

“Confidence Builder” – Pr Jim Sprengle – Pentecost 4 June 16, 2024

- I. **2 Corinthians 5:6-7** – “So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight.”
- II. **A positive attitude and confidence don’t always help us get through life.**
 - a. I came across a couple of studies that were done with college students to see whether a positive attitude was helpful after graduation.
 - i. The article began by pointing out a popular cheer that started at an Army-Navy football game.... “I believe that we will win!”
 - ii. However, just because you are supremely confident and yell this cheer at the top of your lungs, it doesn’t necessarily mean it will come true.
 - iii. As the studies showed, overly optimistic grad students had a tougher time finding jobs.
 1. Those students who were overly optimistic sent out fewer résumés and earned less than the students with a more realistic take on finding a job.
 - iv. Another study these researchers did was asking students about secret crushes or feelings for people around them.
 1. Following up on these students, the study found that the student who spent the most time daydreaming about a future relationship with their secret crushes were least likely to have actually started relationships with them.
 2. The students with moderate expectations, rather than spectacular fantasies about how great things could be, were more likely to approach their crush and get into a relationship.
 - v. Sure, being positive is great – but daydreaming and fantasizing about how great things could be will not set the foundation for positive results.
 - b. An old saying about trying to remain optimistic and hopeful even when we are doubtful and scared is that you are like a boy whistling in the dark.
 - i. If he just whistles a happy tune, maybe he can keep his mind off the fact that he is very afraid.
 - c. For most of us, we have seen optimism and false expectations lead to big let downs... and some of you have wondered where God is in all the brokenness, the shattered dreams, and the failures of life.
 - d. So, false optimism isn’t the answer to getting through life, and it might even be a detriment because it isn’t always grounded in reality.
- III. **Sometimes being positive doesn’t equal a positive result in this world.**
 - a. I remember when Michele and I first got together, and her dad was diagnosed with untreatable lung cancer.

- i. Michele will tell you that her dad was 100% sure he would not get cancer... and he always told his family that not only did it not run in his family, but he felt like it was mind over matter – if you believe you will not get cancer, it won't happen.
 - ii. Yet, it did happen... and even when they tried everything they could to save his life, he only made it about 10 months before dying.
- b. Perhaps you know someone who was overly optimistic about avoiding disease, or when they were diagnosed with a serious illness they made it sound like it was no big deal... they would beat this thing no problem.
- c. The world, with its trials and tribulations, doesn't seem to care whether you have a positive attitude or not.
 - i. No matter what our attitude is – negative or positive – the world is full of ups and downs that cannot be predicted... nor can we avoid them.

IV. **St. Paul is writing about these ups and downs in his letter today.**

- a. I preached a couple of weeks ago about the city of Corinth, and its challenges of wealth, prestige, idol worship, and worldly influence.
 - i. Not only that, but some false teachers in the church seem to have accused Paul of not being a genuine follower of Christ because he was facing so much hardship.
 - ii. Much of 2 Corinthians points out our weaknesses and the trials we face, but how good and powerful God is in spite of our troubles.
- b. Paul's response to the false teachers is also a defense of God's love in the struggle of our lives.
 - i. He was a great missionary, traveling to many countries and provinces in order to share the blessing of Jesus Christ with all people.
 - ii. Paul included everyone in the mission, not just his fellow Jews.
 - iii. Yet, wherever he went, he and his companions faced opposition, and they went through trials for their passion in sharing Jesus.
 - iv. It is this suffering that Paul kept pointing out to the Corinthians –
 - 1. "Yes, I suffered! Yes, I went through trials! And it was all so I could get the saving grace of Jesus into your hearts and minds!"
- c. No amount of false optimism would deliver Paul from the hands of his enemies... or the challenges he went through with the weather, traveling great distances, or his own failing body.
- d. The start of our reading picks up from the past couple of weeks, as he explains that the body is weak... like a jar of clay... or like a tent.
 - i. Tents are not long-term structures, and they are vulnerable to outside forces.
 - ii. So, our tents, or our bodies wear out... we die and leave it behind as we put on our heavenly dwelling – or our spirits go to heaven.

1. But then he points to the resurrection by saying that the spirit without a body is naked, and so he not only looks to the glory of heaven, but also the resurrection of the body as well.
- iii. The world we live in, along with our bodies, are temporary.
 1. The entire creation and every living thing has an expiration date on it... except for we who believe in Jesus Christ as our Savior.
 2. For us, we are first ushered into paradise in spirit, and then further clothed in the resurrection of the dead – when the new heaven and the new earth is created on the Last Day.
- e. The promise of eternal life comes from Jesus Himself, as He said, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in Me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die.” (John 11:25-26)

V. **Faith in Jesus Christ is the ultimate confidence.**

- a. God Himself loved each of us so much that He put a rescue plan into action that bought us back from eternal death and separation from Him.
- b. When He gave us His own Son to die and rise again, it was a victory beyond our understanding.
 - i. Jesus would take away sin’s power to send us to hell...He would stop death from having the last word because the grave is not the end... and He would crush satan and his ability to separate us from God.
 - ii. Jesus is the victor over sin, death, and the devil.
 - iii. Our inheritance is that He gives us that victory through faith in Him.
 1. Without merit, or any good thing we do, God gives us the victory in Christ because we have faith.
- c. No false optimism or people whistling in the dark... we are supremely confident because it is not based us... it is based on God’s work and promise... the ultimate confidence builder.

VI. **Many people in the world attack our faith as false hope and confidence.**

- a. Yes, plenty of people think we are daydreaming or fantasizing about a lie.
- b. Yet, that is why in the world, we walk by faith and not by sight.
 - i. The world and our bodies have an expiration date, and it will always throw struggles and brokenness our way – but that doesn’t mean we have a false optimism when we believe in God as our Savior and Deliverer.
- c. So, as Paul says, “So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please Him.” (vs 9)
 - i. Knowing that there is so much more to life than the brokenness and heartache we see around us, we live out our faith to the glory of God.
 - ii. Whenever we walk in God’s will and in Christ Jesus, His light shines out of us and others see.
 - iii. It’s difficult for those without faith to understand how we can be so confident in our lives today and our future in heaven...

1. Is it false optimism? Is it false hope?
 2. No, it is based on Christ and the sure promise that is backed up by God.
- d. Our cheer in this life is not a worldly one that has no guarantee, but when we say, "I believe that we will win!" it is based on God.
 - e. In fact, through faith in Christ, we have already won. Amen.

¹ Source: *Melissa Dahl, "When 'I Believe' Backfires," Science of Us (7-1-14)*