

THE FLORAL HEIGHTS INFORMER

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Confidence about Eternity

By Jeff S. Smith

Confidence is a powerful attitude, an infectious expectation of success that is often self-fulfilling.

God said about the ancient Behemoth that, “if the river is turbulent he is not frightened; he is confident though Jordan rushes against his mouth” (Job 40:23). If Behemoth was a dinosaur – a now extinct animal species – his confidence eventually was misguided, but optimism through might is still a worthy consideration.

Behemoth was confident because his size dwarfed that of any predator; humans have the same confidence when confronted with grasshoppers or earthworms. Confidence in physical might, however, has its limitations – there is always the potential that someone bigger will come along. Eventually somebody knocked out Mike Tyson, pinned Hulk Hogan and chased the Russians out of Afghanistan.

The Christian’s confidence must rest somewhere other than his size, or even his intellect, prosperity and charisma (see Philippians 3:3-4). His confidence must be in Almighty God who answers prayers, rewards the faithful and punishes the evildoer.

David wrote, “The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? When evildoers assail me to eat up my flesh, my adversaries and foes, it is they who stumble and fall. Though an army encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war arise against me, yet I will be confident” (Psalm 27:1-3).

The world has of late been plunged into an era of uncertainty. Economies are suffering, war on land and piracy on the seas is persistent, crime and immorality are rampant. It is easy to understand how God’s children might especially become discouraged, downtrodden and pessimistic. A consultation with the New Testament reveals the conversions of thousands in the early days of the church, but today a single community visitor at a gospel meeting is cause enough for celebration.

Our confidence, however, should not be shaken by the state of affairs in our own nation or upon the planet as a whole (I Jn. 3:21). The country and the planet are doomed. No amount of recycling at the dump or peace talks in Geneva can alter the fact that life on Earth is temporal and that the planet itself has a date with destiny – annihilation at the second

Local News:

Welcome to all our visitors:

We pray that you will be edified by our service and that you will ask questions if things are not as you are accustomed to seeing. Please do come back at your every opportunity!

Please keep the following members in your prayers:

Nell Hulsey's mastectomy went very well this past Tuesday and she was out of the hospital the next day. Nell remains home recovering.

Please keep the **Cribbs** family in your prayers. Ron is close to leaving for his new duty station and Elizabeth will need our prayers and help to make it through this tough time of family transition.

Nina Gray's recent doctor visit was somewhat disappointing. She will probably make a final decision as to whether or not she has eye surgery after a March 12th visit to a neuro-ophthalmologist.

Tom Witherspoon is back home from his lengthy stay in Houston being treated for cancer.

Blake Robertson made it to Hawaii safely and tells mom and dad that it is beautiful out there.

Women's Bible Study:

The next Bible class will be Friday March 13th at 12:30 PM. The class meets at the church building with Kasey Robertson doing the teaching.

Continue to pray for our shut-ins:

Stella Davidson
696-1030 (Home)

Calvin York
692-0489 (Home).

coming of Jesus Christ (II Pet. 3:1-13). If our confidence is wed to our 401(k) and the thickness of the ozone layer, it is tragically misplaced.

Our confidence must be in a merciful God, the atoning blood of a glorious savior, the guidance of a Holy Spirit, and the singular hope of spending eternity in Heaven (Ephesians 4:1-6). Every other thing can do nothing but disappoint eventually (see Matthew 6:19-21).

It is important that we live our lives with confidence in a blessed outcome (I Jn. 4:17). Too many Christians express insecurities about their immortal spirits, unsure of whether they will be rewarded with a mansion in Heaven or an express ride to Hell. Many lack confidence because they fear they are not good enough to merit Heaven, but they are looking at things through smudged lenses, seeing only works, but not grace. Honestly, no one is good enough to merit Heaven, but every faithful, obedient, penitent believer can approach God with confidence of his acceptance. "Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession ... Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy" (Heb. 4:14-16).

We are confident in our salvation, not so much because we are confident in ourselves – our piety is as imperfect as the strong man's muscles and the genius's gray matter. We are confident in our salvation because we have confidence in Jesus Christ who conquered the tomb and blazed the trail into Heaven (II Cor. 3:4). John addressed himself "to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life. And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us" (I Jn. 5:13-14). Our eternal life is according to his will and an obedient, though imperfect, approach to life will render us good and faithful servants (Matt. 25:21).

