

Jesus: Our Confidence

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 06 March 2016

Preacher: Graeme Shanks

[0 : 0 0] Please do have a seat. And it's wonderful to be here this morning. I hope you feel joyful as you come to church this morning. It's going to be critical that we have our Bibles open in front of us this morning.

There's some of the pews around about you, so can I encourage you to make every effort to get the Scriptures open in front of us. There's also a sermon outline this morning that you may have received on your way, and if you didn't get one of those, and if you put up your hand, then I've allocated two glamorous assistants to help me out with spreading them.

So just get your hand in the air, like you just don't care, and those guys will get one too. But as we come to God's Word this morning, let's pause just for a moment of prayer, and let's just ask that God would help us this morning as we come to this passage.

So let's pray. Our gracious Father, we come before you this morning with the firm conviction that when your Word is opened, that your voice is heard.

So we're on our knees this morning, Father, desperate that you would speak to us. Lord, we need your words, for only your words have eternal life.

[1 : 0 9] And so, Father, we ask that you would come and challenge us and encourage us. Would you rebuke us and inspire us? Would you break us and would you mould us?

All for the glory of your Son, Jesus Christ, and for our goods and the upbuilding of your church in this place and in this city. In Jesus' name we ask. Amen.

So before we, Alex and I, before we came to Brunsfield, we spent a little bit of time in Malawi. And at the end of our time in Malawi, we crossed the border to Zambia and we went on a week's safari.

And while we were on safari, I had one of the most awesome experiences that I've ever had. Now here's what I mean by that word, awesome. We went on a night safari drive.

And at the front of our small jeep was our safari guide who had this massive torch. And pitch black, he's shining his torch looking for wildlife. And for an hour, we saw absolutely nothing.

[2 : 1 3] All of a sudden, out of nowhere, we spot another safari jeep, way in the distance, fixed on something. Now that's a good sign. That means he's found something. So over we went to check it out, with our tour guide still doing this with his lights.

And all of a sudden, out of nowhere, a leopard. A real wildlife leopard. We're not looking at a Puzz 3D book anymore. We're looking at a live leopard.

Awesome. Absolutely awesome. You look at this awesome creature. It's smooth skin. Its muscles are rippling as it's walking.

Its eyes, jet blue, staring at you. Awesome. Mixed in with that sense of wonder. It's that sense of fear. Because underneath those eyes, you see the teeth.

And at the end of the skin, you see the claws. And it suddenly dawns on you that if you so much had stepped out of this jeep, this thing would rip you in pieces.

[3 : 13] It was an awesome creature. Awesome. And I think as we approach this portion of Hebrews 10 this morning, we should feel something of the sense of awe.

Not because we're thinking about a creature, but because we are thinking about the God of the cosmos, the awesome creator God. Can I ask you straight from the off this morning?

Do you fear God? Do you fear him? Do you have that sense of reverent fear as you come before him? Do you come before him recognizing his majesty, that yes, in Christ gloriously, we can call him father, but all the while acknowledging that we are the creature and he is the almighty creator, that he is eternal and we are temporary, that he is big and that we are small, that he is holy and we are not, that he is the awesome God.

You know, I think I know in my life it's so easy to lose sight of that. Sometimes I think we're so akin to thinking of God more as our mate than as our master. Do you not think that's true?

We come before the awesome God. These Christians that Mr. Hebrews is writing to here, you don't need to convince them about the holiness of God.

[4 : 36] You don't need to teach them that they should come reverently before God because they know that all too well. They've grown up in this religious system that's taught them to fear God.

The temple, they know that there's a massive curtain that separates God from them, that they dare not enter God's presence because it's not safe for them as unholy people to come into the presence of a holy God.

So how should they come before God, Mr. Hebrews? How should they come before God? What does he say? Confidently. Confidently. Are you sure?

Confidently, this holy God? Why confidently? Well, summarizing everything that he's just unpacked in the last five or so chapters, this rich, deep theology, look what he writes at verses 19 to 21.

