

## Chapter One – Sermon 3

### The Confidence and Identity of the Believer

“*Time* magazine recently reported on a math test given to thirteen-year-olds from six countries. The South Koreans received the best scores and the Americans received the worst. Those taking the test were also asked to respond to the statement, I am good at mathematics. Only 23 percent of the Koreans responded affirmatively to that statement—the lowest percentage of yes responses—while the Americans came in number one with the highest number of yes answers. Charles Krauthammer observed, “American students may not know math, but they have evidently absorbed the lessons of the newly fashionable self-esteem curriculum wherein kids are taught to feel good about themselves.” If we define pride as an exaggerated opinion of oneself, **it seems clear that self-esteem has produced pride.**

“A historian is making a study of the diaries of teenage girls from the past 150 years. As she compares the differences between the older diaries and the ones from today, the big difference is that in the past the girls were more likely to put their personal struggles in a spiritual context. They were more likely to call upon God for his help in their character development. But today, she discovered, girls are counting on themselves.

“And Alfred Whitney Griswold, who was president of Yale University, said: “Self-respect cannot be hunted. It cannot be purchased. It is never for sale. It cannot be fabricated out of public relations. It comes to us when we are alone, in quiet moments, in quiet places, when we suddenly realize that, knowing the good, we have done it; knowing the beautiful, we have served it; knowing the truth, we have spoken it.”<sup>1</sup>

How do you feel about yourself? Are you self-conscious because your short, skinny, fat, not very good looking, not very smart, shy, old, or lonely? No problem! Simply invite Jesus into your life as your Lord and Savior, commit to living in accordance with the teaching of the Bible, and just watch as He changes the way you feel about yourself. You may be the shortest, fattest, ugliest, dumbest horse in the stable and you can end up winning the “Triple Crown” if you turn yourself over to the will of God. And do you know what? God may have made you that way so that your

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<sup>1</sup> *6,000 Plus Illustrations for Communicating Biblical Truths*, (Omaha, Nebraska: Christianity Today, 1997), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "Self-Confidence".

success, no matter what the world thinks, would be to His glory, and you will be envied by all the good-looking, athletic, intelligent macho guys or gals who keep trying to be somebody on their own without God, and they will never find the joy and satisfaction God has provided you because of your faithfulness. Now let's see what Paul has to say to Timothy about this matter.

2 Timothy 1:8: (Paul is speaking)

*So do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord or of me, a prisoner for his sake, but by God's power accept your share of **suffering** for the gospel.*

**Be willing to suffer for doing what is right.**

If you tell others about Jesus it is most likely that **you will suffer** rejection, persecution, imprisonment, harassment, and even death for your faithful obedience to Jesus' command to go into the entire world spreading the truth about Christ. However, you will be able to endure because God will provide you whatever power you need to do so.

2 Timothy 1:9:

*He is the one who saved us and called us with a holy calling, **not based on our works** but on his own purpose and grace, granted to us in Christ Jesus before time began.*

God provides all people with the opportunity for salvation, and He does this to accomplish His will and demonstrate His love for each and every person He has ever created. If a person refuses this free love-offering from God and goes to Hell, it is not God who sends them there, but rather it is their own choice that sends them there. **Salvation is by grace alone and is not based on human effort** (Romans 3:28): "For we consider that a person is declared righteous by faith apart from the works of the law"

Jude 1:24-25:

<sup>24</sup> *Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy,*

<sup>25</sup> *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.*

"Glory to Him who is capable of conforming you to the teaching of the truths of the gospel I teach, and not I only, but all to whom has been entrusted '*the preaching of Jesus Christ.*'"<sup>2</sup>

Romans 16:25:

<sup>25</sup> *Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the **mystery** which*

<sup>2</sup> Robert Jamieson, A.R. Fausset, David Brown, *A Commentary: Critical, Experimental, and Practical on the Old and New Testaments*, (Toledo, OH: Jerome B. Names & Co., 1884), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "ROMANS".

