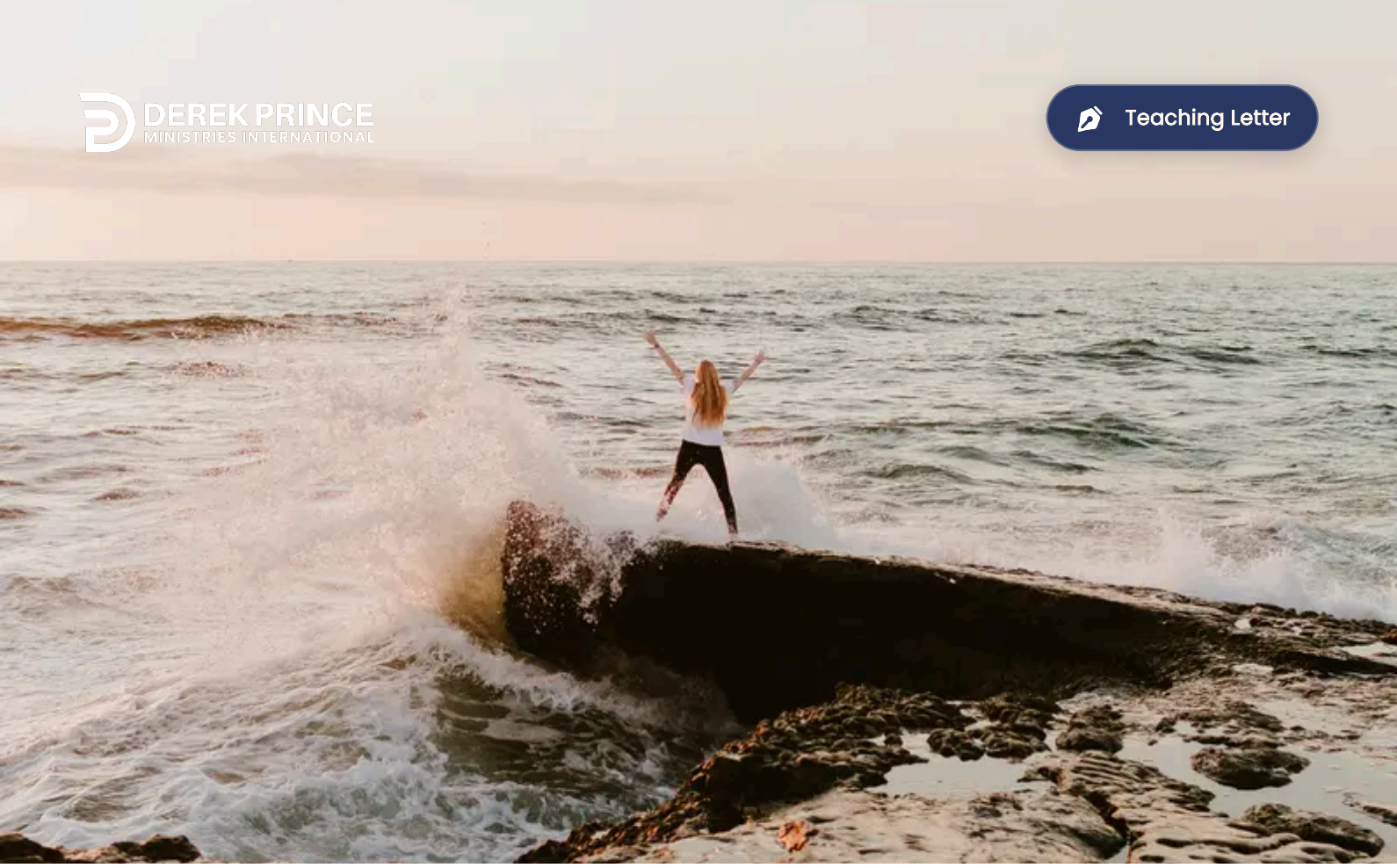


Confidence



Teaching Letter
By Derek Prince

If you could convince people that our country's economy is going to collapse, and you could get everybody talking about it, what do you think the result would be? The economy would collapse! The simple reason is that our economy has one essential foundation: confidence. The same is true of every similar system—financial, political or spiritual: if confidence is undermined, it is certain to lead to disaster.

In this article I want to examine three themes related to confidence: confidence toward God, confidence toward our fellow believers, and warnings against giving up our confidence.

