

Today I want to talk about having confidence in The Lord.

According to “Beyond Blue”ⁱ, 3Million Australians are living with anxiety and/or depression.

This figure has been on the rise, even well before the pandemic (although the pandemic and worries and media hysteria has exacerbated things, somewhat)...

*But over the years, it’s believed that one of the factors in the increase of anxiety, has been social media, where people compare their lifestyle with other people’s life styles, and they feel that they’re not measuring up, and everyone else is so much better than them, **and** the fear-of-missing-out...*

You see the thing is, social media, is largely about ‘self-promotion’ – we have an allusion that we are being given a window into another person’s life, but we only see what they **want** us to see. And even when we **do** get a glimpse of their weaknesses, usually it’s presented as some kind of virtue of “I realised I needed help”.... and even their weakness is presented as a virtue.

And the constant barrage of ‘media’ – Reputable media & made-up news and made-up problems & fear-mongering... And fear-mongering gets shared and re-shared, until worry of the mob, consumes the individual...

Now, the **world** would tell us, that we have the strength in ourselves to overcome our anxieties, we just need to learn how to harness that strength, and develop that strength...

But you know what?

As Christians, we **don't** have self-confidence – In fact, until you rid yourself of **self**-confidence, you cannot become a disciple of Jesus...

We don't have self-confidence, because we have nothing to base **that** sort of confidence on. "Self" is not a source of strength. What gets us through, and **more** than get us through – what:

- **establishes** us; and
- **guards** us; and
- **keeps** us; and
- **directs** us; and
- keeps us **in steadfastness**,

is The Lord.

Our confidence, is not:

- in ourselves;
- in any man or woman;
- in the government of the day; or
- in any kind of 'hoped for hero' to come and save the day
- in wealth;
- insurance;
- investments;
- alliances

Our hope – our confidence, is in The Lord. That's why, when troubles arise, we don't seek our own plans and strategies... We seek The Lord. And ultimately, our confidence in The Lord, is expressed in our prayer-life.

Now, as I studied the reading for today, (but even long before that), I've become increasingly aware that we as a people, and sometimes us as Christians, we get all anxious and worried, about the wrong things.

Some of our listeners, are coming through some devastating floods right now...

And I've been appalled, to see climate-change activists using these dreadful events, to build on the fears of a Godless nation...

It's only the **Godless**, who can believe that man controls the weather. And it's only the **Godless**, who can claim that it's Government policy that's caused these floods... As Christians, we know that **the Lord** is in control of the weather... Surely it is the height of human arrogance to claim that **we** humans control the weather...

Our hope; Our confidence, is in The Lord – not in man; not in ourselves; and not in Government policy...

But what we truly see as important, that's what we pray about... And in this passage, as we dig into it, we realise, what really is important. – Things of eternal significance, and key to this, is the Gospel:

- how it's preached;
- how it's received; and
- how it's lived.

Now earlier on, Paul lets the church of the Thessalonians know that he's been praying for them, and **now**, he asks **them** to pray for him. Only, he's not wanting prayer for his own well-being – his call, essentially, is for them to pray for the advance of the Gospel.

Finally, brothers ... Paul's a typical preacher – he says “finally”, and then he keeps talking for ages...

Finally, brothers, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may speed ahead and be honoured, as happened among you, ² and that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men. For not all have faith.

When Paul took the Gospel to Thessalonica, the Gospel was well received, and because of that, they had a spot close to his heart. And Paul is wanting them to pray, that the word of the Lord, would **speed ahead and be honoured**, just like what happened in Thessalonica.

Now, our call (not just me, but you as well), is to share the word of The Lord. But **whether** the Word takes root or not, that's the work of the Spirit.

You see, not everywhere was as receptive of the Gospel as was Thessalonica. In some places, hearts were hard, and hardly anyone responded, but worse than this, were the times when the Gospel of Jesus Christ, was violently opposed.

And we see this very thing, in our own culture today? We preach the gospel, and:

- some will receive the Gospel with great joy, and believe in our Saviour;
- Then there's others who aren't excited about it, but they're happy to 'live-and-let-live' (You can believe what you want to believe, and that's OK);
- but then there's others, who are passionately (and at times) violently opposed to the Gospel...

Some people make it their life's ambition, to stifle any work of the church. These are the sorts of people who want to undermine Christian schools and church ministries of all sorts...

I find it strange that some people who don't believe there even is a God – how they can hate, what they don't believe exists, as much as they do... Do you get that? If they don't believe that God exists, in their mind, they hate ... “nothing” ... And they hate it passionately.

This is what Paul refers to as **wicked and evil men**, and women BTW – people who oppose Christ and His word.

