

2 Corinthians 5:5-9 (Edward Henry Chater) 54519

Christian Truth: Volume 30, Always Confident

Article from <https://bibletruthpublishers.com/bible-truth-study-bible/btsb>

When speaking of the assurance of salvation, the Lord's servants are often met with such answers as, "It does not do to be too sure," or, "Is it not presumption?" or, "I do not think it right to be so confident." If any who are accustomed to make such replies should read these lines, we would earnestly beseech them to weigh the passage of Scripture where the words at the head of this paper occur, and we feel assuredly they will no longer speak so foolishly. Let us quote it: "Now He that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (for we walk by faith, not by sight:) we are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. Wherefore we labor, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of Him" (or, acceptable to Him). 2 Cor. 5:5-9.

It is the Apostle Paul who thus speaks of that which is true of Christians, and he shows that all the work and blessing is of God; He is the source and author of it; it is He that wrought His people for it, and He who gave and still gives them the earnest of the Spirit. "Therefore we are always confident." What a solid foundation for our confidence to be based upon! confidence because from beginning to end it is a work of God. Man has no part in the matter. He is perfectly helpless in himself; without strength he can do nothing. But God who has the glory in view comes in and fits the poor, weak human vessel for it. He takes us up in pure grace, puts away our sins, justifies us in Christ, and gives us the Spirit as the earnest of the glory to follow. "Therefore we are always confident." Well may we be. Who can frustrate the purpose, power, and work of God? No one. Satan is a vanquished foe, man is set aside in the cross, and the whole work is of God—a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17). How then can the Christian be too confident? Confidence in God is that which honors Him.

"But my difficulty," says one, "is in myself; I feel I am such a poor failing creature that I fear to be too confident." Just so, and well you may, as long as you are looking at yourself. If you wait for confidence until you cease to fail, you will have to wait a long time; indeed, until you leave this scene altogether. Confidence in God displaces self-confidence. The Apostle was always confident because he had learned to rest always in God instead of himself; and that, dear reader, is a lesson you would also do well to get perfected in.

And mark next what goes along with it—knowledge. "Knowing," he continues, "that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (for we walk by faith, not by sight:)." We are confident, not hoping, nor thinking, nor feeling, but knowing. "Always confident, knowing." He was longing to be with the Lord—we should also. But how can that be if we are self-occupied and full of doubt and uncertainty? Not that he desired to die, but to be glorified, as he says in the 4th verse: "For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life." He knew that he might fall asleep, his spirit passing out of the body into the presence of the Lord in the unclothed state; but this is not the proper and immediate Christian hope. Christ is coming, and mortality shall be swallowed up of life, not of death. The Christian should be looking to go up, not down; to go into glory, and not into the unclothed state. We wait "for the adoption, to wit, the redemption" (not the corruption) "of our body" (Rom. 8:23).

And then in the 8th verse he confirms his statement—"We are confident, I say," etc. Not a word, you see, dear reader, to bolster you up in your up-and-down state, not the slightest ground for you to have the least bit of confidence in yourself in any way whatever, and not the vestige of an "of" or a "but" to justify a moment's lack of confidence in God as to the future. God begins, carries on, and ends His work. He saves, gives the Spirit as the earnest, and fills the soul with confidence and knowledge, removing all fear, and creates a desire in the soul too to be with Christ where He is. He would have us then "always confident." Are you?

But perhaps the minds of some of our readers revert to another passage where the same Apostle says, "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." 1 Cor. 9:27. Now, dear friend, -we. would ask you before we say a word on this, Do' you really want to understand the passage, and to get clear in your soul about it? or do you turn to it, as we fear many too often do, to bolster yourself up in a certain system of theology? If the former, we may be able through grace to truly help you, which is our desire; but if the latter, we fear it will be labor in vain as far as you are concerned. Now, whatever it may mean, the Word of God can never contradict itself, so that it cannot contain anything to lessen in the slightest degree the "always confident" of 2 Cor. 5:6-8.

To understand it you must bear in mind that the writer is addressing an assembly of Christians that was allowing varied evils in its midst—an assembly where there was loud talk but low walk—and he is endeavoring to get at their consciences, and hence applies a principle to himself which he intended to reach them. Take especial note, first of all, that he is illustrating the Christian course by a race for a prize and a fight for the mastery, saying, "Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air." 1 Cor. 9:24-26.

Now salvation is not a prize, neither do we run a race nor fight for it. Salvation is of pure grace, and every true believer starts with it before he runs the race or enters upon the combat. The prize is additional. We run and fight because we are saved, but not to be saved or to keep saved. But there is an incorruptible crown for those who are successful. Paul had started on the course and begun the fight; so had they. He was saved, and knew it before he started, and was always confident. So here he says, "I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air." He had no uncertainty as to the issue. Mark it well, for you will never understand this passage that troubles so many without it. But he knows that he has to run a real race and to cope with real enemies, though invisible ones. He puts all his soul into it, so to speak, keeping his body under and bringing it into subjection, "lest," as he adds finally, "that by any means, when I have preached to

others, I myself should be a castaway."

"Ah! there now," you say, "there's the difficult point; what do you make of that?" Why simply that he puts it thus, as we have said, to reach the conscience of the Corinthians, whose walk and ways were bad. Many of them were indulging their bodies instead of keeping them under and bringing them into subjection—preaching to others, but not practicing—and though they came behind in no gift, they had settled down as if there were no race, no fight, no prize, no crown. It is as though he had said, "Take you care that it is a reality with you. You may preach, but what if after all it should turn out to be a mere external thing with you, and you should be a castaway? Though I am an apostle, and though I have no uncertainty, yet I cannot afford to act as many of you are doing, lest after I have preached, I myself should be a castaway." Many a preacher, thought to be a Christian, has turned out a mere castaway. Paul had no fear whatever that he might be one. To allow it for a moment would not only contradict his "always confident," which is impossible, but many other passages of his own and other's writings. No, it was a powerful, pointed way of reaching the consciences of those whose blessing he so earnestly desired.

It is one thing, dear reader, to cast in your lot with Christians and to preach, but it is quite another to be a sinner saved by grace, running with patience the race set before us, fighting the good fight of faith, looking for the glory. By grace ye are saved, not by running or fighting; and if saved, God would have you always confident. But if any profess, whose life is a denial of their profession, the Word of God is unmistakably plain, "He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." 1 John 2:4. Such will surely prove to be worthless castaways. May each believer in Jesus who reads these lines be found always confident till that day.

clickbible.org