

**Mark 14: 53-72; “Christ’s Good Confession”, A Sermon preached at church  
on Maundy Thursday, April 9<sup>th</sup>, 2020, by Pastor Paul Rendall,  
and put up online for the saints**

We find here in these verses Peter’s denial and Christ’s good confession of the truth before the leaders of the nation of Israel. I believe that they are put in this close proximity to each other in order that we might learn from each. It is good for all Christians to learn from Peter’s denial of our Lord Jesus, so that we might not fall into temptation ourselves. And it will strengthen our faith when we see that it is our Lord’s good confession which has become the basis for our faith to be strengthened, so that we, too, can make a good confession. This is what your Lord is expecting you to do, in regard to what He has done for your soul, to make a good confession.

In 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 6, verses 11-15 we see the Apostle Paul telling Timothy that our “fighting the good fight of faith” is directly related to our understanding that our Lord Jesus Christ has gone before us. Listen to what he says: “But you, O man of God, flee these things (the pursuit of earthly wealth and pleasures) and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness.” “Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.” “I urge you in the sight of God who gives life to all things, and before Christ Jesus who witnessed the good confession before Pontius Pilate, that you keep this commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ’s appearing.”

We should understand that Christ’s appearing has not happened yet; and so this commandment still pertains to us in our generation as well as it did to Timothy in that generation. We must fight the good fight and lay hold on eternal life. We too must make a good confession of the power Christ’s grace, to save and to keep us. And so, I would like you to follow me as I attempt to open up this subject. Let us follow both Jesus and Peter through this trial of their constancy, so that we might learn good lessons from each. Here are 3 comparisons which I would have you to take notice of: 1<sup>st</sup> of all – Jesus was falsely accused before men, but Peter was truly accused before men. 2<sup>nd</sup> – Jesus confessed His true identity, but Peter denied his true identity. And 3<sup>rd</sup> – Jesus suffered being spit upon and being beaten for telling the truth; but Peter escaped suffering when he said that he did not know Jesus.

**1<sup>st</sup> of all – Jesus was falsely accused before men; Peter was truly accused before men.** (verses 52-61a)

When Jesus was led away a prisoner, from the Garden of Gethsemane, they took Him to an upper room meeting place; near or in, the high priest’s house. In John 18, verse 13 we learn that our Lord was first brought before Annas, the father-in-law of Caiaphas. This house had a courtyard, and even though initially Peter had fled, it says here in verse 54 that he “followed Jesus at a distance”. He went right into the courtyard and sat down with the servants at the fire. Jesus was inside this building; apparently in a large upper room where all the chief priests, the elders, and the scribes had gathered. In verse 55 it says: “Now the chief priests and all the council sought testimony against Jesus to put Him to death, but found none.” “For many bore false witness against Him, but their testimonies did not agree.” “Then some rose up and bore false witness against Him, saying, “We heard Him say, ‘I will destroy this temple made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands.’”

It is very interesting that there were many who bore false witness against Jesus. “Let every fact be confirmed by the mouth of two or three witnesses”, is the testimony of Scripture; but that nothing that was spoken in witness against Jesus was true, nor could the witnesses even agree among themselves, so as to prove a thing against Him, all this was evident. The closest that they came, was to say that Jesus had said that He was going to destroy the temple that had been

made with hands, and within three days He would build another made without hands. The witnesses, who were brought in, were not great men of wisdom and understanding, but they knew what the leaders of Israel wanted to hear. They wanted to hear that Jesus was guilty of some great crime; that He was planning to do damage to their great temple, that He would do away with the customs of Moses as they had falsely developed them. And so, based upon the testimony of these confused men, they might then infer that it was His desire to start a rebellion and overthrow the existing order of things in Israel. But instead of answering, Jesus said nothing. This was to fulfill the Scripture in Isaiah chapter 53, verse 7, "He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth."

