

## CONFIDENCE

### 2 Timothy 1:3-14

What comes to mind when we hear the word “confidence?” Just as an experiment, I searched the word “confidence” on the internet to see what was there. The first entry I found was a dictionary definition that essentially said “confidence is a feeling or belief that you can rely on something or someone.” I thought that was a good starting point. The next variation in the dictionary was related to “a state of feeling certain about the truth of something.” That’s a good addition. The third variation mentioned “self-assurance” and everything beyond that point was about “self-confidence.” The predominance of self-centeredness in our culture is reflected in these search results.

It is probably not an overstatement to say that our “confidence” impacts everything we do in our everyday lives. “Lack of confidence” leads to withdrawal and inaction while “over confidence” leads to rash and irresponsible behaviors. As is the case with so many things, we need to look for a reasonable balance that avoids too little or too much. While having a balanced level of confidence is certainly important, even more important is the question of “what” or “in whom” is that confidence based.

We’ve heard a lot in the last few decades about self esteem. While self esteem is not the same as self confidence, there is a connection. “Esteem” is related to whether we believe we are worthy of respect from others and “confidence” is associated with whether we believe in the ability available to us. As it works out for most people, self-confidence is strongly influenced by what we think that others think about us. When we think in such terms, we literally give those “perceived” realities control over us.

The inability to visually focus on whatever we are trying to see is an eye problem. The inability to spiritually focus on the reality of our very being is an “I” problem. We all realize that self-centeredness and desiring acceptability from others is a major driving force for most of humanity. Even when people turn to “religion” (this would include Christianity) people are searching for ways to have their needs met. We hear questions such as “How can Christianity help me with my problems and needs?” As a result of this, we see churches evolving into a “religious consumerism” approach and are literally asking questions like “What would you like in a church? What would get you to come back and try the church again?” All these things are evidences of people catering to self and of the church enabling such an approach to life.

The clear message from Christ is an invitation to come and “die to self and receive new life that is focused on God.” As a result, Christians start from a completely different basis than the rest of the world. Sometime we fail to remember who we actually are. If the truth were known and admitted, then we would realize that the only true value we have is the fact that God is in us and loves us. Because we recognize the fact that God does indwell us, He really cares what happens to us, and He is in control, then we can endure problems and difficulties and pressures without caving in and giving up. That outcome will not happen if we fail to focus on God and slip back into the way of the world that focuses on ourselves, our own abilities, and what other might think of us.

In Paul’s second letter to Timothy we find Paul encouraging Timothy to stand firm in the ministry to which God had called him. Apparently, Timothy was experiencing opposition and criticism from some in the church at Ephesus. This opposition may have been coming from false teachers. There may also have been some in the church who did not respect Timothy because he was young and not as experienced as they were. When opposition and criticism come to us, then

we are vulnerable to question whether or not we may have failed to be sensitive to where God was leading us. When this happens, then we need to examine where we are, remember the foundations of our faith, and make sure that we are following God and not our own ideas.

### Heritage – 1:3-5

<sup>3</sup> I thank God, whom I serve with a clear (pure) conscience the way my forefathers did, as I constantly remember you in my prayers night and day, <sup>4</sup> longing to see you, even as I recall your tears, so that I may be filled with joy. <sup>5</sup> For I am mindful of the sincere faith within you, which first dwelt in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am sure that *it is* in you as well. 2 Timothy 1:3-5 (NASB95)

Just knowing that someone is always praying for us should be a great encouragement. Paul's encouragement of Timothy started with a reminder that he was always praying for Timothy. Paul also slipped in a reminder that keeping the faith with a clean conscience is possible even in the most trying times (even being in prison as Paul was). This reminder was followed by an expression of genuine care and concern for Timothy. The treatment Timothy was likely receiving from some in the church he was pastoring probably caused him to think that no one really cared.

Paul was aware of the ministry of his calling and the calling of his ministry. He was faithful to both. This awareness was so strong in his life that it shaped his identity and defined who he was. The things he did were influenced by the position to which he had been called. Timothy needed to be cognizant of his calling and operate accordingly. This idea raises an important question regarding how we would answer a question such as "who are you?" Such a question would be seeking to determine more than your name. That might be an interesting exercise to go through in times of contemplation or a devotional time.

