

be confident? Yes, but the Bible is very clear that our confidence is not self-confidence. Our confidence is in the Lord.

Jesus was confident, but even Jesus' confidence came from His full understanding of who He is and what He was called to do. It was His relationship to the father that gave Jesus the confidence to make claims no one would make unless they were true. Jesus would say, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." Jesus would say, "I must go and be put to death and then rise from the dead on the third day." Jesus would say, "I and the Father are one." Those are outlandish statements unless they are true and unless they are based on Jesus' relationship with the Father.

Let me share with you four characteristics that this type of confidence in God brings to our lives.

First, there is peace. This word can be a fearful and an anxious place. However, when we have placed our confidence in the faithful God and not in self or others... there is a peace. There is peace because we know God will not fail us.

Second, there is determination. When we have confidence in God and God's call upon our lives, we live with more determination. Jeremiah would face many challenges, threats and circumstances but he remained faithful as a prophet. Why? God called him and that gave him confidence to proclaim the words God gave to him. When our confidence is in God we live with more determination.

Third, there is consolation. When we place our confidence in God, then we know God will be there with us to console us when we find life difficult, when we are rejected, when things don't go the way we assume they will go. God's promise to Jeremiah is I will be with you. There is consolation.

There is the increase of faith. This step to place our confidence in God and not in self is the great step of faith. To daily say to God my trust is in you. Use my life as you will this day. Open my eyes to your work in me around me. That, my friends, is a great step of faith and when we look to God more and more... our faith grows and we mature.

Steve Wiens comments in his book "You and I are not nouns, we are verbs. We are endlessly becoming."

Do you lack confidence? Are you over confident? The Bible is clear that our confidence must not be in self, others or this world. Instead, we are to place our confidence in the one who will always be faithful and true. God is the one who knows us, God is the one who has set us apart, God is the one who knows that there is within us more life than we can ever imagine. When we place our confidence in God, then God in turn gives to us true confidence. A confidence that produces peace, determination, consolation and faith.

What will 2016 be like? I don't know. But I do know this, "I know whom I have believed in and I am persuaded that He, God, is able to keep that which I have committed to Him against that day." Place your confidence in God.



# Go With Confidence

Psalm 25:1-10

TRINITY PULPIT

**C**onfidence is a strange quality. There are some people who just seem to have self-confidence. I am sure if we were to analyze each and every person, we would discover in some form or fashion that self-confidence is a trait that has been taught through words of encouragement and from experiences of success in a person's life. However, there are also people who seem filled with confidence even when they experienced failure. Then there are people who even though they are a great success, they lack confidence.

As a parent, many of us know the frustration of watching a child who lacks confidence. We want to encourage her, we want to rescue him, but we know that this is not always best. As friends, we comment to one another "I just wish she had more confidence in herself. She can do this."

We all know the fear and the uncertainty of being assigned a task and thinking to ourselves "I don't know how to do this. I am going to fail." Well, if that is your response to many situations in life, then you are in good company. In fact, when you think about it, many of those who we regard as heroes of faith began their journey with God without confidence in self or God.

We think of Abraham and Sarah who are told that after decades of being unable to have a child, they will not only have a child but they will begin many nations of people. Abraham and Sarah's response is "we are old." That is not going to happen. In fact, they laugh at the prospect of having a baby in their 90s and so would we. I mean really folks, that is the beginning of a good joke but it was no joke. Sarah would give birth to Isaac and a great nation was born.

Moses is told after years of being out in the wilderness as a shepherd that he is to go back

to Egypt from where he has been banished and confront the most mighty man on the face of the earth, Pharaoh himself, and demand that Pharaoh set free the Hebrew people. Moses' response is "God, I don't speak too good." In other words, I am not sure you know what you are doing. Then he adds "even if I go, who shall I say sent me? Just what authority do I have to go to Pharaoh?"

