

Here We Stand

The world bears down on the church and is never shy about hating Her confession. This is nothing new. When the world bore down on St. Paul he responded, *“I always take pains to have a clear conscience toward both God and man,”* (Acts. 24:16). This statement is a clear confession of faith spoken to a world that was obstinate toward the Gospel. We all marvel at the Acts of the Apostles and ask if we would be able to confess the same in a world that hated us as much as it hated them. But the truth is we have the same Gospel!

The world and its damnable faux-gospel have always had expectations of the Church and her true confession of who Christ is and the atoning work that He has done for us. In the book of Acts, St. Paul was brought before Felix and accused by Tertullus for, *“being a plague,” “ringleader for a sect,”* and *“profaning the temple.”* The world hasn’t changed. Satan is still the prince of this world, yet he has no hold on Christ (John 14:30). Still Satan and his mistress (the world) attacks that which is foreign to it and there is nothing more foreign to him than Christ and His bride, the Church. We must stand before the world with a clear conscience, just as St. Paul did before Felix.

In Acts Chapter 24, Tertullus accused St. Paul before Felix saying, *“By examining him yourself you will be able to find out from him about everything of which we accuse him.”* St. Paul answered, *“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 toward both God and man.”* St. Paul stood firm in the confession, for the conscience is never active but rather it sits in our hearts as a judge over our thoughts and deeds. And so, the Holy Spirit leads St. Paul to recognise that he could not have a clear conscience toward God or men without proclaiming what he knows to be the pure, sweet, simple truth of the Gospel. If he wavered in the truth before Felix, he could not have a clear conscience. If he denied the truth because of his fear of men, he would have sinned.

Whereas, St. Paul could stand before the accusations from Tertullus with a clear conscience, the unbelieving Jews at Pentecost could not stand with a clear conscience before St. Peter’s accusation in Acts. 2:36-38. St. Peter accused them saying, *“Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.”* At this, their consciences panged as they were, “cut to the heart,” and questioned Peter on how they were to be saved, and Peter confessed to them their need for the Sacrament of Holy Baptism. St. Paul having the Gospel could stand with a clean conscience as could St. Peter, yet the Jews not having the Gospel stood convicted by their conscience. This is the benefit of a good confession: that Christ as our defense allows us to stand with a clear conscience.