Jesus was being tried as a criminal, which He most certainly was not, in terms of real law and justice. But these, His enemies, would make Him out to be one if they could. And Jesus deliberately decided not to defend Himself. Instead He would be like a sheep going to the slaughter; and He would suffer all of these things for our sakes, sinners who deserve to be punished for the crimes that we have committed against God. Jesus was silent before His shearers because He knew that they despised His glory. These witnesses were speaking of Him what was false. Oh, it is true that He had made a statement about destroying the temple. But Jesus' meaning in making that statement had nothing to do with destroying the literal temple; the physical building in which they worshiped God. It had a much more exalted meaning; a meaning that relates to gospel.

Turn with me over to John chapter 2, and verse 13. "Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem." "And He found in the temple those who sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the money changers doing business." "When He had made a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the Oxen, and poured out the changers' money and overturned the tables." "And He said to those who sold doves, 'Take these things away!'" "Do not make My Father's house a house of merchandise!" "Then His disciples remembered that it was written, 'Zeal for Your house has eaten Me up.'" "So the Jews answered and said to Him, 'What sign do You show to us, since You do these things?'" "Jesus answered and said to them, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.'" "Then the Jews said, 'It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?'" "But He was speaking of the temple of body." "Therefore, when He had risen from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this to them; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had said."

So, you see, the Lord Jesus deliberately concealed the truth of His statement concerning the destruction of the temple, in the way that he phrased it, so that wicked men would misunderstand and use it later as the basis for His being put to death. He was speaking of the temple of His body being destroyed; His willingly offering Himself up as a substitutionary sacrifice for the sins of all of His people. Both Jesus' going to the cross and His rising from the dead are being referred to in that statement. But the truth of the temple being the temple of His body was concealed from them. The reason? It was so that the Father's plans and purposes in the death of His Son, for sinners like you and me, would all be fulfilled. The Lord Jesus has also given us a good example of what we ourselves are to expect as a part of our being made conformable to Christ.

Everyone who would be more like Jesus needs to understand that it is may be a part of the Father's will for you that you suffer the indignity of people acting as false witnesses towards you. How should you handle this? It is not as though you are not supposed to defend yourself; but if you come into this kind of a situation where you can see that there is no faithful witness to speak up on your behalf, then it is evident that God would have you to learn to be patient in enduring sufferings for Christ's sake.

Listen to 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 2: 21 – “For this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow in His steps: ‘Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth’; who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed.” Is it not wonderful, however, that Jesus was suffering these things for Peter, even as Peter was denying His Lord. Verse 66 says: “Now as Peter was down in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest came.” “And when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked at him and said, ‘You also were with Jesus of Nazareth.’” “But he denied it, saying, ‘I neither know nor understand what you are saying.’” “And he went out on the porch, and a rooster crowed.” Now here we find Peter, not being falsely accused, but being truly accused of having been with Jesus. And he denies it. The very man who had so ardently and vehemently declared that he would go with His Lord to suffer and die, and yet we find that he could not do neither.

I hope you will see, my dear Christian friends, that God sometimes does permit even the most resolute Christian to fail at first in what they would like to do for their Lord. Can any of us deny that Peter loved His Lord? No, we cannot deny it, for that was the very thing that Jesus asked Peter when He restored him, later on, after He was raised from the dead. In John Chapter 21, verse 15, Jesus asked him: “Peter, do you love Me?” And Peter said, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.” And yet Peter was not able to faithfully support and defend His Master as He went to the cross. Indeed this was a great sin which he fell into in denying Christ. If you were to have someone say to you: Are you really a Christian; one of those bigoted people that doesn’t believe in gay marriage or a person’s becoming transgender?

What would you say? If someone were to ask you: Do you believe that people from other religions really have to be converted to Christ in order to go to heaven? Will those people who are sincerely following their own religious beliefs which aren’t Christian, really end up in hell? What will you say to them? What will you do when you are accused of being a follower of Christ? You see, this is your chance to shine. This is your chance to tell others of their need of Christ. And by God’s grace you can do it. How can you come to this? You come to it by seeing that the Lord Jesus has made the good confession, suffering in order to do so, so that you might be able to be a good witness to His grace as time goes by. Let me ask you now whether you see this all-important issue related to your obedience. It is that all of your obedience rests upon what Christ did for you at the cross, and that you are totally dependent upon Him for the grace to make progress in your confession of Him. But this you can do, because of His faithfulness.

