

GOOD CONFIDENCE AND GREAT REWARD

A SERMON

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“Cast not away therefore your confidence, which has great recompence of reward.” Hebrews 10:35

THE apostle, it appears, in writing to the Hebrews had three different classes of character in view. The one was those who were established in the truth, and who delighted in the deep and eternal things which he in this epistle set before them. The second class were those that seemed to think that doctrine was not of much importance, and they seemed to go on with a notion that they had already attained nearly all that it was needful they should attain. Hence the apostle felt grieved that for want of understanding in such persons, and for want of that devotedness to God by which we learn the mysteries of the kingdom, he could not speak so freely as he could wish; hence he told them that at the time they ought to have been teachers, they needed someone to teach them again what were the first principles of the oracles of God. And the other class that he had in view were those who showed some signs of apostasy, as it is pretty clear that some few among them had already apostatized from the truth, and had already trodden underfoot the Son of God, had already counted the blood of the everlasting covenant a common thing, had already done despite to the spirit of his grace. And the apostle knew that this would be a kind of instrument, this circumstance, in the hands of Satan, to work upon the minds of some of the rest; he therefore, throws in as he goes along these encouragements, by which to keep those who were at all right minded in their right mind, and said, “Cast not away,” alluding to these two classes, the one who were established in the truth, the other not so well established, but at the same time having grace in their hearts, “Cast not away therefore your confidence, which has great recompence of reward.”

We notice, then, first, *the confidence*; secondly, *the advice*; and thirdly, *the reward*.

First, then, the *confidence*. “Cast not away your confidence.” This, of course, must depend entirely upon the kind of confidence, because all of us, while in a state of nature, have a false confidence in things pertaining to eternity, and we all of us by nature have a false hope in things pertaining to God; and such confidences must be destroyed before we can have that confidence that shall bring us off safe at the last. It would occupy perhaps not profitably your time to range over the various kinds of false confidences in these solemn matters which we find among men. I therefore think it the better, and perhaps the more profitable way, to describe what true confidence is. And the apostle presents a twofold feature of true confidence; first, the ground of it; and secondly, the fruits of it.

This is the twofold representation he gives of true confidence, first, the ground of it. I think we cannot do better than notice what he said as to the ground of this confidence. In the 6th chapter, where the dear Savior is set forth as our forerunner, and as a high priest after the order of Melchizedek, this setting forth, as you are aware, two things, the one that of the eternity of the priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the other is that of the sufficiency of the priesthood of Jesus Christ, called a royal priesthood, because it reigns over all that stands in its way. Now this is the reason why the priesthood of Jesus Christ is eternal; it is because of the sufficiency of it. If there be a sinner found upon the surface of the globe, let that man have been what he may, if he has been as bad or worse than Manasseh, or the worst character that ever lived, and the Holy Spirit should convince that man of his state, and reveal to him the Lord Jesus Christ; and the Savior's priesthood should in that case prove insufficient, why, here is a sinner that the priesthood of Christ cannot make perfect; here is a sinner the remembrance of whose sins the priesthood of Christ cannot blot out; here is a sinner whose sins the blood of Jesus Christ cannot wash away. Such a thing never was heard of, and such a thing never will be. Hence it here said that "he is able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by him." And you will observe that the soul that is enabled to make this, in connection with something else I presently have to state, the soul that is enabled to make this the ground of its confidence. Religion is a personal and a vital reality. Let us hear what the apostle says as to the way in which we acquire this confidence. He speaks of it in this way: "We have fled for refuge" that is a phrase we can pretty easily understand as regards the doctrine of it; whether we know anything of it in our own souls is another thing, "We have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us; which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters into that within the veil;" that is, enters into heaven, for by the eternal priesthood of Christ the soul hopes for eternal life, the soul hopes for eternal salvation, the soul hopes for eternal glory, and thus enters into that within the veil. But notice, it flies for refuge. That, I am sure, is a description of the Savior that every poor sinner that is convinced of his state blesses God for. How beautiful is Isaiah upon this very character of the dear Savior, when he said, "A man shall be as a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land."! How do we fly to him? Why, we fly to him by believing in him, and by praying to him, by faith and by prayer, and by him pour out the feeling, "God be merciful to me a sinner." When we thus see, then, what he is in the eternal perfection of his sacrifice, that becomes the ground of our confidence. But not that alone; there is something else that becomes the ground of our confidence, besides the eternal priesthood of Jesus Christ; and that something else I must be careful to name, because it is an awful thing to be deceived in these matters; and if we receive one part of essential truth and are at enmity against another part of essential truth, I think that stands as a solemn proof that that which we have received we have not rightly received; and having not rightly received one part, we are not led to receive the other part; whereas, if we rightly receive one part, it will lead us to receive the other part. And what then, say you, is the other part, besides the everlasting priesthood of the Savior? Why, a part that is very delightful, a part as that upon which the truth rests, and it is this, namely, the immutability of the counsel of the blessed God; that "God willing more abundantly," more largely, more conspicuously, "to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things," which I take there to mean his counsel and his oath, "we may have strong consolation." Thus, then, poor sinner, for the ground of your confidence you are to take by faith the eternal sacrificial sufficiency of the Savior, and secondly the immutability of the blessed God; and if you are favored to take your stand here, why, you may look forward in the light of sacrificial perfection, and see yourself virtually already without fault and without blemish before the throne of God; and ii you are favored to take your stand here, and the Lord is pleased to bring home the word with

