

# *THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST*

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

## MOTIVATIONAL LESSONS “The Christian’s Confidence”

### **Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:**

*THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST*. Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, Kevin Pendergrass.

Welcome to the Gospel of Christ. In today’s motivational lesson we will be looking at the Christian’s confidence. There are many people today who, if they died right now, are unsure as to whether or not they would spend eternity in Heaven. People who claim to be faithful members of the Lord’s church still are uncertain if they will go to Heaven forever. Isn’t that sad—that such people do not have the confidence about which the Bible speaks that every Christian should have (and that in reality we must have)? Do you have a Christian’s confidence?

I want to begin in Romans 8:31, which says, “What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?” I like this verse because the emphasis here is that there is absolutely no force, and no one, that can go up against us if God is on our side. We and God always make the majority, even if at times we feel alone. If God is on our side, it does not matter. Verses 33-38 go on to say,

“He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall bring a charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, ‘For Your sake we are killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.’ Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Think of the confidence with which Paul wrote when he made the above statements. Nothing can separate us from the love of God. Absolutely nothing! If God is for us, no one can successfully be against us. That does not mean that people will not oppose us. But they will lose every time. Do we have the confidence about which Paul wrote in Romans 8:31-39? Why is it important to have this confidence? Why is so essential that the Christian have such a confidence?

The first reason why it is so important that the Christian has confidence is because it builds faith. In Romans 10:17 the Bible says that “faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” In Hebrews 11:6 the Bible says that “without faith it is impossible to please God.” So, when we have confidence in God, and when we have confidence in His Word, that is only going to make our faith grow stronger. But we must be willing to study the Bible and go to the Word of God so that we can have that faith. Faith does not come from a preacher, from parents, or a feeling inside of us. Faith comes from God’s Word. That is what will help us have confidence. It is ironic how this works. The more confidence we have, the more faith we will have. The more faith we have, the more confidence we have. They play off of one another. But the only way we can have those things is if we are willing

to go to God's Word to build such a faith. In Acts 17:11 Paul was talking about the people in Berea, and said that they were more noble or more fair minded than those in Thessalonica. The reason was because they searched the Scriptures daily to be sure that what was being said was the truth. If you are wondering why you do not have a strong faith or strong confidence, it may be because you have not been studying or have not been putting forth the effort you should concerning God's Word. The Bereans studied the Scriptures daily. Sometimes we pat ourselves on the back if we are at worship on Sunday morning, Sunday night, or Wednesday night. We say, "I come every time the doors are open; I do not know why my faith is not strong or why I do not have a stronger confidence." It could be because we are not searching the Scriptures daily. In 2 Timothy 2:15 the Bible says that we are to "rightfully divide" the word of truth. We are to be good students of the Bible. How can we do that? If we do not know anything about God's Word, then we can't do that. Confidence leaves no room for doubt or uncertainty—which is why it builds our faith. When we have confidence in "the faith" (Eph. 4:5), it leaves no room for doubt or uncertainty at all.

In Acts 26, however, we read about a man who was very uncertain. He had no confidence, and did not have much faith. And because of that, he did not make the right decision. The man was King Agrippa. Paul had talked with Agrippa, and had discussed spiritual matters with him. In Acts 26:27-28 Paul said, "King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you do believe." Then Agrippa said to Paul, "You almost persuade me to become a Christian." This is how many people are today. They are at the brink of repentance, and are so close to doing the right thing. But they do not have the faith they need to carry through. As faithful children of God, we can know these things, which leave no room for doubt. In 1 John 5:13 John wrote, "These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God." Does it say, "...that you may 'think' that you have eternal life"? Does it say, "...that you may 'almost believe' that you have eternal life"? No. It says, "...that you may **know** that you have eternal life." We can know that we have eternal life, based upon the faith we have in God (an obedient faith). How can we know that we have eternal life? We can know it by "continuing to believe in the name of the Son of God." This is not talking about "faith only." This is not simply saying, "I believe in God." According to James 2:19, even the demons believe that Jesus is the Son of God." Rather, this is referring to the idea of obediently continuing to believe. We can know that we have eternal life. How comforting that is!

