

Fellow redeemed sinners, redeemed by the blood of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ,

Prior to our Scripture selection we read that Jesus prepared His disciples to go on a preaching tour, their first of many. Jesus did not sugar-coat the truth regarding how His disciples would be treated, for we read in Matthew 10:16-18, “Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles.” Matthew 10:22 adds, “And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.” Accordingly, Jesus’ followers are to expect persecution in this world from the unbelievers. Nevertheless, in Matthew 10:28 Jesus says, “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.” Thus, Jesus emphasizes the truth that folks need not fear men, but rather need to fear God who will sentence all unbelievers to never-ending death in hell, “Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.” (Mark 9:44)

Fellow Christians, the fact remains to this very day that life in this world is NOT easy-street for believers in Jesus, for we read in 2 Timothy 3:12, “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.” However, despite the hardships believers in Jesus will experience in this world, our Scripture selection urges:

“HEARTILY CONFESS CHRIST”

With that as our theme may we, in view of our text and with the help of the Holy Ghost, see—

- 1) Why it is absolutely necessary to heartily confess Christ
- 2) What it means to heartily confess Christ

Verses 32 & 33, -----. (Matthew 10:32-33)

It is Jesus Christ who says: *Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.* Observe that it’s absolutely necessary to confess Christ before men in this world if we would have Jesus confess us before His Father in heaven. If we fail to confess Christ before men in this world, we thereby deny Him, and consequently Jesus will deny us before God the Father in heaven.

We read in Romans 10:9-11, “That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.” Therefore, note well that confessing Christ as one’s personal Savior and Lord must flow from a heart-deep faith in Jesus Christ who died and rose again that we might live.

Jesus declares in John 14:6, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” Thus, Jesus Christ is the ONLY WAY to God and heaven. Oh, it’s true, for Holy Writ plainly states, “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.” (Romans 3:23-

26; John 3:16, 36) Hence, it is absolutely necessary to heartily confess Christ.

Fellow Christians, Jesus kept God's Law perfectly for us, and then Jesus paid for our lack of keeping God's Law by shedding His holy and precious blood while nailed to the accursed tree of the cross, for Holy Writ reports, "when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin. For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself." (Galatians 4:4-5; 1 John 3:5; Hebrews 7:26-27)

But, Jesus Christ's work as our great High-Priest did not end when He died and rose again, for we read in 1 John 2:1-2, "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." Yes, fellow believers in Christ, Jesus Christ is our Advocate who speaks to God the Father on our behalf, for concerning Jesus we also read in Hebrews 7:24-25, "this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Thus, Jesus Christ speaks the truth when He says: *Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.* Hence, it is absolutely necessary to heartily confess Christ.

Note well that there is NO neutrality; one is either a true confessor of Christ as one's personal Savior and Lord, or one is a denier of Christ. People who

heartily confess Christ before men will have Christ as their Advocate confess them before God the Father in heaven; on the other hand, people who deny Christ before men will be denied by Christ before His Father in heaven. It is as 1 John 2:23 plainly states, "Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: but he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also." Hence, it is absolutely necessary to heartily confess Christ.

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As we continue to ponder our text to its conclusion, let us see what it means to heartily confess Christ.

Once more, let's look at verses 32 & 33, -----.  
(Matthew 10:32-33)

The word "confess" in our text means to acknowledge Jesus Christ as one's personal Savior and Lord from one's heart and through one's lips among human beings in this world. Confessing Christ is NOT mere lip-service, and NOT merely assent to the fact that Jesus Christ once walked upon this earth, for Mark 1:24 relates that even a devil, a demon, once said to Christ, "Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God." Hence, to heartily confess Christ is to sincerely believe in Him as one's personal Savior and Lord and to proclaim the fact with one's mouth publically.

Verses 34-36, ----- (Matthew 10:34-36)

Luke 2:13-14 reports that when Jesus was born in Bethlehem, "suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." Accordingly, in Christ, God provides peace on earth as we behold His good and gracious will toward sinners whom Christ was sent to redeem and rescue from ruin. Thus, CHRIST "is our peace." (Ephesians 2:14) But, in our text Jesus says: *Think not that I am come to*

*send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.* Observe then that while Jesus is our peace when we believe on Him by the grace of God, Jesus did NOT come to SEND peace on earth, but rather a sword.

