

## Our Testimony Given Us

Matthew 10:19-20

Confession of faith

Andy Lanning, 9/13/20

Beloved congregation in our Lord Jesus Christ, at the occasion of confession of faith we have opportunity to consider the speaking, the confession, the testimony of a child of God—not only the young man who stood up tonight in front of the congregation and spoke and confessed his faith, but the entire congregation which stood up together and said, “I believe in God the Father, Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth,” and all of the rest. At the occasion of confession of faith, we have opportunity to consider our speaking and our confessing.

And as we consider our confessing, that brings to mind another testimony and another confession that the church of Jesus Christ makes, and that is the confession and testimony that is made in persecution for the sake of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. The confession we made tonight was a confession made before friends, a confession made before fellow believers. There comes a time in the life of many of God’s children—that may come to pass in our own lives—that we must stand before enemies of the gospel, those who are hostile to the faith, and say before them, “I believe,” and testify before them the truth of the Lord Jesus Christ. And so at the occasion of confession of faith we have this question: how do we do it?! How are we going to do that before kings and governors, as Jesus said, before councils and synagogues? How are we going to confess the name of Christ then, with our life on the line? We may ask that question about confession of faith now: how is it that a young man or an entire congregation say before the church and before the world, “I believe these things”? The answer to how we do it is this: it is given us. It is given us! Our confession is given us. Our confession is worked in us by Jehovah God through the power of his Spirit, so much so that in that day when you stand before a king with your life on the line, it is not you that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you. What a relief! What a relief for the child of God that the mercy of God to us is so great that even in that most trying hour, the grace of God shall not fail us but shall give us our testimony and shall give us our confession by his Spirit.

Now let’s consider that truth of our speaking and our confession tonight under the theme “Our Testimony Given Us.” In the first place consider Christ’s promise; in the second place consider the Spirit’s speaking; and in the third place consider the Father’s glory.

### OUR TESTIMONY GIVEN US

- I. Christ’s Promise
- II. The Spirit’s Speaking
- III. The Father’s Glory

In this chapter Jesus is describing the persecution of the church. And he’s describing in our text one very specific and unique aspect of that persecution. As he says in verse 19, it is the persecution of *delivering you up*. “When they deliver you up.” And being delivered up means that instance and that moment when we stand before the court and are judged for our faith. The persecution Jesus is describing is that unique aspect of our suffering of being on trial in the courts of this land and the courts of this earth. And that is a unique aspect of the persecution that the church of Jesus Christ must endure.

There's all kinds of other aspects to our persecution too. There's that aspect of our arrest when they lay hands on us, as Jesus says in the parallel passage in Luke 21. They lay hands on us. They come in the early hours of the morning, busting down the doors, rousing us and our families out of bed, putting us in the back of the squad car, and bringing us away to the jail. That's an aspect of persecution: laying hands on us. There's the other aspect of our persecution of being imprisoned, so that we are robbed of our freedom. We can't go to work, we can't go to school, but are in the jail cell or in the prison. That's part of our persecution. There's the physical beatings and scourgings that may be part of our persecution, and then even perhaps our martyrdom, losing our lives for the sake of the gospel. All of that is part of the persecution of the church of Jesus Christ, but Jesus calls attention to another aspect of that persecution, and that is the trial itself. After we've been arrested, after we've been held, imprisoned for a time, we're brought for trial. And that trial is persecution. In fact, that trial can make God's people afraid. When we think ahead to those things, yes, there's something terrifying to the flesh about an early morning raid on our home; but what about standing in the courts of the land with the most powerful magistrates of the land assembled against us and angry at us and against our cause, and there we stand alone, with all of the eyes of the world upon us—or all of the eyes in that courtroom—and we have to speak; and the accusation is read to us, and we have to give an answer for ourselves before that hostile judge, who has our freedom or our imprisonment in his power, who has our life and our death in his hand. Many of us, with a natural fear of public speaking anyway, even before a friendly group, think about that trial with some trepidation. It's part of the persecution of the church of Jesus Christ: they deliver us up.

And Jesus indicates that that trial will be sometimes a trial before the church courts and sometimes a trial before the courts of the land, the state courts or the civil courts. Jesus indicates that in verse 17: "Beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues." The "councils" does not refer to the Roman councils that had the rule of the civil state, but to the Jewish councils that had the rule of the church. We could read there the word "consistory." They shall deliver you up to the consistory or the classis or the synod. That will be part of the suffering of the people of God in their persecution for the cause of Jesus Christ, that the consistories will try them, a hostile consistory and a hostile classis and hostile synod, so that the people of God will stand before the august assembled power and authority of the church and have to give an answer for the charges against them.

