

Maintaining a Scriptural Confidence in God

Recently, as I've been reading my Bible, I've realized a terrible problem I've had. I want to have confidence in Christ (not myself), but I tend to strip the scripture of every encouraging point it makes. Instead of recognizing what particular passages say about God, Jesus, the Spirit, and their work to save me, I keep bringing it around to me. I keep harping about what I must do to save me. That only causes discouragement and insecurity.

Let me show you some examples to explain what I mean.

Romans 8:28 says, "And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose" (ESV). Paul's point is God is working on my behalf. He is going to make sure everything is working out for my good. That leaves me free to simply love Him instead of trying to make everything work out the way I want it to. I can let God do His job, leaving me free to simply do mine. But I seem to be unable to accept the confidence this passage is intended to give. Instead of letting this passage be about God and His work, I make it about me and mine. I say, "Yes, but to love God means to keep His commandments. I keep messing up on that. I must not love Him enough. Therefore, He isn't working things out for my good." But Paul was writing to people just like me. He was writing to struggling Christians who kept messing up and he said this anyway. Why not just let this passage be about God as Paul intended and rest in the confidence that Father, Son, and Spirit are working on my behalf?

Romans 8:38-39 says, "For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (ESV). When I am in Christ, nothing can defeat me. I don't have to fret and worry that what is going on around me means I've been yanked out of Christ's hand. But I seem to be unable to accept the confidence this passage is intended to give. Instead of letting this passage be what Paul said, when I read it I jump to defending against Calvinistic errors. "Yes, nothing can separate me from Christ, but I can leave Christ." Yes, I need to defend against error. However, I must not destroy what the passage says while defending against what it doesn't say. I'm in Christ. This passage says what is going on around me won't change that. This passage says I will be a conqueror. Let me just have confidence because of that.

I Peter 5:10 says, "And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you" (ESV). God is going to do that. Yes, I'm going through trials, tribulations, and temptations now, but God is still with me. He is going to restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish me. But I seem to be unable to accept the confidence this passage is intended to give. Instead of simply accepting what the verse says; I immediately ask, "Yes, but what am I supposed to do? God will only go so far. I have to do my part." When am I going to recognize that God gave the Old Law to demonstrate when salvation is left up to me, I'm going to botch it? Why can't I accept the confidence of this passage and just turn my life over to God so He can give me the power to overcome?

Jude 24-25 says, "Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen" (ESV). God is able to keep me from stumbling. He has the power to set me free from my sins. But I seem to be unable to accept the confidence this passage is intended to give. I keep thinking I have to have better discipline and stop stumbling so much and present myself to God as pretty close to blameless before He will give me His grace. Why can't I see that this passage says I'll never accomplish that? Instead, I need to turn my life over to God because He is the only one who will help me overcome my stumbles. And He will do that. I don't have to fret today about whether or not my stumbles are killing me. I'm turning my life over to God; He is giving me progressive victory over my falls. He will get that done.

These are just some examples. Perhaps you have the same trouble. Yes, we must do something. We must give ourselves to God. We must defend against error. We must not trust ourselves to save us. We must not rely on our good works and obedience. We must not put our confidence in ourselves. If we keep twisting these verses to be more about us than God, we'll never have confidence and we'll give up on the fight. Instead, we must put our confidence in God and just turn our lives over to Him. He really is working in us. He really will save us in the end. After all, if He was willing to let His Son die to reconcile us, how much more will His life save us (**Romans 5:10**).

--*Edwin L. Crozier*