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## **Building Confidence**

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### **Read Romans chapters 8 and I Peter 5:10-14**

God desires that we have confidence in Him. This is built when our discipleship is taking root in us. So we are growing in a close relationship to Christ, infused with the Holy Spirit, not merely seeking what we can get. He will give us what we need, and much more! This deepens our trust and thus our self-assurance in Him grows too. This is not the pride we are to avoid; rather the assurance of Who Christ is in us working in us, as we are called to have. If you only seek what you think you want, you will never have a clue what maturity and surrender mean (Gal. 2:20-21).

Our motives, obedience, and persevering will be the key! Be in love with Him. Seek His presence, and be persistent in your prayers.

### **Depend on God's Grace!**

Have you considered how kind God is with us even when we are in the depths of stress and despair, how His hand is guiding, and how He will restore us for our benefit and His glory? What Christ has for us is also about the great hope we have because our Lord is our Great Hope! There is no escape from failure, setbacks, and bad things happening or suffering; we are living in a fallen world, and we will, at times, experience pain and despair. The incredible news is that He still cares and guides us. Jesus will lift us up out of whatever we are in now or will ever face so we can trust him and be assured and confident in Him and what ever He has called us to do. We can persevere in our Fruit, character and faith development no matter what we face! And in the meantime, Christ will give us the strength to endure and even to learn and grow from it. This process will make us better and more confident and thus more mature so we will be a better help to others and more insightful and character-driven ever than before. Our foundation is secure and our standing is firm when we are in Him; we can withstand anything this world throws at us when we are in Him!

Our confidence will be bacons of hope and light to those who need encouragement and to those who were in distress. How sweet are words of encouragement to those in anguish, and how much more impacting those words are when we know that the person saying them is real and sincere! God offers the assurance that the Gospel is real and is relevant. It is for us now, no matter who we are, where we are, or what we face, Jesus Christ loves us and has a plan for us. God is not far off, unapproachable, detached, or antagonistic. He is here, He is with us now, His Spirit is love and it is real and He is totally concerned for us. We are not alone or distanced from God or from others. We are in this world as a community; we are together. The only time we are not is

when we cut ourselves off from others; however, we can never cut ourselves off from God (1 Peter 5: 10-14)!

### **Jesus is our Promise**

He is our Strength, and Validation! God called us to eternal glory, but we must never think of ourselves as equal with God. Rather, we are to humble ourselves, whatever comes into our lives--strife, adversity, goodness, or riches. We are to accept God's hand. Otherwise, Satan will have his hand upon us!

- Because God is a God who blesses us. Thus, we can have firm faith and confidence in Him for whatever we face. Here, it is referring to Christ's return; we have hope now, but the ultimate Hope will come, in His time, and He will lift us out of our situation (Isa. 44:6; Jonah 4:2; John 14:27; 20:19; Rom. 5:1-2; Gal. 1:3; Eph. 1:2)!
- God has a plan and purpose for us (Rom. 8:1, 28-30; 2 Cor. 4:17; 2 Tim. 2:10)! Consequently, we have an ultimate Hope beyond the hope we can see! The only barrier to this hope is our discouragement, our feelings that result from a lack of faith and spiritual maturity; this impacts all that we are and do in life! Peter, in this context, is calling for an attitude of self-control.
- We are *in Christ* refers to how He has freed us from sin, how He suffered for us, and our union in Him, as He dwells in us and represents us before the Father. All that we are, have, or could have comes from Christ. This translates into how we are to treat others (Rom. 6:3-11; 8:9-11, 17; 1 Cor. 6:15-17; 2 Cor. 1:5; 13:3-6; Gal. 3:26-29; 5:24; Phil. 3:10; Col. 1:24; 3:3-4, 11-15)!
- We need to realize our total dependence upon God so we can accept our situation so we can learn and grow from it. We are still to be proactive, but dependence on God removes our frustration, prevents disillusionment, and keeps us centered on what is important in life, which is Christ. We can depend on God's grace because God will provide a way out--in His time (Job 1-2 ; Psalm 31:9, 15; 62; 103; 119:50; Isa. 26:3; 41:10; Jer. 27:11; Luke 10:20; Rom 8:28-29; 35-37; 12; John 14:1; 1 Cor. 10:31; Phil. 1:6; James 1:2-3; 1 Pet 4:12-19; Rev. 21:4)!
- God sometimes brings pressure against us to test us, to purge us, to purify us so that we become stronger and are more willing and able to be used to give Him glory. God's goal is not to personally attack and destroy us; rather, He seeks to improve us and to make us our best for His glory. He wants to grow us like an oak, which grows its strongest under harsh conditions. We are to accept and grow from our experiences. The other choice is to become bitter and harsh, ending up as a burden to others and to ourselves. Our Lord will bring us the solution to our problems on His

