

THE PURPOSE REVEALED

As we begin our sermon series on the apostle John’s first epistle, I want us to be clear on what I want us to take from this series – that being CONFIDENCE in our faith. Now the gospel of John, his earlier writing, was written that all who read it might BELIEVE.

John 20:31 *But these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.*

This is why we encourage those seeking Jesus to begin by reading the gospel of John, It is the perfect book of the Bible to read first, for its purpose is clear – to lead people to faith in Jesus – to BELIEVE.

But much later in life, John wrote his 3 epistles – First, Second and Third John. And these were written to those who had already committed their lives to Jesus. And again, he makes his purpose for writing clear. And this time it is that believers might KNOW and have CONFIDENCE in who they are in Christ and what they have believed.

1 John 5:13-15 *These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life. This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him.*

We will have more to say about this confidence we can have in prayer. But for now – know that CONFIDENCE in our faith will be our goal as we make our way through 1 John in the days ahead.

SELF-CONFIDENCE vs. GOD-CONFIDENCE

It was in 1965 that my mother took me to see the then brand new wide-screen, musical drama film “The Sound of Music.” I was 18 years of age. It captivated me then, as it still delights me. It is indeed one of the greatest screen musicals ever produced. We all know the classic Rogers & Hammerstein songs of “Do-Re-Mi,” “My Favorite Things,” “Edelweiss,” “Climb Every Mountain” and the title song “The Sound of Music.” But one of the less famous songs from that film was “I Have Confidence” that Maria sings as she is on her way to govern the seven children of Captain VonTrapp. She sings:

*I am seeking the courage I lack.
The courage to serve them with reliance; face my mistakes without defiance.
Show them I'm worthy and while I show them, I'll show me!
So, let them bring on all their problems, I'll do better than my best.
I have confidence they'll put me to the test!, but I'll make them see I have confidence in me.
I have confidence in confidence alone.*

Maria had plenty of self-confidence, or at least, she was trying to muster it. But self-confidence is not Biblical confidence. Self-confidence is not what God is asking us to muster. We are not to find our confidence in confidence alone, as stalwart and brave as that might sound. God wants us to find our confidence in Him alone. He is to be, and will be, our confidence – all the confidence we need. The great King David of the Bible wrote this in one of his psalms:

Psalms 71:5 *For You are my hope; O Lord God, You are my confidence from my youth.*

And David’s son, Solomon, the wisest man ever to live, wrote in his book of Proverbs:

Proverbs 14:26 *In the fear of the Lord there is strong CONFIDENCE. And His children will have refuge.*

David, Solomon and indeed all the writers of the Bible wanted us to know that our confidence, encouragement and hope would come from God and God alone.

Now this is not to say that God doesn’t use people in our lives to be the conduit of His confidence. He does indeed, and certainly has done in my life. I remember being able to tell my mother in her last days on earth that she had given me the gift confidence in myself, by believing in me and supporting me in my life’s quests. Through the years so many of my mentors, teachers and pastors have encouraged me and given

me confidence to pursue what I might otherwise not have done. Spouses, parents, children, friends can all be conduits of confidence.

But the apostle John wants us to know that our confidence ultimately comes from our Heavenly Father. Self-confidence and confidence derived from friends and family will help us in life, but only the confidence that comes from God will help us prepare for the life to come. God-confidence helps us to know we are on the right and godly path. God-confidence is what molds us into the image of Jesus, which is God's goal and will for each of His children. (Romans 8:29)

BIBLICAL CONFIDENCE – our outline

Confidence in my PROGRESS (Philippians 1:6; 1 John 3:21)

Confidence in my ACCESS (Hebrews 4:16; 1 John 5:14)

Confidence in my HOPE (Hebrews 3:6; 1 John 2:28)

CONFIDENCE IN MY PROGRESS (Philippians 1:6; 1 John 3:21)

Philippians 1:6 *For I am confident of this very thing, that he who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.*

Everyone has a deep longing for significance. We want our life to amount to something of value to someone and society. We don't want to be the "nowhere man" of the Beatles song:

*He's a real nowhere man, sitting in his nowhere land
Making all his nowhere plans for nobody
Doesn't have a point of view; knows not where he's going to
Isn't he a bit like you and me?* The Beatles, 1969