Confidence in God

I want to examine various examples of confidence toward God, first from the Old Testament and then from the New. If you approach these Scriptures in faith, I really believe your heart will be filled with godly confidence. A tremendous note of confidence and victory is sounded in the opening verses of Psalm 27:1–3:

> The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LordD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? When the wicked came against me to eat up my flesh, my enemies and foes, they stumbled and fell. Though an army may encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war may rise against me, in this I will be confident.

The secret of David's victory throughout his life was his tremendous confidence in God. No matter what happened, whether his enemies came against him to devour his flesh, or armies arose to war against him, he was absolutely confident in the Lord. In Proverbs 3:23–26 we find another beautiful picture of confidence.

> Then you will walk safely in your way, and your foot will not stumble. When you lie down, you will not be afraid; yes, you will lie down and your sleep will be sweet. Do not be afraid of sudden terror, nor of trouble from

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> the wicked when it comes; for the Lord will be your confidence, and will keep your foot from being caught.

The Bible consistently teaches that God's people need not fear. That is why I have reservations about a teaching or prophecy that imparts fear to God's people. God is saying here, "When trouble from the wicked comes, it's not your problem. If you are not wicked, it's not going to strike you." Verse 26 tells us where to find confidence: "The Lord will be your confidence. He will keep your foot from being caught." The Lord doesn't change. He is always in control. He is never flustered. He never encounters an unexpected situation or emergency. He always has the answer.

Proverbs 14:26 says, "In the fear of the Lord there is strong confidence, and His children will have a place of refuge." If we have a right attitude toward God, there is no need for worry. He is our shelter and place of protection.

In the Old Testament, Isaiah said:

> For thus says the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel: "In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and confidence shall be your strength." But you would not, and you said, "No, for we will flee on horses"—therefore you shall flee! And, "We will ride on the swift horses"—therefore those who pursue you shall be swift! (Isaiah 30:15–16)

God is calling His people to return to Him, to find rest, and exercise confidence in Him. Those who reject God's call to quietness, trust and confidence soon learn that their problems overwhelm them, regardless of their schemes of escape. Time and time again, this is evident in Israel's history. When God's people were obedient to Him, their enemies were defeated and Israel had peace. But when Israel relied on their own strength, they were defeated and ultimately scattered throughout the nations.

In the New Testament, the Greek word translated confidence is a very forceful word. It is specifically related to confidence in speech. In secular Greek usage it denoted "freedom of speech," or the right to say what you think—almost an exact equivalent to the liberty of speech guaranteed by the American Constitution. It implies that you do not have to be silent about what you believe. You have an absolute right to say it and no one can silence you. It is a "bill-of-rights" word.

In the New Testament the first Scripture we'll look at deals with having confidence toward God in prayer.

> Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God. [We can say anything we want to God.] And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight. (1 John 3:21–22)

Notice again: the basic requirement for having your prayers answered is confidence. Don't let the devil rob you of your confidence. Exercise your prayer rights and the liberty of petitioning because Jesus purchased it for you. It is written into your constitution.

Another attack of the enemy that many Christians have difficulty in facing is condemnation. Romans 8 shows us that life in the spirit is a life of freedom and liberty, without a shadow of condemnation. You cannot enter or live the life presented in Romans 8 if you are living under condemnation. This essential requirement is stated in the opening verse of the chapter: "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit."

Condemnation is the great barrier to the liberty, joy, peace, and power of the Holy Spirit. But a right attitude of confidence will enable us to overcome this obstacle in our lives.

Confidence in other believers

The second aspect of confidence is having confidence in our fellow believers. We would probably all agree that this is even harder than having confidence in God.

It is interesting that the word confidence in the English translations comes from different Greek words, depending on whether the confidence is in God or in men. For obvious reasons, God does not expect us to exercise the same kind of confidence in our fellow believers that He requires us to have toward Him, but He does expect us to exercise trust. Although trust more closely represents the original Greek word for the attitude we should have toward other Christians, the New King James Version uses the word confidence

It is obvious from Paul's epistles that he had the same kind of difficult people to cope with that we have today. The Corinthians were getting drunk at the Lord's table; they

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were misusing the gifts of the Spirit; one man was living with his father's wife; they needed instruction about finance. In fact, they had many problems! Yet I want you to notice what Paul said to those people in 2 Corinthians after he had "straightened them out" in his previous letter.

> And I wrote this very thing to you, lest, when I came, I should have sorrow over those from whom I ought to have joy, having confidence in you all that my joy is the joy of you all. (2 Corinthians 2:3)

That is an amazing statement when you consider the problems these people had. Paul says he has confidence in them in all things! To me, that indicates that Paul was a giant of the faith.