And Paul uses a bit of a play on words here: The **wicked and evil** ones, who oppose the Gospel, he says “**not all have faith**”, so the ones who oppose the Gospel, are the faithless,
³ But the Lord is faithful.

And when the word of God is preached

- sometimes there will be opposition. But we can take heart, because The Lord is faithful;
- sometimes we might be left feeling, “I did a terrible job of that”, but hearts are touched by the Lord. Why? Because the Lord is faithful.

There’s been times when I’ve preached the word, and I’ve actually felt embarrassed, feeling “I don’t think I did that very well”, and I feel I’ve let The Lord down... but later on, I found out that the **Lord** had done **His** work, and hearts had been touched and changed by His Word; Why? Because of the great hope we find in the word “But”. Things seem really bad: ³ **But** the Lord is faithful. Our confidence is in The Lord.

V³ But the Lord is faithful. He will establish you and guard you against the evil one.

What does it mean, for The Lord to guard us against the Evil one? Remember, Jesus taught us to pray, “Deliver us from evil”...

For the Lord to guard us, he’s not talking about physical well-being – he’s talking about faith. The Lord establishes us:

- into faith;
- into His kingdom;
- into His ministry;
- into His Life/death/resurrection;

- into obedient service of our Lord; and
- into steadfastness in Christ...

And what He **establishes** us into, He also **guards** us from falling away from (by the temptations of the Evil One)...

He's not saying that we're guarded against:

- sickness;
- opposition;
- troubles;
- poverty;
- persecutions & suffering...

In chapter 1, Paul's already told us that we're privileged to suffer for Jesus. In Christ, we become **worthy** to suffer for Him...

But our confidence, is in The Lord. He will not only establish us in the faith, but our faith will endure.

In the first letter that Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, his concern was that, because of their afflictions, that the Thessalonians might lose faith, and stop following Jesus. **1 Thessalonians 3:(ESV) ⁵** For this reason, when I could bear it no longer, I sent to learn about your faith, for fear that somehow the tempter had tempted you and our labour would be in vain.

What was his concern? For their faith.

But he's not concerned for them any more – he's now confident – not in them, but in The Lord. The Evil One,

throws all sorts of suffering at those who believe. His purpose – to tempt us that, “It’s just not worth it”... But our confidence is in The Lord. And no matter what suffering comes our way, it don’t matter, because our confidence is in The Lord – He’s got this.

And Paul’s confidence in The Lord, is that we won’t just believe, but that we will live out **what** we believe – that we would keep the commandments... We don’t hide our Christianity/the Gospel. We believe it; we preach it; we live it...

And all of what Paul has just said, is summed up in one sentence V5.

⁵ May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ.

What a beautiful prayer.

In times of suffering/anxiety/the unknown, it’s tempting to lose perspective... When things get tough, the temptation is to feel “God doesn’t love me”, and “He’s let me down”... But the truth of the matter, is the exact opposite, which is why Paul prays: **May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God...**

If the Lord loves us so much that He sent His own Son to die for us, he’s not going to desert us. The Lord loves you. May the Lord remind us of this, over and over again...

And may the Lord direct our hearts **to the steadfastness of Christ.**

In His suffering, Christ was steadfast in His mission to save the world... And He remains steadfast. We can trust Him. He is steadfast; He is faithful,,,,,,,,, which is why we endure, because our confidence is in Him, and He is in us.

How is that truth going to play out in your life?

What outer opposition? What inner battle/questioning, are you grappling with, that you have a need for the Lord to direct your heart to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ?

What anxieties are looming before you, that needs a renewed confidence in The Lord???

Let's pray:

Heavenly Father,
We thank You for Your Love,
and for the steadfastness of Christ.

We thank You, that the Gospel has sped ahead,
That we heard Your word, and we believed.

We thank You,
that the faith you have established us in,

You also guard us in.

Lord, when the Evil One attacks,
keep us strong in the faith.
That when circumstances overwhelm,
that we would be reminded of Your love;
and that we would stand fast,
to the steadfastness of Christ...

You love us;
Christ is with us.
We know this.

And Lord, we pray,
that the Word of the Lord,
would speed ahead.
That the Gospel would be heard and honoured.
We pray for all preachers of the Word,
that You would restrain wicked and evil men –
That You would hold back all who oppose Your Word,,,
so that the Word would be Heard; believed; and lived.

Lord, our prayer is that this church,
would be a body of people,
through whom the Word would be carried.

Keep us Lord,
In Your Love;

and in the steadfastness of Christ.

Our confidence is in The Lord,
Amen.

ⁱ <https://www.beyondblue.org.au/> 2022-03-10