*has been kept secret for long ages past.*

“In New Testament usage, **a mystery is** not a puzzle or a secret that leaves a person in ignorance, but **a truth that God reveals to man**. It usually refers to something that man normally would not know, but that God in his grace makes known to him (Eph 3:4-5; Col 1:26; Rev 17:7). **The truths concerning salvation through Jesus Christ are mysteries** in this sense. **Man could not work them out by himself, but God who planned salvation from eternity reveals them to him** (Rom 16:25-26; 1 Tim 3:9,16).<sup>3</sup>

“**Jesus taught his disciples that there was a mystery concerning the kingdom of God** (Matt 13:11). **He revealed that God has already established his kingdom in the world**, even though the world is still under the power of Satan. God does not yet force people to submit to the kingdom's authority. Consequently, those who are not in the kingdom live in the world alongside those who are. The decisive separation will take place on the day of judgment (Matt 13:24-30,36-43).<sup>4</sup>

“Paul's preaching was a revelation of the mystery of the gospel and the mystery of Christ (Eph 6:19; Col 2:2; 4:3). He showed that God's plan of salvation through the gospel was to unite Jewish and Gentile believers in one body through Jesus Christ. All share equally in the full blessings of God, without any distinction on the basis of nationality (Eph 3:3-6; Col 1:26-27; cf. Rom. 3:21-24). This unified body is a picture, a foretaste and a guarantee of the unity that there will be throughout the universe when God, through Christ, finally removes all rebellion and disharmony (Eph 1:9-10; 3:9-10; cf. 1 Cor 15:25; see Gospel).<sup>5</sup>

A further mystery reveals how believers can participate in the blessings of this coming glorious age. God will remove all the effects of sin and death from his people forever through the resurrection of the dead and the transformation of all believers to a new state of existence in spiritual, indestructible bodies (1 Cor 15:51-53).

Romans 16:26:

<sup>3</sup> Don Fleming, “MYSTERY,” in *The AMG Concise Bible Dictionary*, (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 1990), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 304-305.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid,

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

*<sup>26</sup> but now is manifested [made evident]<sup>6</sup>, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, leading to obedience of faith;*

### **God kept His plan of salvation secret from the world until Jesus began His**

**ministry.** It was then He made this incredible gift available to all people everywhere. Stop and think for a moment just what this gift of salvation means. If someone offered you \$100 billion it would allow you to have everything you have ever wanted. You would be able to live a lifestyle of the rich and famous right up until the day you died. Then it will be taken from you.

If you have lived your life the way many rich folks do, ignoring Jesus, you will have willingly exchanged your wealthy lifestyle for an eternity in Hell. However, if at the time you were first offered the gift of wealth, you were also offered the gift of salvation through Christ, and accepted that in place of wealth, you would have to endure some suffering throughout your lifetime, but at the time of your death you would receive riches far beyond what you could ever get even with billions of dollars. These riches would last throughout eternity. So if you were given a choice of these two gifts, which would you choose. You may already have made a decision to choose salvation and eternal life in Heaven, but if you have not, perhaps you would like to make it now.

#### 1 Corinthians 2:6-10:

*Now we do speak wisdom among the mature, but not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are perishing. 2:7 Instead we speak the wisdom of God, hidden in a mystery, that God determined before the ages for our glory. 2:8 None of the rulers of this age understood it. If they had known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. 2:9 But just as it is written, “Things that no eye has seen, or ear heard, or mind imagined, are the things God has prepared for those who love him.”*

“Man has truly extraordinary intellectual powers. He has explored the secrets of the atom and learned much about the marvels and mysteries of space. He has split the atom, explored the genetic structure of living things, and put men on the moon. There seems nothing man cannot do when it comes to science, technology, and engineering. However, God is not to be discovered by gazing into a microscope or a telescope. We can see His fingerprints everywhere in creation, but we can never know Him, His mind, His heart, His will, apart from divine revelation.”<sup>7</sup>

The great truths revealed in the Bible never could have been thought out by the mind of man.

