

No Confidence in the Flesh



by Jason Peebles

When you study the life of the Apostle Paul you begin to realize that he had come to the point where his chief desire was to trust in Christ alone instead of his own abilities. We can see this throughout his writings. For example, in 2 Corinthians 1:9 he wrote, *“We had the sentence of death in ourselves that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead.”* In Philippians 3:3 he said, *“We rejoice in Christ Jesus and have NO CONFIDENCE IN THE FLESH.”*

Levels of Trust

If you could draw a graph to illustrate the entire spectrum of “TRUSTING CHRIST” it might appear as a linear graph. On one end you could write the phrase *“Those who call upon the name of the Lord.”* That would be the most basic form of trusting God – simply calling out to Him. Thank God He accepts those who have little, if any, knowledge of spiritual matters save to *“call upon the name of the Lord (Rom 10:13).”* On the other end of the graph, indicating spiritual maturity, you could write the phrase *“the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.”* We know that this is God’s desire for all believers because Paul wrote in Ephesians 3:19 – *“And to know the love of Christ, that you might be filled with the fullness of God.”* Later in Ephesians 4:13 Paul refers to it as *“the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.”*

Thus, as believers in Christ, we are all somewhere on this spiritual graph. God will always start helping you right where you are -- mistakes, sins, messes, and all -- if you will simply turn to Him. **Yet, God does not want you to remain ignorant of the wonderful life that is available when you learn to trust Him more and more. He wants you to grow in your level of TRUST and dependency.** Learning to trust your Lord and Savior is the pathway to spiritual maturity. Spiritual maturity is not about accumulating Bible facts in your mind or church attendance. **Authentic spiritual maturity is about “knowing Him” which only comes through trusting Him as you face the challenges of life.**

Sufficiency in Christ

For the sake of this Study Guide, let's make a quick “jump” on our graph and examine the ultimate desire that God envisions for your life. **The Father's desire is that you would become so fully yielded to “Christ in you” that Jesus Christ is actually living His life through you.** In Galatians 4:19 Paul refers to it as “*Christ formed in you.*” In Galatians 2:20 he says, “*I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.*” What in the world is Paul talking about? Perhaps this paraphrase may help. **Paul was saying, “My old life of trusting in myself is dead, and my new purpose in life is to fully trust Christ each day.”** Of course, we cannot entirely realize this until we receive our resurrected bodies. All of us make mistakes, get frustrated, and fall short. Even Paul lost his temper, made confusing choices at times, and missed the mark of perfection. Yet, Paul said, “*I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as be mature, be thus minded (Phil 3:10-15).*” We should likewise have the same mature attitude and be moving (growing) towards the fullness of Christ being realized in our lives. We do this by TRUSTING Him each day in the situations that confront us.

Now it is at this critical point that you must give some focused thought to what takes place when you move towards this goal of the “fullness of

Christ.” This process will take you along a path whereby there will be less and less of “you” (and your own self-sufficiency) and more and more of Him and His abilities. I use to think that God's greatest desire was to use “my” gifts, “my” talents, and “my” plans. In other words, I had a mental image of me entering God's throne room and bringing “*my stuff*” before the Lord and asking Him to bless it. I now realize that that is a distorted picture of God's true desire. God's desire is that we come into His presence to see what HE WANTS. Maybe He wants to bless “my stuff” but maybe not! Certainly he will accept whatever we yield to Him, whether it is our time, talents, or monies. **Yet, His greatest desire is that we would actually come to the point where we allow Him to manifest His plans, His abilities, and His actions through us.**

