

#260 "Confidence or Confusion?"

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Confusion is rampant within the church. We can blame it on false teaching, watered-down preaching, an overemphasis on rules rather than on how to seek the will of God, disinterest on the part of individuals to dig into the Scripture, some just plain old doubt in the Bible itself, some pandering to the culture, and surely many other reasons as well. It is not uncommon in an honest moment to hear even pastors acknowledge that they don't even know if they believe that the whole Bible is true. Not only that, but it has gotten to the point where people doubt if they can even know if they can know anything at all. Thus, we have progressed beyond just doubt in the authority of the Bible to doubt in truth altogether. Thus, it should not come as much of a surprise when many young people don't know for sure what they believe or what their parents even wanted them to believe. Obviously, if the older ones teaching the younger ones don't know what they believe, how can the younger ones grow up not being confused except by the grace of God? Confusion and doubt breeds further confusion and doubt until people just stop trying and caring because they don't even know if there is a compelling reason to try and care. But Jesus commands people to seek so that they might find and to knock so that the door of truth and understanding can be opened to them (Matthew 7:7). He is revealed as both the truth and the Word, implying absolute certainty, eternal standards, moral clarity, a differentiation between evil and righteousness, and that reason and logic is part of the divine order. Our culture actually tries to make us feel guilty as if we have violated some standard if we teach or even think that we might know something other than what they tell us we are supposed to believe and think. Thus, Satan uses self-contradictory strategies, on one hand denying truth and standards and, on the other, accusing the righteous for failing to uphold politically correct standards. The messages are everywhere, redefining family, redefining morality, redefining success, and redefining justice. But what endures forever despite the pressures of the world is the Word of God (1 Peter 1:25). It alone will enable us to avoid being in perpetual doubt and confusion and to have confidence that endures to eternity.

Isaiah 9:16 says, "For those who guide this people are leading them astray; And those who are guided by them are brought to confusion." Inaccurate and incomplete teaching leads people to be confused and, in turn, leads them astray. 1 Corinthians 14:33 says, "For God is not a God of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints." God's will for His people is not that they wallow in confusion, for it leads to sin and deception. **Too many have accepted that they are confused, and they have stopped letting it bother them. This is not an honorable position to take because confusion is not the will of God.** God tells us to ask for wisdom when we lack it (James 1:5), for in Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Colossians 2:3). Jesus Christ is the source and embodiment of insight and understanding, and He desires to pass that wisdom onto His children.

Confidence in the Lord and in His Word is what we should seek. It will take a lot of faith and labor in the study of God's Word, but it is worth it. We will all battle doubt and confusion at some time and in some form over the course of our lives, but it is what we do about it that counts. **When we find ourselves**

confused, we should use that as a springboard to find answers and grow in wisdom rather than as an excuse to doubt and wander spiritually. Proverbs 9:10 says, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding." According to the Scripture, it is imperative that we set our hearts firmly in the direction of learning wisdom. Solomon commands that we do this over and over again as he begins the book of Proverbs. He says that we should love wisdom and value it above gold, silver, and precious jewels (Proverbs 3:13-15, 16:16). If God's will, as Solomon says, is wisdom, knowledge, and understanding, how can we possibly think that it honors God to settle for perpetual disillusionment with God and confusion concerning the reliability of His Word? We must denounce confusion and doubt so that we can have confidence at Christ's coming, knowing for sure that Christ is in our hearts guaranteeing our salvation and being confident that He will be pleased with our service when we stand before His judgment seat to receive eternal rewards (1 John 2:28, 1 John 3:21-22, 1 John 4:17, 2 Corinthians 5:10, 1 Corinthians 3:10-15). Christians should be looking forward to going to be with Christ because of their confidence in Him, but confusion only leads to directionless living, fear of eternal matters, and a powerless witness. As Hebrews 10:35 says, "Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward."

Our confidence in Christ encourages us to approach the throne of grace with confidence so that we can receive mercy and grace in our time of need (Hebrews 4:16). 1 John 5:14 says, "This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us." We are needy, dependent people, but our God hears us. The connection between answered prayer, knowing and doing God's will, and confidence in Christ makes sense, for why would a person bother to pray if he isn't sure about God, His love, and His Word? Conversely, if a person is confident in God's love, why wouldn't he ask Him for help in time of need?

When we lack confidence in God, we start putting confidence in the flesh, overestimating our own abilities to fix our situations and to invest our lives properly. This is sin and not the will of God (Philippians 3:3). Rather than being self-confident despite our confusion, which is evidence of supreme arrogance, we must humble ourselves before the Truth and let Him be our confidence. Biblical confidence is never a self-aggrandizing confidence grounded in arrogance, pride, and self-admiration, but the confidence of the Christian is despite his own insufficiency and weakness. It is sourced in the strength and certainty of God's power, grace, and faithfulness, so that God gets the glory and the admiration, as in the story of Nehemiah.

Nehemiah led a group of exiles back to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. Despite the taunting and threats of their enemies and the enemies of God, they finished the wall in miraculous time. Nehemiah 6:16 says, "When all our enemies heard of it, and all the nations surrounding us saw it, **they lost their confidence; for they recognized that this work had been accomplished with the help of our God**" (emphasis mine). The confidence of the flesh and of the enemies of Christ was squashed as Christ worked in and through those who put their confidence in God. Confused Christians don't cause anybody to marvel at God because the God they portray is weak and on par with the gods of the day. But our God is unique, He is strong, and He stands alone. Furthermore, He stands with us, and He wants to be our confidence. Will you let Him be yours? "For You are my hope; O Lord GOD, You are my confidence from my youth" (Psalm 71:5).