

What Is Your Confession?

John 6:60-71, Easter Sunday IV

April 28, 2013

Beloved of the Lord.....What is your confession of Christ? How do you confess Christ to this world? Are we pretend Christians or camouflage Christians who seek to blend in with the world, or do we by our confession stand apart from this world? I heard in the news this week a terrible confession by a man who claims to be a Christian. President Barak Obama gave a short speech honoring Planned Parenthood. For those who don't know it, Planned Parenthood is the abortion mill of our country. Every day under the banner of women's health and prochoice, they murder hundreds of unborn children. What was the confession of our president when he spoke to Planned Parenthood? At the end of his speech he said, "Thank you Planned Parenthood, God bless you, God bless you." When our president did this, not only did he take God's name in vain, but he blasphemed God's holy name by making it evil. Likewise by giving God's blessing to murder, he stained his hands with the blood of innocent children, bringing God's eternal wrath down upon his own head, for "God is angry with the wicked every day", and except this man repent he will be damned.

All of this is said so we earnestly examine our own confession. While we must honor our president for the sake of the office given him, God has also called us to condemn the sins of men. We cannot then confess Christ as our Savior from sin, without condemning the sins of this world. True Christians by faith and love renounce sin and we do not give our blessing to evil. If we cannot condemn as evil, abortion, drunkenness, adultery, pre-marital sex, homosexuality, theft, coveting, rebellion, etc., we are not true Christians but false. By our silence we too walk away from Jesus, when He alone has the words of eternal life. Let no man then be deceived, for where there is true faith in Christ our Savior, there is also the true confession of both mouth and heart, "I a poor miserable sinner, confess unto Thee all my sins and iniquities with which I have ever offended Thee and justly deserve Thy temporal and eternal punishment. But I am heartily sorry for them and sincerely repent of them, and I pray Thee of Thy boundless mercy and for the sake of the holy, innocent, bitter suffering and death of Thy beloved Son, Jesus Christ, to be gracious and merciful to me, a poor sinful being." It is just as Peter said, "Lord to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life!"

I. The offended world and hypocrisy. Many Christians are not very familiar with this portion of Scripture, for we forget there was a large falling away from the ministry of Christ. Outwardly the peak or pinnacle of Christ's ministry was the feeding of the 5000. When the people

wanted to make Jesus an king, "Jesus departed again into a mountain himself alone." His mission was not to feed the hungry, but "to give His life a ransom for many."

Knowing well these people had no true faith, Jesus gave a sermon the next day saying, "Labor not for the meat which perisheth but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall give into you." Also "I am the Bread of Life; he that cometh to me shall never hunger and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst." Near the end of His sermon Jesus finally said, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you." This is when many people were offended. Eat His flesh? Drink His blood? "This is a hard saying; who can hear it? When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you? *What* and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?"

Christ did not offend the people in the sense that He sinned against them. Rather He hurt their sensibility, their pride. It was the very Word of God which offended their sinful flesh. Their flesh rejected Jesus' words. No one wants to believe we are *only* wicked and miserable sinners who deserve *only* hell. And certainly our sinful flesh does not think that if we are to be saved *from hell* God Himself must come down from heaven and pay our hell upon the cross. These words offend not only the world, but also our sinful flesh. Yet it is still true for the true Christian, this is truly what we believe. This is why we then have our confession on page 16 before Holy Communion. Read those words closely and make sure you understand them, lest you be a hypocrite. You are confessing there that because of your sins you deserve "eternal punishment", which means you deserve the everlasting torments of hell. Do you believe this? Is this your true confession? While our flesh will always deny the truth of these words, where there is true faith it is believed with the heart. For how can believe Christ is our Savior from sin, death, and hell, if we do not first believe by our sins we deserve death and hell?

