**Sunday 13th May Message**

**Get your confidence back**

**Keep your passion in the right place**

Before I commence this week’s message on getting your confidence back, I want to clarify something about last weeks message which may have been missed or misunderstood.

It is fantastic to be surrounded by enthusiastic, expectant, passionate people. However, just as with this week’s message, everything God calls us to be is meant to be kept in the right place, which is God centred.

Passion which is not God centred is distracting and often counter productive to what God is trying to achieve. We are required by God and scripture to do things decently and in order and in harmony with what the Spirit is doing. If we are lacking sensitivity to what the Spirit is doing and saying, our excitement (which is not the same thing as passion) can take over and we can be guilty of quenching the fire and move of the Spirit. I am sure none of you want to deliberately do that.

Please forgive me being so specific, but I want to use the example of last week, as an example of what does happen. I want you to know Marlene understands and agrees with what I am saying. The prayer spoken out at the end of the message, was not Christ focussed passion. I hate public prayers that ooze gratitude about me, the message, this church. I appreciate one to one encouragement but not public compliments in the form of prayers. Do you know why? Because God has been using the message to get you focussed on what Jesus has done and made available to you, and with one prayer everybody becomes focussed not on the message or Jesus but themselves and me. The Spirit has been quenched, and people switch off from what God is saying to them personally.

When the Spirit is at work amongst us He generally works with a theme and signs and wonders to confirm and strengthen the message. We need to be really sensitive to what God is saying to all of us, and we need to follow what the Spirit is saying through the worship, gifts and prayers.

Passion in its place, and for the purpose God has given it to you for, is powerful. Passion in the form of personal enthusiasm and excitement can on the other hand be destructive.

**Confidence Slide**

This morning God wants to talk to us about confidence. Without confidence in the face of crisis we will not achieve what God wants us to achieve. His will is that every one of you, and us together, succeed in being like Christ, and fulfilling our unique destiny.

God has made you unique, placed you where you are, and called you into relationship with Him. He will complete the good work He has begun in you because His reputation depends on it. For Him to do that your whole life should be one of worshipful submission to His plans and purposes.

One of my favourite Bible characters is Joshua, he is a great example of man of confidence, you might say faith and courage, which are the result of confidence. I meet many Christians that say they have faith but when they are in crisis they seem to lack the confidence to walk through their trials.

**Slide** **Quote Oswald Chambers – Faith is deliberate confidence in the character of God whose ways you may not understand at the time.**

His character never changes, but what He does and what He allows (not wills) to happen is totally unpredictable. He is the God of the miraculous because He is the only One who can put right everything that we (to whom He has given us free choice), sin and the devil make a mess of, Hallelujah.

Faith is deliberate confidence. You have to be deliberate in stirring up your confidence and that is why God says to Joshua be of good confidence, be very confident.

**Slide *Joshua1:1-7 After the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, it came to pass that the Lord spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' assistant, saying: "Moses My servant is dead. Now therefore, arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them — the children of Israel. Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given you, as I said to Moses. From the wilderness and this Lebanon as far as the great river, the River Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and to the Great Sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your territory. No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life; as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you. Be strong and of good courage, for to this people you shall divide as an inheritance the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go. NKJV***

Why did God encourage Joshua to be confident. Remember he and Caleb were the two spies who had been into the promised land with ten others, and they were the only two came out full of confidence in Gods ability to enable them to take captive Gods promised inheritance.

They then had to follow Moses and the million or so Hebrews walking round and round the mountain in the wilderness, because the rest of them had NO CONFIDENCE in God despite His miraculous acts of deliverance from the land of Egypt.

Can you imagine what walking with a load of moaning, groaning, untrusting, unconfident people for 40 years was like. Even to see their leader Moses lose confidence at the waters of Meribah, and consequently lose his right to enter the promised land.

How would you feel, or perhaps you feel right now, about not seeing God do what you believed He could do 40 years ago? How confident would you be about taking the next generation of those who failed into the promised land, knowing they might be of the same spirit as their ancestors. Would you be full of courage and confidence to make that final push in battle against the inhabitants of the land, knowing the rest of your brothers and sisters might no go with you?

**Get your confidence back.**

The writer to the Hebrews has to deal with the early church who find themselves in a crisis and losing confidence.

**Slide *Heb 10:35-39 Therefore, do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise: "For yet a little while, and He who is coming will come and will not tarry.***

Whenever, you see a therefore, you have to find out what it is therefore. This was one of my pastors favourite lines when reading scripture. The therefore in this passage reminds us of the need to always place scripture in context. These two verses are encouraging us to putting the need of keeping our confidence into the context of the readers lives.

