

Lesson 9

Spiritual Confidence

Unshakable Faith in God's Eternal Promises

Before You Begin

Read: Revelation 2:9-11; Romans 7:14-19; 25-8:2; 8:38-39.

Pray for help in broadening your understanding and assurance of God's promises found in His word. Help in living more confidently in His truth. Ask for help in softening any doubts you may have so that you can face life's challenges with a steadfast belief in God's walk alongside you to help.

Set Your Intentions: What do you hope to achieve from this lesson?

Journal Your Thoughts. Journaling can be a valuable tool for spiritual reflection and growth.

Introduction

Be faithful to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life (Revelation 2:10).

What an incredible verse! Do we understand what it means? Let's look at another passage from Revelation:

Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say, The salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have now come, because the accuser of our brothers and sisters, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been thrown down. They conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; for they did not love their lives to the point of death (Revelation 12:10-11).

In verse 11, the word *conquered* stands out. Victory was theirs *by the blood of the lamb* and their steadfastness, perseverance, and faithfulness. They were confident that everything God promised would be true *for them*. This moved them to be committed to God personally and meaningfully – trusting that He was connected to them with the same type of connection.

Now, let's go back to Revelation 2:9-11 and note Jesus' very personal connection to the church in Smyrna:

I know your affliction and poverty, but you are rich. I know the slander of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan (Revelation 2:9).

See how Jesus *knew their physical circumstances*. He knew about their suffering. He is not aloof, distant, or uncaring. It is as if he is right there with them, suffering alongside them. He reminds them that they *are rich*. These are tender words of encouragement intended to enrich, strengthen, and bolster their faith. Spiritually, Jesus says they were in abundance. They had every resource they needed. For the church at Smyrna, believing God and taking Him at his word, pushing through and holding out, demonstrated the quality of their faith.

Don't be afraid of what you are about to suffer. Look, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison to test you, and you will experience affliction for ten days. Be faithful to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life (Revelation 2:10).

Here, Jesus says, *don't be afraid of what you're about to suffer*. He then says *you will experience affliction*. Now that's sobering. What if Jesus came to you and told you that? Would you be ready? Are you sufficiently rooted to withstand that kind of storm? The truth is that Christ and His apostles have already come to us through the word and warned us about suffering and affliction. It's all a test from Satan. We must remember that all the trials Satan puts before us are temporary and will come to an end. But while we're in the middle of it, we must remember we are never alone, have access to the strength or power God provides as He walks with us, and find solace in the victory to come.

"Let anyone who has ears to hear listen to what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who conquers will never be harmed by the second death (Revelation 2:11).

The one who conquers will live eternally. This is the life that matters and the one you must not miss.

The point of this lesson is to live in a way that frames everything in this life for the next. Achieving this perspective requires a profound level of cooperation and surrender to God. As we commit to this process, allowing God to guide our steps, our trust and confidence in Him naturally grow. This deepening faith challenges us to consider whether we are truly rooted in our spiritual lives.

Are we embodying the traits of a strong Christian? If we were to observe a strong Christian, we would likely see robust habits—devotion to God and fellow saints, consistent prayer, diligent study of scripture, and active engagement in positively impacting others. As suggested in Philippians 4:8, their thoughts dwell on whatever is true, noble, proper, pure, lovely, and admirable.

For the next few moments, I want you to know that we will focus specifically on confidence, an essential attribute of strong Christians. We will discuss the importance of trust, where to place it, and how to cultivate it. More importantly, we will explore how this confidence supports us throughout life, offering resilience and stability no matter our challenges. This is about acknowledging the necessity of confidence and understanding how it can be actively developed and maintained in our daily walk with Christ.

The Vital Importance of Being Confident in Our Faith

First, it must be understood that we are not talking about arrogance . . . but confidence in God, His word, and His promises. Note what Paul said:

Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the Lord's work, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain (1 Corinthians 15:58).

It should be our goal to be steadfast. Immovable. To excel as a Christian. Again, this is not arrogance but a quiet confidence or trust in God that propels us into daily action in executing Christian duty. Here's another passage to consider from Ephesians:

Then we will no longer be little children, tossed by the waves and blown around by every wind of teaching, by human cunning with cleverness in the techniques of deceit (Ephesians 4:14).

We're not to be like "little children." Instead, we are to know what God wants us to do. Spiritual knowledge comes from the *maturity* of the previous verse. Is it possible to be sure of what God wants? It certainly is. This is particularly comforting as we live in a time where we receive so many conflicting messages that the enemy designs to raise questions and doubts. Satan has made it popular to believe that the only sure thing is *that you can't be sure*. Can we know everything in the Bible is correct? The answer is yes! How? *By faith*.

Are you willing to stake your soul's survival on it?

