

Confidence

by Richard E. Bieber

God wants to give us confidence, and it is a gift that comes from Him when we ask for it and walk humbly before Him.

Scripture: Acts 4:29

Topics: "Faith And Confidence", "Spiritual Transformation"

Description

Richard E. Bieber preaches about the importance of having confidence in God, using the story of Samuel and the early believers in Acts as examples. He emphasizes the need to say 'Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening' when God calls us, and how connecting with God can transform our weaknesses into strengths. Bieber challenges the congregation to move beyond being hypocrites, crazies, or wimps, and instead, seek God-confidence to boldly proclaim His word and do His work in the world.

Transcript

Little Samuel heard his name called in the middle of the night, but he didn't have a clue what was happening. Three times he ran to old Eli the priest, "Did you call me?" Three times old Eli replied, "No! Go back to bed!"

Then Eli figured it out. It's God! "Next time you hear that voice calling your name, you must say, 'Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.'"

So he did. And the instant young Samuel connected with God in this way, he was no longer trapped in his childhood weakness. The power of God's living Word was now his strength. His confidence. That confidence ruled Samuel for the rest of his long life.

Confidence. That's what we need. And that's what God wants to give us. Now. As we read these words together. So that, to our amazement, we find ourselves in the coming days, saying things---good things, doing things---good things---that we never had the courage to say or do before.

Next Sunday, when you go to church, you know that most people in your town will not be following your lead. They'll be busy with things much closer to their hearts. And when they drive by and see you stepping through the door of your church, will they say, "Now that's what I should be doing."? No, they'll shake their heads in pity, "Those poor suckers! Still slaves of organized religion."

When they think about church people at all, they break us down into three categories:

Hypocrites, Crazies, and Wimps. The Hypocrites are the ones who love to put on a show of righteousness, like they're superior spiritual beings, with a special "in" with God.

The Crazies are the fanatics, who are sure they alone have the truth, and feel obligated to ram it down everybody else's throat.

Then we have the Wimps. The Wimps are trying to follow Jesus without making any waves. Their biggest fear is that somebody might notice them and ask them what they believe. They love Jesus, up to a point. But they lack confidence. They're Wimps. They're hiding their light under a bushel.

So where do we fit in this picture? We'd rather not think of ourselves as hypocrites. O, maybe I see a little hypocrisy in you....and perhaps you see some in me. But we rarely see it in ourselves.

And who would ever accuse us of being crazy fanatics? Not us!

But maybe we're Wimps. We don't like to make waves. Witnessing isn't our strong point. And when it comes to spreading the fire of the living Word out there in the world, it's true, we lack confidence.

Confidence in God. Confidence that when we pray, God will actually come through with an answer. Confidence that when we speak a word of truth to a thirsty soul, God will actually back it up with a sign of confirmation. Confidence that when we invite our friends to God's Banquet, they'll even pay attention.

But does this lack of confidence get us off the hook with God?

Jesus says, "Go, make disciples!"

"Lift up your eyes and see the harvest!"

"You shall be my witnesses."

"Go out into the streets and lanes of the city and bring in the poor and the maimed and the blind and the lame."

"But Lord, I just don't have the confidence."

"You want confidence? I'll give you confidence. I will give you confidence! I gave it to little Samuel, I'll give it to you!"

"Whenever you enter a town and they receive you, eat what is set before you; heal the sick in it and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.'"

Luke 10:8-9

Seventy men who have never been to seminary. Never been to Bible college. Never been to medical school, some of them could not even read. And Jesus says, "Go out there and heal the sick and tell them 'The kingdom of God has come near to you!'"

Do they duck into a coffee shop and complain, "Who does Jesus think we are? We're ordinary guys. How can he expect us to do the stuff he does?"

No, they just go out and do it. And it works!

The seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!"

Luke 10:17

Where did they get that confidence? What made them so sure that they could heal the sick and proclaim the kingdom?

"Well," you say, "Jesus was right there, firing them up. Flooding them with encouragement. They had Jesus' physical presence to give them confidence."

