

Christian Confidence

Acts 24:14-16

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 5-17-2009

Introduction

A few months ago I watched a video of an experienced parachutist jumping out of an airplane to his death. Everyone was puzzled as to why it had happened. He had already had some jumps that day, and was preoccupied with camera equipment and instructions to some skydivers on how he was going to film their jump. So this video camera is strapped to his head, and as he jumps out you can see everything that is going on. He went sailing past the rest of them, and then the camera goes crazy. The reporter announces that he forgot to put his parachute on and plummeted to his death. Up until that time, he seemed to be without concern because he was preoccupied with other things, and had faith was in a non-existent parachute. That is a great definition of presumption. We are going to be talking about Christian confidence today, but this was a case of false confidence.

What is the difference between that story and stories of real faith that seem almost as presumptuous? Some people think it is presumptuous to believe in God. Others think it is presumptuous to believe in miracles. Others think it is presumptuous to take risks. There were many who complained that missionaries who went to headhunter tribes were tempting God by taking on unnecessary risks. Why not bring the Gospel to non-head-hunters? Why invite possible death?

A year or so ago our family read a missionary biography on Adoniram Judson, the missionary to Burma. What a moving story! He sacrificed so much! And so did his family! It took him several years to get his first 18 converts. There were so many discouraging things that happened. At one point he had been imprisoned, and their prisons are nothing like American prisons. The place was filthy and filled with the disgusting smell that came from people losing the contents of their body, his body was stretched in an uncomfortable position, and it looked like he might not make it out. Another prisoner sneered at him, asking, "What about the prospect of the conversion of the heathen?" Judson's instant reply was, "The prospects are just as bright as the promises of God." He had an absolutely confident faith that must have looked silly to that fellow-prisoner. And yet his faith bore fruit. By the time of his death he had completed a Bible translation and a grammar, and there

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were 8000 believers in 100 churches. The Karen people were almost entirely converted. So what's the difference between his confidence and the confidence of that parachute instructor? Today I want to look at a confident faith, a confident hope, and a confident conscience. I want you to have all three, and to throw off all false confidence. It's possible to have a confident conscience that is absolutely misinformed. It is possible to have a confident hope that is just as false as the confident hopes in Washington, DC.

I. A Confident Faith (v. 14)

The first blessing that Paul had was a confident faith. Verse 14 gives Paul's reply to Tertullus. **"But this I confess to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect, so I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets."** There is no embarrassment. There is no hesitation. There is a total confidence in expressing his faith. And I think this verse not only corrects three major errors on the nature of faith, but it informs us of what true faith is all about.

A. *What it is not:*

1. Not a private and hidden belief - "I confess to you"

The first major error that I frequently hear people expressing is that faith is a private, hidden matter of the heart. It's not something that we talk about in public. But look at what Paul says in verse 14: He says, **"I confess to you."** Paul is willing to make his faith public. It is not a privately held matter. I have known people who won't tell you what they believe about God, the Bible, heaven, and hell. For them, religion is a private matter of the heart, not a matter to discuss. But that is completely unbiblical. In fact these people may not even be saved. Genuine faith is always expressed. Let me read you some Scriptures

Romans 10:9 "that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved." That's saying that belief starts in the heart, but must be confessed publically.

Philippians 2:11 "and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." – Every tongue should confess.

Matthew 10:32 "Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven."

Mark 8:38 “For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.”

Luke 12:8 “Also I say to you, whoever confesses Me before men, him the Son of Man also will confess before the angels of God.

So the first error that this verse corrects is the idea that faith is private or hidden. Genuine faith must find expression. It longs to find expression. It is the very nature of faith.

2. Not a blind leap in the dark – “according to the Way...which are written”

I’ve been debating with someone via email about a second major error on faith – the idea that faith is a blind leap in the dark, and you are hoping that something will be out there to catch you. They say that it is not based on reason. You just believe against reason. This guy that I have been debating with approvingly gave the testimony of someone who almost lost his faith when he “realized that the Bible is full of errors.” But he came to a place where he decided to believe in God anyway, even though all the evidence speaks against it. He still doesn’t believe a great deal of what is in the Bible. Well, that’s not faith. That is presumption. Faith believes everything God says in the Bible based on the fact that God cannot lie. Paul speaks of a faith that is “**according to the Way**” and he believes things “**which are written.**” It is an objective truth that is believed. It’s not a blind leap in the dark.