Therefore, earthly peace is NOT what Jesus supplies, for He said: *I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household.* Think about it. Is it not the case that family relationships are split apart when some believe on the Lord Jesus Christ while others do not? Is it not true that quarreling and fighting occurs in families over matters of faith and practice, doctrine and life? Sure it happens! There is not one of us Christians in our ILC congregations who have not experienced family disagreements because we refuse to compromise when it comes to the real Lord Jesus Christ and His true Holy Word. Nevertheless, heartily confessing Christ includes keeping Him FIRST in our lives, fighting for the genuine Lord Jesus Christ and the full truth of His Word, even at the expense of family relationships.

Verse 37, ----- (Matthew 10:37)

Notice that Jesus makes it crystal clear that HE MUST BE OUR NUMBER-ONE LOVE, for He plainly states: *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.*

Think about Jesus' words. Love for one's parents and love for one's children are some of the closest forms of love we have in this world. And yet, we are to love Jesus MORE than those closest family members. Yes, Jesus must be number-one love; and, Jesus Christ IS the LORD who says in Matthew 22:37-38, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment." Thus, heartily confessing Christ includes loving Him above ALL others, even parents and children.

Verse 38, ----- (Matthew 10:38)

In the wicked world in which we live, we Christians shall suffer persecution, for Jesus says to His followers in John 15:19-20, "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also." Hence, persecution is the cross we Christians must carry, for Jesus says: *he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.* Thus, we show our faith in Christ and our love for Him is genuine and heart-deep when we willingly endure persecution for His name's sake, because by so doing we heartily confess Christ.

Verse 39, ----- (Matthew 10:39)

It is Jesus who says: *He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.* My friends, there is temporal life and there is eternal life. Therefore, what our Lord is teaching us is this: if one finds his life all wrapped-up in the world and the things of the world, that person will lose eternal life in heaven. On the other hand, if one loses one's temporal life for Jesus' sake by holding fast to Christ and His Word, that person shall find life eternal.

It's as Jesus clearly states in John 12:25 followed by Mark 8:35-38, "He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it. For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." Additionally, let us never forget that 1 John 2:15

says, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." Accordingly, take it to heart that heartily confessing Christ means loving and trusting in Him above all things, even temporal life itself.

Verse 40, -----. (Matthew 10:40)

Jesus first spoke the words of our text to His disciples, the men whom He had chosen to preach and teach His Word, and to them He said: *He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me.* Hence, those ministers who preach and teach GOD'S WORD – not their own thoughts and opinions – are mouthpieces of Jesus Christ the Lord, who said to His disciples in Luke 10:16, "He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me."

Notice also in our text that receiving a faithful minister is not only receiving Christ, but God the Father as well. Thus, heartily confessing Christ for called pastors includes preaching and teaching God's Word with all faithfulness, never compromising the truth. And, heartily confessing Christ for all believers includes receiving His faithful ministers, rather than rejecting them in favor of those who preach falsehoods.

Verses 41 & 42, -----. (Matthew 10:41-42)

Observe in the closing verses of our text that there is a reward of grace to those who heartily confess Christ by their actions toward faithful preachers and toward all their fellow Christians, for Jesus says: *He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.*

Accordingly, it's obvious that heartily confessing Christ means confessing Him in word and in deed from a heart that beats with true faith in the Lord Jesus— a faith that works by love.

Fellow Christians, Hebrews 6:10 assures us, "God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister." Indeed, God graciously rewards those who are fruitful in the faith which He has given them. Let us never forget that Ephesians 2:8-10 says to all Christians, "by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." Yes, God has ordained that we believers walk in good works, works done in full accord with His Holy Word, thereby being fruitful in the faith, showing love to our Lord and love to our neighbor.

Take it to heart that in Revelation 22:12 Jesus says, "behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be." Hence, let us remember that heartily confessing Christ means confessing Him in word and in deed from a heart that beats with true faith in Him— a faith that works by love.

Let us therefore daily and sincerely repent of our sins; let us keep our full trust and confidence in Christ Jesus as our personal Savior and Lord; and, let us go forward remembering to heartily confess Christ in word and deed in the ways our text has urged us. Amen.

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