

Good morning, friends, and welcome to Foothills Church. As we get started, I'd like to say good morning to all our friends tuning in online, thank you for being part of our online community.

Let's get out our Bible's we are going to be in 2 Corinthians chapter 10 this morning. Sadly, this is the penultimate sermon in the Corinthians series. Next week Phil will wrap up with the closing message and then we head into our Christmas series the Sunday after Thanksgiving.

Today, we are going to be talking about confidence and self-confidence. This is an important subject. There are some people who have a lot of confidence in themselves, like they were born with an extra measure and go through life ready to take on any challenge without hesitation. On the other end of the spectrum are those who have virtually no sense of confidence. They question every decision, hold back from opportunities, shy away from risk or challenges. And then there is everyone in between. Fairly confident most of the time, but once in a while not so sure. Do you fall somewhere in that list? Well, today, in the context of defending himself to the church in Corinth, Paul is going to teach us a few things about where our confidence should come from.

Throughout the letters to the church in Corinth, Paul has shared bits and pieces of the struggle he has had with the Church and with some of the people in the church. The relationship Paul has with Corinth has been rocky at times. Things have been said, feelings have been hurt and Paul has worked hard to reconcile but it's been difficult. In the closing chapters of the letter, Paul's frustrations really come to the surface.

Paul's irritation in these closing chapters is pointed particularly at a group of people that have moved to Corinth and are undermining his authority and stirring up trouble in the church. So finally, Paul focuses on some of the things being said about him to set the record straight to so speak. This chapter is messy. We can hear Paul's frustration in it. And while we need to acknowledge Paul's frustration, even anger at these people, there are some important lessons in this text about the source of our confidence. Paul is very confident in himself and his calling and he is challenging those who have made accusations against him. And in this chapter Paul teaches us that **our confidence doesn't come from our own strength, skill, ability or even what others say about us, our confidence comes from Jesus**, the one who is far greater, far more powerful, far more capable than anyone else. And who has called us to a life of ministry.

There are five lessons in confidence that we find in this chapter.

Lessons number 1: Godly confidence begins with humility. Let's read verses 1-2.

In the first few verses it appears that Paul has been accused of being weak or perhaps inconsistent. He is accused of being humble and simple when he is present with the church, but in his letters, he is bold and confident. So Paul begins his confrontation with the church in a place of humility, meekness and gentleness. What does it mean to be humble? We have talked about humility a lot at Foothills Church and here is the definition that we use. **Humility is dependence on God that generates strength and confidence used in service to others.**

Whenever we face conflict, humility should be our starting point. Humility allows us to place our confidence in God and not in ourselves. It helps us set aside our goals and ambitions and desires, and adopt God's goals and his desires for us. Humility places us under God's authority and not our own authority.

So Paul starts with humility, with meekness and gentleness as he confronts the church and what he has been accused of. This language that Paul uses, should remind us of Jesus and his own attitude of humility. Matthew 11: 27-30. "All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.²⁸ Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.²⁹ Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

All things have been handed over to Jesus and how does he respond. With gentleness and humility.

In Philippians 2 Paul says our attitudes should be the same as Christ Jesus, who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped but humbled himself.

True confidence comes not from ourselves, it comes from God, and begins with humility.

This brings us to **lesson number 2: Our confidence is in divine strength, not human strength.** In these next few verses Paul uses a siege metaphor to describe the types of battles that we face as Christ followers. Imagine ancient warfare when an army laid siege to a walled city. They surrounded the city and would use battering rams against the gates or catapults to launch big rocks at the walls. Eventually they might succeed in breaking down the gates or walls and would flood into the city and destroy it, conquering and taking prisoners and all that. You guys get the idea? Now Let's look at verses 3-6.

Our battle is not against a walled city, our battle is not of the flesh, our battle is a spiritual battle. Therefore, our weapons are not of the flesh, not of ourselves, not of our own strength or intelligence or effort or power.

So we put no confidence in the flesh, instead we find our confidence in the Spirit, we find our confidence in Jesus. We use the tools that he gives us to fight our battles. What tools are those? Paul tells us in **Ephesians 6:10-20**. It's too long to put on the screen so I'm going to read it to you.

Our confidence should never be in human strength or human ability because we are not fighting human battles. We are fighting spiritual battles, and our strength is in divine power at work within us.

Lesson number 3: Our confidence is demonstrated through consistency. Verses 7-11.

Consistency is so important, back in Paul's day and today. So important. Paul has been accused of being inconsistent. That he acts one way in person then speaks a different way when he writes letters. Here it almost feels like he is taking the boxing gloves off. You say I'm too nice when I'm with you? Ok, no problem, next time I see you I'll be just as bold as you read in the letters, look out.

