

One way that people like to make their voices heard is by organizing a protest march. At times, the protesters are speaking out about something which another group is adamantly opposed to, so that group organizes a counter-protest. While we live in a nation that protects free speech, emotions can grow to a fever pitch that there is hatred for those who hold the opposing point of view. To avoid the possibility of violence between the two opposing groups, police may separate them enough so that they cannot interact with one another. While it is easy to know on which side of the issue the participants of those opposing protests are on, it is not as easy to know if this topic is discussed with a group of acquaintances. Those who are passionate on one side of the issue will be quite vocal. Others might prefer if the whole topic were just dropped so that they would not have to reveal where they stand on the issues.

That can be fine with the social issues which arise in our nation. But remaining silent is not an appropriate response when it comes to our faith in Jesus. Jesus once said, *Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven. But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven. (Matt. 10:32-33)* When you stood before the Lord's altar on the day of your confirmation, you made this promise: Do you intend to continue steadfast in this teaching and to endure all things, even death, rather than fall away from it? **R: I do.** Have we kept this promise, or have we been reluctant to speak God's Word in an uncomfortable situation? I think each of us would have to admit that at one time or another, we found ourselves in a situation in which we have either denied our Lord, or at least kept quiet when we should have spoken up and revealed the faith that was in our heart. This evening we will consider the question which was asked of Peter: SURELY YOU ARE NOT ANOTHER OF THIS MAN'S DISCIPLES? We know that Peter ended up denying His Lord three times. If we were asked the same question, I. There ought to be enough evidence to convict us of this, and in addition, II. There ought to be a full confession from our lips.

When Jesus was arrested, Peter was the one who drew a sword wanting to defend Jesus. After Jesus stopped this, all of the disciples forsook Jesus and fled for their lives. Still, Peter wanted to know what was going to happen to Jesus now that He was arrested. Even though Jesus had warned him that he would deny Jesus three times, and even though Jesus saw to it that all of His disciples would be safe even when He was arrested, still Peter did not stay away, but came to the high priest's house. After Peter was allowed into the courtyard, he stood around with people who were warming themselves by a fire as they waited.

That is when Peter was recognized. **“Surely you are not another of this man's disciples? the girl asked Peter.”** (17) He was recognized as one of the disciples who followed this Jesus. This girl asked him about it, whether she was correct in identifying him as such. Even though our reading this evening does not include each of the three times this question was put to Peter, we know that they kept asking him this, adding a little more evidence to prove it each time. Since he had been with Jesus for the past three years, people identified Peter as a follower of Jesus.

Someone once asked this question, “If you were accused of being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?” It was this type of outward, visible evidence which the people in the courtyard were using against Peter. Surely he was a disciple of Jesus because they saw him with Him, they saw Peter in the garden when Jesus was arrested. His dialect was clearly Galilean, so obviously he was there because of Jesus, and so on.

There was evidence available which these people could point to proving their statements about Peter. Can the same be said of us? Is there external evidence that could identify us as followers of Jesus? Have we allowed Jesus to become so much a part of our lives that anyone with whom we come into contact would readily be able to know that the love we have for our Savior does affect every part of our life? The fact that we assemble here in His house might be one piece of evidence to show that we love Jesus for what He has done for us. But even apart from church, others should be able to point to the way we act, the way

we speak, the points of view which we espouse as evidence that we are not like others who do not look to Jesus in faith. This is nothing more than doing what Jesus encouraged, letting our light so shine among men that they may see our good deeds and glorify our Father which is in heaven. These actions ought to be visible enough that everyone is able to point to them as evidence of the faith that lives within our heart.

Peter's love for his Savior had compelled him to follow Jesus right into the camp of the enemy, even though that was a very foolish thing to do. Jesus had warned him. But Peter did not consider Jesus' warnings, for he felt that he could handle himself. He made himself an easy prey for Satan. His faith was not able to stand up to the challenges put to him by the enemies of Jesus. Peter felt that his life was in danger if he admitted that he was a disciple of Jesus, and he may well have been in great danger. So his instincts thought only of survival, so he decided that he had better deny all of the charges against him.

As they continued to point to more evidence, his denials became even worse. Finally he ended up cursing and swearing that he never knew who this man was about whom they were speaking. Peter had refused to stand up for Jesus. He had lost the faith because he had denied his only Savior. From the words which came out of his mouth, he wanted to separate himself as far as possible from Jesus. He thought that he was saving his life here on this earth, which may be, but he was losing the life eternal which Jesus was offering to him.

We can easily see the folly of Peter's actions. But there is the possibility of us doing much the same thing, if we are in the company of those who have no use for Jesus. If we are at a gathering, and some of the topics of the day come up, would we boldly speak what God has to say on some of the social issues which are no longer politically correct, such as gay marriage, abortion, etc.? As God's holy children, it is that important that boldly speak Jesus' word of truth, even though we might be inclined to be silent, and so deny our Lord much as Peter did so as to save face. It is important for us to speak up, for it may be that it is only through our testimony will that person ever hear the truth of God's word.

So instead of denying any real association with Jesus, rather there ought to be a full confession. If we were to be put on trial as being a Christian, we would hope that they would have plenty of evidence against us, and then we would gladly, willingly add our own signed confession to it to make the charges air tight. Nothing ought to hinder our confession of our Savior, not even the consequence of temporal death. In history there have been those whom we call martyrs, who gave up their life because they refused to deny their Lord and Savior. The possibility of that happening to us today is rather remote. But still we dare not see how close to the fire we can get without being burned. That is, we dare not see how much we can live like the unredeemed children of this world so that we will not be recognized as followers of Jesus. We live in a hostile world, even though our country has what it calls religious freedom. Still Satan is alive and well and will use any means that he can find to get us to deny our Savior like Peter did, or deny Him by keeping silent when we ought to speak up.

Maybe in the past, we have failed to give a clear, full testimony about Jesus when we were put on the spot. If that is the case, we must be like Peter, who went out and wept bitterly over his sin. But also, like Peter, we will want to return to Jesus and receive His full and complete forgiveness. Along with that will also be a strengthening of our faith so that we will be able to withstand the bold attacks of the devil. According to legend, Peter also died a martyrs death at another time, boldly refusing to deny His Savior again.

Association with Jesus may not always be the most popular thing in this world, but it is not something that we will want to hide. In fact, the very opposite is true—we want everyone to know and be able to see from the way we live our life that we have received the forgiveness of sins which Jesus died on the cross to win for us, and now we want to show forth our love for Him in every aspect of our lives. May He so fill our hearts that we will always be ready to affirm that we surely are another of this man's disciples.