Then there is Jeremiah. Jeremiah is the reluctant prophet. He is one who is called to give bad news to a nation. His word is not one he wants to speak, but he is compelled to speak. His calling is to be the bearer of bad news when everyone else, advising the King, is telling him what he wants to hear. Jeremiah has to deliver a hard message and live the message.

Jeremiah's life is a hard life. The prophet Jeremiah witnessed some of the best and some of the worst times in ancient Israel. The prologue to his prophecy tells us that, although he was of the exiled priestly house from Anathoth (1 Kings 2:26), he returned to the Jerusalem court during the reign of Josiah, just five years prior to his great religious reform (2 Kings 22:3). Sadly, however, Jeremiah must also have witnessed Josiah's untimely demise, and watched Judah, from that point onward, sink inexorably into a political and spiritual decline from which it would never recover. By the end of his career, Judah was no more, Jerusalem was destroyed, and he himself was left to follow the remaining Judeans into exile in Egypt.

If we were going to measure his life by our standards we would say he was not a winner. His life appears as a failure as does the nation he served. Yet, he is regarded as a compassionate and bold prophet of God.

It is no wonder that when God speaks to



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Jeremiah and places this call upon his life Jeremiah's first response is "O Sovereign Lord, I do not know how to speak, I am only a child." I don't have the experience God. They will not listen to me God. I don't have the gifts. I don't have the knowledge. If we look at Jeremiah's response we find all the excuses we give when we lack confidence.

We lack confidence when we do not know. I do not know. I lack the knowledge to achieve what is presented before me. Surely there is someone else who knows more about this than me. Our lack of confidence sometimes comes from lack of knowledge.

We lack confidence when we do not think we possess the natural abilities needed. I do not know how to speak. God you want me to be a prophet. I don't have that gift. It is interesting how God calls us many times not within the gifts and talents we know, but to places where new gifts will be revealed and developed. Jeremiah lacked confidence because of his perceived gifts and abilities.

We like confidence because of experience. I am only a child Jeremiah remarks back to God. I have never done this before. I don't have the experience. It is exciting to do new things, but we lack confidence until that which is new becomes that which is routine.

Jeremiah, just like us, lacked confidence and yet, God tells him do not say you are only a youth. Do not say you cannot do this. You must go, this is your calling and I will be with you.

This is one of the great lessons for the Christian. When it comes to confidence our confidence is not in self, but it is in the Lord's presence in our lives. The Bible is filled with reminders that we are to be confident, but not in our own ability but rather in the ability of Christ in us.

Most of the references to confidence in the Bible are admonitions not to place our confidence in others, in the flesh and in our self but instead to find our confidence in God.

Jeremiah is reminded in this text that confidence in his future is not found in his knowledge, abilities or experience. Instead, his confidence is found in God's calling upon his life and God's presence in his life.

As we began this year, I encouraged you to go into

2016 with hope. I reminded us that we have hope because God does not forget us, God will provide, God is greater than any challenge we face and God hears our prayers. Today, I want to bookend this month by reminding us that we cannot only go into this New Year with hope, but also with confidence. Let's look at why Jeremiah was to have confidence as a way to give us confidence in Christ.

God first says to Jeremiah before I formed you in the womb I knew you. We can have confidence because we know that God knows us better than we know our self. The words that are used in Jeremiah are important words.

The written Hebrew text of verse 5 has a different verb from the one that is traditionally read in the phrase "before I FORMED you." The Qere (or traditionally read text) reads, "Before I FORMED you in the womb, I knew you." The Ketiv (or written text) reads, "Before I SAW you, (even) in the womb, I knew you." Before Jeremiah had even entered the arena of human interaction, God had defined the role he would play. In the Qere version, there is also creation imagery at work. The verb yatsar is often used to mean "create" as well as to "form" because of the way a potter creates a vessel out of clay by forming it with his or her hands. Think about the phrase "before Jeremiah entered the human arena, God had defined the role he would play." Jeremiah was to have confidence because God knew him. God knew him before he could ever even have a thought to define his own life and own existence.