When the famous scientist, Michael Faraday was dying, several fellow scientists came to see him. One of them asked him rather boldly, “Mr. Faraday, what are your speculations about your future?” With evident surprise to them he replied: “Speculations! I have none. I am resting on certainties.” Then he quoted II Tim. 1:12: “**For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.**” Faith is not a blind leap in the dark. It is a certainty founded on the facts of Scripture. Faith is a gift of God that makes us certain.

3. Not a selective appreciation of certain portions of the Bible (“believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets”)

The third major error corrected by this passage is the idea that we can select which portions of the bible we will believe. I was astonished with one

person that I have been debating who claims to be a Christian in love with God, yet he rejects most of the stuff that's in the bible as mythology. Well, I'm sorry, but you are not a Christian if you reject the Bible. This is the call of faith – to believe all things that are written in the Bible. Here's a little syllogism: God can neither lie nor be mistaken. That's the source of all error right? Lying or mistakenness. Well, that's the first premise: God can neither lie nor be mistaken. The second premise is that all Scripture is the Word of God. The conclusion (which is irresistible) is: therefore Scripture cannot lie or be mistaken. Inerrancy has been thrown away by many churches today, but I am unwilling to acknowledge your faith if you do not hold to inerrancy.

There are other manifestations of this error. Some people say that they believe everything the church says, but they don't have the foggiest notion what the Bible says. In fact, sometimes they believe the church without even knowing what the church says. That's not faith. Jonathan Whitfield was preaching to coal miners in England. He asked one man, "What do you believe?" "Well, I believe the same as the church." "And what does the church believe?" "Well, they believe the same as me." Seeing he was getting nowhere, Whitfield said, "And what is it that you both believe?" "Well, I suppose the same thing."

That's not true faith either. It's implicit faith that the Westminster Confession spoke against. The Roman Catholic Church required you to have implicit faith in all that Rome teaches. In other words, you had to have an unthinking acceptance of all that Rome taught. But that's the opposite of what Paul said. In Romans Paul said that until you can let God be true and every man a liar, you have not been given the gift of true faith. True faith believes God in His Word – period.

Let me give you some statistics that I hope will stir up your heart to pray for faith to be given to the church. George Marsden tells us that 85% of the students in America's largest evangelical seminaries do not believe in the inerrancy of Scripture. That is staggering! These are the largest evangelical seminaries, yet 85% of the students do not believe in the inerrancy of Scripture. That means that evangelicalism has become a meaningless term. The Sociologist Jeffrey Hadden did a similar survey all the way back in 1987 of 10,000 USA clergymen. 74% responded, and of those, here were the results of the question whether they believed that the Bible was the inspired and inerrant Word of God in faith, history, and secular matters. 95% of Episcopalians said "No." The same answer was given by 87% of Methodists, 82% of Presbyterians, 77% of Lutherans, 67% of American Baptists. (*The*

Gideon, January 1994, pp. 12-13.) The church has become liberal when it comes to faith.

The question is, “Do you pass the test? Or do you hold to one of these three errors?” Without any shame, we need to be able to affirm everything that is written in the Bible. Faith trusts God more than it trusts anything else in creation. So those are the errors.

B. What it is:

Let’s look next at the object, warrant, expression and attitude of faith. These four terms help to define true faith.