Okay, let's talk about when Jesus was no longer there as a physical presence. Forty days after the Resurrection Jesus gathered them together for the last time. They would not see him with these eyes any more. They would never again hear his voice. Jesus told them to stay in Jerusalem until they received "power from on high." Ten days later the Spirit fell upon them. Now there was no physical presence. They couldn't see Jesus or hear him or touch him. But suddenly these people had amazing confidence---like never before!

Peter and John are going up to the Temple at the hour of prayer, three O'clock in the afternoon. A man, lame from birth, sits there begging. His eyes are on the ground, his hands are lifted up, waiting for gifts of money.

"Look at us!" says Peter. The man looks up, expecting to receive some money. "I don't have any silver or gold, but I give you what I have. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, Walk!" He reaches out and takes the man by the hand and lifts him up. Suddenly the man's feet and ankles receive strength, as he leaps and dances and shouts praises to God.

Talk about confidence! "I don't have any silver or gold, but I give you what I have----what I know I have---in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, Walk!"

A crowd gathers. Peter begins to speak....

"Men of Israel, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we had made him walk? The God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified his servant, Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release him. But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted you, and killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. And his name, faith in his name, has made this man strong, whom you see and know; and the faith which is through Jesus had given the man this perfect health in the presence of you all."

Acts 3:12-16

The Temple authorities arrive and slap Peter, John and the healed man in prison. The next day they're brought before the elders and the High Priest---the same High Priest who condemned Jesus to death. And Peter, filled with the Spirit, tells him straight out:

"In the name of this Jesus, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, this man is standing before you well."

They're stunned by Peter's boldness.

Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they wondered. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus.

Acts 4:13

Where did they get that confidence? They didn't have Jesus' physical presence. They couldn't reach out and touch him. They simply kept asking God to fill them with confidence.

The Chief Priest and the elders commanded Peter and John never again to preach the name of Jesus, and sent them away. So what do Peter and John do? They (and perhaps the newly healed man) went to their friends and started to pray----for confidence!

"And now, Lord, look upon their threats, and grant to thy servants to speak thy word with all boldness, while thou stretchest out thy hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of thy holy servant Jesus."

And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the holy Spirit and spoke the word of God with boldness.

Acts 4:29-31

Ordinary men. People like you and me. They're not Hypocrites. They're not Crazies. And they're not Wimps. They are confident that, as they walk in his will, the Lord Jesus will confirm their words and deeds with power.

Not self-confidence, God-confidence! Confidence that God is really here, listening to our prayers, guiding our steps, backing up our words and deeds with life from heaven. God-confidence.

Here are 3 basics about confidence that those early believers are teaching us:

Confidence is a gift from God.

We don't have it in ourselves. We weren't born with it. We don't get it by going to motivational seminars. It comes from God.

"And now, Lord, look upon their threats, and grant to thy servants to speak thy word with all boldness, while thou stretchest out thy hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of thy holy servant Jesus."

And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God with boldness.

Confidence comes to us as we open our hearts to receive the Holy Spirit.

We don't earn the Holy Spirit. We don't jump through hoops to get this gift. We simply ask and receive.

"If you who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him."

Luke 11:13

And it's not a once-and-done asking. It's a continuous asking. Just as we keep asking for our daily bread ("Give us this day our daily bread") every day, so we keep asking the Father to pour out his Spirit upon us every day.

"Father, let me walk in the Spirit today, think in the Spirit, see, hear, read, pray, speak, work, rest in the Spirit today!"

As we pray for the Spirit, the Father answers, And the Spirit imparts confidence afresh, day by day, hour by hour.

The more humbly we walk before God, the more confidently we will walk out there in the world.

The more we learn how to take off our shoes on holy ground, bowing before God's glory, the more confidence will attend our daily walk.

To tiptoe through this world as a spiritual wimp is not a weakness, it's a sin. It's an insult to God. It's an insult to our Lord Jesus.

"For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of man be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels."

Why should we be ashamed to open our mouths and speak that name? Why should we be ashamed to walk in his will, when all the confidence we need is closer to us than our breath? God himself will help us to come out from under our bushels and let our light shine. All we have to do is ask.

"And now, Lord, look upon their threats, and grant to thy servants to speak thy word with all boldness, while thou stretchest out thy hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of thy holy servant Jesus."

And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the holy Spirit and spoke the word of God with boldness.

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