

The Good Confession



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Jesus had withdrawn from the crowds to pray, and His disciples were with Him. He turned to them and asked a simple question: “Who do the crowds say I am?”

The answers were varied: John the Baptist, Elijah, or some other prophet risen from the dead.

He turned the question then from others to the disciples themselves. “But who do you say that I am?” And here it is that St. Peter made his great confession: “The Christ of God” (*read the story in Luke 9:18-20*).

It is a confession that would ultimately cost St. Peter his life: tradition states he was eventually crucified upside down because of his faith in Christ. And yet he made the confession anyway. The truth is, he had known such a death might await him. Right after his great confession, after all, Jesus had told the disciples that “whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it” (Luke 9:24). That promise made martyrdom worth it.

St. Peter confessed Jesus to be the Christ, the Son of the living God. In a very real way, that’s exactly what the German princes were called to do at the Diet of Augsburg so many centuries later. Summoned by the emperor to present their Lutheran faith, they made a clear confession to Christ as the Son of God and Redeemer of the world.

They would not deny Christ and His work. They would not give His glory to another. They would not suggest their own efforts contributed to their salvation; that would be to say Christ’s sacrifice was insufficient, to

imply that He had lied in His Word. Both the church and the state were demanding the princes abandon the truth of the Gospel as they had come to know it through the work of the Reformation. Instead, they confessed boldly that Christ was Saviour alone, whatever else other men might say. Their actions demonstrate their faith in the words of St. Paul: “Let God be true and every other man a liar” (Romans 3:4).

Having had access to the Bible in German thanks to Luther’s landmark translation several years earlier, the German princes knew very well Christ’s warning that “the one who denies Me before men will be denied before the angels of God” (Luke 12:9). On the other hand, they also knew Christ’s promise: “I tell you, everyone who acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man also will acknowledge before the angels of God” (12:8). Just a few verses further, they would read additional words of peace: “When they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not be anxious about how you should defend yourself or what you should say, for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say” (12:11-12).

That Scripture must have been a comfort to Philip Melanchthon as he toiled away in the writing of the Augsburg Confession. It was important to make a good confession before the emperor, he knew. But in the end, God was in control even of this situation. Whatever skill Melanchthon and his co-workers might lend to the task, it was the Holy Spirit who would ensure the clarity

and power of the princes’ confession before the Diet of Augsburg.

The impact of that confession continues to be felt down to our own day. Their confession becomes ours, as we make their words—their faith—our own. Against the sneers of an unbelieving world, we join the German princes in declaring Christ to be God and the only Saviour of sinful humanity. Against the errors of a broken church, we join them in declaring God’s Word to be the ultimate authority for faith and practice.

In this way, we make a good confession for Christ in our time. But you are also called to make confession in smaller, everyday matters too. You might not be hauled up before the civil authorities, but you too are called to give witness to Christ as circumstances allow. St. Peter writes that you should “be prepared to make a defence to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you” (1 Peter 3:15). That might come in times of opposition, when people mock you and your “backwards” faith. But it might also come in unexpected conversations with family, friends, neighbours, or even strangers—moments when God is tugging at the hearts of those who do not yet know Him, moments when He is using you to bring the Gospel to someone desperately in need of it.

We don’t always get to see the results of these conversations, of course. But then, we don’t need to: it is the Holy Spirit’s job to kindle faith through these kinds of interactions, not ours. It is our job simply to be ready to speak. God help us all make a good confession.