At first, you may think that this type of analysis is somewhat like “splitting hairs” -- but in truth, it is an important key for you to move into a deeper walk with Christ. **Jesus said in John 5:19, “The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he sees the Father do; for whatever he does, these also does the Son likewise.”** You must come to the point that you realize that, even on your best day, your efforts, your talents, and your plans will fall woefully short of what God could do if you would but entirely trust Him. **Yes, he will work through your abilities, but He wants more, much more. He wants to express HIS abilities, HIS plans, and HIS life through you.** It's the difference between being the co-pilot and the pilot. I once saw a bumper sticker that said, “*God is my co-pilot.*” That may sound nice, but as a pilot myself, my first thought was, “*What is Jesus doing in the co-pilot seat! Move over and let HIM fly the plane!*”



Turbocharged for Christ

As you grow in your level of trust in Christ, you will begin to understand the difference between “your” abilities and “His” abilities. **Another way of stating this is to say that you will become increasingly sensitive to His influence empowering your life.** Let me give you an airplane illustration. As a pilot, I’ve flown a lot of different type airplanes. When it comes to piston engine airplanes, there are what are called “normally” charged engines and “turbo” charged engines. A turbo-unit is a mechanical device that actually forces compressed air into a normal engine and creates more horsepower. Thus, when you install a turbocharger, it empowers a normal engine to perform much greater. *The engine becomes turbocharged.* The airplane can fly higher and faster. As a Christian, you need to let Jesus Christ TURBO-CHARGE your life! All illustrations have their limitations, and this one is no different. The truth is that in time, God not only wants to “turbocharge” your life – but he actually wants to perform an entire ENGINE EXCHANGE! **In time, it will not only be Christ empowering you but Christ living His life through you.**

Paul had grown to the point that he put NO confidence in his flesh. The term “flesh” not only refers to the physical body, but to all natural abilities apart from God. In Paul’s case, he had some very positive assets to “offer” the Lord. In Philippians 3:3-15, Paul said that he was a Hebrew of Hebrews, well educated, an accomplished Pharisee, and a good communicator. He had earned the respect of his kinsmen prior to knowing Christ. **Yet, Paul had grown to the point that he did not trust in his abilities. In fact, he said that He had “lost them” in order to gain more of Christ.** Certainly God used all those assets in Paul’s life, but the point that he was making is that he did not put his trust or confidence in them.

Like Paul, our initial tendency is to think that God could use us in some mighty way if we only had something “great” to offer Him. If only you were a famous sports star, actor, popular musician, or a wealthy person – “then” God could really use you! But the truth is that nothing you can offer the Lord makes you any more qualified to walk with Him or serve Him than a person who seems to have nothing to offer. **In fact, the things that you think**

are “strengths” can actually hinder your progress in Christ if you put your trust in them. Why? Because, as stated earlier, God’s intended purpose is for you to grow into the “*fullness of Christ*” – not the “*fullness of self!*” In God’s kingdom, strengths can actually be weaknesses when you put your trust in them. But, on the other hand, weaknesses can become strengths when you commit them over to Christ (2 Cor 12:9,10). You must come to the point that, like Paul, you put NO confidence in your flesh (“self” and self-abilities). **Rather, your goal should be to YIELD all that you are over to Christ and let Him empower you and direct you.**

Keys for Greater Trust

Proverbs 3:5,6 is a wonderful passage about TRUSTING the Lord. It says, “*Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not to your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct your paths.*” Here are several practical keys that will help this process:

KEY #1 – REALIZE THAT CHRIST TRULY LIVES IN YOU!

The first key is to recognize that your Lord and Savior actually lives **IN** you by the Holy Spirit. Colossians 1:27 says, “*Christ IN you, the hope of glory.*” Jesus Christ is not relegated to some far off part of heaven. No, He lives IN you as a believer! **All HIS talents – all HIS abilities – and all HIS potential resides in you by the Holy Spirit.** Your past life does not have to limit you. Nor should you allow your level of success to limit you either. None of that matters. Jesus Christ can do so much more than you can do if you will simply TRUST Him. Ephesians 3:20 tells us that there ARE NO LIMITS in God: “*Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works IN US.*” 1 John 4:4 says, “*Greater is he that is IN you than he that is in the world.*” Adopt a mindset that the Greater One lives IN YOU!

