn’t mean that there isn’t great pain to deal with, or struggles with forgiving your persecutors (especially when they have *murdered* someone whom you dearly loved): but when you truly submit to the Lord, and leave all your struggles with Him, He actually gives you *joy* in the midst of your trial. Remember this, brethren: because the days may be coming when we, like Musa, will have to pay a high price for being “all in” for Jesus!

If you have never been saved, I urge you to repent of your sin, and trust in Jesus today! Yes, Jesus does call those who believe on Him to endure persecution for his name. However, He promises never to leave

you or forsake you, no matter what may happen to you in this life; and one day, you will experience eternal joy in your Saviour's presence, in the unspeakable glory of the New Jerusalem. Please repent of your sin, and believe on Jesus today!

¹ David Cloud, "Believer's Baptism and Divine Healing," Way of Life Literature, March 13, 2024, <https://outlook.live.com/mail/0/id/AQMkADAwATY0MDABLTlINGQtYWY2Zi0wMAItMDAKAEYAAAMveC%2BLiwB2AkqVsRQRBsFCXwcAzVtUsjKgFU66HiTNxbn0%2FgAAAgEMAAAAzVtUsjKgFU66HiTNxbn0%2FgAIDtfvIwAAAA%3D%3D>

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Thomas Armitage, *A History of the Baptists* (Paris, AR: The Baptist Standard Bearer), 1:347.

⁵ Cole, Cheryl, and Jason, ex. editors of *The Voice of the Martyrs, i am n* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook Publishers, 2016), p. 127.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*