The hard part is that we don't know what Paul said or did when he went to Corinth. We don't know how much restraint he used when dealing with this church. But we see in this text how important it is to be consistent in our lives and in our ministry if we want to have a gospel witness. We can't live one way at church and another way at home or work. We can't be two faced like that. We don't witness to our co-workers about Jesus then go get hammered with them at the next office party right? We don't teach Sunday school and then go home and mistreat our family. Either we are surrendered to Jesus and do all we can to love and serve him, however imperfectly, or we aren't surrendered to Jesus, we simply live for ourselves and pretend.

Confident Christ followers are consistent in how they live. They know who they are, they know what they believe, they know who they follow and they are consistent no matter the context or circumstances. At work, at home, at the grocery store, in seasons of plenty and seasons of need.

Because their confidence is in Christ, not in themselves, not in their circumstances.

Lesson number 4: Confident Christ followers don't play comparison games. Paul says it with some mockery. Vs. 12. Not that we dare classify or compare ourselves with some of those who are commending themselves. But when they measure themselves by one another and compare themselves with one another, they are without understanding.

We don't need to compare ourselves with others. We don't need to play those games. If we belong to Jesus, if we are trusting him and following him and using the gifts he has given us to minister to others the way he designed us to do, then who cares what other people are doing? Who cares? What does it matter if someone is better at singing or serving or praying or teaching or preaching than you and me? Guess what, there will always be someone better at doing something. Just go look on the internet. Go watch YouTube and see just how amazing people are at doing every kind of thing. Someone will always have more talent, more money, more skill, more good looks, more likes and followers than I do. And if we spend our lives comparing ourselves to others we will always feel like less than others and it erodes our confidence.

There is another side to this coin that is equally unhealthy. When we use others to bolster our confidence falsely. When we compare ourselves to others and think, hey, I'm doing better than that guy, so I must be ok. We all do this sometimes. And it gives us a false sense of confidence because it is born out of judgment. Like Paul says "without understanding."

Instead we are to grow in our confidence in Jesus and what he sees in us. That's all that matters. If Jesus is the king of the universe, and if Jesus loves us with unconditional love, and if Jesus created each of us intentionally and thoughtfully with unique features and talents and passions, then all we need to focus on is living our lives and using our gifts for him. If every believer did this consistently we would have so

much more confidence, and wouldn't worry about comparing ourselves to others. Because God's opinion is the only one that matters and we belong to him. Amen?

Lesson number 5: Our confidence is in Jesus and in his work. This is where Paul puts all the pieces together. Verses 13-18.

These last two verses really sum it all up, don't they? Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.

I don't know exactly why this is, but boasting is one of the most annoying, off putting behaviors to me. Do you feel that way? Someone could have all the talent, all the skill, be the very best at something and I'll think wow, they are so amazing, but the moment they open their mouth and brag or boast about how good they are, I'm out. Nope. It's over. I couldn't care less. Actually, I hope they fail miserably in front of the whole world just to be humbled. After all God opposes the proud but give grace to the humble. You know what I mean? You ever feel that way? When some athlete or whoever, gets to bragging about how good they are?

Maybe it's because boasting is so opposite of humility. It's so opposite of the character of Christ. The one who had every reason to boast, but chose not to, and instead gave all the glory to the Father. We imitate Christ when we give God all the praise and glory for the good things we have and the good things we do. Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.

Our confidence should come From Christ and his work in us. If we are good at doing anything or if we do anything that is good, it is because Christ is at work in us and through us. We get the benefit and the blessing of being used by God to do good things. And the joy of being a blessing to others. That's a rich reward,

Lastly, it's not the one who brags about themselves, who commends themselves that are approved by God, it is the one whom God

commends that is approved by God. If Jesus is working in you and through, that is the evidence that you are approved by God and you don't need anyone else's approval. God's approval is the only approval we need. Amen?

Our confidence comes from Christ and his work in us.

I like to send us out with some questions to wrestle with this week.

1. **What is your source of Confidence?** Is it your looks, your smarts, your abilities, your money? Or is your confidence rooted in the God who made you and gave you all those things? Maybe it's both, and you need to wrestle with that a little bit this week?
2. **How has God gifted you and blessed you, and how can you be a blessing?** God has made each one of us uniquely and given us unique spiritual gifts. How can you use those things to be a blessing and give God the glory?
3. **How can you step out in faith and trust God to work in you today?** Maybe you are in a place where you feel like you have zero confidence. No confidence in yourself and no confidence in God, or maybe you are just beginning to trust the Lord and have confidence. Where do you go from here? My question for you is this. If we are to grow in our confidence in God and his ability to work through us, we have to practice, one step at a time trusting him, and serving him, and seeing what he can do in us and through us.