

What We Say – Deny Christ or Deny the Flesh (Matthew 26:69-75; Acts 4:7-31)

In Matthew 26:69-75 we read about Peter's denial of Christ. The world came to him three times, and each time he spoke, he said that he did not know Jesus. It led to bitter weeping (v.75). The next thing we know, he has returned to fishing (John 21:1-17). In Acts 4:7-31 we see the world again questioning Peter concerning Jesus, and this time he denied his flesh and identified with the risen Christ. It led to the ground being shaken and the speaking of God's word with boldness (v. 31). Once we are born again into the kingdom of God, it is inevitable that the world is going to question us concerning our association with Jesus. All day long we are given opportunities to deny Christ or to deny our flesh. Rarely are they as dramatic as the encounters Peter had. Often they come in the form of chit chat, small talk, passing words. "How are you doing today?" "What's up?" "Where are you from?" Etc., etc., etc. All day long, every day, 365 days a year. The questioning goes on and on.

In our daily communication, we either deny Christ or we deny our flesh by the things we say. If we speak after the manner of our flesh, that is, what we were before Christ laid hold of us, we deny Him with our words. If we speak after the manner of the reality of the new man, that is, we communicate the reality of what we are now in Him, then we deny our flesh and our words identify us with Christ. Each has a ramification on the quality of our experience as a believer.

The negative experience comes when we continue to speak out of what we were before Christ laid hold of us. When asked where we are from when we are on a trip, we say "Little Rock," and we reap all the benefits of being from Little Rock. When we speak as a Jew or a Gentile, we will reap the benefits of that. When I am a Levy, I will reap the benefits of that, good and bad alike. **When our speaking is based on what we were before we were born again, we are denying Christ.** By speaking after the flesh, we give life to our flesh, and no good thing dwells there. The law of sin and death comes to life and is at work in our flesh. We find ourselves weeping all the time, living in defeat, and eventually turning to our career instead of to God for our significance. We struggle with lust, anger, bitterness, strife, etc. We easily fall into sin. We are saved, but we are not enjoying the benefits of being in Christ. We may even be miserable.

The positive experience comes when our speaking describes what we are in Christ Jesus. When we tell the truth. When we say what God says about us. When asked where we are from when we are on a trip, we say "Heaven," and we reap all the benefits of being from heaven (Philippians 3:20). Instead of speaking as a Jew or a Gentile, we speak as a new creation, a holy nation, a chosen race, and we will reap the benefits of that reality (1Peter 2:9). When I am a child of God rather than a Levy, I will reap the benefits of that, good and bad alike (1Peter 2:10). When someone asks us how we are doing today, we should tell the truth and say "I'm blessed". **When we speak the truth of what we are in Christ Jesus instead of what we were before He laid hold of us, we are denying our flesh.** We are identifying with Christ and the new life that is in us, that God has put in us. And when we do this, a marvelous thing begins to occur. We begin to experience the reality of the new man in our daily experience.

By denying our flesh and identifying ourselves with Christ in us, we see strongholds fall, illnesses healed, captives delivered, the very kingdom of God in our

daily living. We have joy, peace, patience, etc. (Galatians 5:22-25). We are delivered from sin, and move from victory to victory. We experience the joy of God's salvation in Christ Jesus. Now that's something to get happy about. That's something to talk about. That's something to shout from the rooftops.

To the extent that we let the new man affect our thinking and our speaking, to that same extent we will experience the reality of the new man in our daily living. What we say either denies Christ or denies our flesh. We either identify ourselves with what we were before Christ or with what we are now that we are in Christ. Either way it will shape our experience while we remain present on this earth, resulting in defeat or victory, life or death, anxiety or peace, anger or joy, etc. "Death and life are in the power of the tongue" (Proverbs 18:21a). So "put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh..." (Romans 13:14). That includes what we say. "Put on the new man which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth," and "laying aside falsehood, **speaking truth**," (Ephesians 4:24-25a) God's truth concerning what you are in Christ Jesus. The New Man is in the house. Let Him out. Let Him shout.