

Confidence for the Battle

Jeremiah 15:15-21

Introduction

We are in a spiritual battle today and we need confidence for that battle. As I was preparing this sermon, I did a quick Internet search to see what confidence is all about. What does the word mean? What does the world say about confidence? The free on-line encyclopedia **Wikipedia** had this definition: *Confidence is the state of being clear-headed: either that a hypothesis or prediction is correct, or that a chosen course of action is the best or most effective.* **Psychology Today** said this: *Confidence is a belief in oneself, the conviction that one has the ability to meet life's challenges and to succeed—and the willingness to act accordingly. Being confident requires a realistic sense of one's capabilities and feeling secure in that knowledge.* Here's a sampling of 101 quotes from Reader's Digest about confidence (read quotes). All of them treated confidence as if it were only concerned with oneself. While self-confidence might get you far in sports or business, it won't get you anywhere in the spiritual battle we are talking about today.

Our Object of Confidence

We know we can't have confidence in ourselves because we are weak, fallen human beings. So, where do we place our confidence? God is speaking in the key verse for our lesson today: *"I will deliver you out of the hand of the wicked, and redeem you from the grasp of the ruthless" (Jeremiah 15:21).* The Psalmist says: *I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come? My help comes from the Lord who made heaven and earth (Psalm 121:1—2).* We put our confidence in God by putting our faith in Jesus.

The War Against Evil

The battle we are in isn't against other people, or philosophies, or ideologies. Paul says: (read **Ephesians 6:12**). But where do we find these spiritual forces of evil? WW II was one war, but it was fought in two theaters: the Pacific Theater, where the Allies fought against Japan, and the European Theater, where the Allied forces fought against the German Nazis and the Italian Fascists. There are two *theaters of operation* for us as well: inner and outward.

The Inner Battle

The first place we see these forces at work is inside our own lives. Each one of us are born enemies of God. We are born with the fallen sin nature we inherited from our first parents. So, originally, the battle is against God. but when the Holy Spirit works faith in us through the Word, we are no longer enemies with God. However, even in our regenerated state, we still have that sin nature. Now, the battle is with that. But when we sin, all we have to do is repent and God restores us. As God said in **Jeremiah 15:19**, *"If you return, I will restore you."*

The Outward Battle

Then, we fight an outward battle on two fronts—this fallen world and the devil. It's tough, having temptations come at us from three sides. How can we hope to succeed?

An Offensive Battle

But this isn't just a defensive battle we're in. We aren't just fighting temptation to sin. In our Gospel lesson last week, Jesus told Peter that He would build His church on Peter's confession of faith, that *Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God* (**Matthew 16:16**). He went on to say that *the gates of hell shall not prevail against it* (**Matthew 16:18**). The gates of hell not prevailing against the church indicates that it's the church that's on the offensive. How do we do that? Johannes Bugenhagen, Lutheran reformer, said: *Pure doctrine must be taught and opponents must be reproved. We must separate the precious from the worthless* (**Commentary on Jeremiah 15:19**). We go on the offensive when we stand on the Word of God and teach the truth found within it.

Clinging to God

Where do we get the power to do that? We must cling to God. Or, as Bugenhagen went on to say: *We cling to God when we hold to faith in His Word*. As Jesus says in **John 15**, *"If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you"* (**John 15:7**). We abide in Jesus and He in us when we spend time in the Word or hear the Word. This abiding also takes place at the Lord's Table, when we eat His body and drink His blood. Come to the table, receive His body and blood, and receive the **CONFIDENCE FOR THE BATTLE** you need.

*And the peace of God,
Which surpasses all understanding,
Will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*