Paul did. He knew what he was doing and how he was living was correct. He says:

And that is why I suffer these things. But I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able to guard what has been entrusted to me until that day (2 Timothy 1:12).

If you aren't confident, you aren't strong.

Confidence is a cornerstone of spiritual strength and being deeply rooted in faith. We need confidence to grapple with doubt and insecurity about fundamental aspects of our faith, such as our forgiveness and eternal destiny. It's not uncommon to encounter Christians wrestling with these doubts. Many find themselves fluctuating in and out of faith, struggling with habitual sins, and feeling disconnected from their local church family—infrequently attending services or spending time with their brothers and sisters. These struggles are not just about lacking faith but also about lacking the confidence that strengthens and sustains it.

Take, for example, Peter's early experiences. There were moments in his life, like during the storm on the sea in Matthew 14 and the night before Christ's death, where his confidence faltered significantly. His fear, anxiety, and doubt led to actions driven by self-preservation, focusing solely on the immediate threats rather than the bigger picture.

What happened to Peter demonstrates why confidence is vital, especially as we live the Christian life in a world that often contradicts godly values. As Christians, we are, metaphorically, going upstream in a downstream world. We face the challenge of acting modestly in an immodest world and striving for a life of purity amidst pervasive sinfulness. Jesus said:

The light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil (John 3:19).

This environment means we will inevitably face scrutiny, questioning, and often unpleasant interactions. We must be reminded of our calling in such a world.

- Philippians 2:15 encourages us to be "blameless and pure, children of God who are faultless in a crooked and perverted generation, among whom you shine like stars in the world."
- 1 Peter 4:14 reassures us, "If you are ridiculed for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you."

These passages highlight the stark contrast between Christian living and worldly values and the inevitability of not "fitting in" with the world.

So, confidence is not just a personal trait but a spiritual necessity. It equips us to handle the difficulties and opposition we encounter as we live out our faith. Building and maintaining this confidence is essential for navigating the challenges of a life committed to Christ, ensuring we can stand firm no matter what we face.

How Can We Gain Confidence?

Trust the Word

Trusting the Word of God is the foundation for building strong faith and conviction, which builds courage and confidence. More study and deeper understanding lead to greater conviction, propelling us to act because we know what is right. Often, people question how one can preach with such confidence and live with certainty about their salvation, wondering if it borders on arrogance. Yet, studying God's Word solidifies our confidence, as it continually presents promises of assurance.

In the Word are Continual Promises of Assurance

The assurances found in Scripture affirm that what God promises is indeed true. He has established a covenant with us, urging us to trust in His saving grace, love, and mercy, even though we are often weak and sinful. For example, the Apostle Paul openly discusses his struggles in Romans 7, acknowledging human nature and the internal conflict it creates. Despite his best intentions, he often found himself doing the things he hated, a struggle many of us can relate to. Yet, Paul never grew comfortable with sin; instead, he despised it and strove to overcome it.

For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold as a slave under sin. For I do not understand what I am doing, because I do not practice what I want to do, but I do what I hate. Now if I do what I do not want to do, I agree with the law that it is good. So now I am no longer the one doing it, but it is sin living in me. For I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my flesh. For the desire to do what is good is with me, but there is no ability to do it. For I do not do the good that I want to do, but I practice the evil that I do not want to do (Romans 7:14-19).

This ongoing battle with sin highlights the importance of not becoming content with our sinful tendencies. We have made a covenant with God to resist the flesh and persevere in our faith. While perfection is unattainable as long as we are in the flesh, it is not our perfection but our heart's posture toward God that matters most. Living under constant guilt about our performance can erode our confidence and lead to discouragement and defeat. It's crucial to recognize that while we strive to avoid sin, as Paul did, we are covered by grace when we fail.

You Have Been Set Free

Thankfully, we have been set free from the law of sin and death through Christ Jesus.

Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with my mind I myself am serving the law of God, but with my flesh, the law of sin. Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus, because the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death (Romans 7:25-8:2).

Your freedom allows you to approach God's throne boldly, knowing that you have an advocate in Jesus Christ who intercedes for you when you sin (1 John 2:1-3). This is a fantastic source of comfort and

confidence, as emphasized in Hebrews 4, where we are encouraged to come boldly before the throne of grace to receive mercy and find help in our time of need.

Therefore, let us approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in time of need (Hebrews 4:16).

Trust the Father

In Romans 8, Paul poses several rhetorical questions that underscore our security in Christ's love, which nothing can sever. He asks:

- If God is for us, who is against us? (v. 31)
- How will he not also with him grant us everything? (v. 32)
- Who can bring an accusation against God's elect? (v. 33)
- Who is the one who condemns? (v. 34)
- Who can separate us from the love of Christ? (v. 35)

What God has promised is true:

For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:38-39).

Nothing in all creation can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. This promise assures us of God's unfailing love and the surety of our salvation.

