

Pastor Ben Libby
 Sermon
 9/10/2019

To Jesus Christ, who suffered once for sins in our place, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring us to God. Amen.

The Word of the Lord which forms a portion for our sermon text this morning comes to us from Paul's second letter to the Corinthians, chapter 3, starting at verse 4:

⁴ Such is the confidence we have through Christ before God. ⁵ Not that we are competent by ourselves to claim that anything comes from us; rather, our competence is from God. ⁶ He also made us competent as ministers of a new testament (not of letter, but of spirit). For the letter kills, but the spirit gives life. ⁷ If the ministry that brought death (which was engraved in letters on stone) came with glory, so that the Israelites could not look directly at the face of Moses because of the glory of his face (though it was fading), ⁸ how will the ministry of the spirit not be much more glorious? ⁹ For if the ministry that brought condemnation has glory, the ministry that brought righteousness has even more glory. ¹⁰ In fact, in this case, what was glorious is no longer very glorious, because of the greater glory of that which surpasses it. ¹¹ Indeed, if what is fading away was glorious, how much more glorious is that which is permanent! ¹² Therefore, since we have this kind of hope, we act with great boldness.

This is the Word of God. Congregation may be seated.

Grace and peace be to you from God our Father and from your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Dear fellow Redeemed...

What gives you confidence? Today is the first Sunday of the NFL season, and there is much about football that boils down to confidence. If you were a member of a football team, and your quarterback or coach was visibly rattled and shaken, that would not provide you with very much confidence. You would probably be looking around at your teammates and thinking, "If our leader is that visibly upset, it means they don't think we can do this. If they don't think we can do this, how can we possibly win?"

In my own personal experience, I believe that confidence comes from one of

two places. It either comes from past experiences and performance, or it comes from belief or trust. If you have done something in the past, it makes you think that you can do it again. It gives you confidence. Or it comes from belief, either belief in yourself or someone or something else. If you believe that you can do something, that's half the battle. The automobile entrepreneur Henry Ford, who knew a thing or two about getting things done, once said, "Whether you think you can, or you think you can't—you're right."

For the Christian, our confidence comes from both experience and trust. But where our confidence differs from that of the world is that our confidence does not rely on OUR past performance or self-belief. Rather our confidence is in SOMEONE else; our God and our Savior. Who He is and what He has done for us in the past gives us confidence, and these two things reinforce one another! Since He has already done great things for us in the past, how will He not also do great things for us in the future? The words of the Romans 8 always remain true for us: **Romans 8:32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?**

And so, we pray: MAY THE WORDS OF MY MOUTH AND THE MEDIATIONS OF OUR HEARTS BE ACCEPTABLE IN YOUR SIGHT O LORD, OUR MAKER AND REDEEMER, AMEN.

⁷ If the ministry that brought death (which was engraved in letters on stone) came with glory, so that the Israelites could not look directly at the face of Moses because of the glory of his face (though it was fading), ⁸ how will the ministry of the spirit not be much more glorious?

What is Paul talking about here? Well, he is using a very well-known example of a former leader in whom much confidence was placed: Moses. Before Jesus came to earth, perhaps there was no one more personally identifiable with the Word of God than Moses. It was through Moses that the LORD wrote down His Law. It was through Moses that the LORD brought His people out of slavery and bondage in Egypt and to the boundaries of the promised land. It was through Moses and his brother Aaron that the

people would bring their petitions to the altar of the LORD.

And the LORD Himself talked to Moses. This reference here of **the Israelites could not look directly at the face of Moses because of the glory of his face (though it was fading)** [v7] is talking about that relationship between Moses and God. On Mount Sinai, the LORD spoke to Moses and told him what to write on the tablets that would become the Ten Commandments. When Moses came down from the mountain, his face was radiant, and it reflected the Glory of the LORD. So, Moses would wear a veil in the presence of the people, and he would remove that veil before the presence of the LORD. He would wear this veil for two reasons. #1 He did not want to frighten the people. The Glory of the LORD, even the reflected glory from Moses' face, would be frightening to sinners. And #2 he did not want the people to see the glory fade from his face. Moses would shine, not because of who he was, but rather to whom he was conversing with. That reflected glory would fade over time, whereas the Glory of the LORD never fades.

