

A Confession Describing A Christian

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[0 : 00] Well, please turn with me now to Acts chapter 24. Acts 24 tonight. We're going to look for a short time at verses 14 to 16.

! We find Paul having been called upon here to give a defense against the accusations that were made against him.

In verse 14, this is what he said. But this I confess to you, that according to the way which they call a sect, I worship the God of our fathers, believing everything laid down by the law and written in the prophets, having a hope in God which these men themselves accept, that there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust.

So I always take pains to have a clear conscience towards both God and man. And when you read a passage like this, it comes to you fresh, as it were, because everything there is as if you were there when this event took place.

It's the same when you go to the Gospels and you read about the ministry of Jesus in the Gospels. You find yourself, because you know the Word of God is true and truthful, it's as if you were standing there at the time that Jesus performed a miracle or spoke in whatever way he spoke.

[1 : 33] And tonight, because of that, in a sense, we are in this courtroom. Because a court case is opening up before our eyes.

The Apostle Paul is under accusation. He's been brought to this courthouse with these accusations against him.

That he was a troublemaker. That he was a ringleader of a sect, which they called a Nazarene sect. That he was a profaner. That he had uttered things against the holy temple of God.

And this man, Tertullus, was specifically hired to present the case against him. Here is Paul having to answer for himself, but Tertullus opens up the case against him.

He is, if you like, the prosecutor. He's a lawyer. He's a professional. He's used to such situations.

And so he begins to present this case, first of all, by flattering the governor who is presiding over the case.

[2 : 44] And then he goes on to specify what it is they found Paul guilty of. He was massaging the ego of Felix to hopefully make it easier for Felix to accept his arguments in the case against Paul.

And the interesting thing for us tonight is that as Paul made his defense, he made his defense in the form of a confession. A confession of what he believed.

A confession of why he was a Christian. A confession of what exactly were his thoughts and what he's speaking of when he was brought into custody.

And that makes it very personal, doesn't it, to the apostle's own way of life. Because there are four things tonight that I want to just mention as the basis of his defense or his confession.

He says here that there was nothing they can prove against me, and then verse 14. But this is my confession to you. And in that confession, he has four things that are essential to our way of life as Christians.

[4 : 03] Four things that will always be true of a Christian life, or should be true of our confession of being Christians. They all have this I, this personal emphasis, this confession.

Paul says, firstly, I worship. I'm worshipping this God, the God of my fathers. Secondly, I believe.

And he goes on to specify what he believes. I worship the God of our fathers. I believe everything laid down by the law and written in the prophets. In other words, that's the Old Testament, as Paul then had it.

We have the New Testament, including the writings of the apostle since those times. But everything up to that moment that God had revealed and given to be the body of scripture of the Old Testament, Paul says, I believe that.

I accept that. And then he says, I have a hope. I have a hope. I have a hope. I have a hope. I have a hope. I have a hope. Which these men themselves accept.

[5 : 11] I have a hope that there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust. I worship. I believe. I have a hope. And the fourth one is, I take pains.

In other words, I strive. I do my very utmost. To do what? To have a conscience. A clear conscience towards both God and man.

Let's look at these four I's. The four points of his confession. Let's put them to ourselves as we're going through them. And apply them to ourselves personally.

As to where we stand in relation to those points of his confession. I worship. Now he's saying here, I according to the way which they call a sect.

And it's a wonderful thing in the book of Acts. Especially in the early chapters of the book of Acts. You find the way that these disciples of Jesus described themselves. Or lived. Or preached.

[6 : 15] Or whatever. Witnessed to Jesus. It came to be known as the way. The life they followed. And that follows into our own description sometimes.

In the island here. For a long time of people who have come to be Christians. Come to follow the Lord. They are in the way. They are in the way. They are in the way. They are in the way. There is a way that they follow.

And that's exactly how it was. For the apostles and the disciples and the Christians of Paul's day. They were known as people of the way. This particular way of life. This particular path of life that they followed.

They were on this way. They spoke of this way. We're on the way. We're on the way to heaven. We're in the way that worships God. We're in the way that believes in Christ as our Savior.

It was clearly for them. A path that was marked out. They weren't trying to discover the way. They weren't trying to find out. What is the way to know God?

[7 : 13] What is the way into eternal life? They knew that. God had provided that for them. He gave them the details. In his word. And they were following that way.

You'll find some people. And you young folks as well. You'll find this as you grow through the different stages of life. You'll find people saying to you. There's more to life than just believing the Bible to be God's word.