power, you can see already that this God is your God forever, that he has been your God from eternity, that he is your God now, that he will be your God forever; that whatever may leave, whatever may forsake you, and whatever you may have to undergo, you will never be deprived of that sacrificial perfection you have in Christ; you will never be deprived of a friend in heaven, a faithful and unchanging God.

This, then, is the ground of confidence. If this be your confidence, then the words of our text, whether you can take them or not, whether they are any comfort to you or not, they certainly belong to you. But then the Lord does not always give us that power to take that which does belong to us. Well, it is better not to have power to take that which does belong to us than to take that which does not belong to us; because if we take those promises that do not belong to us, they will be some day taken from us; but if we feel our need of this sacrificial perfection and immutability of the blessed God, and cannot yet get hold of the promises, they are ours, for the promise is to the poor and needy; "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

I now look at the love, practical love, which this confidence gives to the name of the Lord, and to the people and cause of God. The apostle looked at the Hebrews, and he saw that they were deeply interested in the cause of God. He saw that anything within their power that they could do to further the gospel, or for the cause of God, they were willing to do; and he saw that if there were necessitous among the people of God, poor saints of God, some subject to adversity, and some through old age, some through affliction of body, someone, and some another, the apostle saw that these persons, who had this confidence, and saw what the Lord had done for them, that they were ever willing to act accordingly. Hence, he said, "God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love which you have showed toward his name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister. And, he says, "we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end." I am sure of it that the Spirit of God is a family spirit, and I am sure of it that if he be our teacher, we shall be taught not only to say, "*My* Father," but also "*Our* Father;" and I am also sure that it is good and pleasant for brethren to dwell together in unity. I am also sure that whatever we have been favored to do from time to time for the poorer brethren and sisters, or for the furtherance of the gospel, we shall never repent of it; no, the Lord will, though we think nothing of these doings ourselves, indeed, we are ready to pray the Lord will forgive us our very services, for they are mingled with so many infirmities, and so many drawbacks, and so many faults; as the poet says,