When we build our faith, it takes away our doubts and our fears. In Mark 4 we find the account where Jesus calmed a storm. The winds and the waves obeyed Jesus Christ. In verse 40 we read that Jesus said to His disciples, "Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?" The disciples were in a boat on the sea, and storms were coming. They were fearful. Jesus calmed the storm, and then asked them, "Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?" When we have faith, we do not have to worry about fear. In 2 Timothy 1:7 the Bible says, "God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind." Far too many people act by fear instead of by faith. Because of that, they do not have the Christian's confidence. If a person does not have confidence in what he is doing, then he will start acting by fear. He will start being afraid of what might happen—which is why he will eventually fail. This is why Jesus said in Mark 4:40 that we can't say that we are acting by both faith and fear. There is a godly fear, of course, that we all must have (Phil. 2:12). We are commanded to "work out our own salvation with fear and trembling." But we are talking here about fear of controversy, fear of trials, or fear of not doing the right thing in following the Lord. Those things represent a spirit of fear that the Lord has not given us. That is something that has developed within our own minds. We must act by faith, not fear.

In Romans 1:17 the Bible says, "In it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, 'The just shall live by faith.'" We need to be passing on a genuine faith instead of just saying, "This is what I believe, so I'm going to pass it on to my children so they can pass it on." Rather, we need to pass on the type of faith taught in the Bible. We need to say, "This is God's Word, and we have confidence in it." This will build our faith. We are to pass on a biblical faith. In 2 Timothy 2:2 the Bible says, "The things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." We must pass on a genuine faith so that we can give each other Christian confidence and help build each other's faith.

Abraham was a man who had great faith because of his confidence. In Romans 4:20 the Bible says, "He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God." Because of Abraham's confidence, he did not waver. This means that he did not budge at all. He could not be moved because he had such a strong confidence. Because of this, his faith was strengthened that much more. Let's be like Abraham. Let's live a faithful life before the Lord. Even though we today are under a different law, we still have to have the same type of faith that Abraham had—a faith that does not waver. If we do that, our faith will become even stronger. Sometimes we may feel like the apostles in Luke 17:5 when they asked the Lord to increase their faith. It is OK to ask such a thing from time to time. But let's not ever lose the confidence in what we have. Let's not put our confidence in the wrong thing. In 1 Corinthians 2:5 the Bible says that our faith should not be in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. Far too many people have put their confidence in the wrong place. They do not have a correct faith in God. Instead, they put their faith in other things, especially in the wisdom of men. We must put our faith in the power of God. As Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 1:24, "it is by faith" that we stand. If we do not have a God-given faith that comes from the Word of God, then 1 Corinthians 10:12 teaches us that we will fall. Confidence must establish our faith. In Colossians 2:7 the Bible says, "Rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving." Why must we have confidence? We must have it because it builds our faith and makes us stronger.

Second, confidence also builds trust in God and helps us assist one another in getting to Heaven. In 2 Corinthians 1:9-10 Paul wrote,

"Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead, who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver us; in whom we trust that He will still deliver us."

Paul knew that when we put our trust in God, and have a confidence that allows us to trust in God because we know that He will deliver us, it continues to build a greater trust. One of the passages that sticks out in my mind when I think of someone who had confidence, and how that confidence built trust, has to do with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Their story is found in Daniel 3 where we read of King Nebuchadnezzar. He had a massive image of himself built, to which all in the region were to bow down and worship. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were in that region. Did they bow down and worship the image? They knew it was wrong. But did they have confidence and trust that allowed them not to do such a thing? Let's read in Daniel 3:8-11—

"Therefore at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and accused the Jews. he spoke and said to King Nebuchadnezzar, 'O king, live forever! You, O king, have made a decree that everyone who hears the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, shall fall down and worship the gold image; and whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.'"

The situation was that people had to fall down and worship Nebuchadnezzar's image or they were going to die. They would not be put in jail for a year, or have to pay some money. They would be put to death. Verses 12-15 go on to say,

“There are certain Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; these men, O king, have not paid due regard to you. They do not serve your gods or worship the gold image which you have set up.’ Then Nebuchadnezzar, in rage and fury, gave the command to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. So they brought these men before the king. Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying to them, ‘Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the gold image which I have set up? Now if you are ready at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, and you fall down and worship the image which I have made, good! But if you do not worship, you shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. And who is the god who will deliver you from my hands?’”