1. Faith’s object is the God of Scripture (“God of my fathers”)

Faith’s object is God. And it’s not just some nebulous theoretical God, but the God of the Scriptures. Paul’s confession of faith was in the “**God of my fathers.**” This is not nebulous – this was the God of Abraham, Moses and David. I had a friend who told me several years ago that he had stopped believing in the God of the Old Testament. And I said, “What are you talking about?! He’s the same God as the God of the New Testament.” But he insisted that his experience told him otherwise. (You can see where his ultimate authority was.) But anyway, he said that the God he knew was love, but the God of the Old Testament killed off the whole population of Canaan, believed in capital punishment for numerous crimes, was vengeful and wrathful. The God of the Old Testament called down curses on His enemies. He believed the God of the New Testament was different – that He was love. I thought I could convince him to change his mind by showing him that Jesus spoke about hell more than the Old Testament did, that the New Testament affirmed the imprecatory psalms that he hated, and that the book of Revelation is far more vengeful than anything you will find in the Old Testament. And then he shocked me by saying, “Well, I guess I don’t believe in the God of the New Testament either.” I tried to convince him that his God was simply a figment of his imagination, and that he had no solid basis for believing that his kind of God even existed. But the God that he said he had experienced was more important to him than anything written in the Bible. You may think that is weird, strange, and bizarre – but how many times does our experience or desire trump Scripture? If it ever does, we are really no different in principle. He is just further along the road of apostasy than we are. He has since stopped even pretending to be a Christian. But you can see that the object of his faith was something inside, rather than the Person who had created all things and revealed His will in the Bible. The object of His faith was a false God, even though he claimed to be a

Christian. And it is imperative that we not have a false faith in a false God. I've talked to evangelicals who insist that their God doesn't care about law, judgment and capital punishment; He only cares about grace. I tell them that the object of their faith will let them down, because He isn't the God of the Bible. Faith's object must be the God of Scripture – the same God as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob believed.

2. Faith's warrant is the propositional truth of the Scripture (“believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets”)

Faith's warrant is the propositional truth of the Scripture. A warrant is a reasonable ground for what we believe or a justification for what we believe. So the object is *whom* we believe, and the warrant is the ground or justification for why we believe in God. It can't be wishful thinking. It can't be our feelings. It can't be what's comfortable. It can't be what the church says, or what mom and dad says. All those things can let you down. Paul gave the warrant for his faith when he said, “**believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets.**”

Most of us would affirm that. But here is where your faith can become weak: it can become weak by picking and choosing what areas of the bible are comfortable to believe, or convenient, or politically correct. If anything other than Scripture is driving your faith, the body of things that you do not believe can keep growing and growing until you can't believe anything in the Bible. One person that I am debating with over the subject of inerrancy said this a couple weeks ago: “I respectfully suggest that one's Christian faith consists in a relationship with God in the heart, and that, outside of this, one's faith is in doubt.” The warrant for his faith is purely internal. He's got all kinds of doubts about the Scriptures. But genuine, God-given faith always grounds itself upon the Bible, the whole Bible and nothing but the bible. Genuine faith may doubt its experience and may even on occasion have doubts about our own salvation, but will not doubt the Word. It is a counterfeit faith that cannot affirm the same warrant Paul affirms here. God anchors it there.

3. Faith's attitude is the worship of the God of Scripture rather than the creation (“worship the God of my fathers”)

Third, faith's attitude is always God-ward. Paul said, “**I worship the God of my fathers.**” False faith mixes worship of God with worship of creation; it mixes a trust in God with a trust creation. It can't let go of creation and hold onto God with both hands. Just in case, it's holding onto

God, but just in case, it's holding on to something else. I think this was illustrated so well by Niels Bohr, who received the Nobel Prize in Physics for his work on atomic structure and quantum mechanics. One of his colleagues was surprised to see a horseshoe securely nailed to the wall over Bohr's desk with the open side up, the approved way to catch good luck and not let it spill out. And his American colleague asked with a nervous laugh, "Surely you don't believe the horseshoe will bring you good luck, do you, Professor Bohr? After all, as a scientist..." And Bohr interrupted and said, "I believe no such thing, my good friend. Not at all. I am scarcely likely to believe in such foolish nonsense. However, I am told that a horseshoe will bring you good luck whether you believe in it or not."¹ That's the way many people treat God. They don't really believe in Him, but they want to be good just in case.

