

## 10. Confidence (3Q 2009—Loved and Loving: John’s Epistles)

**Biblical material:** John 3:36, Acts 4:29, 1 Cor. 9:27, Heb. 4:16, 1 John 5:13–21, Rev. 12:9.

### Quotes

- Religion is the possibility of the removal of every ground of confidence except confidence in God alone. *Karl Barth*
- Optimism is the faith that leads to achievement. Nothing can be done without hope and confidence. *Helen Keller*
- Faith is a living, daring confidence in God’s grace, so sure and certain that a man would stake his life on it a thousand times. This confidence in God’s grace and knowledge of it makes men glad and bold and happy in dealing with God and with all his creatures; and this is the work of the Holy Ghost in faith. *Martin Luther*
- They are able because they think they are able. *Virgil*
- God is not a cosmic bell-boy for whom we can press a button to get things. *Harry Emerson Fosdick*

### Questions

What is our confidence based on? How can we be sure of the character of God? How can we become over-confident or fall into the sin of presumption? How does God really answer our insecurities? How can we best minister to those around us who have spiritual problems? How do we represent God in the most effective way?

### Bible discussion

“I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life. This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.” (5:13, 14 NIV). Only with God can we have total confidence. In a world that often shatters our confidence, we can always turn to our great and glorious God who is the source of supreme confidence, for now and eternity! In these verses John returns to his great theme of confidence with God. Based on John’s experience of God in Christ, he is confident that we have nothing to be afraid of in the presence of God. He *knows* the nature and character of God, and so all his doubts, fears and insecurities about God and His intentions have been removed (see also 1 John 3:21,22; 1 John 2:28). The reason for coming to God in confidence is because of the demonstration of the true character of God made so inescapably clear in Jesus, who is also God. Because of this (“in him”) and because of our trust in Jesus (“faith in him”) then we come to God in trusting confidence and freedom. There is no compulsion—we approach because we choose to, because we want to.

When we hear of a fellow-member’s sin, sadly the response is often condemnatory and judgmental. Just like the scribes and Pharisees who brought the woman (note that—not the man!) taken in adultery before Jesus and condemned her, so do we expose and publicise the sins of our brothers and sisters. Perhaps as a way of making ourselves better we point the finger and adopt a holier-than-thou attitude towards our fallen friends.

Instead the response should be one of grief and support, thinking of what we can do to help and restore. As John says “you should pray to God, who will give him life” (1 John

5:16 TEV). A wonderful text to remind us of the inclusive nature of God, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance (see 2 Peter 3:9). God is always there to save and rescue, to revive and re-establish the one who has fallen. While we do not believe in the doctrine of “once saved, always saved,” through our actions we can give the impression of “once lost, always lost”!

“We know that we belong to God even though the whole world is under the rule of the Evil One” (1 John 5:19 TEV). The whole concept of “belonging” is critical. We have chosen to belong to God’s family, despite the current situation in which this world is under Satan’s domination. This makes us “aliens and strangers” here, but we are part of God’s kingdom already, a kingdom that is soon to be fully established with the return of the King. *So let us make absolutely sure where we belong!*

We are “in him”—or as the Good News Bible puts it, “We live in union with the true God—in union with his Son Jesus Christ” (1 John 5:20 TEV). Identifying with Him, agreeing with Him, right with Him: we have this harmony of will, purpose and objective with God. Now truly we are one with God—the being “at one” which is the original meaning of atonement. Life with God, being in union with Him, is to be found through having total confidence in God’s saving and healing salvation. Only by truly knowing God as He is can we trust in Him completely, be sure of the reality of prayer, and come with complete assurance to God.

### **Comment**

“By faith, we enter into a relationship that will never end. We are in God, and he is in us, his people, so that in Christ we are as close as we possibly could be and God shares with us his own indestructible life, the life of the eternal. Here is reality, here is Truth, ultimate and absolute.” David Jackman, The Message of John’s Letters, (Leicester, England and Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1988), 171.

### **Ellen White Comments**

Oh, how I wish that we would honor Christ by realizing what He wants to do for us, and taking Him at His word. If we would do this, we should be sunshiny Christians. By beholding Christ, we would be changed into His likeness. {UL 359}

Prayer is the opening of the heart to God as to a friend. Not that it is necessary in order to make known to God what we are, but in order to enable us to receive Him. Prayer does not bring God down to us, but brings us up to Him. {SC 93}

...the self-righteous scribes and Pharisees. They had so misrepresented God that He was looked upon as a stern judge, incapable of compassion, mercy, and love... Though they professed to know and to worship the true and living God, they wholly misrepresented Him; and the character of God, as represented by His Son, was as an original subject, a new gift to the world. Christ made every effort so to sweep away the misrepresentations of Satan, that the confidence of man in the love of God might be restored. He taught man to address the Supreme Ruler of the universe by the new name—“Our Father.” This name signifies His true relation to us, and when spoken in sincerity by human lips, it is music in the ears of God. Christ leads us to the throne of God by a new and living way, to present Him to us in His paternal love. {FE 309}

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