We can already see that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego had great confidence because they had already refused to bow down to Nebuchadnezzar's image. But put yourselves in their shoes for just a minute. You know what the truth is. You know what you are supposed to do. The first time you did not do the wrong thing, but you did the right thing. But now you get called in before the king. Nebuchadnezzar should have put the three men to death. Instead he gave them one more chance to do “the right thing.” Can't you see how they might have tried to justify their future actions by thinking, “Perhaps this is God's way of delivering us. Perhaps He is giving us a second chance because the first time we did what we knew were supposed to do. We did what we knew was right. But now God is giving us an opportunity to bow down. In our minds, we won't worship the image, but this way we won't be put into a fiery furnace either.” Could you see how some of us might try to reason through the situation in such a manner because our trust level wasn't where it should have been—which led us to justify compromising? This was not the case with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. This is what they said to the king.

“O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up” (vss. 16-19).

They told Nebuchadnezzar that the God Whom they served would deliver them. They had confidence and trust that God would deliver them from the fiery furnace. But their attitude was that even if God chose not to do that, they still would not bow down to Nebuchadnezzar's image. Their confidence was going to build their trust. According to verse 27, after Nebuchadnezzar ordered Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to be put into the fiery furnace, he and his court “saw these men on whose bodies the fire had no power; the hair of their head was not singed nor were their garments affected, and the smell of fire was not on them.” God had delivered them. They had confidence and trusted in God. Even though they were thrown into a fiery furnace that had been heated seven times hotter than normal, they came out of it without even any smell of smoke upon their clothes. Confidence builds our trust. We must trust in God even when trials and persecutions come our way. In fact, this is when trust really needs to be built up and when we need to have confidence in God. In 1 Timothy 4:10 the Bible says, “To this end we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe.” When we trust in God, trials will come our way. But we have to have confidence that God will deliver us. In Hebrews 2:13 the Bible says, “And again, ‘I will put My trust in Him.’” We must put our trust in God. Confidence is not arrogance. Sometimes people may mistake confidence for arrogance. But the reason we can be confident is be-

cause we are not trusting in ourselves. We are confident because we are trusting in God. In fact, if we were trusting only in ourselves, we would have nothing about which to be confident. Isaiah 64:6 says, "But we are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags; We all fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, Have taken us away." We do not have confidence because we trust in ourselves. We have confidence because we are trusting in the true and living God. That confidence builds our trust because we know that we are not depending upon ourselves, but upon God. In Proverbs 3:5-6 the Bible says, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths."

Confidence builds faith. But confidence also builds trust. Third, confidence builds the church. When we are confident, we are much more likely to reach out to others in order to build up the church—both inwardly (by strengthening those who already are members, but also outwardly by going out to win souls for Christ in order to make new converts. In Acts 16:5 the Bible says, "So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily." How were the churches "strengthened in faith," and how did they have their numbers "increased daily"? It was because of the confidence that the Christians had in God. Non-Christians saw that such confidence was not fake, but was real. Today the Lord's church has almost become a hobby to so many with whom I have come in contact. It is almost as if people say, "I go on Sundays, and occasionally I go on Wednesday nights, but that's about it." Would that person have been a successful Christian if he lived during the time of the events recorded in the Book of Acts? How would such a lack of confidence have worked out for such a person if he lived during the time of the Book of Acts? It would not have worked out well! We see the kind of life that the Christians lived during the time of the events recorded in the Book of Acts. And that same type of life should be what we today live. We should try to bring souls to Jesus.

If you have a lot of people who do not believe in what they are doing, then there is no way for a congregation to be built up. That is why people often wonder, "Why is our congregation not growing?" It is because there is no confidence in what they are doing. If there is no confidence, the church will not be built up. In 1 Peter 3:15 we see the type of confidence we are to have: "Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear." This is the type of confidence that we are to have. If someone asks us a question, we are to have God "sanctified in our hearts" so that we can "always be ready to give a defense." If we do not know, then people will say, "You don't even believe in what you are doing. You're just treating it like a weekend hobby." People will see that our confidence is not real. We have to have confidence to know that what we believe is true. In John 8:32 Jesus said, "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free." In John 17:17 Jesus prayed that His followers would be "sanctified by truth," which is "God's Word." Some people today, however, back down and refuse to take a stand. Why is this the case? It is because of a lack of confidence. The church will never grow the way it needs to if this situation prevails.

Now I want to look at Acts 8 when the church was being severely persecuted. As I read from Acts 8, think to yourself about what your mentality would be if you had been a member of the church at that time.