But the attitude of true faith is one of true commitment, grateful worship, and full-hearted trust. The trust is not mixed between good luck and God; it is wholly in God. Genuine trust is not holding onto God as a good-luck charm, but has motivated us to unconditional surrender of our lives to Him.

4. Faith's expression is by word (v. 14a), life (v. 14b), and heart (v. 14c).

Finally, faith's expression is in word, in life, and in heart. Paul was not ashamed to profess Christ, not ashamed to be mocked at as a sect, not ashamed to live out the whole Scriptures, and Paul was willing to offer up his heart to God. Faith is a commitment of the whole man wholly to God without any reservation.

Last week I read a hilarious illustration of how you can tell the difference between a true faith and a false faith. This was given by Ken Davis. Let me read it to you. He said,

In college I was asked to prepare a lesson to teach my speech class. We were to be graded on our creativity and ability to drive home a point in a memorable way. The title of my talk was, "The Law of the Pendulum." I spent 20 minutes carefully teaching the physical principle that governs a swinging pendulum. The law of the pendulum is: A pendulum can never return to a point higher than the point from which it was released. Because of friction and gravity, when the pendulum returns, it will fall short of its original release point. Each

¹ *Bits and Pieces*, September 17, 1992, p. 6.

time it swings it makes less and less of an arc, until finally it is at rest. This point of rest is called the state of equilibrium, where all forces acting on the pendulum are equal.

I attached a 3-foot string to a child's toy top and secured it to the top of the blackboard with a thumbtack. I pulled the top to one side and made a mark on the blackboard where I let it go. Each time it swung back I made a new mark. It took less than a minute for the top to complete its swinging and come to rest. When I finished the demonstration, the markings on the blackboard proved my thesis.

I then asked how many people in the room BELIEVED the law of the pendulum was true. All of my classmates raised their hands, so did the teacher. He started to walk to the front of the room thinking the class was over. In reality it had just begun. Hanging from the steel ceiling beams in the middle of the room was a large, crude but functional pendulum (250 pounds of metal weights tied to four strands of 500-pound test parachute cord.). I invited the instructor to climb up on a table and sit in a chair with the back of his head against a cement wall. Then I brought the 250 pounds of metal up to his nose. Holding the huge pendulum just a fraction of an inch from his face, I once again explained the law of the pendulum he had applauded only moments before, "If the law of the pendulum is true, then when I release this mass of metal, it will swing across the room and return short of the release point. Your nose will be in no danger."

After that final restatement of this law, I looked him in the eye and asked, "Sir, do you believe this law is true?" There was a long pause. Huge beads of sweat formed on his upper lip and then weakly he nodded and whispered, "Yes." I released the pendulum. It made a swishing sound as it arced across the room. At the far end of its swing, it paused momentarily and started back. I never saw a man move so fast in my life. He literally dived from the table. Deftly stepping around the still-swinging pendulum, I asked the class, "Does he believe in the law of the pendulum?" The students unanimously answered, "NO!"²

² Ken Davis, *How to Speak to Youth...and Keep Them Awake at the Same Time*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, p. 104-106

For Calvin, the essence of faith was confidence. There are many people who affirm belief in God, but when push comes to shove and something else is swinging up at their nose, they dive under the table. They lose their faith in God. When an evolutionist professor starts mocking creation and throwing argument after argument at the hapless Christian student about why creationism is idiocy that no scientist would believe, they dive under the table and lose their faith in God. And it shouldn't be. The pendulum swinging at other Christians may be God's Old Testament law that they are embarrassed by, or it may be God's call to repent of their fornication. And as soon as it gets too hard, they dive under the table.

If you want to develop a confident faith in your children, it must be anchored in truth, heartfelt, it must be God-focused. My leadership training book shows ways to ground your children's faith in God. My apologetics training recommendations then help them to go on the offensive and tear down every stronghold of opposition to God's faith. And thirdly, Bahnsen's philosophy tapes and his exposition of Calvin's Institutes help our kids to teach a confident grounding for faith. But let's not be satisfied with the faith of that professor. Seek to develop a confident faith in God's Word.

