

Call to Obedience #241
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“He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.” —John 12:25

They Did Not Confess Him

By Reimar Schultze

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: For they loved the praise of man more than the praise of God.

—John 12:42–43

What we find here with these chief rulers is people who believe something but they are not willing to embrace what they believe for fear of the consequences. Let us first consider what they believed and then we shall consider the weakness of their faith.

The chief rulers believed that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of God, because that is what the text is speaking about at this point. By now, after three years of ministry, Jesus had done hundreds, if not thousands of miracles. The miracles of our Lord were indeed so abounding that John says at the end of his Gospel that “there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written” (John 21:25).

Now, let me ask you, how many miracles is that? Can you conceive that there was hardly a home that Jesus ever left without everyone in that home having been healed? Can we conceive now that perhaps there were many healed even by the very shadow of our Lord passing by? Can we perceive, in the light of this, that in many a meeting with thousands of people, Jesus could simply have stretched out his hand over the multitude and said, Be healed; be made whole, and all were healed? Could it be that he passed through some villages and by virtue of his healing power, everyone rose up the next morning whole in body and mind? How great is our Savior?

Three years of ministry were now nearly complete. Our text above finds us in the Passion week. All the questions concerning Jesus had been asked, and the only one left to be answered was, “Is Jesus the Messiah or not?” Although this question had been answered in the negative by the Pharisees much earlier, now in the final hours we find that, “among the chief rulers also many believed on him.”

Now, chief rulers here can and should be interpreted quite broadly. They were the community leaders and the nobility; they were the people whom you would find in country clubs and “up the hill.” They were the magistrates, the princes, the mayors, the engineers, the professors, the bankers, the landowners, the diplomats and the physicians. Jesus could not reach many Pharisees, but he could reach the poor, the unlearned, the wealthy, and the educated! This is exemplified by Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, by the unnamed rich young man who came to Jesus, and by the wealthy tax collector, Zacchaeus. These people, with their brilliant minds having put all the evidence together, could not help but conclude that Jesus was the Son of God. Nicodemus spoke for all of these when he said, “for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him” (John 3:2).

Many intellectuals today believe that if a scholarly investigation of the life of Jesus had been done in the first century, it would have proved that Jesus was not the Son of God. Well, my

friend, here we learn that a scholarly investigation had been done, and the verdict was: Christ is Lord, the Messiah, the Son of God.

But there was a problem with the chief rulers. Although they believed Jesus to be the Son of God, they lacked the courage to embrace him, to identify with him, to defend him, and to witness of him publicly. They never said anything publicly to identify themselves with him. They did not do it at the club house; they did not do it on their jobs; they did not do it amongst their relatives for fear of the consequence. "...they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue."

Oh how this stands out as a indictment against almost all church goers today: "they did not confess him, lest..."

Do you believe Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God? Do you speak of him publicly? Do you identify yourself with him publicly? Do you publicly share what marvelous things he has done for you? Do you share at the gas station, at the store, at the bank, at the family reunion, at work, at school, and at college? Isn't the greatest miracle of all time, in all the ages, the rebirth that makes us sons and daughters of God?

It says that they did not confess him publicly. How serious is this? Can we be Jesus' disciples if we don't confess him publicly? Can we make it to heaven if we do not embrace him publicly? Let us ponder one of the most important biblical passages in this regard: Luke 12:8-9 (AMPLIFIED):

"And I tell you, Whoever declares openly [speaking out freely] and confesses that he is My worshiper and acknowledges Me before men, the Son of Man also will declare and confess and acknowledge him before the angels of God. But he who disowns and denies and rejects and refuses to acknowledge Me before men will be disowned and denied and rejected and refused acknowledgement in the presence of the angels of God."

Let me ask you, Do we need to witness? Do we need to confess Jesus publicly? Are we doing it or are we just like the chief rulers in Jesus' days? What does it mean to be disowned by Jesus? What does it mean to be denied, rejected and refused in the presence of the holy angels? Oh, how soul-searching is this Gospel song by Joseph Grigg:

Jesus, and shall it ever be,/A mortal man ashamed of Thee?