Look with me. What does he write? Why can they come into the presence of this holy and awesome God? Verse 19. Because they have access.

[5 : 39] Because of the blood of Jesus. That Jesus, as he dies on the cross, what do the gospels tell us? That the temple curtain ripped in two from top to bottom, declaring to the watching world that Jesus has opened up something that was formerly closed.

You have access to this awesome God through Jesus Christ. You have access, and you've got an advocate before God. Verse 21.

Jesus is the great high priest. And what is he doing? He's ministering for you, for us, for his people, at God's right hand, in God's very presence.

Why can you come confidently before this awesome God? Well, because of Jesus Christ. And that's our big theme this morning. If you just remember one thing, I hope you take away a few things, but if you can remember one thing, is that this passage tells us that confident Christians cling to Christ.

Okay? I've made that lot of C's there. Okay? It was my word of the week, my letter of the week. C. Confident Christians cling to Christ. That we come before this awesome, holy God, not casually on our own, not presumptuously, but confidently, because we are in Jesus Christ.

[6 : 56] That's our confidence. He is our confidence. And so you can understand verse 35. Mr. Hebrews, his big plea, his big plea, is please, whatever you do, let me beg you, do not throw away that confidence.

Do not throw away Christ. And remember what we said right at the start, he's writing to this group of Christians. And they're tempted to turn back. They're tempted to move on from Christ.

They're tempted to bin him and go back to their former way of Jewish life. That's the decision that's in their minds. Do we go on with Christ? Or do we go back to our former Jewish ways?

That's the decision. And so anticipating that decision in the mind of his readers, you'll see it verse 39. You'll see it verse 39.

He's got two groups of people in his mind. He's got the shrinkers and he's got the endurers. Those people who will shrink back, who will turn away from Christ and who will be destroyed.

[8 : 03] That's what it says. And those people who will have faith and will persevere, who will endure and will be saved. If you go, this is what he's saying. If you go this way, if you keep claiming to Christ is your confidence, then here's what that's going to mean for you.

And if you go that way, if you throw him aside and turn back, well, here's what that's going to mean for you as well. And we're just going to look at these two groups of people. I think the flow of the text here, Mr. Hebrews, he ends on a positive note.

And so I think our time this morning, short as it may well be, we'll try and end on that positive note of encouragement as well. So let's firstly turn to the shrinkers that he's got in his mind.

What is going to happen to them if they throw away Christ, if they turn back? Well, let me take you back to my, the Jeep. We're on safari. Our tour guide, the first thing he said to us before we set off, he said, I'm not going to, I was going to try and do an accent there, but I'm not.

He said, whatever you do, hands and feet very much inside this vehicle. Under no circumstances, unless I say, are you ever to step outside this vehicle? And why?

[9 : 11] Well, I guess you could look at it two ways, couldn't you? I guess one, this is kind of what I looked at it, first of all. I thought, who is he? I've flown halfway across this world for the safari. This is a once that, I'm never coming back to Zambia, I don't think.

Who is he? Why is he killing my joy? Why can't I go out? Why can't I take some photos? Why can't I stroll around? Or, he's done this business for 20 years.

I've done it for 20 seconds. I think he knows a thing or two more about safaris than I do, so I think I can probably trust his words. And I think that's what we do as we come to these verses.

In Hebrews this morning, tough as they are, 26 to 31. Now, we have to see that he says this warning in the context of the fact that he desperately loves these Christians.

He loves them. And because he loves them and cares for them, he wants them to know the consequences of what they're about to do as they reject Christ. Now, we know that to be true in our own lives, don't we?

[10 : 11] The friends, the closest friends that we have in our lives are people who will tell us the truth. They won't sugarcoat it. They won't dilute it. They will tell us the truth. And why will they tell us the truth? Because they love us.

And we'll listen to them. And that is the context of these verses here. Mr. Hebrews loves these Christians. And to my mind, he makes the strongest of the warnings here that he's made in this letter.