And you have to add to that. You have to put other things along with that. Because to confine it just to the Bible. It's just being too narrow. And anyway you'll be told that the Bible actually spoils things for you.

It doesn't allow you to do certain things that otherwise you'd want to do. Well God is saying to us. If we take this as being God's word as we do. That this word that he's given to us.

Is a word that is sufficient in itself. To tell us about God. To tell us about ourselves. To tell us about the way of life.

[8 : 13] To tell us about what it is to be a disciple of Jesus. Jesus. And when you become a disciple. When you come to trust in the Lord. You enter into this way. Jesus himself spoke in those terms didn't he?

He spoke about the broad way. And the narrow way. He spoke about the broad way that leads to destruction. And he says there are many that find it. That walk in it.

But few are those. Who walk in the narrow way. The way that leads to life. Few there be that find it. You young folks.

Older folks. Myself included. Make sure that we're following the right way. Not the way that seems right to ourselves. Not the way that we would prefer. Not the way the world will actually commend to you.

But the way that God specifies. The way of faith. The way of trusting in Christ. The way of repentance from sin. And coming to know his forgiveness. And it's according to that way.

[9 : 17] That Paul is saying. I worship. It's a fundamental mark. Of being a Christian. And being Christians together. That we are worshipping people.

That we are a people who love to worship the Lord. Whose concern to worship him. Is not just because it's something laid down for generations. Or something that we've been taught.

Good though that is. The way of worship is the right way. We worship God because we love God. Because we think God is worthy of our worship.

That's why we're here tonight. We're here tonight. Not to listen to a human voice merely. But to worship God. We are here not just out of habit. Aren't we? It's not just because we've done it before. Or because our ancestors did it. We're here surely. Because we're absolutely convinced. [10:14] That God is worthy to be worshipped. And we worship him. And as we engage in worship. We actually come to present ourselves as worshippers.

Before God. So worship. Worship dominates. Every Christian life. Every life that's come to know God in Christ. And worship. That our ancestors did it. Is also important. We have all the facilities nowadays. That our ancestors didn't have. Like live stream. Wonderful facilities that can be used. And are used. By yourselves. And many other congregations. To actually beam. The gospel message live. Into our homes. And there are many people. In this district. And many other districts. That value that. And it will tell you. And I've been told often. That it's different to just. Listening to a recording. On CD. Or digitally online.

[11:11] Or whatever. Because live stream. They'll tell us. Is just. As if you were actually there. Almost like being there. But the Bible is telling us.

If we can be there at all. That's where we should be. We are not to neglect. The assembling. Of ourselves together. Hebrews tells us. As the custom of some is. What a great privilege. It is to be. Worshippers together. Of this God. God. And. It's the God of our fathers.

He says. I worship the God. Of our fathers. In other words. We tonight. Have entered into this. Worship of God.

As our fathers did. We follow. In a long. Line. Of worshipers. Stretching back. All the way through. To the earliest stages. Of human life. In the Old Testament.

[12:08] The God. We're worshipping. Tonight. Is the God. Abraham worshiped. The God. Noah worshiped. The God. All of these saints. In the Old Testament. Worshiped. Down through the generations.

We're not worshipping. A new God. It's the God. Of our fathers. In other words. The God. Of the promises. The God. Of his word. The God. Of our salvation. The God. Of the great. Events. In history. Where God's. Wonderful work. Of grace. Was manifested. Among human beings. This God. That's the God.

We worship. Tonight. He is our God. Not a God. We have. Invented. For ourselves. I worship. Aren't you. Delighted. To be here. Tonight. To worship God. Let me say. To the young folks. You have no idea. What a great. Encouragement. It is. To us.

[13:03] Older ones. To see. Young people. Like yourselves. Joined. In the worship. Of God. It's absolutely. Superb. It's something.

That hugely. Encourages us. As older people. And we are older. In this church. We are older. In age. And as you.

Commit yourselves. To coming together. Like this. To worship. Be assured. It's not just something. That's good for yourselves. But it's good for us. To see it as well. And you do our hearts good. It's good. To worship the Lord together. Well that's the first thing. He's saying. I worship. The God. Of our fathers. Secondly. He's saying. I believe. Believing everything. Laid down by the law. And written. In the prophets. But you notice. A very important. Connection here. What he's saying is. I worship.

[14:03] Believing. The worshipping. And the believing. Are inseparably. Tied together. For Paul. Worshipping.

And believing. Cannot be detached. From each other. And when we come. To worship God. As we do tonight. It involves. The working of your mind. You don't come.

To worship God. Without thinking. About what you're doing. You don't worship. But it's not. Into some sort of. Ritual or form. There is that too.