I believe the capacity to have confidence in people is a mark of spiritual maturity. I also believe that if I have confidence in people, it does something for them. If a parent has confidence in his children, it lifts them up; if he doubts and criticizes them, it puts them down and breeds insecurity.

Parents who always criticize and never praise their children may think they are clever. But pointing out faults in a person doesn't prove you are clever, because a person's faults are usually obvious. To have confidence in people is far harder than to doubt or criticize them, and it requires the power of the Holy Spirit.

Let's look at some other Scriptures about trusting our fellow believers.

> I have confidence in you, in the Lord, that you will have no other mind; but he who troubles you shall bear his judgment, whoever he is. (Galatians 5:10)

> Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ. (Philippians 1:6)

Can you believe that about everyone in your church? Do you really believe that the Lord will finish what He started in each one of their lives? If you do, then you will feel differently about the people with whom you fellowship. You may still be aware of their problems, but you will see them in a different context.

My conviction is that the Lord never started anything He couldn't finish. I apply this to my own case. When the Lord took me on, He took on a lot of problems. Nevertheless, He took them on in the confidence that He could deal with them.

When I was newly saved, having been a professor, scholar, and philosopher, I really thought the Lord was pretty fortunate to get me! But as the Lord began dealing with me, I realized that wasn't so. I came to see that when the Lord took me on, He took on a lot of problems that were going to take Him infinite patience and wisdom to deal with. But I thank God that today I share His confidence that He will finish what He started—even in me! Paul makes another remarkable assertion in 2 Thessalonians 3:3–4:

> But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard you from the evil one. And we have confidence in the Lord concerning you, both that you do and will do the things we command you.

How many pastors can say that about the people looking to them for leadership? If pastors believe in their people, it will both motivate them and encourage them in the Lord. But if all the pastor sees is their problems, they will soon come under self-condemnation and discouragement.

Confidence liberates the people about whom you are confident. Jim Moore once said, "When a man quarrels with his wife, his greatest weapon against her is to bring her under condemnation." When you bring your wives under condemnation, husbands, you are just setting yourself up for a problem that you'll have to face later. But if you encourage them by your confidence in them, you will lift them to a place of peace and security.

Warnings about lost confidence

Let us now look at the warnings against giving up our confidence, all of which come from the epistle to the Hebrews. The greatest problem of the Hebrews was that, though they started in faith, they were going back to works. They started in the liberty of the Spirit, but they reverted to religion, ritual, and rule. And there is no sufficient basis for confidence in any of these.

There are five separate warnings in this epistle, all of them written to believers. We will examine three of the five. They

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are some of the strongest warnings found in the New Testament. In essence, the writer says, "Don't give up your confidence, don't become so religious that you can't enjoy the Lord, and don't become so serious that your religion is no longer a joy." We can get so preoccupied with doing what we ought to do that we lose the enjoyment of doing it.

One of the greatest assets of the spiritual life is spontaneity. We cannot afford to lose it. When I look back on my life, I discover that most of the major decisions I made were arrived at by accident. That doesn't make me sound very spiritual, but it's true. For example, my coming to the United States in 1963, which has been a major turning point in my whole life, happened by accident.

All the plans and arrangements we can work out are not enough; they won't get the job done. Plans made strictly on the level of human ability merely produce an Ishmael. Ishmael was the best Abraham could achieve without God's supernatural grace and power. And he was not good enough.

One test I have used to determine whether something is of God or not is to see if it was born supernaturally. If it was solely the result of my planning and arranging, I must question whether it's from God. I believe in being practical and working something out, but its origin must be in the supernatural.

That is the difference between Ishmael and Isaac. Ishmael was naturally originated; but Isaac was supernaturally originated. Isaac was as far above Abraham's own thinking and ability as heaven is above the earth.

> "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways," says the Lord. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts." (Isaiah 55:8–9)

We plan on the earthly level; God initiates on the heavenly level. That doesn't mean it will not be worked out on earth; but we must be sure it originated in the heavenly realm.

The things that are a result of human planning will not survive the pressures that we have to go through. My marriage with my first wife, Lydia, was supernaturally initiated. God showed me whom I was to marry. Later, Lydia and I were subjected to pressures we would never have survived if our marriage had been the result of human planning.

The same applies to my marriage with my second wife, Ruth. God's will for us in this matter was revealed to each of us by God supernaturally and independently. Marriage itself is supernaturally initiated; it did not start on the human level. God thought marriage up; man didn't. That's why it is such a solemn sacrament.