A discipleship arrangement existed between Paul and Timothy. Paul provided guidance to this young pastor and all that he shared was based on what God had given to him. Paul realized that God had been involved in forming a strong bond between him and Timothy. Paul could see Timothy being God's instrument in carrying on the work Paul had begun in Ephesus. Because of the importance of the work and the affection he had for Timothy, Paul remembered Timothy in all his prayers. Obviously, prayer was important to Paul, especially at this point in his life and ministry. He was in prison in Rome and he realized that the battle for the souls of men was still underway and that praying was a way to fight the good fight. It still is the most effective thing we can do as Christians and it is perhaps the most neglected thing we (don't) do.

Paul had not abandoned the faith of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob but served with a clean conscience in the same kind of faith. Some had accused Paul of abandoning the faith of his forefathers. The God Paul served was the same God Who had called Abraham. It is important to see that Christianity is not different from the faith of Abraham but is the fulfillment of it in the person of Jesus Christ.

Because Paul could see the fruit of his labor in the ongoing ministry of Timothy, he was thankful to God for Timothy's faithfulness and sincerity. Just as Paul could identify with the faithful examples of the "forefathers," he noted that Timothy was similarly influenced by the faithful examples of his mother and grandmother. Paul could see in Timothy the value of godly influence in the home. All of us need to keep in mind that what we do and how we live has influence not only on our own individual lives but can also impact others in future generations. That is a heavy responsibility when we consider that our actions today can impact the lives of our grandchildren.

### Gifted – 1:6-7

<sup>6</sup> For this reason I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. <sup>7</sup> For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline. 2 Timothy 1:6-7 (NASB95)

Paul encouraged Timothy to use all the resources he had especially the spiritual gifts for ministry. Many time people in Christian work get so involved in the daily grind of things to do, people to see and places to go that they forget to tap into the spiritual power that God has placed in them. Sometimes people with whom we must deal require us to love them when they are not lovable and we need the love that God put into our hearts by the Holy Spirit to be loving toward them.

To really accomplish all that our ministry jobs entail requires that we live orderly lives and concentrate on the priorities even when we would rather be doing something else which brings us to the word “discipline.” Self-discipline (NIV) is rendered “sound mind” in the KJV and according to Gill’s commentary means “prudent conduct and behavior; in sobriety, moderation, temperance, purity, and honesty.”

One of the lessons that Paul was passing on to Timothy was the importance and the potential impact of being bold in the ministry of the gospel. We have the ability to be bold because we have the Holy Spirit in us and working in us and exhibiting the life of Christ in us. What would cause us to be less than bold in our Christian walk and testimony?

### Unashamed – 1:8-12

<sup>8</sup> Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner, but join with *me* in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God, <sup>9</sup> who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity, <sup>10</sup> but now has been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, <sup>11</sup> for which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle and a teacher. <sup>12</sup> For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day. 2 Timothy 1:8-12 (NASB95)

Two things Paul cautioned Timothy about were (1) being embarrassed about the testimony of Jesus and/or (2) the testimony of well-known leaders in the church.

The testimony of Jesus is the life He lived which would include His birth and the circumstances of it, His experience of growing up in an impoverished environment, His ministry including the miracles, His arrest, trial and crucifixion, resurrection and ascension and His sending of the Holy Spirit. Why would that be an embarrassment? Consider how non conventional and improbable all of this testimony really is. Whoever heard of someone being born of a virgin? Why would He be arrested, put on trial and executed if He was who we claim Him to be? How improbable is a spontaneous resurrection? Do you really think anyone is going to believe that someone just rose up from the ground and disappeared into the sky? You get the idea! This is what Christian young people get exposed to when they go away from home to a university. It is difficult to be bold in the face of such caustic criticism that would suggest that Christians are deluded and believe in fairy tales. The same kind of questions could be raised about Paul who was in a Roman prison. Why would you put any confidence in the teaching of a criminal? Few of us have close friends who have been arrested for their Christian faith. How would we react to such a situation? Would we be embarrassed because they were arrested? Are we sometimes apologetic for those who are labeled as fanatics by the world? If the world is not opposing what we are doing for Jesus, then we must not be encroaching on their territory.