Ashamed of Thee whom angels praise,/Whose glories shine through endless days?

If you are ashamed of Jesus, he will be ashamed of you. Yes, you may be the best worker on the job or the best student in your class—punctual, kind, helpful, industrious, honest—but if you pride yourself in these things alone as being a good witness, you are mistaken. Even an atheist can be an excellent worker, showing these same qualities. People will not know that your good character is because of Jesus unless you open your mouth and confess him. If you do not identify your conduct with Jesus, the name of Jesus coming from your lips, all the good you do is nothing but the works of self-righteousness, seeking the praise of men over the praise of God. Yes, you do all this to be popular, to promote your self-image in the eyes of man and God. But, don't be fooled, no man looks good in eyes of God who is ashamed of Jesus.

However, if you add Jesus to your good conduct at work, God will get the glory and then—yes—then you may be scoffed at, laughed at, and demoted! That is what we fear, isn't it? And so it says in the following verse, "For they loved the praise of man more than the praise of God." So, whose praise are you seeking, the praise of God or the praise of men? It is the fear of man and the consequence of witnessing that stops a man from speaking for Jesus publicly.

Now then, you say: I get your point, Pastor Schultze—I want to confess Jesus publicly, but I am timid; I am shy; I am backward!

What inexcusable excuses. If you cannot drive an auto, what do you do—you learn to drive. If you are afraid of computers, what do you do—you overcome that fear and learn computers. Life consists of constantly breaking down barriers.

How then does one get started in their witness? How does one learn to do it?

First: Get excited about Jesus. An empty soul has nothing to shout about. Fill yourself with the Word of God, saturate your life with prayer and praise, so that you come to the point of your life that you cannot but speak as the apostles of “the things which we have seen and heard” concerning Jesus (Acts 4:20). In this passage of Acts 4 when there was the first arrest of people confessing Jesus, Christianity was at the edge of death. If believers would stop confessing Christ out of the fear of man, unwilling to lose their lives, Christianity would die forever. If believers would confess regardless of the consequences, Christianity would live forever. The apostles Peter and John set the stage that Christians must publicly confess, even at the point of civil disobedience and death.

Second: If you are weak and inexperienced, start your witness in the community of believers. Start at church where you will be cheered and not ridiculed, building self-confidence. The first steps of every marathon athlete were from the baby crib to a chair. Take little steps. Practice!

Here is the case of a shy young girl—extremely shy. In the presence of other girls, she would always be the non-communicator. But she is enrolled in our Youth Discipleship Program, and in that program every youth has to confess Jesus publicly. So her mother said, “Honey, it is time to start the witness.” “But mother, I am afraid.” Mother said, “We must do it.” Take your choice: you either start at church or we will go door to door and do it.” Oh, what a mother! She knew Luke 12:8–9.

The next Sunday, that shy, backward young girl decided to start. She was too afraid at the first opportunity; but at the next, she pulled herself together, stood up and said, “I thank the Lord for his help last week.” This was her first public confession. Now, what do you think happened in that church? The congregation was shocked and amazed and greatly helped for hardly ever did a youth witness in the sanctuary. And what do you think happened in heaven? Do you think the angels in heaven took notice? What do you think they did? Well, they rejoiced and then took a sticker that said “Ashamed” on one side, turned it over to declare the word, “Unashamed!”, and placed it on the girl’s book of records. They took a sticker that said “Rejected & Refused” on one side and turned it to the other side which declared “Accepted & Welcome!”, and put it in her book of records. And what happened to this young teen-ager? The moment she confessed Jesus publicly, the joy of the Lord flooded her soul, for the joy of the Lord is the gift of God to every obedient heart.

Yes, we must confess Jesus. Our destiny depends upon it. Living without speaking is not living! Believing in your heart must be accompanied by confessing with your mouth (Rom. 10:9–10). The chief rulers “believed on him,” but because of the fear of men, because they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God, they did not confess him.