<sup>6</sup> Brackets added.

<sup>7</sup> John Phillips, *The John Phillips Commentary Series – Exploring 1 Corinthians: An Expository Commentary*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2002), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 59-61.

For the things which we know nothing about are the very things God has *"prepared for those that love him."* We cannot even begin to imagine what God has in store for us in eternity. However, most of us are still curious about what we will be doing when we get to Heaven.<sup>8</sup>

For the most part, however, God simply says: *"You'll have to wait and see!"* Even those whose eyes and ears and hearts have been opened to understand spiritual things through their new birth (to be born again),<sup>9</sup> cannot know the wonders of Heaven. We can, however, be sure of one thing. God will never run out of ideas for making Heaven an exciting place to be.<sup>10</sup>

Knowing, however, what curious creatures we are, God has provided us with enough revelation (1 Corinthians 2:10-11) that we know Heaven will provide us with unimaginable joy. Paul emphasizes our spiritual comprehension first (2:10). As to the source of what has been revealed, he tells us that *"God has revealed these to us by the Spirit."* He has revealed to *us* the great truths set before us in the Bible.

“It is in the Bible, and in the Bible alone, that we have any reliable information on what life and death is all about and what lies beyond the grave for saint and sinner alike. The Holy Spirit has told us all that we need to know. He tells us about creation, about the fall of man, about salvation, sanctification, and service, and about the life to come. The philosophies and theories of men about these things amount to so many wild guesses. Many Eastern religions are based on the theory of reincarnation, the notion that we live over and over again, that what we do in this life determines what we will be in our next life, whether we will come back as a conqueror or a cockroach. Atheists, often arguing from the ills and injustices of life, as life is perceived by them, declare that there is no God at all. The old Viking seafarers went roaring into battle, confident that if they died in war they would feast in the halls of Valhalla. Muslims believe much the same, only their heaven is even more sensuous than the Vikings'. The great goal of Buddhism is extinction. The ways and means men have conceived for achieving the unachievable are as many and as varied as the goals themselves—prayers and penances, rules and rituals, feasts and fasts, sufferings and sacrifices, flames and flagellations. The common note in all of them is salvation by works, by human merit, by our own effort.”<sup>11</sup>

Apparently they do not believe what God tells us in Ephesians 2:

Ephesians 2:8-9 (NASB):

<sup>8</sup> *For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God;*

<sup>9</sup> *not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.*

“There are, indeed, unfathomable depths in the Word of God. As David exclaimed in reference to God's omniscience; such knowledge is too wonderful for me (Psalm 139:6). So Paul exclaimed, ‘O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out,’ as he thought of the wonder of God's past, present, and promised dealings with the nation of Israel (Romans 11:33).

<sup>8</sup> Ib  
<sup>9</sup> Pa  
<sup>10</sup> o  
<sup>11</sup> Sc

**It is the Spirit of God who opens to us the deep things of God.** He is the Author of all revealed truth. He provides understanding to those who reverently, patiently, and humbly study their Bibles. They become aware of new understanding, things they never saw before, in passages they have previously read many times. Let us never forget that the author of the Bible is God. He used human beings to write it down, but they were guided by the Holy Spirit to record what he led them to write down.<sup>12</sup>

In 1 Corinthians 2:11, Paul gives us an interesting comparison.