Paul uses that picture of faded glory to talk about the Law which Moses wrote. It was the Word of God, so it was glorious. But it was not something that the people lived up to. It has glory, but not one that we can even get remotely close to. We, just like the Israelites, are frightened by it. It reminds us of our many mistakes. It reminds us that we are not holy, even as our holy God commands us to be.

Faded glory is something that I think most of us are familiar with. Tomorrow is my thirty-first birthday. Some of you may not think that is very old at all, but I know how much things are different for me now in comparison to even ten years ago. The "glory" of our past does not last for very long.

We are reminded of it every time we see old pictures of ourselves. We are reminded of it every time we look in the mirror, how much that reflection has changed throughout the years. Back in our day, we may have been one thing or another. But nowadays, things are much different.

And that is what relying on the Law is. It is like trying to go back in time to your youth, it's impossible! The Law shows us how we should be. But it also shows us how far we are from that. When you actually look at the Law, it shows you how far you have fallen from what God demands.

And it shows death! **For the letter kills**

Honestly looking at yourself in the mirror of the Law shows that you are dead in your trespasses and sins, and it shows that you still stand condemned today. Anyone who thinks that they have a chance at keeping the Law truly is not listening to it nor applying it to themselves. God's Law is Holy and Good, but the problem is that we are not! Because of this discrepancy, we have been sentenced to death!

But that is why we have been given something so much better, so much more glorious than the Law. We have the Gospel of Christ!

⁷ If the ministry that brought death came with glory... ⁸ how will the ministry of the spirit not be much more glorious?

Why is the Gospel more glorious than the Law? They are both from God, they are the two great teachings of the Bible. What makes one better than the other. Well, the Gospel is not better than the Law, that is not what Paul is saying here. He is saying that the Gospel is more GLORIOUS than the Law. How is that? It is as simple as the subject to whom the teaching is referring to. The Law

points to us, shows us our sin, compares it to God's standard, and then condemns. In the Law, we are the subject. "YOU have sinned against God". Whereas in the Gospel, we are the object. "JESUS died for you!" The Law reflects our sins, whereas the Gospel reflects the great love that God had for us! That is why it is more glorious because it is reflecting Christ's work for us!

⁴ Such is the confidence we have through Christ before God. ⁵ Not that we are competent by ourselves to claim that anything comes from us; rather, our competence is from God.

Paul uses these two concepts throughout this text. So, what is the difference between **confidence** and **competence**? They are similar-sounding words and similar concepts to a certain degree. To be competent is to have suitable or sufficient skill, knowledge, experience; to be properly qualified. Confidence is a bit different than that. Confidence is belief or trust, and it doesn't really have anything to do with knowledge or qualification.

Which one of these traits is more important? With these two ideas, you can certainly have one without the other. You can be competent and not confident. That is, you can be adequately trained for a task, you can know everything there is to know about it, and still fail to accomplish it because you lack the confidence to do so. You could have the best medical training from the most prestigious school, and at the same time fail as a surgeon because you lack the confidence to do the hard job. On the other hand, you can have every confidence in yourself to do something, but that does not mean that you are qualified to be doing it. Someone could have all the confidence in the world that they could successfully operate, but if they didn't

go to school for it, that confidence would be absolutely good for nothing!

In any job or profession, both qualities are important. Yet, you may lack one of the two departments. But, as Christians, we are given both of these things! How? BECAUSE of Christ Himself!

