

## *True versus False Witness*

Mark 14:53-72

Series: Christ our Focus

### 1. Introduction:

- a. This portion of Scripture employs the Markian Sandwich Method of teaching.
  - i. A<sup>1</sup> – Peter’s False Witness – Verses 53 and 54
  - ii. B – Christ’s True Witness – Verses 55-65
  - iii. A<sup>2</sup> – Peter’s False Witness – Verses 66-72
- b. We no longer focus on Judas, or the failure of all the disciples in general, but on Peter and Jesus individually.
  - i. While Peter is in the courtyard being a false witness, Christ is being persecuted and bearing a righteous witness to the truth.
- c. We must consider what it means to bear witness under persecution.

### 2. Verse 53-54 – Peter at a distance

- a. Peter follows Jesus at a distance into the courtyard of the high priest.
- b. The gap in Peter’s discipleship does not go well with his boast a short while earlier to die with Jesus if necessary.
- c. This distance foreshadows, ominously, the upcoming denial
- d. He is mingling with the very people that arrested Christ, warming himself up by their fires.

### 3. Verses 55 –Seeking Testimony –

- a. The proceedings violate Jewish Jurisprudence
  - i. Trial needed to be in the prescribed place.
  - ii. In a capital case most of the Sanhedrin had to be present and the person was presumed innocent until proven guilty.
  - iii. A guilty verdict required a second sitting on the next day.
  - iv. Both sittings had to be during the day.
  - v. Never on the eve of festival.
  - vi. Witnesses were to be warned of against lying
- b. Expediency—John 11:50 Nor do you understand that it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish."

### 4. Verses 56-59 – False witnesses

- a. The Sanhedrin resorts to false testimony—they are the law breakers.

- b. Jewish Law demanded two corroborating witness in this type of case
  - c. However they might try, Jesus cannot be discredited.
    - i. **Daniel 6:4** Then the high officials and the satraps sought to find a ground for complaint against Daniel with regard to the kingdom, but they could find no ground for complaint or any fault, because he was faithful, and no error or fault was found in him.
5. Verses 60-62 – Silence
- a. Christ silence is a demonstration of pure meekness and fulfilment.
    - i. **Isaiah 53:7** He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth.
  - b. Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?
    - i. A full Christological confession in the mouth of the High Priest
  - c. I am
    - i. Christ admits to being the Messiah and the Son of the Blessed—in essence he claims sonship with the Father.
    - ii. Christ, openly, before his enemies confesses the truth about who he is, knowing the full ramification that were to follow.
6. Verses 63-65 –
- a. Tearing the garment representative of great sorrow
    - i. The High priest seizes on Christ words as self-evident blasphemy.
  - b. Irony –
    - i. The Sanhedrin stands on the law and Jesus sits in the dock, but in reality the Sanhedrin breaks the law and Jesus upholds it.
    - ii. The testimony sought to destroy Jesus does not come from the false witnesses but from Christ himself
    - iii. Jesus stands in trial before these men but these men will one day stand in a greater trial before Jesus.
    - iv. The high priest and Sanhedrin convict Jesus of blasphemy but it is them that are the blasphemers in not accepting the father’s witness.
    - v. In utter mocking and humiliation – Jesus will be exalted
7. Verses 66-68 –Peter’s false witness
- a. Mark does not tell us Peter’s motives or his justifications

- i. Nothing justifies the actions of Peter.
- b. While Jesus was undergoing a formal trial, Peter is undergoing a different trial at the hands of a slave girl.
- c. Peter becomes the center of attention.
- d. Peter stumbles over himself to disown Christ.
  - i. I neither know nor understand what you mean.
    - 1. Greek—*Oida*—theoretical knowledge
    - 2. Greek—*Epistamai*—practical knowledge
  - ii. And he went out into the gateway and the rooster crowed.
- e. A further change of location – farther away from Jesus

#### 8. Verses 69-72

- a. In an effort to save his own life, Peter for a second time must deny his association with Jesus Christ.
- b. Now the crowd accuses Peter and for a third time (the boldest of all accusations) Peter denies his association (the boldest of all denials).
  - i. The Greek is coarse and explicit, “He began to curse and swear, ‘I do not know this man you speak of!’”
  - ii. Peter will not even pronounce the name of Jesus.
  - iii. Remember, this has all been prophesied.
- c. Luke allows us a deeper look,
  - i. **Luke 22:60-62** But Peter said, "Man, I do not know what you are talking about." And immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed. (61) And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the saying of the Lord, how he had said to him, "Before the rooster crows today, you will deny me three times." (62) And he went out and wept bitterly.
- d. Peter’s renunciation is the first open denial of Jesus in Mark. The fact that it comes from the chief apostle makes it more severe.
- e. Peter’s example is a warning for the any disciple, that faithful witness to Jesus is most important (an most easily betrayed) in simple and ordinary actions and words.
- f. It is in everyday living that disciples are true martyrs.
- g. Finally -
  - i. This passage reminds us that no Christian is beyond the greatest of sins, nor is he beyond the promise of grace!

#### 9. Benediction:

- a. **Romans 5:20-21** Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, (21) so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.