1 Corinthians 2:10-16 (NLT):

<sup>10</sup> *But it was to us that God revealed these things by his Spirit. For his Spirit searches out everything and shows us God's deep secrets.*

<sup>11</sup> *No one can know a person's thoughts except that person's own spirit, and no one can know God's thoughts except God's own Spirit.*

<sup>12</sup> *And we have received God's Spirit (not the world's spirit), so we can know the wonderful things God has freely given us.*

<sup>13</sup> *When we tell you these things, we do not use words that come from human wisdom. Instead, we speak words given to us by the Spirit, using the Spirit's words to explain spiritual truths.*

<sup>14</sup> *But people who aren't spiritual can't receive these truths from God's Spirit. It all sounds foolish to them and they can't understand it, for only those who are spiritual can understand what the Spirit means.*

<sup>15</sup> *Those who are spiritual can evaluate all things, but they themselves cannot be evaluated by others.*

<sup>16</sup> *For, "Who can know the LORD's thoughts? Who knows enough to teach him?" But we understand these things, for we have the mind of Christ.*

Paul compares what the *human spirit* knows with what the *Holy Spirit* knows. A person's innermost thoughts are known only by the spirit of that person. God's innermost thoughts can be known only to God Himself. We reveal our innermost thoughts by expressing them in words. God makes known His thoughts by His Word. "The Spirit of God gives them to

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

us by a process of divine revelation and divine inspiration. The end result of this process is the book we call **the Bible.**"<sup>13</sup>

So then, before God's secrets can be revealed, the inspiration of God is necessary (1 Corinthians 2:9-11).

Matthew 28:19:

***Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.***

Being timid in the ministry often accompanies feelings of shame, and Paul warns against this. This invitation that Paul gives Timothy to join him "*in suffering for the gospel*" is a reminder that Paul was a prisoner when he wrote this letter.

Paul lists some of the essential truths that we must have in our arsenal when we do battle with the enemy: God's power, salvation, holy living, God's purpose and grace.

Paul's declaration that it is "*not because of anything we have done*" emphasizes Paul's awareness that salvation is by **God's grace alone.** Our faith in the work of Jesus makes us fit to receive God's salvation by grace. We must always remember that it is only within the power of God to grant us the gift and it has nothing to do with anything we do. It is also a gift that God will provide whatever strength we need to endure suffering for His glory.

Paul further expands on the topic of grace by revealing that it has been in God's plan since before the earth was even formed, and it was revealed through Jesus Christ during His ministry on earth. It is the same Christ who has destroyed death.

1 Timothy 1:10:

*But now made visible through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus. He <sup>17</sup> has broken the power of death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel!*

2 Timothy 1:11:

*For this gospel **I was appointed** a preacher and apostle and teacher.*

Galatians 1:11:

Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel I preached is not of human origin. <sup>12</sup> For I did not receive it or learn it from any human source; instead

**I received it by a revelation of Jesus Christ.**

2 Timothy 1:12:

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

*Because of this, in fact, I **suffer** as I do. But I am not ashamed, because I know the one in whom my faith is set and I am convinced that he is able to protect what has been entrusted to me until **that day**.*

“*That day*” refers to **Judgment Day**.

We would conclude that Paul’s purpose in telling Timothy these things was **to encourage him**. If Paul is expected to **suffer for the Gospel**, it would certainly follow that Timothy be prepared to do the same thing. If we look back to 2 Timothy 1:8 we see again that Paul is urging Timothy not to be ashamed. In verse 12 above we see Paul saying that he is *not ashamed* of his suffering. Why not? Because he knows that God will protect him because of his total submission to God and Christ. But what has Paul “*entrusted*” to God? Everything, his entire life. That is the kind of faith I long for!

Titus 1:9 (NLT):

*<sup>9</sup> He must have a strong belief in the trustworthy message he was taught; then he will be able to encourage others with wholesome teaching and show those who oppose it where they are wrong.*

**1 Timothy 1:13-14:**

*Hold to the standard of **sound words** that you heard from me and do so with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. 1:14 Protect that good thing [**treasure**]<sup>14</sup> entrusted to you, through the Holy Spirit who lives within us.*

The “ <i>treasure</i> ” is the Gospel.
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<sup>14</sup> Emphasis added.