"Sin is mixed with all I do;"

and yet, poor as these our services are, our God would reckon himself unrighteous if he did not so set them down to our account as to look at them as evidence of interest in his love. "I was hungry, and you gave me meat; thirsty, and you gave me drink." And the apostle reverts to this same thing again in this chapter, and he draws the attention of these people who were tempted and tried in the way I will presently try to describe, to what they endured at the first. "Call to remembrance the former days, in which, after you were illuminated," after the Lord had set the light of his truth up in your soul, not merely enlightened, but illuminated; there was a fixed light, God fixed the light of his truth in your understanding, and that lighted up your soul, lighted up your heart, lighted up your affection to the Lord; "in which, after you were illuminated, you endured a great fight of afflictions," for the truth's sake. And does Satan try to get you to cast your confidence away? "Cast not away your confidence. See what you have endured, see how you were supported, and remember

that your God has lost none of his power by having helped you so much; his riches are not lessened by ministering so many riches to others; he is still the same, to make the promise good, "As your days, so shall your strength be," And the apostle could not forget, for he was a very grateful man, and the more grace a man has, the more humble and the more grateful he will be, even to any Christian with whom the Lord might bless him; the apostle therefore here says, in relation to himself, that while the people had soon made in times past a gazing-stock, partly by reproaches, and partly by afflictions, and partly by becoming companions of them that were so used; the apostle, having grateful recollection of what they had done for him, said, "For you had compassion of me in my bonds." Now look at this. Why did you do so? Why, because you loved me for the truth's sake. Well, then, as you have given me many cups, as it were, of cold water, why did you do so? You did so to me as a servant of God, and as unto the Lord. "Cast not away, therefore, your confidence." And then look at the motive. "You took joyfully the spoiling of your goods," not grudgingly; as though he should say, There was a contention among you which should give the most; there was a contention among you which should give the first, there was a contention among you who should stand first in this matter. "You took joyfully the spoiling of your goods you were delighted with the opportunity of giving that vent to your feelings; "took joyfully the spoiling of your goods;" and look at the motive; "knowing in yourselves that you have in heaven a better and an enduring substance," Thus, then, they had this confidence in the priesthood of Christ, this confidence in Divine immutability, this prospect of better and enduring substance; as though the apostle should say, "All earthly things are shadows, but that which you have in heaven is substance, substantial joys and sincere; "knowing in yourselves that you have in heaven a better and an enduring substance." "Cast not away therefore your confidence." Here, then, where this confidence is, the man is interested in three things: first, in his own soul's welfare, and he is concerned daily, more or less, to walk with God; secondly, in the cause of God, or furtherance of the gospel; and thirdly, to sympathize with the poor, the necessitous, and the afflicted. Such is the representation which the apostle gives of this confidence. And if you have such a faith as this, if you have such a confidence as this, real, living, practical confidence, why, you have a treasure that all things that can be desired are not to be compared with the hope you have, with the destiny you have, with the prospect you have, the God on your side that you have. The longer I live the more I see, and feel, and know the blessedness of real godliness.

I notice in the next place, then, *the advice*. There are two ways I notice, only two of the many ways in which confidence may be cast away. First, by a disbelief of God's blessed truth. Oh, let me once begin to question the perfection that is in Christ; let me once begin to question the divinity and eternity of his righteousness; let me once begin to question the certainty of the sure mercies of David; let me once begin to quibble at any of these things; let me once begin to think, "Well, perhaps it would be better to go over to the lower in doctrine, and to be more moderate;" let me once begin to think this, and by slow degrees away will go the ground of my confidence, away will go my love to the poor and afflicted people of God; away will go my sympathy with real soul trouble; away will go my oneness with the liberty of the gospel, and by slow degrees away I go into the spirit of apostasy, and it is not possible to renew such an one again unto repentance, seeing that he crucifies to him-self the Son of God afresh, and puts him to an open shame. I am aware that this is what the child of God cannot fatally do. That is one way. And I may, perhaps, before I leave this point, just remind you of what the apostle said of this matter in connection with our text. He reminds us that we have need of patience. So that Satan, when we look around sometimes and see those that hate the truth prosper, and are very much happier, and have neither the reproaches, nor the afflictions, nor the trials that we have, Satan comes in and says, There must be something wrong somewhere;