Thus God wants no man to be a pretend or false Christian who worships God outwardly but not inwardly by repentance and faith. Jesus had many followers, but few true believers or disciples. Jesus also knew Judas was not a true believer. "For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him." God however does not teach us that there are hypocrites so we begin to look at one another with suspicion. Rather this teaching that God knows our hearts helps us to understand God knows our secret sins, even if we are good at hiding them from others. Therefore it does no good to our soul when we hide our sins, rather we should confess them openly. For "if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. [but] If

we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us." On one level or another, all Christians are hypocrites in the sense that we all by nature hide our sins from one another. When we repent however, we uncover and openly declare our sins, and we also pray, "Dearest Lord, I am a hypocrite at heart, for the sake of Jesus Christ, please forgive all my hypocrisy and heal me." This is just as David prayed, "Who can understand his errors? Cleanse Thou me from secret faults."

II. Our flesh profits nothing, but the Spirit quickens.

Knowing many of His false disciples would soon walk away, Jesus said in verse 63, "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing." What does this mean? When Christ says "the flesh profits nothing", this means our bodies, our flesh, cannot give nor provide anything toward our own salvation. Neither our good works, nor our good will, nor our good reason can save or lead us to God. It is just as Luther said in the Third Article, "I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Ghost has called me by the Gospel." This agrees perfectly with the words of Jesus in verse 65 "No man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of My Father." It is not then that we have the power to come to God on our own, for no criminal has the desire to come to stand before Judge, nor do we want to be anywhere near the gallows. And though we all deserve the gallows for our sins, our God above is not only a Judge, but also a Father, a most gracious, tender and merciful Father filled with lovingkindness for our soul. It is then not just Christ who quickens us, or His Spirit, but also the Father, for Psalm 119:149 says, "Hear my voice according unto thy lovingkindness: O LORD, quicken me according to thy judgment." We don't come to the Father then, but the Father comes to us through the Son. Speaking both of our sins and God's Son, Titus three says it quite nicely, "For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, *and* hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." In our baptism Jesus our Savior comes to us. In the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Spirit of God is sent unto us. In the words Jesus speaks, "they are spirit and they are life" and it is indeed life everlasting. Hence "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, *they* are spirit, and *they* are life." Thus for our salvation, Jesus had to first in spirit descend down and take on both flesh and blood, that He by spirit and flesh and blood, pay our price ascending up. "What and

if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?"

III. Peter's good confession, which is our own. Now compare and contrast that Jesus is the Son of Man who ascends up, and then Peter later CONFESSES of Christ, "Thou art that Christ, the Son of the Living God." Peter knew....Peter could see Jesus came down from heaven, sent by the Living God above. Peter saw Jesus not just as the Son of Man, but also the Son of God sent from heaven to SAVE. In the words of Christ also, Peter saw the words of eternal life! O how glorious! And where else could Peter go? Remember also Jesus said of Peter, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed *it* unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." The Father reveals the Son just as much as the Spirit brings Christ to our heart.

Thus it is no small thing dear believer, that you too like Peter know and understand, believe and rejoice, that Christ is not just a Man, but also the Son of the Living and Eternal God, sent down from heaven for your salvation. Your gallows because His gallows upon the cross, and by His stripes you are healed. "Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name *is* Holy; I dwell in the high and holy *place*, with him also *that is* of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." God then is not apart nor far away from us high in heaven, Jesus is near all those who are sorry for their sins, confessing their sins. Therefore we say as also Peter said, "Lord to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

Having eternal life dear believer, through the precious blood of Christ, we also confess as Peter confessed, "WE BELIEVE AND ARE SURE that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the Living God." Yes indeed you can be sure (for God's Spirit has promised) that when you die, for Christ's sake, GOD WILL SURELY TAKE YOU TO HEAVEN to be with Him forever. "SURELY goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever." Knowing Him who loved you first, be sure to confess your sins to this world, condemn the sins of this world, and high above everything else confess to this world, Jesus is "the Christ, the Son of the Living God", the Savior of the world. Remember also the promise of Jesus, "Blessed is *he*, whosoever shall not be offended in me." Amen.