Jesus Our Confidence

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 19 September 2021

Preacher: Revd Clive Jennings

[0:00] Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. That comes from 2 Corinthians.

And here, right at the beginning of our new series, as we look at our reading and our study on Colossians, let's get the question right out there, right at the beginning. No messing.
Do you have confidence in Jesus Christ? I'll say it again, just in case we're not sure. Do you have confidence in Jesus Christ? A lack of confidence manifests itself, as we know, in various different ways in life, and especially in the Christian life, because Satan loves nothing better than to instill in us a lack of confidence. A lack of confidence in the gospel, a lack of confidence in the church, in the power and sovereignty of Jesus in our lives, and a lack of confidence in prayer, and the power of the Holy Spirit. And then, as we know, lack of confidence is often then manifest and borne out in that insecurity in who we are as Christians, in our calling, in our ability to shape the culture of the community around us, and then to pray with confidence for others to stand secure in who we are in Christ, in Christ in us.
You see, the importance of this question, as we start our new teaching series, is, do we have confidence in Jesus? As you know, I love film, and I can watch a film, and I see the gospel of life being lived out, often in a very, very raw way. Frank Abiganali Jr. is seeing the breakdown of his mum and dad's mum and dad's marriage. He's only 16, and in order to impress his dad, and in some weird warped way, hopes to get the family back together as mum and dad, he goes on this amazing, notorious, and ingenious way of making money. He starts making and writing fraudulent checks. It's a true story.
Immortalised in the film, if you've seen it, catch me if you can, between the late 60s and early 70s, Frank Jr. successfully lived out life as an imposter, and made millions and millions of dollars as the FBI pursued him across the world. He lived his life as an imposter in many ways, as, first of all, as a doctor, then he pretended to be a lawyer in the Attorney General's office, and then a professor. And in this little clip, we see him as Frank, played by Leonardo DiCaprio, marvellous in this film, as he evades the FBI as posing, no less than a pan-American airline recruiting officer, and then takes on the role of a pilot. You can sing along, if you like, in the life that he lives.
[3:41] Aileen Anderson. Miggy Acker.

Deborah Jo McMillan. Andy Heskin.
Come fly with me, let's fly, let's fly away. If you can use some exotic booze, there's a bar in far Bombay.
Come fly with me, let's fly, let's fly away. Come fly with me, let's float down to Peru.
In Lama Land, there's a one-man band, and he'll toot his flute for you. Come fly with me, let's take on in the blue.
[4:50] It's a great clip. Frank lived his life as an imposter and took other people in. He was very convincing.

Being honest as a Christian requires of us, especially as we look at this series, we start with a reality check. It's easy to calm people, and it's not a surprise that Christians are easily calmed.
It's Satan's task to do that. That's what he wants to do. And say to the world, I'm fine, I'm secure, yet so often, as we know in Christians, it's the smallest thing, isn't it, that diverts us, that takes us away from that essence of having our confidence in Jesus.
I've seen it so many times. I've experienced it so many times. Everything is going swimmingly well. And then all of a sudden, it's one thing that takes us away.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

The one person you can't calm is Jesus. And that's why we have our confidence in him. And we will learn from the series in Colossians that Jesus is our confidence.
[6:08] And in this morning, Paul is writing to Colossae, and they are a newly formed church. There are no masks to hide behind. Paul is writing from prison.

He says, we always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, because we have heard of your faith in Jesus Christ, and of the love you have for all God's people.
Paul is saying he has heard about their faith in Jesus Christ, which is authentic and real for everyone to see. It is out there. There is nothing.
It is the real deal. Is that true for us? Is that what people see when they see the church and us in the everyday?
Each year as a nation, we spend billions of pounds, billions of pounds, on clothes, image-changing body surgery, products and items to make us feel more confident.
[7:08] Look at books on a shelf. People have written books that they are encouraging us to be more confident in the workplace, in our careers, in our lovemaking.

People are making millions as they seek to make us more confident. Yet we know that statistically and from evidence that we know that that doesn't work.
Because a third of British teenagers in 2020 said that they felt ashamed of their body. The imagery of idealised bodies on social media is driving their insecurity insane.
31% of 13 to 19-year-olds feel ashamed of their body, according to a YouGov survey. In addition, 35% of respondents worried about their body often or every day.
37% said they felt ashamed about their bodies. Two in five said pictures that they had seen on social media have made them worried too.
[8:19] Where's the confidence? Where do we place our confidence? I don't need to tell you that in our Western society, it's increasingly become obsessed with celebrity.