Spiritual confidence gives birth to emotional contentment. Suddenly, the drive to accumulate wealth and to experience carnal ecstasy matters less. Even life's disappointments – death, disease, dismissal – pack less punch. And why not when "we can confidently say, 'The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me'" (Hebrews 13:6)?

Surely there are some at the other extreme whose confidence has soured into arrogance, who are oblivious to the shrinking of their faithfulness and the dissipation of God's fellowship with them. Foolishly, they rush in where angels fear to tread, risking their eternal life by throwing themselves down from the pinnacle of divine fellowship, abstaining from the bread of life, and blindly falling at the feet of the Enticer (see Luke 4:1-13).

Remember Behemoth? Haven't seen one lately, have you? His confidence swelled until it led to his extinction and a Christian who becomes arrogant enough that he feels he can sin and backslide with impunity is slated for the same result. The fallen disciple is ashamed and disappointed because his confidence was delusional (Job 6:20).

"Is not your fear of God your confidence, and the integrity of your ways your hope" (Job 4:6)? "Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward" (Hebrews 10:35).

Differences among Churches of Christ

Introduction:

Differences between churches of Christ are not new topics. A difference existed between the church in Jerusalem and the churches of Galatia during the days of the apostles (see Acts 15:1ff; Gal. 1:6-8; 3:1; 4:16-17). An apparent difference between the church that Diotrephes attended and the one the apostle John was at is recorded at III Jn. 9-10. While the apostle Paul commanded that brethren be of one mind we find no such mindset among “churches of Christ” in any one given city in America (see I Cor. 1:10; Rom. 15:5-6; Eph. 4:1ff). We find churches that teach that only one cup must be used at the Lord’s Supper. Other churches teach that the church treasury can be used to support children’s homes, hospitals, and retirement communities. There are churches of Christ that use musical instruments and churches that do not. Even more bizarre is the church in San Antonio Texas dropping the name “church of Christ” all together (see San Antonio Express-News, Sept. 6, 2003). While mass confusion reigns among the thousands of different denominational bodies here in America it is sad to note that even among churches of Christ there is confusion. This lesson shall focus primarily on the differences revolving around institutionalism.

I. Nothing new under the Sun:

- A. Otey – Briney Debate over instrumental music and the societies September 14-18, 1908
- B. Cogdill – Woods Debate over institutionalism 1957
- C. Britnell – Woods Debate May 1977
- D. Cogdell – Turner “Discussion” over organized cooperation between churches 1983

II. Reasoning behind the Doctrine:

- A. Change church name so that people will come to church that would not have originally come (Oak Hills drops ‘Church of Christ’).
- B. People reached that would not otherwise be reached if orphan homes are not supported: “the church started attracting Hindus and Muslims when its members began ‘helping the needy with no expectation of return or credit’” (The Orphanage Inspector... March 2009 issue of The Christian Chronicle).
- C. Dan Goddard: “The church is composed of Christians; what the church does, Christians do; what Christians do, the church does, generally speaking. We cannot separate the Christian’s work from the work of the church” (Institutionalism, Orphan Homes and Church Cooperation, p. 5).

III. Two issues to be understood:

- A. Bible Authority:
 1. God reveals two sources of religious authority (Matt. 21:23-27)
 - a. God’s authority is to be understood and adhered to (Deut. 4:9-16; Phil. 4:9).
 - b. Paul gives a warning (Col. 2:4-8; 3:17).
 2. Those who do not conduct themselves according to God’s authority are rejected (Isa. 1:10ff; Lev. 10:1ff; II Sam. 6:1-7).
- B. The Work of the church and individual:
 1. There is a distinct difference between the church and the individual (see Matt. 18:15-17; Acts 5:3-4; I Tim. 5:16).
 2. The work of the collective body of Christ = Evangelizing the lost (Eph. 3:8ff), Edification of its members (Acts 11:25-26; Eph. 4:11-12), and Benevolence to needy saints alone (Acts 11:29; Rom. 15:25-26 etc.).

Conclusion:

Bible authority must be respected. If the church I attend uses musical instruments in worship, demands all to use one cup, or supports institutions with the church treasury I better be able to give a Bible authorized example or command else God will not be pleased.