II. A Confident Hope (v. 15)

The second area of confidence that Paul had was in the area of hope. Hope deals with eschatology, with the future, with the promises of God. Hope lays hold of God's personal promises, family promises and His promises for planet earth. Let's read verse 15: **"I have hope in God, which they themselves also accept, that there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust."**

A. Hope's object is God ("God")

Just as with faith, the object of hope is God. He doesn't have hope in his abilities. Paul for sure didn't place his hope in Nero. He said, **"I have hope in God."** It is God who directs world history, not man. It is God who controls our future, not Satan. And though Paul only speaks of one point in our future hope – the resurrection, all of eschatology is a hope in God if we have a Biblical eschatology.

The eschatology of some is quite the opposite. They live in fear of antichrist, and especially of Satan, who seems to be an invincible enemy to them. For many people, eschatology is a countdown of how Satan is winning, and controlling planet earth, and bringing this world to Armageddon. Its focus is not on God's victory. When a person titled his

eschatology book, *Satan is Alive and Well on Planet Earth*, which has sold millions of copies, he didn't have a solid basis for confidence. Every evil around him was proof that things are getting worse and worse and that Antichrist is about to show his demon-possessed person somewhere. That was back in the 70's.

But our eschatology is an eschatology of hope precisely because it focuses on God and His victory. Our hope is not an "I hope so" kind of hope, but a confident hope. It is a hope that takes the promises of God at face value and acts upon them. When Jesus said, "**I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it,**" we believe He meant exactly that. So we attempt to take on the gates of hell. When Jesus gave the great commission to disciple all nations and teach those nations how to be Christian nations who observe everything mandated in the Word, we don't believe that will be a failure. Why? Because our hope is in God, and if God is for us, who can be against us?

B. Hope's attitude is confident expectancy ("in" or into)

Second, hope's attitude is a confident expectancy. Paul said, "**I have hope in God,**" and that is literally, "into God" or it could also be translated "toward God." But our back is never turned on God. He is our source for everything, and so our expectation looks continually to Him.

Let's apply that: What is our hope for American politics? It is God, not man. What is our hope for the economy? It God, not men. Apart from repentance, I don't see how we can do anything but go downhill. Why? Because God has promised judgment to nations that reject Him, and has promised mercy to nations that repent. We haven't repented yet. But praise God, the source of repentance is in God as well. My goal is to turn people's hopes to God. What is our hope for our own sanctification, or that of our spouse or children? It is God. Too many times we place our hopes in changing our spouses heart, or changing our nation's laws. But that is to set yourself up for frustration. Your orientation in your hope must be in God's power.

C. Hope's substance is the promise of the "not yet" ("that there will be")

Hope's substance is the *promise* that there will be something. In this case, it is a promise of a future resurrection of our bodies. He says, "**that there will be a resurrection.**" But the Bible is full of promises that are not yet fulfilled.

There are two implications of that fact: the first is that God calls for hope when everything looks hopeless. This is really important. Hope's substance is always the promise of the "not yet." That's what makes it a divine hope rather than a humanistic hope. A humanistic hope is based upon what is humanly possible. A divine hope is based upon the promises of a God who cannot lie (even when everything looks impossible from a human perspective). When God promises that all nations will be Christian, and that of the increase of Christ's government and of peace there will be no end, that hope drives us to seek to achieve it. When my parents were first missionaries to Ethiopia, it didn't look possible for the Kembata tribe of Ethiopia to be converted, and yet now, more than 95% of that region is evangelical Christian. So the fact that things look hopeless is no reason not to hope. Here's how Paul words it in Romans 8:24 - **but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees** (Rom. 8:24). This is why G. K. Chesterton said,

Hope means hoping when things are hopeless, or it is not virtue at all... As long as matters are really hopeful, hope is mere flattery or platitude; it is only when everything is hopeless that hope begins to be a strength.

Do you have a divine hope? The fact that things are terrible is simply a testing of your hope, not an indication that there is no hope. Genuine hope always shines when everyone else is losing hope.