And then there is the trial before the civil state. Verse 18: "And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles." And that refers to the earthly judges, the kings and governors in those days taking care of the judging of cases that came before them. We will be brought before the judicial system of the land and stand before the dock in the court and have to give an answer for the charges against us.

And this will be persecution because our cause in this world is the cause of Jesus Christ. That's what we'll be on trial for. That won't be the charge. The charge will be something like this: "You trouble us. You trouble us! You stir things up." And you can go through the Scriptures and find what the charges were against God's people from the beginning to the end. "You trouble us. There's something wrong with you." But Jesus explains the reality of those trials when he says, "Ye shall be brought before governors and kings *for my sake*." For my sake. "It's because you belong to me, because I have given my life for yours and covered you in my blood, because I have given you my Spirit and made you my own and brought you into my Father's house and given you life from heaven so that you're different. There's not something wrong with you; you've been delivered from what's wrong with you through my blood. You

belong to me. And if they said about me, 'You trouble us; you divide us; you're Beelzebul,' well, what more are they going to say about you?" It's for the cause of the gospel that the people of God will be brought before the church courts and before the world's courts.

And there's something about that order that teaches us how it goes for the church of Christ in the world. Christ lists the councils and synagogues first, and then the kings and governors. The church courts first, and then the civil courts. It doesn't take too much imagination to see how that might go. Things have settled down now, but there was a time this year when I wondered whether it would be a Christian driving past on 84<sup>th</sup> Street who would call the news organization about a church meeting for worship, or a Christian who called the police and brought us up on charges for meeting for worship. It's not hard to see how it might go for the church in this world. This is part of our persecution, and it's something that can cause the child of God some fear.

Jesus indicates that this persecution applies especially to the ministers of the gospel and the elders in the church. Jesus here is speaking, after all, to his disciples, those who had the official call from him to proclaim the gospel, which official call to proclaim the gospel belongs to the ministers of the gospel today. Ministers of the gospel must be prepared to be delivered up to the church courts and to the civil courts of the land for the cause of the gospel of Jesus Christ and for the cause of his truth. I say that to you young men tonight. In the Protestant Reformed Churches we need ministers of the gospel. We need young men to go to seminary and study for the ministry, God calling them in their hearts, and finishing seminary, being called by God through the church and ordained and installed into office. You young men must know that it will be especially the ministers who will be delivered up to the church courts and to the courts of the land. I say that knowing that that warning will not scare you young men away, because the cause is not your own. The cause is not the cause of men, which is no cause and which is a failing cause. The cause is the cause of Jesus Christ, so that preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ boldly and suffering for it, you will be given a great privilege by your heavenly Father.

Though Jesus indicates that this applies especially to ministers of the gospel, he also teaches that this applies to the whole church of Jesus Christ. This will be part of the persecution of the church in the world: we will be delivered up. That comes out especially in Luke 21, the parallel passage to this, where Jesus gives the very same instruction, but there does not give it only to the twelve but gives it to the whole church as part of the signs of the times. Before the day of the Son of man comes, they will deliver you up to the councils and the synagogues, and they will bring you before kings and governors for Jesus' sake for a testimony against them. And that's because every believer has the office of believer. Every believer has the office of prophet, priest, and king. And every believer confesses the truth of the Lord Jesus Christ and belongs to Jesus Christ as his own possession, as his own brother, and has been brought into the kingdom and covenant of God through the blood and body of the Lord Jesus Christ. And every believer, belonging to that cause of Christ and belonging to Christ, is hated by the world. It's not just the ministers whom the world hates, but every believer that the world hates, so that the believers who confess the truth and who confess Jesus Christ as the only Lord over against every lie must also expect this persecution: they shall deliver you up, and you will have to give an answer before men for the charges that are brought against you.

And what does Jesus say about this trial, when we stand before men? He says something completely unexpected, something that does not fit with the wisdom of our flesh. He says this: "Take no thought how or what ye shall speak." Take no thought how or what ye shall speak. What does that mean? In the first place, "take no thought" means don't worry about it. That's

Jesus' language in other places, like Matthew 6 for example: "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink." That means don't worry about what you shall eat or what you shall drink. Don't be consumed with fear and terror about what you shall eat or what you shall drink. And that same language is used here: "take no thought how or what ye shall speak," meaning, don't worry about it; don't fret about it; don't be filled with terror. "What am I gonna say?! What am I gonna say when they call me on trial?"