The writer to the Hebrews is writing to believers whose confidence was in crisis. By the inspiration of the Spirit he is writing to all of us who find our confidence in crisis. To all of us who wonder from time to time what is the point? Why carry on? Things seem to be getting worse? When will the breakthrough come?

The original readers were of this letter were having their faith tried on every front. They were suffering persecution, loosing businesses, homes, jobs, families and possessions because of their faith in Christ. The writer begins in Hebrews 1 and throughout the book, trying to get them to focussed on Christ whilst in their crisis.

This is an essential point for everyone of us when facing trying circumstances. Remember when Peter focussed on crisis he deified the laws of buoyancy. He was sinking in the stormy waves until he focussed on Christ and then he was walking ABOVE the storm.

In Hebrews 1 the writer begins to encourage these believers to remember the supremacy and superiority of Christ above all things. He goes on to say Christ is superior to angels. Christ is superior to all the patriarchs of the Jewish faith. Christ in the New Covenant is superior to all the sacrifices and rituals of the Old Covenant. Christ is the final sacrifice in which they could have confidence to boldly enter the throne room of God. Christ is better than anything you can take to ease your pains, legal or illegal drugs, nicotine or alcohol. Christ is better than any addiction. Christ is better than any false religion. Christ is better than winning the lottery. Christ is better than any of the comforts of this world. Christ is better than ANYTHING.

The writer is stating the obvious in order to rebuild their confidence in Christ whilst they are in the middle of crisis. He is making it plain that they have every reason to have confidence in Christ. Particularly, Christ was the once and for all sacrifice to give us bold access into the presence of God. I presume you have the same confidence in the complete work of the cross because I did not see you bringing any animals to sacrifice this morning. Or are you oblivious or ignorant of the fact that to enter the presence of God without confidence in the work of Christ may result in death?

**The devil cannot take your calling**

God called you into relationship with Him through Christ, His decision to chose you as one of His children and draw you to Himself is an irrevocable call.

**Slide *Romans 11:29 For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. KJV***

God does not change His mind, He will not take your calling or your gifting from you. Therefore, the devil cannot take them from you. The devil cannot take from you the right to become like Jesus and do the things that Jesus did. The only thing the devil can do is persuade you not to have the confidence to be the person you are meant to be.

The way he works is to attack your **conscience**. He points to your failings and weaknesses to try and convince you that you are predetermined to fail. He tries to convince you that because of your upbringing, your family, your social circumstances, your genes that you cannot be who you are called to be. Rubbish.

**Slide Joyce Meyer said “A believer without confidence is like a jet engine sitting on the runway without and feul. It has all the equipment but no power to get above the circumstances.**

Christians without confidence should be an oxymoron – totally out of context with the message of the gospel. The essence of the gospel is CONFIDENCE in Christ. If you listen to any message preached and feel defeated, downtrodden, and despairing then you have not heard the message in the full context of the gospel.

**Context is important to confidence**

Remember from where you have come since you came to faith, and the triumphs you have had so far, when circumstances seem overwhelming. It is easy to say it has never been this bad before, but ask somebody else for their experience, or read history, or look further afield than your own little world, and you will get some context to your circumstances.

Modern day slavery is horrendous and inexcusable, however in the context of the history of world slavery it is possible to have hope for a change. We are not living in this country where if you did not work yourself to death, you were whipped to death, and in some places even eaten.

There are many relationships destroyed by one offence being taken and no attempt at forgiveness or reconciliation. The mad thing is that the one offence in a loving relationship that leads to such a breakdown is taken out of the context of the thousands of loving acts that first created the relationship. The enemy is a master at emphasizing the bad about all of the good, he blots out context.

The writer to the Hebrews is saying you need to remember the context of the gospel to hold onto your confidence. He says DO NOT THROW AWAY your confidence.

**Are you using the confidence you have?**

**Slide *Heb 10:19 Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus NKJV***

Bold people are confident people. You have confidence to come to God if you are saved. It is in you, but it does not mean you are accessing or using it.

How many of you here this morning have a mobile phone with you? Many of you have one but I hope that none of you are using it at the moment?

We have so much in Christ, but we are often not using or accessing what we have.

Stop praying for more confidence. Use the confidence that you have because of Christ. Christ is the power and confidence in you. Christ in you is the hope of glory. Christ in you is the promise of God being glorified.

**There are three things the writer of Hebrews says are important to maintaining confidence**

 Conscience

Community

 Consistency

**Conscience**

You have confidence in the blood of Christ and that is why you can come into the presence of a holy God and ask whatever you want in the name of Christ. That is, until the enemy convinces you that your conscience is tainted and unwashed.