The second implication of Paul's statement is that hope must constantly find its strength and virility by meditation on the promises and commands of Scripture. Fill your mind with the Biblical promises of an eschatology of hope. For example, what is the eschatology of your personal sanctification? It's exactly the same. It's the promises of God. So when Satan tries to rob you of hope by thinking that overcoming your sin is not possible, tell him, "Get behind me Satan. I will not believe that, because God's Word says, **"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me"** (Phil. 4:13), or quote Luke 1:37, **"For with God nothing will be impossible."** When your hope is pressed with tiredness, go to the promise of Isaiah 40:29, **"He gives power to the weak, and to those who have no might He increases strength."** That Scripture will raise your hope in the midst of weakness. When Satan tempts you to think that nobody loves you, resist that thought with Jeremiah 31:3, **"Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you."** When you think, "I can't go on," remind yourself that Jesus said, **"My grace**

is sufficient for you.” (2Cor. 12:9) When it seems that your hard labors will not bring in enough income, you can say, “**And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus**” (Phil. 4:19). When you are fearful, go to the promise, “**For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind**” (2Tim. 1:7), or “**Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.**” (Josh. 1:9). The point is, God doesn’t call us to get hope by bucking up and toughing it out. That may or may not help you. But if you are to have a certain hope, it must be a divine hope founded on the Scriptures. Get used to preaching those Scriptures to yourself to give you the certainty of hope.

D. Hope’s fulfillment will be at the resurrection (v. 15d)

Then hope’s fulfillment in this case is at the resurrection according to verse 15. Death is the last enemy to be destroyed. That’s why all of history is aiming toward that goal. To me that is very encouraging - if death is the last enemy to be destroyed (as 1 Corinthians 15 says), it means all other enemies will be put under Christ’s feet prior to His return. It means that the church has yet to enjoy victory after victory. All of history is pressing toward that final enemy of death being destroyed. Now *that* is a confident hope.

III. A Confident Conscience (v. 16)

So this passage calls you to have a confident faith, and confident hope, and then lastly, a confident conscience. Verse 16 says, “**This being so, I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men.**” We will look quickly at the fragility of this comfort, the description of this comfort and the secret of this comfort.

A. The fragility of comfort

1. “I myself always strive to have” (v. 16b)

The fragility of a good conscience can be seen in the fact that Paul has to work hard at having a good conscience. He says, “**I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense.**” If Paul had to work at this, then we do too. It is so easy to fall into sin, to cover up that sin, and to let Satan take away our confidence because of a defiled conscience. But it’s also easy to rationalize and to have a false confidence. Having a sense of comfort and security before God is critical. So the word “strive” implies that it doesn’t happen automatically.

2. “offense towards God and man” (v. 16c)

And the word “offense” implies that a Christian can offend both God and man. That’s not a popular doctrine in this post-modern age. If the reason your conscience is confident is because you think God just sweeps everything under the rug, you’ve got a false confidence. Just because we are saved does not mean that we should not strive to have a clean conscience every day. Paul never stopped working at making sure he had the comfort of a good conscience. It is a fragile thing that can be lost so easily.

B. The description of this comfort – “have a conscience without offense”

Point B - Paul describes this comfort as having a conscience without offense. If you think of your conscience as have a legislative function, a judicial function and an executive function, I think you can understand what he is talking about. The legislative function is the law written on the heart. But often we have bad consciences because we allow man’s law to bind our conscience. But God never intended our consciences to be bound by legalistic additions to the Bible. He doesn’t want the expectations of man to defile our conscience. The moment we add to or take away from God’s law, our conscience becomes unbalanced. So that’s the legislative function.

The judicial function is the part of our conscience that makes us realize that we are guilty. It judges us. Nowadays people don’t like to be judged, but this judge is looking out for the security of the city of Mansoul. You don’t kill the judge simply because he tells the truth. In the same way, you don’t harden your conscience simply because it is troubling you. You value the judge function, but you want it instructed about true justice from the word.

The executive function makes punishment. It makes us feel wretched when we sin.

All three functions need to be healthy for us to have a confident conscience. If you harden your conscience so that you no longer hear the voice of those three, you have a false confidence.