But the second thing "take no thought" means is don't plan what you're going to say. Don't write out a script of what your defense will be. Don't go through several drafts of a document with your statement of what you will say before the courts, whether of the church or of the land. Take no thought *how* or *what* ye shall say. Don't plan the content, and don't plan the manner—or the tone, or any other thing that belongs to that speech. Jesus says that same thing in Luke 21:14: "Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer." Don't even meditate before what ye shall answer. You don't have to have an outline of what you will answer in your head, or a few main points or a few key phrases or a couple of words you've gotta hit when you answer. Take no thought how or what ye shall speak.

And that flies against all human logic. That flies against everything our flesh is telling us to do. Our flesh is saying, "Prepare! Get ready! Have *something* ready! Have *something* in mind!" How many hours don't go into the preparation of a defense today even for earthly matters in the courts of the land? How many hours don't the lawyers spend crafting the perfect defense for their client, and how much money don't the clients pay to have that perfect defense crafted? The wisdom of the world is: get ready! Get ready! Prepare, plan, premeditate what you're going to say. And over against that Jesus says, "Take no thought. Take no thought how or what ye shall speak. Settle it in your hearts now that ye shall not meditate on what you are going to answer."

This is the most important speech of our lives! Freedom or imprisonment hangs in the balance. Life or death could be the result of that trial. And yet Jesus says, "Take no thought how or what ye shall speak."

How would that go then? That would mean this, that after that raid, when we are imprisoned and awaiting our trial, we don't have to sit in that holding cell going over and over again, "Now what am I going to say? What am I going to say to these charges?" As we're being led from the holding cell to the judge, we don't have to be panicking now: "I don't know yet what I'm going to say. I don't know what my words are going to be." We don't have to be worried: "I've never been a good speaker. Words have always failed me just when I need them." You don't have to worry about any of that. Take no thought how or what ye shall speak.

Why not? Well, here's the promise of the Lord to encourage our hearts: "For in that same hour *it shall be given you* what to speak." It shall be *given* to you by God. *It. It* shall be given you. What is "it" that shall be given to us? Well, "*it*" is what we shall speak. "It" is everything that we shall say. It's the how and the what. It's the content of what we shall speak; it's the tone with which we shall speak, whether a sweet, honeyed tone or with a sharp, polemic tone. It may be a long speech that is given to us to make. It may be only a sentence or two. It may be, even, dead silence. There were times when Jesus was tried when he kept silent, and that silence was the testimony. Maybe that will be what is given to us to speak in that day. But whatever it is, it shall be given us to speak.

That means as we're sitting in the holding cell we don't have to be fretting ourselves: "What am I gonna say? What am I gonna say?" It shall be given us—maybe while we're sitting there, so that suddenly we know, "This is what I have to say." Maybe we don't know yet even as we're standing before the judge and he's reading the charge and about to ask us, "How do you

plead? What do you have to say for yourself?" In that moment, in that very hour, it shall be given us what we are to speak.

This is the mercy of God to his fearful people who think about persecution in all of its aspects, in all of its horror, and become afraid of it. And that goes for all of the aspects: that raid in the middle of the night or that imprisonment or that physical beating or that death or that moment when we're on trial. We become afraid of those things. We look up against those things. God comes to us in Matthew 10, which is outlining for us how bad the persecution's going to be, and he says, "But in that persecution there's no worry needed by you. You don't have to fret. You don't have to be afraid. I will give you what you are to speak."

That cuts off our flesh, because our flesh says, "But if I can just find the right words, I can convince them!" Let's say it's a church trial. Let's say that the one accused by the false church in this synagogue and before this council of which Jesus speaks must give an answer. The flesh thinks, "When I stand before that classis, when I give an answer, *I can convince them!* I've got the words. I know how to put them together. My argument is sound. It's airtight. It cannot be gainsaid. There's no way, after they hear what I have to say, that they'll be able to go through with this persecution." That's the flesh. That's the flesh that says, "I know the way, and I have the words." Jesus cuts that off, and he says, "It's not you. Especially in that moment, it must not be you that speaks. You don't have the words. I do. And it will be given you in that hour what ye shall speak."