People are led to believe that success and confidence is defined by the number of people who follow you on social media. And people compare.
People compare not only their bodies, they compare their homes, their cars, their churches, their online presence, or seeking to enhance their own confidence in themselves.
It's right back to Pauline teaching where he's writing to Corinthians who are an older church and are making the mistakes.
You know, what does it mean? I mean, one of you says, I follow Paul. Another says, I follow Apollos. Another says, I follow Cephas. Another says, I follow Christ.
[9:21] Is Christ divided? Is Christ divided? Paul says. Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized in the name of Paul? It still goes on. Anything to erode our confidence.

I follow this particular minister's teaching online. I go now to this particular church because I like their worship band. You know, things don't change. Comparison is often manifesting itself above or below the surface of our Christian life and is a flaw, not only in membership, but in leadership too.
It destroys confidence in the one who is central to our faith. We are not immune from avoiding the question, do you have confidence in Jesus Christ?
And if so, how does it manifest itself in our life, in our everyday discipleship? In our reading this morning, we're looking at Paul writing to this newly found and growing church.
They haven't had the opportunity to make the mistakes yet because they are establishing themselves. And Paul always suggests writing to a church that is in the throes of maturing.
[10:35] And isn't that where we should be as Christians? Maturing all the time in faith? Many will, maybe it's a long time back for you.

It certainly is for me. But remembering those days of going through teenage years and through puberty, I mean, it was a rough time.
And it's no different from maturing Christians and disciples. We can be easily subverted. We can be easily diverted to trade honesty and humility with Jesus and place our confidence and trust in the trappings of those things around us, of society and church with a very small C.
We doubt who we really are. We struggle to find our identity. And maybe at school, you remember those awkward years looking at the popular kids that were in your class?
Maybe the pictures of them still come to mind. It's that much power that they had of thinking what they had and what I didn't have. And yet I would suggest as many Christians, we never ever grow out of that insecurity of who we are in Christ, in Christ in us.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

[11:47] And therefore we struggle to come to that full fullness of Christ, which we all seek. And I would venture indeed be bold enough to say that it's a barrier to the fullness of our relationship with Jesus.

Ask me, I have been there. So welcome to the series as we look at Jesus and Jesus is my confidence so that we can confidently say as we explore this that Jesus is my confidence.
Paul knows this new church needs reassurance. We all do. And so Ephesus, who Paul has sent to them, is doing a brilliant job. He's teaching them. He's building them up.
He's growing them. They're building faith, building in confidence. And Paul continues in the same way. The gospel is bearing fruit and growing throughout the whole world. Just as it's been doing amongst you since the day you heard it and truly understood God's grace.
You learned it from Ephesus and our dear servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf. And who also told us of the love in the spirit. Paul is hearing and therefore writing to a church that is seeking to be authentic.
[13:05] Authentic to the gospel. What are they hearing and starting to live out is an image-driven, isn't an image-driven copy of anything else. This is something new and alive to them.

Denomination hasn't yet been invented and therefore they haven't been divided. They didn't know anything else. What they experienced was a pure, undiluted, a vision of church that was beautiful and was full of Jesus.
Don't you just long for that? I certainly do. Clearly, through him and through the growing followers of Jesus, they saw a life that was starting to be lived out.
It wasn't an imitation. It wasn't a facade. No people were putting on masks. No people were arriving at their meetings and saying, Hi, good morning. How are you? I'm fine.
Thank you so much. When actually underneath, I am feeling rotten to the core and I need confidence in Jesus. Martin Luther said, Faith is living, daring confidence in God's grace, so sure and certain that the believer would stake his life on it a thousand times.
[14:20] Paul must be overjoyed when he's hearing about this embryonic church that is authentic and is real. Jesus is their confidence. What is the science of this confident, Christ-focused church?

One, they have acknowledged Jesus. You may think that's strange. We are a church that acknowledge Jesus.
But so often in congregations, we don't. We don't acknowledge the fullness of all that Jesus is for us and with us and for the community we seek to gain.
They have acknowledged Jesus. They have seen his purposes through the power and presence of the Holy Spirit. When do we experience that as a church? The people are drawn to us because they experience that, the power and presence of God amongst us.
They have started to experience what an authentic Jesus-focused life is like in serving, sharing, worship, sacrifice, giving, caring, loving and forgiving.
[15:21] No pretense, no pretending, no falseness to be something that they aren't. And in fact, he goes on to say in 9 to 14, then there is a word here that leaps out.