KEY #2 – DETERMINE TO PUT NO CONFIDENCE IN THE FLESH.

Proverbs 3:5,6 says, “*Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not to your own*

understanding.” **The pathway of spiritual maturity is not about leaning on what “you” can do – but about who He is and what He can do.** Paul said, *“We rejoice in Christ Jesus and have NO confidence in the flesh” (Phil 3:3).* Admittedly, this area can be a bit tricky, especially if you have talents and strengths. In my own life, I learned early on that I was a fairly good communicator. Even before I knew Christ, other people would often make comments along these lines whenever I gave a report or a speech. I don’t know if I was born with it or acquired it -- and it really doesn’t matter. What does matter is that I tended to “lean” on that ability in the beginning of my ministry instead of leaning on Him. Like Paul, I had to grow to the point that I finally realized that any gift, any talent, any asset can actually become dangerous apart from Christ. **Thus, if you are blessed with any talent – music, singing, dancing, athletics, wealth building, and on and on – you must come to the point that you realize that those gifts can actually destroy you unless you submit them to Christ.** How many music stars, preachers, and millionaires have self-destructed? If you want to grow in your level of trust and faith, then you must commit all that you are and all that you have over to Christ. Additionally, if you feel that you have nothing to offer the Lord, then take heart! You too must shift your focus – from what you consider your weakness to His potential and His ability. **Thus, whether you consider yourself talented or not, rich or poor, you must place your trust in Christ.**

KEY #3 – LEARN THE SECRET OF YIELDING VS. STRIVING.

When you walk in the Spirit, you will find yourself being led into a life of YIELDING. Instead of trying to do the work, you will discover the joy of resting and allowing Him to do the work. Young Christians strive hard at being spiritual. They “try hard” to walk in love, they “try hard” to be patient, and they “try hard” to be disciples. **But a mature Christian is someone who finally grew tired of trying so hard and discovered the joy of resting and yielding!** The truth is, our only “work” should be YIELDING. Hebrews 4:9.10 says, *“There remains therefore a rest unto the people of God. For he that is entered into His rest, he also has ceased from his own works as God did from*

His. Let us labor therefore, to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.”

KEY #4 – DEVELOP A SPIRIT OF FAITH IN YOUR LIFE.

If you want to grow in your trust in the Lord, then you absolutely must start speaking faith. Proverbs 3:5,6 says *“in all thy ways acknowledge Him.”* I want you to look at how the apostle Paul responded to shipwrecks, beatings, stonings, and all sorts of unimaginable challenges. **He said in 2 Corinthians 4:13-18 – “But we have the same SPIRIT OF FAITH according as it is written, ‘I believed therefore have I spoken.’ We also believe and therefore speak.”** And what did Paul speak when faced with those challenges? It goes on to say (paraphrasing): *“We know that the same God who raised Jesus from the dead will deliver us too! Our inward man is being renewed each day with His power. We are focused on our eternal mission and not on these temporary setbacks.”* WOW! What faith Paul had! He had developed the habit of praising, prophesying, and seeking God (Acts 13:1-3); singing when imprisoned (Acts 16:25); and trusting in GOD’S ABILITY. In your life, you too must start speaking faith in the face of adversities and challenges. Like Paul, develop a SPIRIT OF FAITH that trusts God no matter what comes your way.

Dear friend, I pray that you will grow in your level of trusting Christ. Yield to His ability and His power. ■ -- *Jason Peebles*



Key Memory Verse:

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not to your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct your paths.”

Proverbs 3:5,6

Prayer for Greater Dependency

“Father, thank you for sending your Son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross for my sins. I accept His sacrifice and commit my life to Him. Teach me to TRUST you more and more. I give you all the challenges that I am facing and I expect miracle breakthroughs. Thank you for your great love. In Jesus Name – Amen.”

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