

If you watch any TV at all, you are probably familiar with what are called the Miranda rights.

**1** *“You have the right to remain silent. Anything you say can and will be used against you in a court of law. You have the right to an attorney. If you cannot afford an attorney, one will be provided for you. Do you understand the rights I have just read to you? With these rights in mind, do you wish to speak to me?”*

These are the rights of any accused that must be read to them by the arresting officer, by law. Failure to do so could result in that accused going free, regardless of how guilty they might be. That is an interesting thought, you have the... **2**

## *Right to Remain Silent*

*Acts 4:19-20*

**3**

**19** But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge; **20** for we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard."

The context here is that the Jewish Council was surprised at the boldness of Peter and John, and attributed that boldness to their having been with Jesus.

*Acts 4:13*

**4**

**13** Now as they observed the confidence of Peter and John and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were amazed, and began to recognize them as having been with Jesus.

But, remember, these are the same ones who fled and denied Christ on the night of His arrest. What changed? What happened to these disciples that ignited within them the courage to speak so boldly for Christ and to face up to the council? Typically, a leader's execution is not a usual motivation for strengthening the hearts of his followers, but it had that effect in this case, and the Peter who was frightened to the point of denial by a maid-servant stands before the Council and rejoices that he is counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Christ. We might point to the brutal death of Jesus at the hands of the Romans, or maybe it was witnessing the ascension of our Lord into heaven, or perhaps it was the power of the Holy Spirit that came upon them at Pentecost. The thing is, that, it was not **just** Christ's death nor **just** His life that transformed them, it was the complete and total acceptance of all that Jesus was, as the promised Christ of the Old Testament, all that He was as beloved of God sent to save man from his sin, and all that He is as the head of the Church reigning in heaven.

*Heb 1:1-2*

**5**

**1** God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, **2** in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.

God appointed Christ as heir of all things. Peter tells us in...

*1 Peter 3:21-22*

**6**

**21** Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, **22** who is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, after angels and authorities and powers had been subjected to Him.

It becomes pretty easy to see the sequence of things that establish Jesus as God’s Son, the chosen and first born, the Christ.

**7** A) Christ fulfills all that the Law and Prophets pointed towards

**Matt 5:17**

**8**

**17** "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill.

Before the Old Law would no longer be in force, the provisions of the prophecies in it that pointed towards the coming of the messiah had to be fulfilled. Christ claims to be the fulfillment of those prophecies, including His death at the hands of...

**9**

### ***“Lawless Men”***

After His resurrection and the time He spent with the disciples and prior to them going into Jerusalem to wait for the coming of the comforter...

**10** B) Peter and John were with the disciples when Jesus ascended into heaven

**Acts 1:9-11**

**11**

**9** And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. **10** And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was going, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them. **11** They also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven."

A quick aside, something I didn’t realize was that there apparently is some discussion concerning who was with Christ at the time of His ascension. When you look at the account in Acts, I suppose that there might be a couple of different ways to understand it...

**Acts 1:12-14**

**12**

**12** Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away. **13** When they had entered the city, they went up to the upper room where they were staying; that is, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas the son of James. **14** These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer, along with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.

After the ascension in verses 9-11, we see that “THEY” returned to Jerusalem. In verse 13 the “THEY” entered the city and went to the upper room where they were staying. All eleven disciples are named. It is pretty obvious that they were all with Christ at His ascension. But verse

14 is where the discussion begins. They were devoting themselves to prayer along with the women, Mary, the mother of Jesus, and His brothers. Were the others mentioned with Jesus at the ascension? The scriptures are not real clear, but the eleven were. Back to the point we were making.

Peter and John were there and witnessed it, along with the other disciples. Note what Peter says in...

*Acts 1:15-17*

**13**

**15** At this time Peter stood up in the midst of the brethren (a gathering of about one hundred and twenty persons was there together), and said, **16** "Brethren, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit foretold by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus.

The scriptures had to be fulfilled. That is the point that supports faith. The scriptures were all fulfilled, by Jesus and the events that surrounded Him.

**14** C) The power of the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples

*Acts 2:1-4*

**15**

**1** When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. **2** And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. **3** And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. **4** And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.

Which one of these was the reason for Peter and John to find the strength to stand up for Jesus and preach His Gospel? I don't think it was any one event, I think it was a combination of not only all these things but everything that they knew about Jesus, His teaching, His life, everything that came to the surface in them. However the strength came; these two men, before the Council, made a statement. There is a story...