That raises the question: how is it that it will be given us? And Jesus answers that too by calling our attention to the Spirit. It is the Spirit who gives us the words to speak; it is the Spirit who speaks. As Jesus says in the text, verse 20: "For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you."

Who is this Spirit who speaks and who gives us the speech? This is the Spirit of our Father. This is the Spirit of God. The Bible teaches us about the Spirit of our Father that he knows everything about God. He knows the deep things of God; and there are deep, deep things in God, for God is infinite. There is no bottom to his depths. His wisdom is infinite; his power is infinite; his glory and his mercy and his righteousness are infinite. And the Spirit knows it all. The deep things of God. And the Spirit brings out those deep things of God. He exegetes God, as it were, or brings out of God the truths that are in God to us. The Spirit does that in the word of God, which he has inspired. The Spirit does that by causing us to know the word so that we know the deep things of God. The Spirit is the one who knows the mind of the Lord. He knows the mind of God. He knows the will of God. He knows the whole counsel of God, the entire eternal counsel concerning every single thing. That's who the Spirit is, the Spirit of our Father, the Spirit who knows our Father and knows our Father's intent with that trial.

And this Spirit is the Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the one speaking in this passage. He's the Spirit who has been given to Christ and who knows the mind of Christ and who knows the love of Christ for his people and who knows all the blessings and all of their richness that our Savior has won for his people by his cross. That's who the Spirit is. He knows Christ and the mind of Christ and the will of Christ for us. That's the Spirit who will speak and who will give you and me what to speak in that hour. What a thing! What a thing, that that Spirit who knows the whole counsel of God, that Spirit who is the Spirit of Christ, will be speaking! I can't wait to hear that speech! I can't wait to hear it from your mouth; I can't wait to hear it from my mouth in that day. Maybe there won't be a friendly ear in the audience; maybe we'll all be separated from each other. But the speech in that day will be from the Spirit and therefore a

testimony against the Gentiles, a testimony against the unbelievers, which means it will be a testimony of Jesus Christ and his truth.

Jesus uses some very strong language to describe what the Spirit's speech will be like. He says in verse 20, "For it is not ye that speak"—it is *not ye* that speak—"but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh *in* you." It is not ye that speak? That does mean this, that as we're being led before the judge the Spirit will knock us out cold, and we'll be in a coma while we stand before the judge; or we'll be a robot and something will be said, but we'll have no concept of what that is. Jesus makes clear in Luke 21 that he will give us *a mouth and wisdom* (Luke 21:15, that parallel passage). "I will give you a mouth and wisdom." That means you'll understand the speech. That means that I will know what I am saying. And the sound of that speech will be my voice box, and the words of that speech will be formed by my tongue and by my mouth. Ye shall speak; *but* it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.

What Jesus is teaching here is four S's with regard to this speech. The source, the strength, the sovereignty, and the splendor is not ours. None of those things are ours. But the source, the strength, the sovereignty, and the splendor is all God's.

The source is the Spirit. The source is not my mind. The source is not even my new man that is alive and that knows Jesus Christ. The source of my speaking is not in me. With regard to the source, it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you. It is the Spirit who will give us the words to speak. Maybe those will be words of Scripture that we've memorized when we were children or more recently. Maybe it will be a speech that the Spirit gives us new, that we've never heard before, in those days. But the source of that speech is not from me, not from any part of me, but from the Spirit of Jesus Christ alone. With regard to source, it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.

With regard to strength, the strength to speak is not mine, but the Spirit of our Father who speaketh in us. It takes strength to speak. It takes strength to speak against the church that's charging the child of God with sin. It takes strength to speak against the courts of the land that are unjustly charging the child of God with sin. That takes strength. There's the temptation to wilt. There's the temptation to take it all back and acknowledge that they have a point and they're right after all. Oh, it takes strength to stand before men, especially those august faces of men, and say no to them and yes to the truth of Jesus Christ. With regard to the strength of that speech, it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you. What a joy for the child of God. He won't falter, by God's grace, in that day, for it is not ye that speak. If it were ye that spoke, you'd falter and I'd falter. But it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.

Source; strength; sovereignty. That is, upon whom does this speech depend? Or, upon whom does the outcome depend? With regard to sovereignty, it's not us that speak. Nothing depends on whether we know the right words to say. It depends entirely upon the Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ, who knows the mind of God and who knows the will of Christ. Depend on me? How foolish. How foolish. It depends upon the Lord Jesus Christ and his Spirit alone. With regard to the sovereignty, it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.

