

Confidence To Finish The Course

The world defines confidence as 'faith or trust in a person or thing; a belief in yourself and your abilities'. In the world, confidence is a belief in 'self'; self-esteem, self-confidence, self-belief. All these things equate to one thing – if I can manage to muster up enough confidence in myself, if I can believe I can do it, if I can motivate myself enough, then I'll be able to do it.

I read this about improving your confidence

10 ways to build your confidence

Dress sharp – although clothes don't make the man, you will feel better about yourself if you look good, smell good and shave regularly.

Walk faster – One of the easiest ways to tell how a person feels about themselves is to examine their walk. Is it slow, tired, painful? Or is it energetic and purposeful? People with confidence walk quickly – they have places to go, people to see and things to do! You can increase your confidence by putting some pep in your step!

Good posture - Stand up straight, keep your head up, and make eye contact. You'll make a positive impression on others and instantly feel more alert and empowered.

Compliment other people – When you feel negative about yourself, you can project that negativity on to others. Refuse to enter into gossip – instead compliment those around you. In the process, you'll become well liked and build self confidence.

Sit in the front row - Most people prefer the back of an assembly or conference because they don't want to be noticed. This reflects a lack of self confidence. By sitting in the front row, you can get over this irrational fear and build your self confidence. You'll also be more visible to the important people at the front of the room.

Work out - Physical fitness has a huge effect on self confidence. If you're out of shape, you'll feel insecure, unattractive, and less energetic. By working out, you improve your physical appearance, energize yourself, and accomplish something positive.

So if you look good, smell good, walk fast, flatter people, suck up to important people and exercise until you look like a stallion – you will improve your self confidence. Is it wrong to have confidence? Absolutely not – but what we put our confidence in is crucial.

1. We must have 'No confidence in the flesh'.

Phil 3:3 For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who **put no confidence in the flesh—**

Phil 3:4 though I myself have reasons for such **confidence**. If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put **confidence in the flesh**, I have more:

Phil 3:5 circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee;

Phil 3:6 as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless.

Phil 3:7 But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ.

Phil 3:8 What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ

Phil 3:9 and be found in him

Paul was proud of his lineage and he said, 'I have more reason than anyone of you to have confidence. Look at where I come from. Look at what I've achieved; I'm well educated, I come from a rich family. When I speak, people listen. But all of this is nothing... it's rubbish compared to knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake, I have lost all things.'

Paul said, 'I put no confidence in the flesh'. Why? **Because everything that is of the flesh is subject to change**. Confidence can be taken hostage by our emotions; it can rise and fall like a thermometer; it fluctuates depending on circumstances.

2. We must have 'Stickability'

Illustration of Cross-trainer

Paul says that many Christians start out with good intentions, but then, when the going gets tough, they abandon their course. The reality of the commitment, the time and energy needed, along with the inability or unwillingness to do what was necessary took them out of the race. For Paul, finishing the

course and finishing his ministry well was his highest priority. Time and time again, Paul talks of the need to persevere to the end, to run the race, to finish the course. **Paul had stickability.**

In my next scripture, Paul warns us of the consequences of changing priorities - of starting out and not finishing. In Hebrews 10 Paul reminds the Jewish converts of how they felt when they first received Christ. He said, **'Remember how you felt; nothing was as important as Christ. You were insulted, persecuted, all your possessions were taken, but you laughed, because you knew that what you were going to receive in the future was worth more than any earthly goods and would last for eternity.'** But then they began to tire, they were battle weary. They no longer declared Christ as boldly as they did at first. The problems they were facing was putting a strain on their faith and they were in danger of returning to Judaism, and it's in the light of this that Paul says,

Heb 10:35 **So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded.**

Heb 10:36 **You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised.**

Heb 10:37 **For in just a very little while, "He who is coming will come and will not delay.**

Heb 10:38 **But my righteous one will live by faith. And if he shrinks back, I will not be pleased with him."**

Heb 10:39 **But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved.**

In and around Droylsden at the moment, as you are driving along you see many diversion signs, one of which says **'Changed Priorities Ahead'**. Last Sunday, I came to church the normal route but as I went home I was diverted, taking me way off course. I got there eventually, but **'Changed Priorities Ahead'** meant that it took me much longer and took me down roads I didn't want to go down. **The problem with some Christians is that they start out well but some get waylaid en route to the finishing line. God has set our course but if we allow our priorities to change, it will take us off course.** We will get there in the end if we persevere and determine in our spirits that we are going to get to the finishing line.

Paul warns us in this scripture – **'Don't throw away your confidence. Don't retreat, don't shrink back; it will destroy you. Keep going, keep trying, persist.'** The antonym or opposite of persist is 'fade away'. How many people do you know who were once 100% all out for God, but who have now just 'faded away'? The journey became too hard, they lost their confidence in God and other things became their priorities. **Notice the wording in v35 – 'Don't throw away your confidence' which implies it cannot be taken from you; you have to give it up yourself.**

The bible is full of examples of people persevered and who finished their race: David, Abraham, Joseph, Joshua, Caleb, Daniel, Paul and Peter. And there are those who started out good but who didn't finish: Judas, Eli, Saul and Solomon.

David is a perfect example of one who started out good then shrunk back – because he found pleasure in sin – but he then finished his race in good condition. He realized, like Paul, that all the earthly pleasures were as rubbish compared to following and finishing what God had planned for him. In fact, David became so distraught by what he had done against God that he wrote the most amazing prayer of repentance – Psalm 51. He knew that in order to be right before God, to have the commitment needed to finish the course that God had set for him, he not only had to repent, but he had to change. He had come to a point where he knew that if he didn't alter his behaviour and **change his priorities**, if he didn't stop satisfying his flesh that he was in real danger of God removing his Spirit and His presence from him.