Trust the Spirit

By trusting in the Spirit, as outlined in Romans 8:14, 16, we are reminded that we are God's children and that the Spirit Himself affirms this truth.

For all those led by God's Spirit are God's sons.

The Spirit himself testifies together with our spirit that we are God's children,

The Spirit also aids us in our weaknesses and intercedes when we are unsure what to pray for.

In the same way the Spirit also helps us in our weakness, because we do not know what to pray for as we should, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with inexpressible groanings (Romans 8:26).

This continual divine support strengthens and comforts us, ensuring that our confidence does not rest on our imperfect selves but is rooted in Christ and the assurance God provides through His Spirit.

Confidence Helps You Through Life

It helps you:

As you walk

If we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin (1 John 1:7).

In What You Say

but in your hearts regard Christ the Lord as holy, ready at any time to give a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you (1 Peter 3:15).

In Your Prayers

This is the confidence we have before him: If we ask anything according to his will, he hears us (1 John 5:14).

In the Future

because I know this will lead to my salvation through your prayers and help from the Spirit of Jesus Christ. My eager expectation and hope is that I will not be ashamed about anything, but that now as always, with all courage, Christ will be highly honored in my body, whether by life or by death (Philippians 1:19-20).

We live in an uncertain world. As we face the prospect of living in a nation in decline, extreme moral decay, world war, and economic destruction, *we will have help from the spirit of Jesus Christ*. No matter what happens, we know God will be with us.

What's in This for Us?

Embrace Trials as Opportunities for Growth: Understand that your trials and afflictions are temporary and serve as tests of your faith. As Christ and His apostles have warned through the scriptures, you will face suffering and affliction. Embrace these challenges as opportunities to deepen your faith, knowing that you are never alone; God's strength and power are always accessible.

Cultivate a Spiritual Richness: Regardless of physical circumstances, remember that you are spiritually rich if you are in Christ. Just as Jesus reassured the church in Smyrna of their spiritual wealth amidst affliction and poverty, we too should focus on our spiritual resources. This involves regular engagement with scripture, prayer, and interaction with the local church, ensuring that our spiritual lives are robust and vibrant.

Live Fearlessly in Faith: Be inspired by the promise that Jesus gives to those who are faithful to the point of death—the crown of life. This assurance should motivate you to live fearlessly and commit fully to your faith, regardless of your trials. Practically, this means making decisions that align with God's will, even when they are counter-cultural or difficult.

Stay Rooted in God's Promises: Regularly remind yourself of God's promises and His unchanging character. Engage deeply with scriptures affirming God's commitment to His people and ultimate victory over evil, such as the promises in the book of Revelation. By doing so, you strengthen the foundation of your faith, ensuring that when storms come, your spiritual house stands firm.

Conclusion

Confidence is not just a helpful trait; it's necessary for a life rooted in faith. We need definitive answers with exclamation points, not the uncertainty of question marks. We don't wish for this certainty; it's something we already possess through God and His Word. Many wonder, "How do I know I'm going to heaven?" The answer lies in our commitment to following God's way to the best of our ability and our conviction that God's word is accurate. You can know what is right and develop your faith based on these truths.

This is especially important for young people who may question their path should their parents or mentors fall away or pass on. Would your faith endure without them? It's crucial to build confidence in the righteousness of our actions because they align with God's truth, not because they are validated by external approval from elders, preachers, parents, or friends. Our commitment must build confidence in God and His way, underpinned by the unwavering truth that God cannot be wrong.

This unshakeable confidence fueled the Christians' perseverance and hope in Smyrna. They appeared to have nothing by worldly standards, but in God, they possessed everything, including eternal life. Their example shows us that having God's word deeply embedded in our hearts brings stability and certainty, rare commodities in a world where little else can be taken for granted. Have you placed your trust in Him? This question is fundamental, as your answer determines the strength and stability of your spiritual life. Trusting in God transforms your perspective, empowering you to face tough times with the assurance that, with God, you are indeed a possessor of eternal life.

For Discussion

1. What does it mean to have confidence in God, and how does this influence your daily decisions?
2. How can we cultivate steadfast faith even if influential figures, like parents or spiritual mentors, fall away or pass on?
3. Discuss a time when you experienced doubt. How did you regain confidence in your faith during that period?
4. What practical steps can you take to ensure your faith is based on God's word rather than seeking approval from others?
5. How does the assurance of eternal life influence your perspective on material possessions and worldly status?
6. In what ways does embedding God's word in your heart provide stability in your life?
7. Can you share an example from your life or someone you know where trust in God's plan provided peace in a difficult situation?
8. How does understanding that God cannot be wrong affect your response to life's uncertainties and challenges?
9. What role does personal Bible study play in building your confidence in God's promises?
10. How can the local church support its members in developing and maintaining a confident faith, especially among young people?