time schedule and for our benefit. We want it done *yesterday*; He may say *tomorrow*.

- We do not go about ministry or live his life alone; even the Epistles are a collaboration by others united in Christ and guided by the Spirit to glorify the Father (Acts 15:22-29, 40; Acts 16:37).
- We are given through the Word and Spirit the essential, fundamental postures and exercises for being a spiritually mature Christian, a Christian rooted in the call to be solid in the foundation of our Lord! This is not to be for selfish gain or pride, rather for an attitude of spiritual maturity.
- Our Lord gave us the prime example of this in the Garden of Gethsemane. Three times, as it is recorded, Christ asked that the suffering that was to come be stopped; but each time He said to the Father, *not my will, but yours be done!* Jesus demonstrated the way. Will we not follow (Psalm 88:8-9; 119:50; Matt. 26:36-46)? These things do not come to you by chance; they come by knowing and following Christ (Proverbs 12:4; 28:20; 31:10)!
- If we desire to be close to Christ, walking in the Spirit, spiritually mature and effective, and to be all that God wants us to be, then we will build our lives on what our Lord has done. This does not mean just saying our doctrines and being faithful to our faith and our church; rather, it means being right with Christ and right in our being. It is essential to have correct thinking, be in personal study of His Word, prayer, and devotions, and know the fundamentals of doctrine. So, the result is not just self-gratifying knowledge for us to sit on and ponder, but to know more and be more than a surface imitation of following Christ (1 Cor 11:1). We need to model His character because our whole being is in Christ!
- One of the clearest evidences of being a mature Christian is an increased awareness and knowledge for the need to be in Christ so that our focus is no longer on ourselves. When we have an increased awareness of others that goes beyond self, then we are humble. When we have an awareness that goes beyond our self-confidence, then we are humble. When our confidence is in our Lord, then our self-confidence becomes Christ-confidence. So, our confidence is humbleness, rooted and dependent on Christ who is working through us. The result is that we are not self-driven, but Christ-driven. Thus, we will be in total surrender to God's will as the driving force for our existence.
- Spiritual maturity is essential! Nothing is more distressing than a church filled with people who do not have respect for those who are in spiritual authority over them. Conversely, nothing is more discouraging to a congregation than immature and irresponsible spiritual leadership. Many

churches go under every year mainly because of pride, arrogance, bitterness, envy, and strife, the opposites of what God calls us to--the opposites of maturity (Phil. 2:5-11).

- To God be the glory and to nothing else! It may not seem that we are in the loop with God's plans and purpose, but we can take comfort in that He is indeed in control. God does not need us to reconcile all the truths, reasoning's, and intricacies of theology or understand His dealings with humankind. He only desires that we exercise simple faith, trust and hope that leads to being confident in Him. We can praise Him for His glory, even when we are being persecuted and are suffering. The key is to keep our focus on who He is, and not on ourselves or our circumstances.

We need to realize that we have true grace in Christ; this leads us to trust God in all things! It is about who we are in Christ, what He has done, and our response to Him that is rooted not just in our actions but also in the core of self--who we are. Because our core values come from our inner most thoughts and desires, they are a result of how we see ourselves, our world, and most importantly, our God. This translates into how others see us! What builds our confidence is *submission*. Our Lord showed us the way of submission, the way of obedience, and the way for us to live out our lives. If there ever was someone who did not need to submit, it was the Creator of the universe; if there ever was a being who could have gone it alone, without any submission, it was God. Yet, He did submit; do we consider ourselves higher than God? Do we refuse His call and replace it with our fallen self? Real spiritual maturity is being submissive, even though it goes against our culture and our own preferences. This is the essential foundation for healthy growing in the Lord, and for a Christ-centered church!