But it's not. A mere ritual. It's in fact. Above ritual. Because. It's something. In which your heart. Is engaged. And tonight.

As we come. To think about. Loving the Lord. Loving the worship. Of our God. It's important. For us to realize. That. Our worship of God.

[14:59] Our loving of God. Is a. Thinking thing. We use our minds. We give our minds. To it. We apply ourselves. Thinkingly.

To what it is. To worship God. And as we engage. Our minds. And as God helps us. Use our minds. In worship. So we're able to say.

With the apostle. Believing. I worship. I worship. Because I'm a believer. There's an inevitability. About my worship. I worship.

I believe. And what he's saying. Is I believe everything. Written. Laid down. And written. In the law. And the prophets. As we said. The Old Testament. As we have it.

Paul is saying. I believe. Everything. The whole. Of what God. Had given them. Had given them. To be written down. Through the years. Of the Old Testament. Paul is saying. I believe everything.

[15:56] That God. Has revealed. Of himself. I don't choose. What to believe. And what not to believe. I don't choose. What seems relevant. To me. And leave out. The other bits. I don't choose.

The things. That seem. To be. Relevant. And appropriate. For this generation. That I belong. To compare. To the generations. Before me. In the likes of Abraham. Isaac. And Jacob. I worship. Everything. I worship. I believe. Everything. And as I do. So I worship. You see. There's plenty. People. Today. Will tell you.

That. When you come. To this Bible. And the young folks. Especially. Need to bear this in mind. You'll be told. That there are certain things. In the Bible.

That you don't really. Anymore believe. The way they believed. When they were written. Miracles. Such as Jesus performed. Or even.

[16:49] Some of the apostles. By the power of God. You don't believe that anymore. Things in the Bible. That just don't fit in. With present day. Thinking. Or things in the Bible.

That seem to be. Utterly contradicted. By the discoveries. Of science. Since the apostle. Wrote this. He would never have written. These things. People will tell you.

If he had known. What's been discovered. By science. But. This is either. The word of God. Or it isn't. Do we really think. That God.

Did not take account. Of what would be true. About every generation. Of human life. Right down to the end. Of the world. When he caused. His word. To be written. Do we think. Do we think.

That God. Would have put things. In other terms. Other than. That they are. In the Bible. Of course not. Otherwise. It wouldn't be God's word. And he wouldn't be.

[17:41] The author of it. There are no failures. With God. And he has always. Anticipated. What will be true. Of human life.

In other words. Whatever was relevant. To the apostle. And remember. Scripture is always relevant. You'll find people saying.

I need to make this passage. Relevant. To the young folks. Of today. Of today. Or I need to make this. Relevant. To the people. I'm speaking to. No. You don't need to make it relevant. It is relevant. You bring out.

Why it's relevant. You bring out. Why it is the word of God. And why you believe it. And so. For all of us tonight. Young or old. It's so important.

That we. Follow what the apostle is saying. Believing. Everything. That God has laid down. In his word. If we don't believe. Everything. That's been written to us. In the Bible.

[18:35] By God. Then we're really saying. Well. Well God is mistaken. Or God. Really should have put this. In another way. And of course. That's not the case.

And the greatest problem. Or one of the greatest problem. And it's a problem that belongs to the church. And I'm talking here about. The wider church in our country.

And throughout the world. Not taking account of any specific denominations. But. One of the greatest problems in the church. Is a flawed view. Of the Bible. Before you ever ask.

What does the Bible teach. You have to ask the question. What is the Bible? What is the nature of this book? Where does it come from? And when you say.

It's come from God. And like the apostle Paul. You believe God is the author of it. Well then everything in it is relevant. Everything in it is important.

[19:33] And that's what he's saying. I believe everything. And one of the greatest problems. As we said. Is a flawed view of the Bible. Not accepting the Bible.

As being authored by God. And being given to us. By God and his goodness. You remember. Way back. As the Bible tells you. Questions ever asked.

Or Garden of Eden. One of the first questions. Ever asked. Or put to human beings. Was a question. Put by the devil.

The serpent. In the Garden of Eden. The devil coming. In the form of a serpent. What did he say? Has God.

Really said. Has God. Indeed said. Has God. Really said. This to you. Trying to inject. Doubt. [20 : 32] Into Eve's mind. Firstly. Followed by Adam. As to the veracity. The truthfulness. Of God. That God. Somehow. Had kept something back.

That God. Wasn't being honest. With them. That God. Really wasn't. Bringing them. A reliable word. Has God. Indeed said. And every.