Ps 51:10 **Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.**

Ps 51:11 **Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me.**

Ps 51:12 **Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.**

David was determined in his heart to change his life, to change his ways and correct his behaviour. He was so committed to transforming his life that he asked God to create in him a pure heart; a heart that refused to think adulterous thoughts; a heart that would not yield to temptation because he knew he was weak; a heart that stopped living contrary to God's principles. Then he asked God to 'renew a steadfast spirit' within him; 'renew' implies that at one time he had possessed it but he'd **changed his priorities** and he knew that he was in danger of being one of those who started out good, but didn't finish the course. He knew that in order to finish good, he would need more than a desire to change – he needed

to be able to keep going day after day and month after month. What he was saying was ‘**Lord. I need a steadfast, unwavering, committed spirit that will be strong, that will be constant, that will enable me to keep going and to keep my eyes on the finishing line.**’

3. We must have ‘Discipline’

Paul often used the analogy of our lives being a race:

^{1Co 9:24} Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? **Run in such a way** as to get the prize.

^{1Co 9:25} Everyone who competes in the games goes into **strict training**. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever.

^{1Co 9:26} Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air.

^{1Co 9:27} No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be **disqualified** for the prize.

- **He said, ‘Run in such a way’** so there’s a right way and a wrong way to run. Some run in endless circles. Do you know people who are always running around, always look busy but never actually achieve anything? That could be because they have no clear direction, they have not yet understood their personal assignment. **God has a global plan for His church, and within that global plan is a blueprint for The Dream Centre, and within that blueprint each one of us has an assignment to complete.** It is when we know that assignment that we then get a clear picture of our route and we then know which way to run. ‘Run in such a way as to get the prize’, meaning once you know where you are to go, don’t allow anything to change your route; no diversions; no priority changes - Make finishing your priority.
- Paul says everyone who competes must go into **"strict training,"** Paul refers to the athlete's self-control in diet and his rigorous bodily discipline. The serious athlete has to take account of what he puts into his body and how he trains it and restrains it. This means every area of his life.
- **He said there was a possibility he could be disqualified from the race.** He isn’t speaking here about losing his salvation but of not completing his assignment here on the earth before he goes to heaven.

^{Heb 3:12} See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God.

^{Heb 3:13} But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness.

^{Heb 3:14} We have come to share in Christ if **we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first.**

Conclusion:

Paul mentions confidence five times in Hebrews. After Heb 10:35, when he says, ‘Don’t throw away your confidence’, he continues into the ‘faith’ chapter, Hebrews 11 to say ‘Look at all these people who went before you. They had confidence and faith in God. Look at them... There’s Abraham – he started off a bit shaky, but he came out good in the end. He was even willing to sacrifice his child of the promise having faith that God would bring his son back to life if he sacrificed him. Then there’s Moses, Isaac and Jacob. I don’t have time to tell you about Gideon, Barak, Jephthah, David and Sampson – but they all nearly lost it but came good in the end. What about Rahab – there’s a past not to brag about! And yet she is also commended for her faith.

^{Heb 11:39} **These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised.**

They were **ALL** commended for their faith. All of them are singled out as heroes of the faith. Do you ever look at these men and women and think ‘If only I could achieve great things in my lifetime... Esther had amazing courage. Look what Moses achieved – my life can never be as great as his. What about Joseph – all those years in captivity and yet he rose to become the most powerful man in Egypt.’ All of them had confidence in God; they all had stickability; they all disciplined themselves to follow God’s directives. God blessed them and He fulfilled His promises to them. **In Heb 11:33 it says ‘their faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised.’ So why in v39 does it say ‘These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised.’?** God fulfilled His promises to them but not one of them saw ‘the Promise’. Not one of them saw the promised Messiah and yet they all fulfilled their assignments.

How much more then should we, who live in the blessings of the New Covenant, have no confidence in our own strength, but in the Christ who lives in us. How much more stickability, perseverance and endurance should we have who know Christ our Saviour and the death He endured for our sake. How much more should we discipline ourselves so that we can say, like Paul, 'I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith.' 2 Tim 4:7.

[QUOTE: "If those on whom the great light of grace had not yet shone showed such surpassing constancy in bearing their ills, what effect ought the full glory of the gospel to have on us? A tiny spark of light led them to heaven, but now that the Sun of righteousness shines on us what excuse shall we offer if we still cling to the earth? Our motivation and inspiration is fuller than theirs, for we have Jesus himself to sustain us."](#)

We are not of those who 'shrink back'. With Christ, there's a boldness and a confidence that rises up on the inside of the man who trusts God that says 'whatever happens, I'm going forward; whatever comes at me, I'm living by faith; whatever I see in the natural, I'm fixing my eyes on Jesus and I'm not being diverted, I'm not changing my priorities.' We have confidence in Christ to finish our course. Something has to rise up inside of us and say, 'I've been on this course for too long now. I've been diverted a couple of times – I've made bad choices sometimes, but I've fought too long and too hard to give up; I've persevered and endured, and I'm not throwing all that away.'

This is our time – if we can believe if we can have confidence, if we can have faith, if we persevere, there is nothing our God cannot do through us. We look with admiration and awe at what our forefathers achieved – we learn from their life and their faith but this is our time, this is our day, this is our race. Do not become one of those who shrink back but one of those to whom Jesus says, 'Well done, good and faithful servant.'