

# Matthew 10:32-33

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/matt/matt-10/matthew-1032-33/>

*Jesus puts His disciples on notice of two contrary truths. The first is that the cost of faithfulness is the scorn and persecution of men, but the reward for confessing Jesus before men is His approval and future celebration of them before His Father in heaven. The second is that the reward of denying Jesus before men is the fickle approval of men, but the cost will be Jesus' denial of their place of honor within His kingdom.*

The parallel gospel accounts of this teaching are found in Mark 8:38, Luke 9:26, and Luke 12:8-9.

The next word is *Therefore*, which indicates what Jesus is about to say is a conclusion or takeaway to His previous thoughts. Throughout the preceding verses, Jesus has revealed the risks of following Him. He has presented the difficulties and dangers (Matthew 10:24-25). He has assured them that God knows everything and will evaluate everything (Matthew 10:26-27). He has defined the alternative and its consequences (Matthew 10:28). And He has assured them of God's love for them, and the great value God places on each of their lives (Matthew 10:29-31).

Jesus gives His disciples two parallel thoughts to consider. Everyone's confession or denial of Christ *before men* in this life *will* have a corollary confession or denial before the *Father who is in heaven*.

To *confess* means to "agree with." The Greek word for *confess* is "homolego." It literally means "speak the same as." When someone confesses their sin. They are agreeing with God and sharing the same perspective that He has about their attitude or behavior, namely that what they have done was wicked and wrong. But the direct object of confession in this passage is not sin—but Jesus Himself. Jesus says *Everyone who confesses Me*.

What does it mean to *confess* Jesus? The answer to this question is found in the indirect object of the confession, *before Men*. *Everyone who* openly identifies with Jesus as the Messiah by publicly speaking and acting in such a way that demonstrates that He is the Divine King confesses Jesus *before men*. Confessing Jesus *before men* is a life that is lived boldly for Him: a life of obedience. This is an echo of what Jesus taught His disciples in Matthew 5:13-16 where He told them to be salt and light.

"Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven."  
(Matthew 5:16)

Confessing Jesus before men is a living and active faith, lived out in real time by obeying Jesus's commands of how to live life in this world. It is a faith that gives outsiders reason to wonder at the reason for the hope being displayed in the lifestyle of the faithful believer (1 Peter 3:15). But

it is not a mere external display of religious piety like the Pharisees performed. Jesus condemned the hypocrisy of such behavior.

We saw in Jesus's Sermon on the Mount that God cares deeply about our inner life ("psuche") (Matthew 6:1, Matt 6:2-4, Matt 6:5-6, Matt 6:16-18.) But Jesus desires our redeemed inner life, that includes the resurrection power of His Spirit, to spill over into our daily living. When we consider these truths alongside the outer boldness Jesus encourages, we conclude that God is not at all interested, much less impressed, with an outer display of righteousness to be approved by men. Such behavior is devoid of love for Him. He is pleased by our acts of righteousness that comes from within our hearts which are harmonized to His heart. In particular, this takes the form of service to others, particularly those who cannot return any favors to us in this life.

Because in Greek the form of *confess* ("homolego") is in the future tense in both occurrences, a better translation would read: *Everyone who will confess... I will also confess*. When Jesus guarantees that He *will confess everyone who confesses* Him, He is making an absolute statement. In logic, this is known as an "All S are P" statement. All S (confessors) will be P (confessed.) Jesus is promising His disciples that if they will *confess*, openly acknowledge, and identify with Him through the trials of this life, that He *will confess*, openly acknowledge, and identify with them at the judgment. This would apply to the process of rewarding believers for their deeds done in this life.

But the contrary is also true. *But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven*. To deny Christ *before men* means to live and act in fear of *men* over fear of God. It means choosing to identify with them instead of Jesus. If we do this, we *will* be denied by Jesus *before His Father in heaven*.

What does it mean to be denied by Jesus *before His Father in heaven*?

The primary thing that will be denied is the right to reign with Christ. Revelation 3:21 makes clear that it is only those who overcome as Jesus overcame who will receive the reward Jesus received, to reign over the earth. This passage also states this explicitly:

A) "For if we died with Him, we will also live with Him;

B) If we endure, we will also reign with Him;

B') If we deny Him, He also will deny us;

A') If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself"

(2 Timothy 2:11-13)

This chiasm makes clear that those who believe on Jesus, and are therefore baptized into His death through faith, are children of God, even if they are faithless (the A and A' statements). However, when it comes to rewards, only those who endure in living faithfully will receive the reward of reigning with Jesus. Those who deny, or refuse to *confess* Jesus *before men* will be

denied participation in the reign (The B and B' parts of the chiasm). The center part of any chiasm is the main point, and in this passage Paul echoes this teaching of Jesus, that Jesus *will* reward those who faithfully serve, and do not shrink back from serving due to fear. In 2 Timothy, Paul particularly exhorts his disciple Timothy not to fear going to his death for the gospel even as Paul is about to die for his testimony.

The cause of such denial is clearly a lifestyle of unfaithfulness to Jesus from fearing the opinions and persecutions of *men*. The cause does not appear to be a lack of belief in Jesus as God's Son; that would not fit the context since Jesus is speaking this directly to the twelve. Therefore, any future denial of His disciples would not involve being sent to eternity in the Lake of Fire, because Jesus has already and forever saved them from these dreadful consequences when the disciples first believed that He was the Son of God and their Messiah. They have the irrevocable gift of eternal life through their previous faith in Jesus (John 3:16, John 10:28-29, Romans 10:4). The efficacy of this gift has nothing to do with their continued faithfulness or cowardice (Ephesians 2:8-9) and everything to do with what Christ will accomplish through His life, death, and resurrection.

What Jesus *will deny* them is a place of honor alongside Him in His eternal kingdom. If they do not serve Him now, He *will deny* them their reign later.

In Mark 8:39, Jesus warns His disciples, "For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels."

But if we are faithful to *confess* Him *before men*, then He promises that He *will confess us before His Father in heaven* and inherit a position of authority alongside Him in the new earth.

The book of Romans also expresses this thought.

A) "that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord,

B) and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved;

B') for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness,

A') and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation."

(Romans 10:9-10)

The argument Paul makes in this passage is that the core of all faithful living is faith. This is consistent with Jesus' teaching to His disciples. Jesus is asking them to believe that how Jesus will reward them later is worth suffering for now. Romans 10:9-10 is a summary of the immediate context where Paul quotes Deuteronomy 30, which states that faithful living, living that results in life rather than death, comes through believing what is true, confessing that truth, then acting upon that belief. Jesus desires that His disciples believe His words, meditate upon His words, then make life choices consistent with those words.

## **Biblical Text**

**Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven.**