### **2<sup>nd</sup> – Peter denied his true identity, but Jesus confessed His true identity.**

Verse 69 says: “And the servant girl saw him again, and began to say to those who stood by, ‘This is one of them.’” “But he denied it again.” This second denial in a row shows us how utterly dependent upon Christ we are for grace. It shows us how Peter’s sleeping before, and his lack of prayer before in the garden, contributed to his fall. It would be well for each one of us if we were to memorize 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians chapter 10, verse 12 – “Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.” “No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.” Peter did not take heed. He thought that he could stand, but he fell, and he fell badly. Self-confidence should never be mistaken for faith.

Sometimes a Christian does not want to let unbelieving people around him know that he is a Christian. He or she is afraid of the disapproval of men; they are afraid of being known as a born-again Christian. They are afraid especially of what their worldly friends will think if they find out. The temptation, I am afraid, is even more subtle than that. There are many church-

going Christians who do not believe that it is all that an important thing to be baptized and to join a church. They know that it is a public declaration of their faith, and they would rather not do it. It is almost as if they are ashamed of Christ. But what does the Bible say? It says in Matthew 28, verse 19 – “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Now how can this commandment to be baptized, be escaped, if you truly are a disciple of Jesus Christ. You say that you believe, but you will not publicly take your stand with Christ, and you will not join the church?

Listen to the Lord Jesus Himself. Matthew 10: 32 – “Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before my Father who is in heaven.” “But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven.” Let us, if we truly believe, always be ready to confess our Christ before men. Let us sanctify the Lord God in our hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks us for a reason for the hope that is in us, with meekness and fear; having a good conscience, that when they defame us as evildoers, those who revile our good conduct in Christ may be ashamed.” “For,” Peter says in 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 3: 17 – “it is better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.” Why? “For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit.”

What is it that keeps a person from making a public commitment to Christ in baptism and church membership? Possibly it is because they feel that they have not experienced enough of the world’s pleasures and parties. Listen to Peter once again. 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 4, verse 1 – “Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, that he no longer should live for the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God?” Are you still living for the lusts of men, or are you living for the will of God? Peter goes on to say: “For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles—when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries.” “In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you.” “They will give an account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.” Are you ready to suffer for Christ? Do you want to stand in the evil day? Then you must come to have a better grasp of Christ’s sufferings on your behalf.

Verse 60 of our text says: And the high priest stood up in the midst and asked Jesus, saying, ‘Do You answer nothing?’ “What is it these men testify against You? “But He kept silent and answered nothing.” “Again the high priest asked Him, saying to Him, ‘Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?’” “Jesus said, ‘I am.’” “And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.” You see, when push came to shove, Jesus did exactly what He knew that His Father in heaven wanted Him to do. He was silent in defending Himself in regard to charges made against Him because He was going to bear the charges that God has against us. But He immediately answered the question related to His own identity. That would not affect His ability to suffer for our sakes; it would enhance it to an infinite degree. “Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?” “I am”, He says.

This was the very reason that the high priest tore his clothes and proclaimed that what Jesus had said was blasphemy. However, he did not investigate to see whether this was really true. Why the rush to judgment? It was because they hated Jesus without a cause. They hated Him because they knew that He was against everything that they stood for; a hypocritical, self-righteous religion of sacramental and ceremonial righteousness based upon self-effort and self-evaluation, and not upon what God Himself had said that He wanted them to do. Oh, how blind were these ultra-religious men; that they could act with such haste to condemn the Lord of

Glory! Jesus' confession of His identity is what led to His sufferings on the cross and to His death. Even so, our open confession of our identity as Christians may lead us to suffering and even to death. I hope that you will remember how it takes the revelation of the Holy Spirit to perfectly convince a person that Jesus is the Son of God. No one can say, "Jesus is Lord", except by the Holy Spirit. (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 12: 3) And 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 2, verse 6 says: "However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing." "But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age knew, for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory."