And as Christians – followers of Christ – we want to be going and growing in our faith. We don't want to be standing still, spiritually immobile and ineffective. We certainly don't want to be a "nowhere man." We long to be more like Jesus. And this verse of Philippians 1:6 assures me that if indeed God has performed the good work in me of transformation from unbeliever to believer, then He will continue His work of molding me into the image of Christ throughout my life. This is an extremely encouraging and confident-building truth. We love this truth as expressed in Jeremiah's prophecy:

Jeremiah 29:11 *"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope."*

When we hear this we often think of the events of our life that will be guided by God's protective hand. But I believe this speaks even more of God's plans to mold us into the image of His Son, Jesus, for this is His ultimate plan and our ultimate hope. In this we can have CONFIDENCE in our progress and significance. Jesus when he was on the earth spoke of this in John 10, when He assured us:

John 10:14. 27 *I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.*

I appreciate the assurance that I am known by the good shepherd, Jesus. But even greater I am encouraged with the confidence that I know the shepherd and will follow Him. That indicates progress and spiritual forward motion that is promised.

Our target book of 1 John speaks of this confidence in 3:21.

1 John 3:21 *Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God.*

Confidence in what? – Confidence that we are His; confidence that we will follow Him; confidence that we are forgiven and not condemned; confidence that God will work in us to mold us into the image of Jesus. And if I do have a twinge of doubt or sense of condemnation, then I need to go back to be sure I have received Christ as our Savior. And when I am sure of my acceptance of His work for me on the cross, I can be assured and reassured that He is working in me and will never condemn me.

I will have CONFIDENCE IN MY PROGRESS,

CONFIDENCE IN MY ACCESS (Hebrews 4:16; 1 John 5:14)

One of the great differences between Christianity and all other religions is that Christianity is about relationship to God – not just obedience. It is wonderful to know that God is working in me – but I long to

know that I am more than just a work project. Gladly, the Bible teaches me that I am not only His possession, but amazingly I am called His friend.

John 15:13-15 *Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. You are My friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you.*

This tells me that God wants a relationship with me. He has revealed much of His plan for me through Jesus. But amazingly, this relationship is not one sided – that is, God telling me what He wants and will do. God has given us prayer – an invitation to come into His throne room to receive the grace of His caring ear and His willing mercy of action.

Hebrews 4:16 *Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*

Note that we can approach God with confidence. He asks us to draw near; He wants us to draw near. He desires relationship with us, His children. Not only does He want to express to us His heart, He wants us to express to Him our heart. And hear now these words from our target book of 1 John.

1 John 5:14-15 *This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him.*

Wo, what a promise! What a confidence in access! – that I can ask and receive, if indeed I ask as best I know what is His will. And why would I want anything that is not His will? God wants me to prosper – so ask! God wants me to love my spouse and family, and them to love me – so ask! God wants me to grow in love, joy, peace, patience and all the other fruit of the Spirit – so ask! God wants my church to flourish as a beacon of hope to many – so ask! God wants to protect me and my family from evil and the evil one – so ask! This is CONFIDENCE IN MY ACCESS.

CONFIDENCE IN MY HOPE (Hebrews 3:6; 1 John 2:28)

Yes, God wants me to have confidence that He is working in me, and confidence in glorious access to His throne. But He also wants me to have confidence in my future beyond this life. He wants me to have confidence that when my life on this earth is over I have a reserved place in His heavenly kingdom. And He doesn't just want me to "hope" in this, but to know this by confident faith. He wants me to have confidence in my hope.

Hebrews 3:6 *But Christ was faithful as a Son over His house – whose house we are, if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end.*

1 John 2:28 *Now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming.*

And remember, we will hold fast our confidence and hope firm, and we will abide in Him because His sheep follow Him and hear His voice. We may stray, but He will never let us slip from His Almighty grip, for we are His family – His house.

SO REMEMBER . . .

- ✓ God is WORKING in you – confidence in PROGRESS
- ✓ God is INVITING you – confidence in ACCESS
- ✓ God is AWAITING you – confidence in HOPE