*By Bill Otten*

*Years ago in a North American University, 2,000 students listened for almost one hour to a famous atheist. She ridiculed religion, defied God and attacked the Bible. At the end of her speech, a young Christian girl stood at the back of the auditorium. She didn't have any clever answers for all the arguments of the atheist; but her 'Best Friend', someone she had loved dearly, had been criticized and misrepresented that day. To the amazement of all gathered, she suddenly began to sing... "Stand up, stand up for Jesus, ye soldiers of the cross, lift high His royal banner, it must not suffer loss."*

*The atheist stopped speaking; the students and the teacher were stunned. Then suddenly, in a different section of the auditorium, a young man stood to his feet and joined in singing "from victory unto victory, His army shall He lead." Two others joined them, and suddenly one by one, all over the auditorium others began to stand, and lift their voices, until hundreds of students were singing... "From victory unto victory, His army shall He lead, till every foe is vanquished and Christ is Lord indeed." The atheist stormed from behind the podium and said she would never be back. (Praise God!!!!) What she tried to build for hell in one hour, had been torn down in a few*

*moments by the commitment and courage of a young Christian, who refused to be a "secret disciple!"*

I can't speak to the veracity of this story, but it has been around for quite a while and there are different variations of it on the web. The point of the story is that even though we may have...

**16**

## ***The Right to Remain Silent***

Do we really? It seems that there were two things that Peter and John saw as making silence impossible...

**17**

- C) A divine command
- D) An inward impulse

**Acts 4:17-18**

**18**

**17** But so that it will not spread any further among the people, let us warn them to speak no longer to any man in this name." **18** And when they had summoned them, they commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus.

There's a warning for you. Notice how they respond to it...

**Acts 4:19-20**

**19**

**19** But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge; **20** for we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard."

Therein is the question; Do we have a right to remain silent about Jesus. Peter and John would disagree with that. They might suggest that the facts of Jesus make silence an impossibility for the believer or a Church. A Church must be an active working Church, and a Christian cannot be a silent Christian, unless he is a dead Christian. Quickly, with the remainder of the time that we have there are a couple three points we want to look at...

**20**

- 1) An inward necessity which makes silence impossible.

Peter makes it pretty plain that he and John had no choice but to keep speaking. Why? What is it about faith, about being a disciple, that demands not being silent about it, that demands one to stand up for Jesus. Jesus told His disciples to go into all the world and preach the Gospel. That is the divine commandment that was part of the impetus for Peter and John. Christ wants His followers to spread His Gospel.

**Acts 8:4**

**21**

**4** Therefore, those who had been scattered went about preaching the word.

Here then is the next point...

**22**

- 2) A command which makes silence sinful

Pay close attention to very last words which our Lord left with the Apostles, according to the two accounts of them which are given in the Gospel of Matthew, and here in the beginning of Acts, that in principle also apply to all Christians everywhere...

**Acts 1:8** 23

**8** You shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."

Did you ever think what an extraordinary thing it is that the last statement of our Lord and Savior was that the truth about Him should be spread throughout the world?

**Rom 10:14** 24

**14** How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher?

Brethren, we all have a responsibility to help in the spreading of God's word, the Gospel. Otherwise, "How will they call on Him in whom they don't believe?"

The last point we want to make is...

25 3) The bond of unity makes silence impossible

When you look closely at Peter's statement here, it becomes apparent that he is saying he has no choice in his response to Jesus the Christ and what He did. Peter is saying that he had to continue preaching and teaching, regardless of what the council's orders might be.

26 **20** for we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard."

That thought turns our attention to our own hearts. What do we choose to do with Jesus? What do we choose to do with the commandment of God to preach and teach Jesus to others? This idea of unity is twofold...

27 A) Unity with Christ

**Rom 8:16-17**

**16** The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, **17** and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.

28 B) Unity with each other

**Col 3:14-15**

**14** Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. **15** Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful.

The point is this; If we are truly faithful followers of Christ. If our faith is founded on Jesus Christ and the love of God that sent Him, then how can we "Remain Silent?" That is our right, we don't have to say anything, well we do if we choose to follow Christ, but we have the right to choose not to. The dynamic is that if we are one with Christ, then like Peter and John, we will speak out. If we are not one with Him, then will. Remember we all have the right to... 29

***Remain Silent***