We have been made competent because of Christ. That is another beautiful thing about the whole Gospel message. It does not require anything from us to get it to work! One time in the recent past, I found myself at a conference worship service. As a Pastor, I have the privilege of leading worship, but now because of that, I don't get to preached to as much as before. So, I found it wonderful to hear a sermon preached to me, and I thought that the Pastor giving the message did I good job at delivering that message. So, after the service had concluded, I approached the Pastor and I complimented him on an excellent sermon. He responded, rather abruptly, "to GOD be the Glory!"

The reason that he did not accept my compliment was that he knew what Paul was referring to here. **Not that we are competent by ourselves to claim that anything comes from us; rather, our competence is from God.**

This is not only true for pastors, but for all Christians everywhere! We are all charged with the great commission, to spread this glorious gospel to all corners of the earth. This is quite the task, and we as sinners are not worthy of such a grand responsibility. But we do not need anything other what we have already! JESUS!!! The LORD is the one who does all the work! This is true for both Law and Gospel. It is the Holy Spirit who works in the heart. It was Jesus who died on the cross and declared us Holy. It was the Father who now calls us His heavenly child! Spreading God's Word is a grand task, but

you do not need years of training to do it. The LORD does all the work for you!

We are not only competent in the work of Christ, we are also confident! **11 Indeed, if what is fading away was glorious, how much more glorious is that which is permanent! 12 Therefore, since we have this kind of hope, we act with great boldness.**

There is so much that can bleed over from our personalities into other things. Maybe you are not a very confident person. Maybe you are. Our personalities differ from person to person. The problem is that what end of that spectrum you are on, the Devil has a way to tip the scale. If you are a confident person, then the Devil will try to make you overly confident, confident in yourself alone, or confident in the wrong thing. If you are not a very confident person, then the Devil will try to push you into despair. He will prey on that and whisper in your ear that you are right to have little confidence. He will try to take that lack of confidence and transfer it over into your faith life. He will tell you things the two teachings of the Bible do not. He will agree with the Law, and then he will go even farther with it, saying that there is no way that God could ever forgive such a sinner like you. He will let you feel the warmth and joy of God's love in the Gospel, but then he'll add something that you need to accomplish to earn that love. Satan preys on the overconfident and the underconfident alike.

But that is why this ministry that we have been given is truly glorious! No matter what your personality is, your confidence never needs to waiver. You don't need to fear, because your confidence is not in yourself, or in any other external thing. Your confidence is in Christ, and that is glorious confidence indeed.

Of course, we are still sinners. Yes, we will have our moments when we lose sight of that confidence in Christ and look elsewhere and everywhere. Like Peter walking on the water to Jesus, it is easy when the storm gets boisterous to focus on that instead of Jesus. But His work for your soul is complete! It was finished, He died once for all! Our confidence in Him doesn't have anything to do with our human weakness. It has everything to do with His love!

So, keep focus on Him! Keep reading His Word and remember what it says! When the old evil foe starts to prowl around your conscience, tell him what Luther told him: *"I admit that I deserve death and hell, what of it? For I know One who suffered and made satisfaction on my behalf. His name is Jesus Christ, Son of God, and where He is there I shall be also!"*

Because of what Jesus did, we now have boldness! Because of what He did for us, let us do what the writer to the Hebrews instructs: **Hebrews 4:16 Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we**

may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. We do not need to tremble before God any longer as the Israelites did. We have boldness to approach His throne whenever! No more veils are required. We have this privilege through the work of Christ!

For the Christian, our confidence comes from both experience and trust. We have experienced firsthand throughout our lives what the LORD did for us. We have seen it throughout the generations. That builds up our trust, that is, trust in HIM! He Himself has made us worthy to spread His great and glorious gospel throughout the world. He Himself also gives us the constant confidence needed to be able to do such a thing. And when He finally calls us home to heaven with Him, we will experience the permanent glory of His work directly. All praise and thanks be to Jesus, our Savior, our confidence, our glory! AMEN.