Being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience. In joy and patience, or do we shift when we hear those words when the going gets challenging?
When things don't go our way. And giving joyfully thanks to the Father who has qualified you. Qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light.
Qualified you. Qualified you. Some manuscripts say qualified us. I like qualified you because it becomes personal. It becomes personal to us.
It's between us and Jesus. Do you write, do we write our own qualifications as Christians? Do we grade ourselves against others?
[16:33] Do we judge other churches against our own? No. We are qualified through no rights of our own. We are qualified through the sacrifice, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Jesus is our confidence. And yet sometimes we try to rewrite that. It doesn't end there. If we are qualified, and we are, we should have confidence in, dare I say it, courage, confidence and humility in doing the work of the Father.
First, disciples, as we know, were cowering in fear and despondency after the cross. Gathered together.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

Then they encountered the risen Jesus. And in their overflowing joy of being united with the risen Christ, their disciples were jumping, dancing, leaping up and giving each other high fives, I guess. It was great excitement. It was great excitement, but they needed to calm down a bit. Because Jesus says, peace be with you. And then Jesus told them the main point of what that was all about, was as the Father has sent me, I am sending you.
[17:47] They are given faith-filled confidence in the risen Christ. Death is beaten. The price of sin has been paid.

Satan is no more hold over us. Jesus is our confidence. How can we truly, how can any truly committed follower of Jesus look at the cross, look at the empty tomb, and not proclaim that, Jesus, my confidence is in you?
I'll end where I started. Because as we move into this series, basically the gospel, the good news from Genesis to Revelation is that God loved the world so much that in time he sent his son to save us.
Jesus is our confidence. Jesus is our confidence.
Today, this is asking us personally in our relationship with Jesus. You and him, King Jesus, this is the one-to-one moment to say, Jesus, you are my confidence.
[19:29] Maybe to say that afresh for the first time. Maybe to say that as we move into this series. Jesus, Jesus, I place my confidence in you because you have every confidence in me because you have given me that confidence.

I'm going to invite you now if you'd like to stand with me as we move into our next hymn. Would you like to do that?
If you're able. And as we do that, to acknowledge that the Lord has created us as his temple, us personally, in which the Holy Spirit dwells and is active.
So maybe as we consider that of Jesus, you are my confidence. Not saying that to anyone else, but saying that to him, to affirm that.
That we pray, come Holy Spirit, we pray. And fill each and every one of us with that strength, that confidence that comes from you.
[20:41] From nowhere else, Lord, but from you. Holy Spirit, may, would you come. Maybe as you say those words just personally to him now.

Jesus, you are my confidence. And in saying that, Lord, Holy Spirit, would you come and would you break the deception and lies that Satan has spoken into many lives that we are not qualified.
Hear the Spirit, filled in God-breed words of the gospel to you today. Thanks to the Father who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light.
Jesus, you are my confidence. Maybe you've not acknowledged that for some time. You've been a Christian for a few weeks, a few days, a few decades.
And through circumstances and insecurity, Satan has sought to crush your confidence in Jesus and his power and sovereignty in your life. Today, in the reassurance of the cross and the power of the Spirit, hear these words.
[22:01] You are qualified. And we can say, Jesus, you are my confidence. Christ in me and me in Christ. A new chapter in my discipleship.

A renewed confidence in your teaching and in your living. A new confidence in sharing my faith. A new confidence in all I do. I invite you, maybe if you are saying that afresh today, maybe for the first time, you sense the lies of the evil one peeling off you to stand renewed and refreshed in the confidence that only Jesus can bring.
Maybe you'd like to acknowledge that by raising your hand. Nobody's going to look around and see you. But maybe there is something in you today where you are saying, yes, Lord, I want that fresh confidence that you have in all that I do.
Put down a marker today. Because brothers and sisters, we are qualified. We are saved in the blood and power of the cross. Jesus is our confidence.
And as we worship, we're just going to hear those words that Isaiah said way before. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you. When you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you.
[23:28] When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned. The flames will not set you ablaze. Jesus, come, Holy Spirit. Send us out in the power of your Holy Spirit.

Because Jesus, you are, you are my confidence. Jesus, thank you.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host