you see everybody is getting on better than you are, and more easy and comfortable. So, the apostle said, "You have need of patience." Therein laid the patience of Job; namely, his not giving up the truth; Job, through all his afflictions, held fast the truth, and therein laid his patience. "You have need of patience, that, after you have done the will of God, you might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith; but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." Now what is the drawing back there meant? Why, a drawing back from the truth, for the apostle says, "We are not of them who draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of the soul." Ah, say some, the child of God backslides sometimes. I know he does, in the sense in which that word is used by men generally; but the biblical sense of the word does not appear to me to be the same as the sense in which men in general use it. But then what are we to understand here? The apostle says, "We are not of them who draw back unto perdition;" which I understand to mean this: The child of God does draw back in many respects. There is a bitter cup for you to drink, you draw back from it; there is an adversity for you to meet, you draw back from it; there is a mighty impediment in your way, who will roll away the stone? You shrink and draw back from these things; none of us like these things; we would rather go some other path, we would rather seek some other road, unless a voice shall say, "This is the way; walk you in it." In this the child of God may draw back. But that is not drawing back unto perdition; to draw back unto perdition is to draw back from God's truth, and if you draw back from God's truth, remember that God has no pleasure. He has no pleasure out of his truth; he has no pleasure in anything hostile to his truth; it must be his truth; there lies his pleasure; and the just shall live by faith, holding fast his truth, and there is the Lord's pleasure. And so, the Lord takes pleasure in his people; "he will beautify the meek with salvation." And he knows whether we take pleasure in his truth or not; he knows whether we really love it or not; he knows whether it is our shield and buckler or not; he knows whether it is our hope or not; he knows whether it is our meat and drink or not; we cannot deceive him, and if we are honest, we shall not desire to deceive ourselves. And thus, then, lies the man that draws back to perdition, that draws back from God's truth; and he that draws back from God's truth draws back from the remedy, and there remains no more, no other sacrifice for sin, but that sacrifice of eternal perfection that is in and by the Lord Jesus Christ.

But I am not come to the point I wish to dwell a little upon, namely, that many of the people of God are tempted to cast their confidence away on the ground that they have no right to have any confidence; that they think they have no right to hope.

"When gloomy doubts prevail.
I fear to call you mine."

Death is a great terror to some of the people of God. It is not every one that can march boldly on, look the monster in the face, and stand prepared that vast abyss to try; it is not every one that can face death with full assurance. And what are we to do with such? We are not to scold them, for they cannot help it; we are to deal very kindly with them. The apostle says, "Comfort the feebleminded." And I will tell you just how these are sometimes in their experience: they are just spiritually as the traveler is sometimes literally in scorching deserts, when there is no water to be obtained. The symptoms that come on when the thirst is excessive, and they begin to fear they shall lose their lives for want of water, then the knees begin to tremble, the hands hang down, and the heart also begins to beat and to palpitate, the eyes become dim, the ears become deaf, cannot hear anything distinctly, and the tongue becomes dry, and they cannot speak, and a lameness overtakes them, and

there they are fixed, move one way or other they cannot. Just so spiritually, the little one spiritually, the little one finds himself in that state, he feels as though he has no hope, he feels as though he can see nothing in his favor, as though he can hear nothing that would do him good, and his heart is too weak to believe that God will have mercy upon him, and he seems so lame he can hardly step over a straw, everything seems to go against him. This is the character that the Lord had in view by Isaiah, when he said, "Strengthen you the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not; behold, your God will come with vengeance," against what would destroy you, "even God with a recompence; he will come," since you confess you cannot save yourselves, you are the very persons that he will save; "he will come and save you;" for "to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit;" cannot save himself; "he will save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened;" then you will see he has led you forth in the right way; "and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped;" then once more the gospel shall be to you a joyful sound. "Then shall the lame man leap as a hart," and so the feeble-minded shall be comforted. Ah, says Satan, I thought I had got that man into such despair that he would not go to the house of God again, that he would not go to the Bible again, that he would never look to God again. But the Lord watches over such, and he stirs up such to say, with Jonah, "I said, I am cast out of your sight, I am cast out of your sight; yet I will look again toward your holy temple;" and Jonah did not look in vain; so true it is that "when the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue fails for thirst, I, the Lord, will hear them; I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys;" satiate the weary soul, and comfort every sorrowful soul; and therefore, "cast not away your confidence," either by disbelieving the truth or despairing of your interest in it.