We lose our confidence when our conscience is not clean. When your conscience is violated so that you cannot look at God, or look at other people, in the eye because you are trying to hide your sin, or pretend it is not there. Your conscience is often violated, and your confidence lowered, whenever there is bitterness or a lack of forgiveness. This is why scripture encourages us to deal with these areas of human weakness.

It is in the presence of God that your conscience can be cleaned by the blood of the Lamb, it is one of the great challenges for us when we should be fearful of a holy God because of our violated conscience is the very time we need to approach Him.

We must remember – we are no longer slaves of fear, we are children of God. God is calling to you who are lacking confidence – COME.

**Slide The context of Christian confidence is not in your ability to conform to a set of prescribed behaviours, that is the Old Covenant. Your confidence is in the work of Christ and relationship with Him.**

**Community**

**Slide *Heb 10:25 Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another — and all the more as you see the Day approaching.***

Confidence comes from community which keeps us focussed on the goals set before us. You cannot live the Christian life in isolation.

Walking alone results in you fellowshipping with past experiences, self loathing and doubts.

Elisha’s servant Gehazi needed Elisha alongside him to pray for his eyes to be opened so that he could see the army of angels outnumbering those of the enemy.

The circumstances, which were naturally overwhelming, were nothing in comparison to what Gehazi could not see. This is why God places us in community. The circumstances may not change but the odds and hope does when we are focussed on Christ in our crisis.

We need people around us to encourage us to leave the chains of lack of confidence behind us. Reminding us that lack of confidence is not the end of our calling, it is not the and of your pursuit of being like Jesus, it is not the end of your relationships.

When the enemy is pressing all your buttons to make you feel defeated, downcast and abandoned, you need fellowship that reminds you to declare GOD CALLED YOU. He has put the confidence of Christ in you.

We all have negative thoughts that come into play when we need to step out in Christ. We need community around us that are aiming to walk in the same direction.

**Consistency**

**Slide Selina Williams was once asked how she coped with the pressure of so many games. Her reply was quite simple “Because I have played a lot of tennis.”**

You can have confidence because you have prayed a lot of prayers and seen a lot of them answered. You can have peace in your heart with difficult people because you have forgiven a lot of people. You can face many trials and persevere, because you have read and obeyed many Bible verse. You can remain in fellowship because you have overcome many offences.

Christian spiritual disciplines consistently done bring success and confidence.

Do not throw away your confidence because if you keep it you will be richly rewarded. You need to persevere.

**Reflect on the gap**

There are many times in scripture when we are encouraged to forget the past, press forwards toward the goal. The writer to the Hebrews reflects on the gap between where the believers have come from to where they are, to encourage them to be confident about going forward.

When we are frustrated about the gap between where we are now in Christ, and where we want to be in Christ, this is where we need the context of the gap in the past.

Demonstrate – 3 volunteers.

Where I was ------------------------------------------------Where I am ------- Where I want to be

When you can put the difference between the gaps into context and begin to praise God for where you are – then you will gain confidence to press on to where you want to be.

David slayed many bears, lions and wolves when looking after sheep. As he stood before Goliath he had to remember the gap of where he had been to be confident about getting to where he wanted to be in defeating Goliath.

**Slide Praise puts context on your current position and boosts your confidence for your future position.**

**Nobody can take it away, so do not throw it away**

Nobody can take away from you the things that they never gave you in the first place. Nobody other than Christ gave you confidence in God so it cannot be taken from you, you have to give it up consciously or unconsciously.

When you have lost your confidence it is because you have given it away. If you are the one who gave it away, then you are the one who can take it back again.

The Greek word translated confidence in the letter to the Hebrews is the same as the word translated bold in the Book of Acts, and equivalent to that translated from Hebrew in Joshus as strong.

The word being par rhay see ah – bold, confident, strong

In the book of Acts Peter prayed as follows

***Acts 4:29-30 Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus." NKJV***

NT:3954 parrhesia (par-rhay-see'-ah); from NT:3956 and a derivative of NT:4483; all out-spokenness, i.e. frankness, bluntness, publicity; by implication, assurance:

KJV - bold (X -ly, -ness, -ness of speech), confidence, freely, openly, plainly (-ness).

The confidence they required was to counter the context of overcoming the fear of the threats of the chief priests of punishment if they continued to preach. We all need confidence to preach the gospel and we need the power of the Spirit to heal and deliver to be revealed.

In ***Joshua 1:6 Be strong (confident) and of good courage, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. AMP***

God encouraged Joshua to be confident. Reminding him of the gap from when they were in Egypt and to where they were on the edge of the Jordan, pointing to the fact how far they had come and the small step they had to go to be where they were meant to be.

God also called on him to engage the community, be consistent in his meditation on the the scriptures, and to keep the battles in context of all the victories that God had given them so far.