When we are not focusing on maturity, then we are focusing on self which ends up destroying the Lord's work rather than building His kingdom. We are not perfect. It is a question of spirituality that we are to submit as we are called because Christ did. Without a life approach of submission, we will reveal that our foundation for life is not spiritual maturity; hence we and our churches will be hindered in growth. We cannot be a caring community if we are not submissive and humble in our relationship to God and then to one another (Eph. 5:21; 1 Thess. 5:12)!

Our growth in Christ has value! Real, impacting, growing faith requires our diligence. Thus, we are asked to rekindle our Christian growth as an ongoing effort and apply His Truth so our hearts become centered upon Him. Just think what self-control, patience, endurance, godliness, and love would do for you and those close to you (2 Pet. 1: 5-11)! Our failure to obey God will cause us to lose out on being confident and on so much more in life and in eternity. Our diligence to remain faithful and obedient with virtue will help enable others to do so. When we obey God, He will reward us beyond our ability to fathom!

Remember that people will always disappoint us; we will even disappoint ourselves as well as others. Christ will never disappoint us; He gives us the care, love, and His grace that we do not deserve. Confidence and Submission are a risk; there is a danger to it because people may take advantage of our humility or our confidence may turn to pride and lead us astray. However, this can only happen if we take our eyes off our Lord (Psalm 37:5; 55:22; Isa 41:10; John 14:1; Rom 8:28-29; 35-37; James 1:1-5; 3:12; 1 Pet. 4:12-19).

**Questions:**

1. What does it mean to be confident?
2. What does it mean to you that God has a plan and purpose for you? How has this epistle helped reveal that to you?
3. Why would being a depressed Christian who does not seek help be shameful?
4. Have you considered how kind God is with you even when you are in the depths of stress and despair? He will restore you for your benefit and His glory. Do you believe this? How so? Why not?
5. To serve Christ effectively we must be infused with what? Why do some people find that so hard to do?
6. What is the correct self-image for we as Christians? Christ-esteem means what to you?
7. Who are you in Christ? What can you do to develop a healthy image of who you are in Christ? Why is this attitude of Christ the most significant thing in the universe for the Christian?
8. What do you need to get rid of so you can carry your own load and be confident in Christ?
9. How does confidence in Christ build your confidence for daily life and ministry?
10. Why would some Christians feel insecure or have the "poor me" attitude when they have Christ in their lives?
11. What do you need to do to be an over comer, to be one who is not bogged down in depression and a "poor me" attitude? This is a tough task, but we can do it with our Lord at the helm.

12. How is knowing that Christ is not just your Lord but also your Great Hope give you the strength to endure the rough times of life?
13. How is knowing that Christ will restore you for your benefit and His glory give you encouragement? Now add to this that He still cares and that He will lift you up, giving you further support and assurance in your daily life? What will this mean to you?
14. What does it mean to you that Christ is your foundation, hope, and conviction? Do you believe that you can withstand anything this world throws at you when you are in Him? How so? Why not?
15. What are the vital opportunities we miss when we do not practice the Christian faith with a sense of urgency?
16. What does hope mean to you? What are the barriers to hope? How does discouragement or feelings impact your hope and confidence?
17. How can you take comfort in that God is indeed in control? How does this help you with submission and humbleness? What about preventing disillusionment? How does this translate into how you are to be confident in Christ?
18. Real spiritual maturity is being submissive--the essential foundation for a healthy growing church. Why? How does this impact confidence? What can you do to model this in your church? How can your church be more centered upon Christ as Lord rather than on trends or personal ideas?
19. Why should we not go about ministry or our lives alone? How does collaboration with others help us produce better modeling of His character?
20. What needs to take place in your life for you to be more confident? How will this help you being more insightful, spiritually and socially mature, and character-driven? What is in the way? What are you going to do about it?

*He has preserved our lives and kept our feet from slipping. For you, O God, tested us; you refined us like silver. Psalm 66:9-10*