Now those that are so tried, perhaps it is difficult sometimes for you to ascertain whether you possess a secret that none can possess but he who is born of God, and what is that? Why, the love of the truth. I will just mention three things that make the truth dear to you, even when you cannot call it yours. One is its exact adaptation to your necessities. If you are a poor destitute creature, he hears the prayer of the destitute; if you are tossed about on life's tempestuous main, then he hears the cry of the one that is driven to his wits' end; and if you seem afar off, as it were, farther off from God in your own estimation than any poor creature before ever was, there stands the scripture that "he is the confidence of them that are in the ends of the earth, and of them that are afar off upon the sea." In a word, whatever your guilt, whatever your sin, whatever your bondage, whatever your necessity, there is something in the word of God exactly adapted to you, and you say of these several scriptures suited to you, "Give me that, for there is none like it." Jesus, and Jesus only, knows in perfection how to speak a word in season to him that is weary. Now you must know whether you are that poor, sinful, needy, helpless creature as to appreciate such scriptures as these. That is one thing in a way of encouragement; that is one thing that will let you into the great secret, the love of the truth. The second thing will be, when some word suited to you shall be by the Holy Spirit brought into the mind with power, in spite of yourself, your troubles depart, your bondage departs, your darkness departs, Jesus Christ is precious; is there hope for a wretch like me at last? Shall I, the vilest of them all, stand among your dear children at the last? Shall I be one to adorn that happy, happy land? Is it so, after all? Such incomings of the truth as these will endear the truth; there will be a love to it, and you will say with David, taking the word "law" in that scripture to mean the law of faith, the law of liberty, "Oh, how I love your law!" Its adaptation, then, is one thing; when it comes with power in the way I am now stating, that will endear the truth wonderfully. And the next thing that will endear it will be the order of it, that order of it I have already in a measure noticed this morning, by just reminding you, in my usual feeble way, of the eternity of the priesthood of

Christ, and the immutability of God. Take those three things, the adaptation of the various scriptures to your experience and circumstances; the word brought home with power; and the certainty of God's truth, the order of it being yea and amen. Now if you have this love of the truth, then, however much you are tempted to think you do not belong to the Lord, and I would not for a thousand worlds say one word that should have the least tendency to deceive any man; but I do say this, if you are thus brought into this experience of your need of it, see the suitability of it; and if you have not yet realized the sweetness and the power of it, but that you are longing for it, and that your language is with Samuel, "Speak, Lord, for your servant hears;" Lord, send some seraph with a live coal in his hand from the sacrificial altar, to touch my unclean and guilty lips, and say unto me, as you did to your servant of old, "Your iniquity is taken away, and your sin is purged," then I shall love much, because much is forgiven. If you are a living soul, that is what you will seek for with more or less earnestness. Then, as we have said, there is the order of truth. Now, then, you may be tried, you may have your doubts and your fears, and you will, like those not able to pass over the brook Besor, they tarried by the stuff; and "as his part is that goes down to the battle, so shall his part be that tarries by the stuff; they shall part alike." The Lord encourage you, then, and keep you not only from the disbelief of his truth, but also keep you from despairing, that you may still have just hope enough left to keep your head above water, and wait, for the vision is for an appointed time, and at the end it will speak all that your soul can desire, and when the happy time shall come you will then bless the hand that kept you waiting; none ever thus waited in this spirit and this order of things in vain. "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which has great recompence of reward."