C. The secret of comfort (v. 16a) – my conscience is judged by God alone

1. The resurrection of the just (v. 15e) is the vindication of God's justice met in Christ

And of course, if you have a confident faith, and a confident hope, you will be well on your way to having a confident conscience because your conscience will not be bound by humanism, but will be bound by the golden rule of Scripture. And daily your conscience will be cleansed by the grace of Christ, which washes away our guilt.

Of course, if you have a lousy conscience, then the resurrection of verse 15 will be a terror rather than a hope. But for the believer who is justified in Christ, and who is continuing to walk in the light, we can look forward to judgment day. I'm looking forward to that day when I will be forever with the Lord.

2. The resurrection of the unjust (v. 15f) is the vindication of God's justice in their punishment

For the unbeliever whose faith is not in God and whose conscience is not clean, the thought of a future resurrection and judgment is very uncomfortable. So he doesn't want to think about it. So you can see that all three of these points are essential to each other if we are to be confident in our Christian walk.

Now let's return to the first question of how we can tell the difference between a presumptuous confidence and a true confidence. It comes by faith in God, through Christ, by the power of the Spirit, and grounded upon the Scriptures. Any other doorway has you falling into an open elevator shaft. True confidence comes by faith in God, through Christ, by the power of the Spirit, and grounded upon the Scriptures.

It would be just as foolish to face death and jump into eternity without having put your faith in Jesus as it was for that expert parachutist to jump out of the plane without a parachute. Confidence by itself is not enough. It must be a confidence that flows from a vital and saving union with God through faith in Christ.

Conclusion

Let me end with a true story. Just before World War II the main school in Itasca, Texas, burned to the ground killing 263 children. It was a horrifying tragedy. After the war, the town built a new school, and vowed that this would never happen again. They built into the building what they

called "the finest sprinkler system in the world." The town was very proud of their new school. Honor students were selected to guide citizens and visitors on tours of the new facility. Never again would a fire disaster happen.

Fast-forward quite a few years. The town had grown so much that they needed add a huge new wing to the school. As they started construction they discovered something that was rather disconcerting. They discovered that the sprinkler system had never been connected.³ All those years they had a false confidence. Are you vitally connected to God by the grace of Jesus Christ?

It is my prayer that not one of you would enter into eternity with a false confidence in your salvation. It is only as you yield yourself in unconditional surrender to Jesus and trust Him for your salvation that you can be connected vitally to the power of God's grace and begin to experience a lifetime of confident faith, confident hope, and confident conscience. May it be yours. Amen.

³ Story told by Dr Howard Hendricks on 4 Mar 82 at International Congress on Biblical Inerrancy in San Diego, California.

Christian Confidence

Acts 24:14-16

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 5-17-2009

Introduction

I. A Confident Faith (v. 14)

A. What it is not:

1. Not a private and hidden belief - "I confess to you"
2. Not a blind leap in the dark - "according to the Way...which are written"
3. Not a selective appreciation of certain portions of the Bible ("believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets")

B. What it is:

1. Faith's object is the God of Scripture ("God of my fathers")
2. Faith's warrant is the propositional truth of the Scripture ("believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets")
3. Faith's attitude is the worship of the God of Scripture rather than the creation ("worship the God of my fathers")
4. Faith's expression is by word (v. 14a), life (v. 14b), and heart (v. 14c).

II. A Confident Hope (v. 15)

A. Hope's object is God ("God")

B. Hope's attitude is confident expectancy ("in" or into)

C. Hope's substance is the promise of the "not yet" ("that there will be")

D. Hope's fulfillment will be at the resurrection (v. 15d)

III. A Confident Conscience (v. 16)

A. The fragility of comfort

1. "I myself always strive to have" (v. 16b)
2. "offense towards God and man" (v. 16c)

B. The description of this comfort - "have a conscience without offense"

C. The secret of comfort (v. 16a) - my conscience is judged by God alone

1. The resurrection of the just (v. 15e) is the vindication of God's justice met in Christ
2. The resurrection of the unjust (v. 15f) is the vindication of God's justice in their punishment

Conclusion