The great secret to confidence is determining that the life God has for us is the best life. This moment of faith and trust is not an easy place to arrive. The concept that God knows better than we do and that life is about God and not about us is a place that most of time we resist. We might say "God knows best or God has a plan for my life", but to truly live as though God knows us better than we know our self is a not easy to do. It is a daily relinquishing of our will to God's will. It is a daily surrender of self-glory to God's glory. It is a constant moment of trusting God's ways when they sometimes seem contradictory to who we feel and what we would normally do. Confidence does not come easy. Yet, Jeremiah is reminded his confidence is grounded in the knowledge that God knows him before he was born.

Our confidence is rooted in a God who knows us.

The second word of confidence for Jeremiah is before

you were born I set you apart. The word to be set apart means to be made holy or different. It can also mean be to physically set apart. In Jeremiah's case, both were true. Jeremiah would be set apart for God's holy use and Jeremiah would be set apart from his own people. His own people, the government and the people would reject his prophecy and doubt his word and yet, his word of prophecy was fulfilled. Jeremiah would live set apart by God.

The idea of being holy, sacred, and set apart is a reminder that as followers of Jesus we are holy, sacred, and set apart. We have confidence because God has called us to be God's people in this world for God's purpose.

Rick Warren would start his book "The Purpose Driven Life" with the words "It is not about you." John Ortberg states in the book "The Me I Want to Be":

*You are not your handiwork; your life is not your project. Your life is God's project. God thought you up, and he knows what you were intended to be. He has many good works for you to do, but they are not the kind of "to do" lists we give spouses or employees. They are the signposts to your true self.*

The Apostle Paul put it this way "Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God--this is your true and proper worship."

Jesus put it very simply "If you want to find your life you will lose it, but if you lose your life for my sake you will find it." Matthew 10:39 I like how the The Message paraphrases that statement from Jesus.

"If your first concern is to look after yourself, you'll never find yourself. But if you forget about yourself and look to me, you'll find both yourself and me."

Jeremiah's confidence comes in God's reminder that he is set apart and holy. His life is about something much greater than he could ever imagine. And so are our lives. Our confidence is in the knowledge that God has set us apart for good works.

Jeremiah is reminded that he is appointed. The term

means again to be set apart or ordained or chosen. Jeremiah is chosen, but notice the plural "nations" in this verse. Jeremiah is appointed to be a prophet to the nations. This is repeated again in verse 10. Jeremiah was a messenger and called, but not just to his own people, not to just the nation of Judah, but to the nations. Jeremiah was a priest of a priestly family and knew what it meant to serve the nation and its people. Yet, now his call had expanded. God had a plan for his life that was beyond his own vision for his life.

Confidence comes when we know God has something more for us than we can imagine. The Bible again is filled with instances where God's call is so much more than the person could ever imagine. The Bible is filled with the most unlikely person being the very person God uses.

In his book "Beginnings" Steve Wiens tells the story of discovering the meaning for the word "good" in the creation story. A Rabbi friend

defines the word good in Genesis this way:

It is the actualization of the potential of life embedded in the earth by God when creation brings it forth with seeds for future life in it. He goes on to comment that God produces life that always has more life for the future embedded within it.

Then he tells this story. It is a story about a friend name Jenny who was born with cerebral palsy. She walks with a limp and she tires easily. She is routinely asked what is wrong with her. Jenny is an elementary school librarian who cares about getting great stories in the hands of children. Jenny shares her story with the children and what it is like to have this limp. She shares the struggle and the joy. The kids sidle up next to her, those with and without disabilities, and they begin to tell their own story. Because of Jenny, they feel like they have something beautiful in them to offer the world. Jenny calls it out of them with every word and every limp. That is "good."

How much more life is embedded in us that God is calling forth. Jeremiah's confidence was found in a call that was greater than he could have imagined. Our call is the same. Our call is always more than we can dream and do our self.

So the question is... Is it right for us as Christians to

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MATTHEW 10:39