And so, you say, "Well, if I cry and shout, he shuts out my prayer." Well, that is because the appointed time is not yet come. It is Satan at your right hand that makes you say that, and Satan does not care for you, and he will tempt you in this way, until the Lord shall come and say, "The Lord rebuke you, O Satan, even the Lord that has chosen Jerusalem." You shall sometimes hear a good sermon; you will say, "Now that minister has preached like a servant of God; I can see he has preached a good, simple, solid, truthful, practical, real gospel sermon; but I cannot get hold of any of it. Surely, if I were one of the Lord's people, he would speak to me sometimes." This will discourage you, and will tempt you to leave your usual place, perhaps go and hear other ministers, and perhaps you cannot get on there; and so, it is, and we come to the conclusion at last that our times are in the Lord's hands. So, then, let not these things unreasonably discourage you. Bless his dear and precious name! he has said, and with that I close this part, "Him that comes unto me." So then, fall upon your knees before God, and say, Lord, if I have never come before, teach me to come now; if I have never believed before, teach me to believe now; if I have never rested upon you before, teach me to rest upon you now. And you have said, "Him that comes;" there is not a word about the man's character, whether he is good or bad, or old or young, or learned or unlearned, or rich or poor, or loved or hated; "Him that comes unto me let him be what he may. As though the Savior should say, Let him be what he may, I will be more than a match for all his sin and woe, and "will in no way cast him out;" "Cast not away, therefore," seeing there is such a Savior, seeing there is such mercy, seeing there are such scriptures, and seeing there are such prospects, and seeing there are such assurances to the poor and needy; "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which has great recompence of reward."

I notice *the reward*. I had intended to take a fourfold view of the reward; I must therefore merely name the main points of the reward. "Which has great recompence of reward." I could not do better, perhaps, than take the suggestions of the next chapter to set, in conclusion, before you the reward; and it there appears in a fourfold form. The first part of this great reward is in bringing us into

harmony with the Judge of all; that appears to be the first part of the reward. Abel obtained witness that he was righteous. Why, is not that a great thing, to remain waiting and looking to the Lord until he shall bear testimony to your soul that Christ was accepted in your behalf, and that you are justified by his righteousness? Abel obtained witness that he was righteous. How glad I am to come by this sacrifice; how glad I am I had light to see, and that I had faith to believe, and that I had decision to offer this more excellent sacrifice! Now I am righteous before God; I am right with God, right with life, right with death, right with judgment, right with eternity. Oh, happy, happy, happy man! Is not this a great reward? Disbelieve the truth, cast away your confidence, then you cannot stand right with God, for without faith it is impossible to please God. Second, that is in this part, not only making you righteous with God, but gives you the privilege of walking with God, and to know that you are welcome to walk with him. Enoch was not, for God had translated him; but before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God; that is, that he was pleasing to God; and the apostle explains how, namely, approved in Christ, accepted in Christ; and here he walked with God, and here he told God all his cares, and all his necessities, all his sins, and all his troubles; and he walked with him, and God with Enoch, and Enoch with God, until the Lord translated him. Well, say you, but I shall not have that privilege of being translated without seeing death. Well, you will be translated by-and-bye without seeing the second death. Why, the first death won't last long, you know; that is only a shadow, it is only a passing evil, that is all. I think some of you, to whom death is a trouble, if you could feel pretty sure when you come to that hour, which you must, for we all must come to it, if you could feel pretty sure that the second death could not touch you, you would not be so much afraid of the first death. I suspect it is what is behind the first death that alarms you and makes you so unhappy sometimes. I am not going to speak lightly of your doubts and fears upon these matters, for after all I would rather preach to a people that are very jealous about their own souls, than I would to a hardened, careless, unconcerned body of mere professors. I like that people that have in them a godly jealousy, and that examine themselves from time to time, whether they be in the faith, lest they should deceive themselves. It is a part of the great reward, then, thus, to walk with God. And Noah, he became heir of the righteousness which is by faith; so, will you, by this confidence you have in Jesus Christ, why, you thereby prove that you are a child of God, and if a child, then heir, heir of God, and joint heir with Christ. What reward can equal it? Then come to Abraham: and the Lord showed to Abraham a city which has foundations. Abraham, should not you like to be there? I should. See the book of Revelation, how John reads out, or rather how the Lord reveals to him, the glories of that city; that is the city Abraham saw.