There are three specific passages in Hebrews that contain conditions based upon confidence. The first is Hebrews 3:6:

> ... but Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house we are if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end.

Where it says rejoicing in the New King James Version, the New American Standard Bible says "boasting." We have already seen that confidence is expressed by "freedom of speech"—God wants us to boast about Him. That's the condition of being the true church: that we hold fast our confidence and boast in God until the end.

Second, Hebrews 3:14 says:

> For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end.

This passage shows that our salvation is conditional upon our not giving up our confidence. In traditional theological terminology, this is known as "the perseverance of the saints." Those who do not persevere do not qualify as saints.

Finally, in looking at Hebrews 10:35–36, we find a reference taken from the military world.

> 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.

One major piece of a soldier's armor was his shield. In Greek literature, the greatest disgrace for any soldier was to cast away his shield and run from the battlefield without it. When the writer says here, "Do not cast away," I believe he's thinking about the disgrace of casting away your shield. So he is saying, in effect, "Do not cast not away your confidence, which is your shield. Do not cast it away

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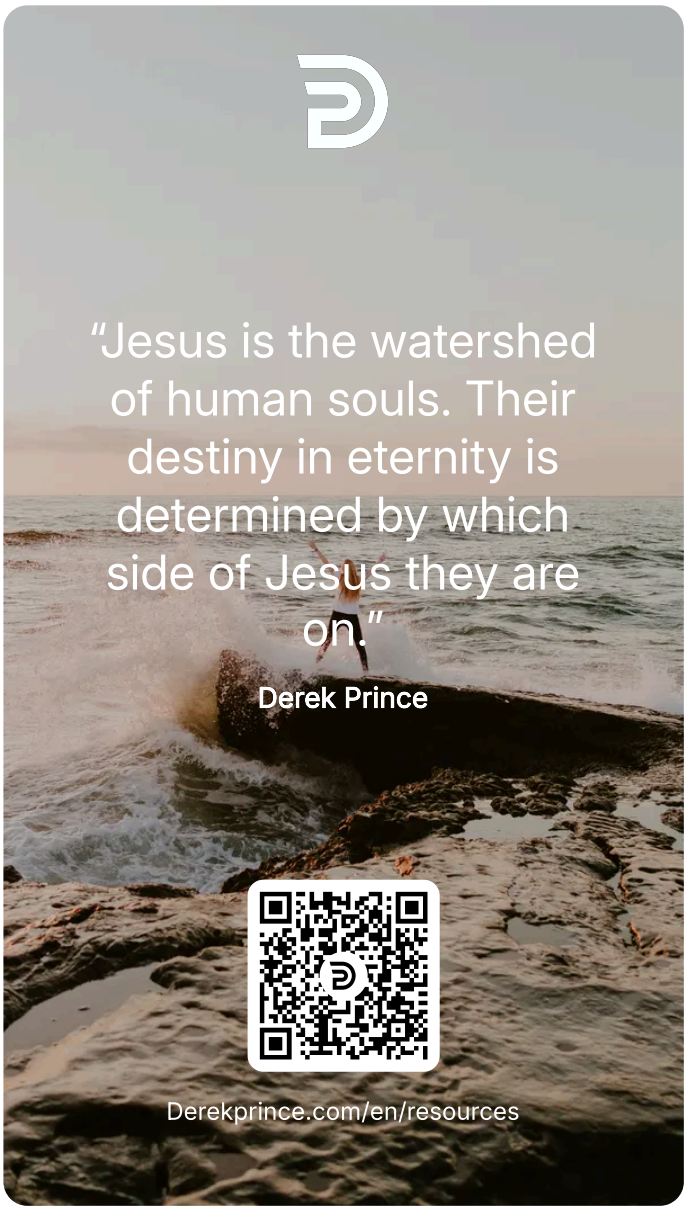
because there's a great reward coming if you hold on to it." We must tighten our grip on that shield of confidence and resolve not to let it go at any cost.

Looking ahead, we can see that the future is both challenging and frightening. In all parts of the world, peace is threatened, and upheaval and uncertainty rule the day. Yet beyond this, we as Christians have a King who has a plan and an answer for our particular situation. It is He who has said that He will be our refuge in the time of the storm. The kingdom that He rules is unshakable and the foundation we build on cannot be moved.

Therefore, we may appropriate for ourselves every one of the promises given in Proverbs 3:23–26 to those who make the Lord their confidence:

> I will walk safely in my way ... When I lie down, I will not be afraid ... I will not be afraid of sudden terror, nor of trouble from the wicked when it comes. The Lord will be my confidence.

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