

Series: Acts

Lesson #68

Title: Holy Spirit Conviction

Scripture: Acts 16: 35-40

Date: May 7, 2009

Place: Sovereign Grace Baptist Church in Princeton, New Jersey

I. A TRUE CONFESSION OF CHRIST IS PRODUCED BY CHRIST JESUS THE LORD.

Acts 16: 35: And when it was day, the magistrates sent the serjeants, saying, Let those men go.

The magistrates had a change of heart and decided to let Paul and Silas go. In this we noted that: Natural causes may produce a mere change of heart but a mere change of heart produced by natural causes is not a true confession of Christ. The new heart within a sinner is created by Christ Jesus, repentance and faith are of God and so the mouth confesses from this heart by the grace of God through the power and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit. So the glory in our confession of Christ is to the God of peace, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, through the work of the Holy Spirit.

II. CONFESSING CHRIST MEANS STANDING FOR THE GLORY OF GOD OUR SAVIOR, WHICH WE DO ONLY BY THE SUFFICIENCY OF GOD'S GRACE.

Acts 16: 36: And the keeper of the prison told this saying to Paul, The magistrates have sent to let you go: now therefore depart, and go in peace. 37: But Paul said unto them, They have beaten us openly uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast us into prison; and now do they thrust us out privily? nay verily; but let them come themselves and fetch us out.

Paul believed God from the heart. So Paul's refusal to leave the prison privately after being treated shamefully in public was for the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. We saw that the strength to stand for Christ in the face of such opposition also comes through the sufficiency of God's grace. We looked at the example of Stephen.

III. CONFESSING CHRIST IS NOT ONLY PRIVATE BUT ALSO PUBLIC.

Not that the magistrates were claiming to confess Christ but in them we see the same principle in those who may think a confession of Christ is only a private matter. By releasing Paul and Silas, the magistrates were confessing that Paul and Silas were innocent. Yet by doing it privately they show that they wanted the public to think no differently of them. Paul knew therefore that they were not really admitting any wrongdoing, nor were they really confessing Paul and Silas to be right. We noted this as an example of how some actually attempt to confess Christ, which is no confession of Christ at all.

An observation was brought to my attention after the message. Someone said that Peter's denial of the Lord might come to the minds of some as they hear all this. That is a good

observation. I want to take a moment to show you how Peter's trial supports what we looked at in these three points.

First, the Lord Jesus Christ taught Peter that the confession produced from the heart which Christ has made new must be sustained by the power of Christ through the Holy Spirit.

Matthew 26: 31: Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad. 32: But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee. 33: Peter answered and said unto him, Though all *men* shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended. 34: Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. 35: Peter said unto him, Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the disciples.

- **Proverbs 16:18: Pride *goeth* before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.**
- **Proverbs 28:26: He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool: but whoso walketh wisely, he shall be delivered.**
- **Proverbs 29:23: A man's pride shall bring him low: but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit.**

Our old fleshly carnal nature hates to be denied. I think, in his fleshly way, as we do when we are lifted up with pride, Peter probably thought that by cutting off the soldier's ear, he was proving to Christ that he would not deny him. But listen to what the Lord taught him.

Matthew 26: 52: Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. 53: Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? 54: But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?

- **Zechariah 4:6: Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This *is* the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts.**

This was truly the instruction that Peter was being taught through this whole ordeal--as the Lord Jesus Christ prayed to the Father so we ought to come our High Priest in time of need.

So then Peter was taught and we by him, what we will do without Christ strengthening us.

Matthew 26: 69: Now Peter sat without in the palace: and a damsel came unto him, saying, Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee. 70: But he denied before *them* all, saying, I know not what thou sayest. 71: And when he was gone out into the porch, another *maid* saw him, and said unto them that were there, This *fellow* was also with Jesus of Nazareth. 72: And again he denied with an oath, I do not know the man. 73: And after a while came unto *him* they that stood by, and said to Peter, Surely thou also art *one* of them; for thy speech bewrayeth thee. 74: Then began he to curse and to swear, *saying*, I know not the man. And immediately the cock crew. 75: And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly.

- **1 Corinthians 10:12: Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.**
- **John 15:5: I am the vine, ye *are* the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.**

Keep in mind here how Peter wept bitterly. This goes well with our subject tonight.

Subject: Holy Spirit Conviction

Proposal: A true confession of Christ arises from true Holy Spirit conviction.

HOLY SPIRIT CONVICTON CONVINCES A SINNER THAT WE ARE BUT SINNERS, WITHOUT STRENGTH. AND THAT WE MUST HAVE CHRIST OUR SUFFICIENCY, OUR FORGIVENESS, OUR ALL.

I. A mere conviction one falls under when he has been caught and fears punishment is a legal conviction which results in a false confession.

In the magistrates, we see a demonstration of a mere legal conviction.

Acts 16: 37: But Paul said unto them, They have beaten us openly uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast *us* into prison; and now do they thrust us out privily? nay verily; but let them come themselves and fetch us out. 38: And the serjeants told these words unto the magistrates: and they feared, when they heard that they were Romans.

A. They feared, when they heard that they were Romans.

They did not fear because they had done this against the true and living God; they did not fear because they had done this against his Christ; they did not fear because they had done this against the Lord's ambassadors; nor did they fear that they had done this against those babes in Christ for whom Christ died.

The magistrates show us a totally selfish fear which comes from a mere legal conviction.

- They feared the punishment that would happen to *them*
- They feared losing *their* seats of respect before the people
- They feared losing *their* seat of power
- So they were in a panic to somehow right their wrong immediately.
- This is a mere fleshly, legalistic conviction.

