

God's Presence With Man: 5

Cultivating a God-Confidence

1 Corinthians 10

Some time ago I was reading through 'The Message' (paraphrased NT by Eugene H Peterson) and came across this chapter:

Paul was warning the church of the dangers of going astray. The Israelites all experienced the same things – they came out of Egypt, through the Red Sea, they ate the Manna and drank from the Rock, which was Christ – they enjoyed the presence of God, but they went away from Him being tempted and yielding to it.

“But just experiencing God’s wonder and grace didn’t seem to mean much – most of them were defeated by temptation during the hard times in the desert, and God was not pleased” (The Message, 1 Corinthians 10.5)

Later in the same chapter, Paul said:

“These are all warning markers—danger!—in our history books, written down so that we don’t repeat their mistakes. Our positions in the story are parallel—they at the beginning, we at the end—and we are just as capable of messing it up as they were. Don’t be so naive and self-confident. You’re not exempt. You could fall flat on your face as easily as anyone else. Forget about self-confidence; it’s useless. Cultivate God-confidence.” (The Message, 1 Corinthians 10.11-12)

This verse ends with the words, '*cultivate God-confidence*'.

Paul is saying that we can mess it up too – and to avoid messing it up we should cultivate a God-confidence that comes from the Presence of God.

What does this word **cultivate** mean?

Merriam-Webster Dictionary:

- to prepare and use for the raising of crops; also : to loosen or break up the soil about (growing plants)
- to foster the growth of
- to improve by labour, care, or study
- to culture, further or encourage

How can we cultivate God-confidence? How can we improve?

One of Paul's greatest desires is mentioned in the Scriptures. He told the church in Philippi:

“Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; that I may know Him and the power of His

resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.” (Philippians 3.8-12)

Knowing God creates that confidence. That knowledge only comes from spending time in His presence. It cannot be cultivated through books or learning – it comes through fellowship

1. Knowing God through His Word

Those *'that know their God shall be strong and carry out great exploits'* so says Daniel. (Daniel 11.32)

- Knowing God creates confidence in Him.
 - That God confidence will make us very bold, even to the point where others may think that we're arrogant.
 - Those who are God confident are strong and do great things for Him.
- We get to know Him, through His Word.
 - The Word reveals Jesus to us. When we believe His Word we become very bold.
 - God's Word is His covenant;
 - God's Word cannot fail;
 - God's Word is living, effective and very powerful.
 - How hard is it to believe something that cannot fail - that makes us very confident.
- We can cultivate God-confidence **through the labour, care and study** of the Word – getting to know Him

2. Knowing God by Seeking Him

"Sow for yourselves righteousness; Reap in mercy; Break up your fallow ground, For it is time to seek the LORD, Till He comes and rains righteousness on you" (Hosea 10.12)

- Now we're not talking about confidence in ourselves or our own ability or might, but confidence in God and the Word. We can only cultivate that confidence by getting to know God through His Word and fellowship with Him.
Loosening and breaking up the fallow ground - cultivate!
- When you spend a lot of time with someone you get to know them.
 - When you first met your husband or wife you knew very little about them, when you got married you thought you knew them but as you began to live together and grow together you got to know them, so much so that you probably know how each other thinks.
- To hear some Christians talk about God – you can tell that they don't spend too much time with Him. They say things like 'God gave me this disease to keep me humble' – God doesn't give sickness, Jesus died to take it away.

As we have already seen, cultivating God-confidence was one of Paul's great desires:

“I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord... and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which *is* from the law, but that which *is* through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection...” Philippians 3.8-10

3. Knowing God through the Fellowship of the Saints

Another way we can cultivate God-confidence is to gather with the brethren as often as we can.

“Let us hold fast the confession of *our* hope without wavering, for He who promised *is* faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as *is* the manner of some, but exhorting *one another*, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.” Hebrews 10.24-25

As we come together it is to

- consider one another – fully observe and learn from one another
- stir up love and good works - stimulating and encouraging each other
- exhort and encourage one another – admonishing (warn, instruct and encourage)

it is these activities that **foster and encourage** God-confidence among the brethren.

We are to do this as much as possible, especially as we are in these end time days

- staying away from the house of God robs you of a blessing
- it also robs your brothers/sisters of the blessing that you are

Cultivating this God-confidence is so important in these days

“All these things happened to them as examples for others, and they were written down as a warning for us. For we live at a time when the end is about to come. If you think you are standing firm you had better be careful that you do not fall” (1 Corinthians 10-11-12, TEV)

– we are at the end of time:

- there are so many distractions to draw us away from the truth
- cultivating God-confidence will keep us strong so that we don't fall into the same types of sin that they did.