If Jesus Christ has been revealed to you in the gospel, and you take Him as your Savior and Lord, then your identity as a Christian will always be secure. Why? Because your being a Christian, and your continuing to be a Christian, rests entirely upon what He has done for you. Any works that you do for Him are done by faith in Him. You now see your great dependence upon Him to do anything spiritual; without Him you can do nothing. But by Him you become a New Creature. Paul says: "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." Paul's new identity after he believed in Christ was that it was no longer he that lived, but Christ who lived in him. Is this the way that you see yourself, dear Christian? Is your Old Man, your Old life, crucified with Him? Do you now live by faith in the Son of God, realizing that He gave Himself for you so that you could live this new life? This new life is righteousness, peace, and joy, in the Holy Spirit.

**And 3<sup>rd</sup> – Jesus suffered being spit upon and being beaten for telling the truth; but Peter escaped suffering when he said that he did not know Jesus.**

In verse 64, the high priest said, "You have heard the blasphemy!" "What do you think?" "And they all condemned Him to be deserving of death." "Then some began to spit on Him, and to blindfold Him, and to beat Him, and to say to Him, 'Prophecy!'" "And the officers struck Him with the palms of their hands." These verses show us the ugliness of fallen human nature. These are religious men of the highest offices in the land, and yet they act like this toward the Son of God. Let us see, however, just how much God was involved in all of this. In Acts 2: 23 Peter says in his sermon on the Day of Pentecost, "He was delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God." And in Acts 4: 27 it says: "For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done."

All of the sufferings of our Lord Jesus were determined beforehand by our great God and Father, in order to fulfill His purpose, that through His sufferings that we might find the forgiveness of all of our sins. I hope that you can see that the Lord Jesus is full of tender mercy for sinners who know that they need His help. It is truly amazing how even though Peter tried to follow Jesus into His sufferings, that really it was Jesus who during His sufferings was looking out for Peter. Peter tried to be there for Jesus when He died, he failed miserably. Verse 70 says – "And a little later those who stood by said to Peter again, 'Surely you are one of them; for you are a Galilean, and your speech shows it.'" "Then he began to curse and swear, 'I do not know this Man of whom you speak!'" "A second time the rooster crowed." "Then Peter called to mind the word that Jesus had said to him, 'Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times.'" "And when he thought about it, he wept."

Jesus suffered terribly for telling the truth about Himself, but it was all for sinners like Peter. Peter denied that he knew His Lord, and he escaped suffering because of it. But it was not as though Jesus was not with Peter in this time of his worst failure. For in Luke chapter 22, verse 60 it says this: "But Peter said, 'Man, I do not know what you are saying!'" "Immediately, while

he was still speaking, the rooster crowed.” “And the Lord turned and looked at Peter.” “Then Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said to him, ‘Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.’” “So Peter went out and wept bitterly. Peter had failed terribly, and the Lord Jesus looking at Him at that point, shows us that He was not so much condemning Him with that look, but saying to him, “You see Peter how much you need my sufferings on your behalf.” Indeed, in looking back a few verses to Luke 22, verse 31, we find Jesus saying to Peter: “Simon, Simon!” “Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat.” “But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren.” Jesus knew, even then, how badly Peter would fail, how Satan would for a time gain an advantage over Peter.

But what is so very wonderful is that Jesus’ prayers for Peter meant that he belonged to Jesus; that He was one of His. Because of Jesus’ prayers, Peter would return after he had sinned and denied his Lord. He would repent. He would be restored. And He would even become very useful in service to the Lord later on. Oh, dear Christian, don’t ever believe that once you have come to know Jesus savingly, that you can ever lose your salvation. Your salvation does not rest on your best performances, and is not determined by your worst failures. It rests on Jesus’ having suffered for you, prayed for you, and His having seen you go through the most awful of lapses into sin and unbelief. Your salvation rests upon Him, and your repeated confession of your faith in what He has done for you and what He is doing for you, and what He will do for you by His precious and powerful grace. Let your heart be strengthened by this truth today.