B. Look back at the jailor to see the difference grace makes.

Acts 16: 29: The jailor...came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, 30: And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? This jailor did not know how to say what he felt and he said it the only way his old flesh knew to say it. But this is a statement of one who has beheld something of just how holy God is and what a sinner he is. A true Holy Spirit conviction cries out, "How can a God so holy have anything to do with a wretch like me!" True conviction has something to do with seeing our sin in light of the revelation of the holy, just and good God; true conviction is not only that I have sinned, but

that I have sinned against God. When we have been given a true fear of God in the new heart, the sinner takes sides with God and his holy justice against himself. God whom he has sinned against becomes the focus and not man. **Psalm 51: 4: Against thee and thee only have I sinned and done this evil in thy sight! that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.**

II. Unless God has wrought the work which lays a sinner prostrate before God a sinner will desire to be saved only on his own terms.

Acts 16: 39: The magistrates came and besought them and brought *them* out, and desired *them* to depart out of the city.

A. The magistrates went through the motions.

The magistrates came--they complied outwardly with Paul. They besought Paul and Silas; they even brought them out of the prison. (Note: This was truly enough for Paul to leave with a good conscience before God that Christ's honor had been upheld.) But the beseeching of the magistrates shows us the same principle which is at work in a false conviction, a false repentance and faith and a false confession, that is, the magistrates pleaded for Paul to do things their way--**they desired *Paul and Silas* to depart out of the city.**

B. This shows us that there may be much sincerity and yet no true repentance.

Example: Remember Esau--**Heb 12:17: For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.** Esau's tears fell because after he had given away his inheritance for a bowl of beans, he later changed his mind and "would have the blessing." He desired with all the lust of his flesh to have his father's inheritance. But he was rejected by Isaac his father because Esau found no place of repentance and Isaac found no place of repentance in Esau. The place of repentance is the heart made new by the Holy Spirit. In the new heart a man repents not to have his Father's inheritance but he repents to have his Father. Not to merely have his sins forgiven, or to escape hell, but to know his Father whom he has sinned against has forgiven him.

C. Let's see an example of true conviction, of true repentance, of true faith, of a true confession

Luke 7: 36-48.

Did you catch what the Lord said, **47: Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.** Much is forgiven her, not because she wept much, but because she loved much. Her bitter-sweet tears were because of what she had done to one who had forgiven her so much. She rejoiced over Christ, she loved Christ; she rejoiced to know her Lord whom she had sinned against had forgiven her.

D. A repentant sinner will be sincere toward God, he will beseech God, BUT it will be from a heart that rejoices in God's Way.

The jailor came to Paul as unto the Lord. When we are brought to cry out, "How can such a just God have any dealing with such a sinner as I am" then we stop boasting in our will, and we stand afar off, we will not even be so prideful as to lift up our eyes unto heaven, but we weep from the breast, saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" Lu 18:13.

THEN GOD MAKES CHRIST ALL TO US. I Corinthians 1: 30: But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption. When a sinner is made to behold that in the all-wise Lord Jesus Christ has by himself fulfilled God's will, by himself fulfilled God's law for me, that Christ is the power and wisdom of God, then God makes Christ Wisdom unto that sinner; when a sinner beholds that in the faithfulness of Christ the righteousness of God is manifest then God makes Christ Righteousness unto that sinner; when a sinner is made to behold that the holy character we must BE to be accepted into God's presence is Christ "who by his one offering has perfected forever them that are sanctified" then God has formed Christ in that sinner and Christ becomes sanctification unto that sinner; when a sinner is made to behold that they are bought from sin, death and hell with the precious blood of Christ and that we are now the purchased possession of Christ then God has made Christ Redemption to that sinner! Then the sinner rejoices in God's terms--here are God's terms, **31: That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.**

The magistrates knew nothing of this, Esau knew nothing of this, but that wretched girl who poured out perfume on his feet, who washed his feet with her tears and dried them with the hairs of her head--she knew! Peter knew. This is what caused Peter to weep bitterly. It is this same power and grace that made Peter willing to turn from his sin to believe on Christ that kept Peter and that taught Peter his constant need of Christ and that came and recovered Peter after he denied the Lord.

Now notice what grace taught Peter. When the Lord came to recover Peter he told him how he would be bound and killed later in his life. **John 21: 18: Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. 19: This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me.**

This time, Peter did not say a word about whether or not he would deny the Lord when the time of his death came. But read what he wrote in his epistle instead. **1 Peter 4:11: If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen...5: 5:...and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. 6: Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in**

due time: 7: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you. 8 ¶ Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: 9: Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world. 10: But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. 11: To him *be* glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

Conclusion:

A true confession of Christ is produced by Christ Jesus the Lord in the heart he has made new through the Holy Spirit. Confessing Christ means standing for the glory of God our Savior only by the sufficiency of God's grace. This confession of Christ which God works in the sinner is a public confession. A true confession of Christ comes from true, Holy Spirit conviction which has convinced the sinner that he is sin and has sinned against the holy, just and good God.

What happened to the magistrates? The magistrates went through the motions. They used their own hand to make vainly make amends for the sin of their own hand. The whole of the matter was an attempt to save themselves from confessing their unrighteousness while putting Christ and his witness out of their midst. Therefore the magistrates walked out of the prison back to their chief seats, there conscious soothed, while they truly remained captives in the prison of sin and death.

What happened to Paul and Silas? By God's grace, by the power and grace and wisdom of Christ, Paul and Silas stood for Christ's honor and his glory. They publicly confessed Christ the Righteous. And truly as verse 40 says, "**And they went out of the prison.**"

Matthew 16:25: For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.

I pray God will give you grace to lose your life then shall you find Christ your Life. Amen.