We are to be about the business of rescuing and redeeming and restoring that which is under the control of the devil and bringing those people and things under the control of the kingdom of God. Our lives are to make a difference in the world. We were not called to just blend in and not be changers of the world. Our life is to be useful for God’s purposes because

that is why we were saved. The plan is totally improbable and against any scheme that would be developed by fallen mankind. Any plan that is developed in the mind of man has a strong element of people having to do something to earn salvation or approval or whatever and however the ideal condition might be described. God's plan excludes our contribution and it depends entirely on His grace. It is freely given or granted to all who trust in His means of salvation. The plan was in place before creation, it was the foundation upon which the call of Abraham and the establishing of the nation of Israel was based as God put into place the physical events and religious rituals that pointed to the eventual revelation of that plan in Jesus Christ.

This brings us back to what the world considers to be an incredible story that Paul called the testimony of Jesus. Place this testimony on the backdrop of four thousand years of events and activities that pointed to and predicted exactly what happened in the "testimony of Jesus" and the conclusion is that only God could have caused all these things to come together. To dismiss the overall panorama of history is to ignore the evidence which is essentially intellectually dishonest. Paul was not a self-appointed person but had been called of God for his ministry. Each of us has jobs to do in the kingdom of God. Paul had three jobs. He was a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher.

Many times we think that if we will just do what is right and be in God's will that we will have it great. But Paul found that he was suffering because he did what God called him to do. We don't see much suffering in our country by Christians but in other parts of the world, many are paying a high price for their faith – even death. However, if we know Jesus and have our trust in Him, then He will vindicate us and it will be worth it all in the day of judgment.

We should be learning from faithful Christian leaders who have gone before us. Look at the action words Paul used in his testimony regarding why he was not ashamed. The first verb he used was "know." How do we "know" anything? So much of what we say that we know is related to information that we have read or heard or observed. How much of what you read or hear or see can you really **know** that it is absolute truth? In the *Spiritual Man* (the three volume work of Watchman Nee), the author claimed that the only thing we can really know is that which is revealed to us in our spirit. What or Whom did Paul say he knew? He said he knew God. You can't prove God is; but, you can know it in your innermost being.

Paul described God as "whom I have believed." This brings us to the second action word: believed. This word in the Greek is from the same root that is translated as "faith" or "trust." This implies an active reliance upon the object of trust or faith. Because Paul did rely upon God and His provision and power, he was a witness to that not being a misplaced trust because God kept His promises to Paul. Paul then had confidence or was persuaded (the third verb) that God was able. When the evidence backs up what we know to be true and that in which we put our trust then we can say that we are persuaded.

The thing that Paul was persuaded about was that all he had entrusted to God (his very life for all eternity) was in good hands and that his knowledge and trust would be vindicated before the judgment seat of God. We could also interpret the text to read that Paul was persuaded that God was able to guard and bring to pass all the promises given to those who love him.

#### Loyal – 1:13-14

<sup>13</sup> Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.

<sup>14</sup> Guard, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to *you*. 2 Timothy 1:11-15 (NASB95)

Paul encouraged Timothy to follow his example in the ministry that had been entrusted to

him at Ephesus. We can use the teachings of those who have gone before us as examples and when we apply the truth of sound teaching in faith and love, then the kingdom of God will continue to be advanced. God has provided resources (spiritual gifts) and responsibilities (offices in the church) to each of us to help build up the Body of Christ. We also have the Holy Spirit to work in and through us to be effective in whatever our ministry is.

Notice the interesting tie-in with the previous verses where we saw that God is able to guard that which we entrust to him (or that which He entrusts to us). All of us have been entrusted with gifts and abilities from God and we are called upon to guard these by means of the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Some significant benefits of the gospel are to improve our sentiments, our affections, our feelings, and our emotions by having these influenced by foundational truths. Our actions (as we properly respond to the presence of Christ as our lives) will find appropriate restraints and stimuli so that natural defects may become positive attributes, and good attributes may never become defects by being excessive.