"Now Saul was consenting to his [Stephen's] death. At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him. As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison. Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word" (vss. 1-7).

Think about that. Saul was taking men and women who were members of the Lord's church and who were standing for truth, and was dragging them off to put them into prison. A faithful Christian had just been stoned to death. So what are you going to do? Will you say, "I'm giving up on this, and will find something else to do because this can't be the right thing"? That is not what the first-century Christians did. Those who did not go to prison "went everywhere preaching the word." And the church grew because of that. In Proverbs 14:26 the Bible says, "In the fear of the Lord there is strong confidence, and His children will have a place of refuge." This goes back to godly fear—not a fear of trials or persecutions or personal fears within ourselves. This is a good, godly fear—a fear that reveres and respects God, and submits to Him. Where there is a godly fear of the Lord, there will be a strong confidence. Is Acts 8:1-4 an example of people who had fear in the Lord, and who, because of that, had a strong confidence? Absolutely! Those people were not afraid of what might happen to them. They had fear in the Lord, which gave them, as Proverbs 14:26 says, a strong confidence. If we have that, God will provide us with "a place of refuge." In Proverbs 25:19 the Bible says, "Confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble is like a bad tooth and a foot out of joint." If we have confidence in unfaithful individuals, we cannot grow. Our confidence must be in God alone. In Acts 28:31 the Bible says that Paul was "preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him." How was he preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things that concerned the kingdom? He was doing it "with all confidence." Because of that, we see throughout the Book of Acts that the church grew and grew and grew.

Don't we want the Lord's church to grow today? Of course we do. If you are a member of the Lord's church, you want it to grow. But do you have the confidence it takes to build up the church? If you do not, you need to work on that. If there are certain Bible-related questions that you have, you need to get those questions answered. It is not wrong to ask questions. What is wrong is to leave those questions unanswered because that will harm our confidence.

Why is confidence so important? Why must Christians have confidence? First, it builds our faith and makes us true individuals of faith. Second, it builds trust in God. Third, it builds up the Lord's church, not just inwardly, but outwardly as well.

Are you a Christian? If you are not a member of the church of Christ—the one church that Jesus built (Mt. 16:18; Eph. 4:4)—then you cannot have confidence. But you can change that by obeying the Gospel so that you can have this amazing confidence. The Bible teaches that we must confess Jesus Christ as Lord (Rom. 10:10), and that we must repent and turn away from our sins (Acts 2:38). Then we must be baptized because "baptism does also now save us" (1 Pet. 3:21). If you have yet to obey the truth, we pray today that you will obey the Gospel of Christ.

### **Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:**

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## STUDY QUESTIONS FOR “THE CHRISTIAN’S CONFIDENCE”

1. What does Romans 8:31 say, and how can its message help Christians build up their confidence?
2. What does Romans 8:38-39 say, and how can its message help Christians build up their confidence?
3. According to Romans 10:17, what is the origin of every Christian’s faith?
4. According to Hebrews 11:6, how important is faith in the life of every Christian?
5. According to Acts 17:11, what made the Christians in Berea “more noble than those in Thessalonica”?
6. How does Acts 17:11 apply to Christians today?
7. In Acts 26:27-28, to what man did the apostle Paul speak, and what was the man’s problem?
8. What important point is found in 1 John 5:13?
9. According to 2 Timothy 1:7, what has God **not** given Christians?
10. What does 2 Timothy 2:2 admonish faithful Christians to do during their lifetimes?
11. In Romans 4:20 the Bible says of one man, “He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith.” Who was that man?
12. According to 1 Corinthians 2:5, where should a Christian’s faith **not** be?
13. According to 2 Corinthians 1:24, what is it that allows a Christian to “stand”?
14. According to 2 Corinthians 1:9-10, in whom should Christians **not** trust, and in whom **should** they trust?
15. Names the three individuals mentioned in Daniel 3:8-1 who trusted completely in God.
16. In what circumstances did the individuals mentioned in Daniel 3:8-1 find themselves, and how did they react to those circumstances?
17. What was the end result of the individuals’ actions (mentioned in Daniel 3:8-1), and how should their actions impact the lives today of Christians?
18. According to 1 Timothy 4:10, in whom should every Christian trust?
19. According to Hebrews 2:13, in whom should every Christian trust?
20. Acts 16:5 says that “the churches were strengthened in the faith.” What caused that?