And with regard to the splendor of it—that means, where does the glory go? These speeches that we're going to give, these will be the greatest speeches in the world. Probably nobody will record them. It happens sometimes that these kinds of speeches get recorded, so that we hear about them yet today. But most of these speeches are lost to history. Nobody hears them except those wicked men who have us on trial. But these will be the greatest speeches in the

history of the world, greater speeches than the speeches of the prime ministers or the presidents, who could move a nation to courage in the face of a hostile foe and move a nation to fight and stand in those earthly wars. Those speeches, which the world hails as great speeches and which we can appreciate too, are nothing compared to these speeches that the Spirit will give us in those days. But when that speech is all finished, the child of God who has stood before the rulers and spoken will not puff up his chest and say, “Wow, what a speech I just gave. Oh, what a speech I just gave.” The child of God will be on his knees, if not literally then in his heart, thanking God and giving all the splendor and honor and glory to him. With regard to the splendor, it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.

It is the Spirit even who gives our diaphragm movement so that air is pumped through our vocal cords and they vibrate at just the right frequency. It is the Spirit who forms our mouth and our tongue to say those words, so that what comes out of our mouths as instruments in the hand of the Spirit is the Spirit’s speech and the Spirit’s word to the glory of God.

That’s offensive to me. That’s offensive to my flesh. It shouldn’t be. It shouldn’t be offensive. But there’s something offensive about that to my flesh. “It is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you”? Right away there’s something in my flesh that says, “But wait a minute. Wait a minute. You’re going to make us all robots. You’re going to make us all stocks and blocks. You’re gonna lead us into antinomianism and hyper-Calvinism. You’re gonna lead us into the thinking that we don’t have any callings in this life.” Why is that so offensive, that it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you? Why is that so offensive, that God built the ark? Why is it so offensive that Noah didn’t build the ark? I warn myself here, I warn all of us, that that reflex is misplaced. There’s something amiss in our spiritual thinking and in our theology if our reflex is to deny *that it’s not us*, but the *Spirit* that doeth these things in us. Let us heed the words of Jesus Christ, our Lord, who said, “In that day, when you stand before men and you’re delivered up to them, *it shall be given you* what ye shall speak, because I’m gracious, because even this I don’t leave you alone for; even this I give to you—even your speech I give to you; and it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.” And that truly is glorifying to God.

There’s a testimony that we give at our confession of faith in the church or our confession of faith before the world and its courts; there’s a testimony that we give of the one cause that’s victorious in all of the world. That victorious cause is not antichrist—not antichrist. Antichrist is nothing. Oh, he’ll be something to us. He’ll be something to us. Every headline will be about him. Nobody will be able to ignore him. We’ll feel him. We’ll feel his chains and his prisons. We’ll feel his persecution. But he’s nothing. He’s nothing! His cause isn’t the cause in this world—his cause is the cause of man, and that’s not the cause in the world that’s victorious. It’s the cause of God, our heavenly Father, which is the cause of his glory; which is the cause of Jesus Christ, the center of his whole counsel; which is the cause of the salvation of his church and the forgiveness of her sins and the bringing home of her to glory. That’s the cause that’s victorious in the world. That’s the cause that in his grace he has brought us into and made us part of, uniting us to himself. And when you’re alone before a packed house and being charged unrighteously with all manner of wickedness and you give your testimony, which is given you by the Spirit of Christ, what will be heard by all is: that cause of man is failing even now. Though it’s a thousand against one, that cause of those thousand men is failing before the cause of that one, for the cause of that one is the cause of God in Jesus Christ. Then even our death will be to the glory of God, as we are brought home to live with him forever with all the others who have suffered and been beheaded for the cause of Jesus Christ.

At the occasion of confession of faith we have the opportunity to think about our speaking, our confessing, our testimony. How is it that this all happens? It is given us, to God's glory. Amen.

*Our Father which art in heaven, we thank thee for thy Word to us this evening. Wilt thou bless it to our hearts and apply it that we may have courage in these evil days and that we may see the victory of our Lord Jesus Christ, which victory is in his cross, that we may be fearless in the face of persecution, including that aspect of persecution that is our trial. Wilt thou give us courage in that day and give us the words to speak, to thy glory and to the confounding of the man of sin. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*