Every generation. Of human life. Down from that. Point onwards. Has had that question. Thrown at them. And the question. Has come up. In human minds. Time after time again.

Has God. Really said. You know. I can't understand. How. God would have written that. Surely. That's not the case. You know. You know. Where that's from. That's from. The devil. That's from. That horrible. Evil being. That would want you. To be lost. That would want you. To be lost. Because. You placed doubt. In God's word.

[21 : 31] And here is Paul. Saying to us. As we need to say ourselves. I worship the God. Of our fathers. Believing. Believing everything. Laid down by the law. And written.

In the prophets. That's our greatest temptation. Or one of our greatest. To say. Has God. Indeed. Said this. Whatever is in your Bible.

Don't place any doubt. On it. Don't think. Maybe it hasn't come from God. Maybe it's not been true. It's always true.

It's always relevant. It's always God's. Holy word. I worship. I worship. Believing. And I have a hope. Having a hope in God. I don't think. There's a thread. There isn't. I worship. Believing. And having a hope. Hope. You see. He's not. Disconnecting. Any of these. From one. From another.

[22 : 27] Having this hope. In God. Which these men. His accusers. Themselves. Accept. That there will be. A resurrection. Of both the just. And the unjust. That is where Paul's. Hope rests.

His hope. Is connected. To the whole issue. Of resurrection. As you know. Young folks. Resurrection means. Coming back. From the dead. Being raised. From the dead. The Bible tells us. That. That day will come. When all who are in the graves. Shall be raised. Back to life. That's an awesome thought.

It's a huge thought. And you and I will be among them. If we've died before Jesus returns. That there will be a resurrection. Both of the just.

That's those of God's people. And the unjust. Those who are not God's people. Who have not accepted him. But that's where Paul's hope is. Now. What is it in this life.

[23 : 30] That gives you hope? Where is your hope tonight? Resting? Resting. Because the Bible. The Bible's. Presentation.

Or the Bible's. Teaching on hope. Tells us that. For it to be a. True and lasting hope. It must be something. That's based. On what is true.

I mean. Just take it. I don't know if any of you guys. Follow. Rugby or not. Did you? You watch the rugby. Scotland versus England. Scotland. Well.

A lot of people had a hope. Scotland at least. That the Scots would win. And before that game started. That hope was. A real hope. They were really hoping.

That the Scots would win that game. But before the game started. There was no certainty. That that would be the outcome. It was a hope of a kind.

[24 : 29] But there was nothing to make it certain. That it would come to pass. In fact. A lot of people are saying. It just won't happen anyway. Going by their previous results. But it did happen.

It came to pass. They did win. But that's a very different hope. To the hope that Paul is speaking of. The hope that these people had. That the Scots would win.

And the rugby. It was never a certain hope. Because it wasn't based on something certain. But the hope that Paul had. That there will be a resurrection.

Of both the just and the unjust. The hope of eternal life. The hope of that event. When he would be raised from the dead. And come to be set before God.

And God to announce him as righteous. In the presence of everybody else who ever lived. That was God's promise. As a promise to all. Who come to trust in Christ.

[25 : 23] It's a living hope. That's how Peter put it. When he wrote his first epistle. Blessed be the God and Father. Of our Lord Jesus Christ. Who has.

Brought us this living hope. Who has transformed our life. To give us this hope. By the resurrection of Jesus Christ. From the dead.

That's the only thing. That gives us a certain hope. When our life is connected. To the resurrection of Jesus. That's a living hope.

That is a hope. That will never be proved wrong. And whatever your hopes. Or my hopes are tonight. If they are not based upon.

The resurrection of Christ. Upon the truth of God. Upon Jesus himself. And what he has done. Well. It's not a certain hope. It's not a hope.

[26 : 20] That's going to be realized. In eternity. But the other side of it. Is absolutely true as well. Because this is God's promise. That God's people will be raised.

And be with him in heaven. Because as Paul says. He has a hope. That there will be a resurrection. Of the just and the unjust. Because he's going to be found. Amongst the just. Who will come to be in heaven.

With God. With Christ. That is just as certain. For the apostle. As anything else. Just as it's through. That there is no hope. Without Jesus. Without faith in Jesus. So it is through. That you cannot be lost. And you will never be lost.

When your trust is in Christ. Because his promise then is. I will come. And I will raise you from the dead. And you'll be with me in heaven forever.

[27 : 18] That's Paul's hope. This living hope. This hope connected. To the resurrection. Of the just. But there is a resurrection.

Of the unjust as well. And that is equally. Awesome. That some people will come. To be raised from the dead.

In the judgment of God. Who will never be in heaven. Who will spend eternity in hell. Because that's what the Bible says.

And as we said earlier. Where we can't pick and choose. What we believe. As Paul said. I believe everything. And tonight. I believe everything.

The Bible says about being lost. As well as being saved. And so must you. Believe the same. This is his hope. A resurrection of both the just.

[28 : 18] And the unjust. And when you go forward to. Verse 25. Where you find. Felix having come in. With his wife. Who was Jewish.

And he sent for Paul. And heard him speak about. Faith in Christ Jesus. Now. The next verse is important. What does it mean? He spoke about faith.

In Christ Jesus. Well Paul. Reasoned. About righteousness. Self-control. And the coming judgment. Paul didn't choose himself.

What he was going to say. What the subjects of his sermon. Was going to be. The subject of his sermon. Were the three-point sermon. If you like. It was about righteousness.

Self-control. And coming judgment. But notice that word. Reasoned. Paul didn't actually speak. Before Felix. And just give a kind of discourse. Or a lecture. As if he was saying to Felix.

[29 : 13] Well that's my opinion. You make of it what you like. Believe it or not. That's up to you. He reasoned. With this man. He got into his mind. He got him to think.

He got him to really. Focus on. The important issues of time. And eternity. And that's all his conscience. And that's why Felix.

Tremble. Is the literal word. He was alarmed. He was absolutely terrified. Because Paul was speaking. About things. Where his own guilt.

Where the guilt of Felix. Really came to the surface. He spoke. And reasoned. About. These three things. Reasoned about.

Righteousness. How are we right with God? Self-control. Felix was an immoral man. He didn't control his life.

[30 : 16] And he reasoned. About the coming judgment. And Felix trembled. And sadly. Many people.

Under the gospel. Under the teaching. Of the gospel. Have done what he next did. Or said next. Because he was alarmed. Because he didn't want anything. Further said.

He said. When I get an opportunity. Go your way for your present. Go away for a moment. I'll call for you. At some other time. In the future. Never say that. In your own mind.

When you're hearing. The gospel presented. When you're reading. Your bible. For yourself. Don't ever say. Well. I don't think. I'll deal with it. I'll deal with it. Just now. I'm still young.

I'll have plenty. Time in the future. You know. It's a solemn thing to say. But. As a minister. I've sometimes. Had to conduct funerals.

[31 : 10] Of young people. Sometimes very young people. So remember. It's not just old people. Who die. Young people die as well.

And it doesn't matter. What age we are. We have to be ready to die. Through trusting in Christ. Felix said.

Don't want to hear any more about that. Just now. When I have another opportunity. I will actually send for you. And he did send for him. Not because he was interested in eternal life.

But he wanted some money. What a horrible man. That's what the Bible tells us. He conversed with him often.

He hoped that money would be given by Paul. In other words. He was saying. I need to send for this man. I'm going to get through to this man. Because he's going to give me money. In the hope that I can then release him.

[32 : 10] That's what he was after. And it never happened. Because that's not the kind of person Paul was. And so. He left him.

And left Paul in prison. When another governor took over. The time is gone. But I just have one more question. One more point in closing.

Paul is saying. I worship. I believe. I have a hope. I take pains. I take pains. Or I make every effort. Is what that means.

To actually have a clear conscience. Towards both God. And man. The word. Take pains there. Is a word that's. It was used.

Of the likes of athletes. You've seen athletes. During the. Winter Olympics. Just now. And you can see. The sheer effort. That they put into. Whatever it is. Whether it's a team event.

[33 : 07] Or an individual event. The effort. That they've put into it. In training. And the effort. They put into it. When the event takes place. That's the kind of word. That Paul is using. He's borrowed.

That word. From the athletics. Of his own time. And he's saying. I make. Every effort. I strive. I put. Hold. A clear conscience. Between myself.

And God. And between myself. And other people. It wasn't enough. For the apostle. To say. Well I've got a clear conscience. My relationship. With God. Is okay.

He was also concerned. To know that. He had a clear conscience. In regard to what he is. How he related to other people. Sometimes we leave that one out.

Don't we? That's true. If we're Christians tonight. I take pains. About my conscience. To have a clear conscience.

[34 : 04] I worship. I worship. I worship. Believingly. I worship. Having a hope. And I strive. To keep a clear conscience.

All of these. Are important. I hope they're important. In your lives. As well as mine. And I hope that tonight. We're able to say. As Paul said.

This is my confession. I worship. Believing. Having a hope. And I'm striving. To be a holy person. Let's pray. Thank you.