If you remember, we've seen two warnings so far in this letter. We've seen one at chapter 2 and we've seen one at chapter 6. It actually occurred to me in preparation for this that I spoke on chapter 6, the warning here, so you must think I'm kind of judgment shanks.

I don't know. But this is the third of these warnings that he's making here because he wants to ultimately save their lives. What will throwing away Christ mean? Well, see verse 27.

It will mean a fearful expectation of judgment. And judged on what? Well, what did you do with Jesus? What did you do with him?

[11 : 17] And as you scan your eyes over that text, let me just draw your attention to two words. Firstly, verse 26, notice the word knowledge. So what did you, this is what he's saying to them, what did you do with the gospel message that you received?

What did you do with the Son of God? Verse 26, did you receive the message and deliberately reject him? Did you say a resounding no to him as Lord of your life and go your own way?

Well, if you did that, see what he says at the end of verse 26. to be out with Christ, to reject him, then no sacrifice for sin is left.

That you will one day stand before God, this awesome God, not on the basis of Christ's righteousness, his perfect life, but on the basis of your own righteousness.

And let me tell you, you will not win. And to help them picture what they are doing as they reject him, secondly, notice the word trampled at verse 29.

[12 : 19] To reject Jesus is akin to trampling over him. Now, if you think about it, I don't know if you've been here during August when the festival's on, but you go up into the Royal Mile and people are flying you all over the place, aren't they?

Hitting you with flyers everywhere, everywhere. And what do people do if there's not a bin around? Well, they get the flyer and they throw it on the floor. What happens? People just trample over it. They don't care about it. They just trample over it.

Now, Jesus uses that word trample in Matthew 5 in the Sermon of the Mount as he talks about salt being saltless and therefore worthless, good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled under men's feet.

And so what will that judgment lead to? Well, see verse 31, and this is a really intense statement he makes here.

It will lead to the dread of falling into the hands of the living awesome God. Notice the force of the word choice there. This isn't a light thing.

[13 : 21] This isn't an unpleasant thing nor an uncomfortable thing. Judgment without Christ said lovingly will be a dreadful thing.

It will be a dreadful thing. And look at some of the words and images that he uses there throughout as if to make his point. Look at, scan your eyes over it. A raging fire. Consuming.

Punished. Avenge. Repay. It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living awesome God. To throw away Christ, to forfeit your confidence in him is akin to stepping out of the jeep and facing this leopard on your own.

And so, so, so much worse. Now let me ask you this morning, are you prepared to face the confident consequences of rejecting Christ?

Are you here this morning and if truth be told, you quite fancy your chances before the creator of the universe? Maybe some of you saw it. I don't know, a recent interview with Stephen Fry.

[14 : 28] He was asked recently what he would say if he ever came face to face with God and he said this. I would say to him, how dare you create a world in which there is such misery that is not our fault?

It's not right. It's utterly, utterly evil. Why should I respect a capricious, mean-minded, stupid God who creates a world in which there is so much injustice and pain?

It's not our fault. That was the phrase that he used that caught me. It's not our fault. I don't know this guy. Occasionally I've laughed at something he said in Q1. But that strikes me as such arrogance that you, Stephen Fry, you would come before the God of the cosmos and expect him to answer to you?

Really? Really? Friends, see that this passage tells us that it is very much the other way around. That one day, gloriously, God will come to put all wrongs to right.

It's a glorious truth. But the sober truth is that outwith Christ we are very much one of those wrongs. But the incredible thing about the gospel is that the gospel tells us that we can face judgment confidently.

[15 : 43] And why? Because the gospel is true. It's true. It's true. Because Jesus took this judgment for me. Jesus was the one as we were singing who was trampled underfoot.

Jesus was the one who was mocked and insulted. Jesus was the one who was punished in my place. He was the one who bore the wrath of God that I deserve to take.

He took it on himself so that I do not have to bear it. And the gospel is glorious because it tells me now that I can come before God confidently that I will be met not with wrathful hands but that I have been met with outstretched hands of grace by a prodigal God who calls me a prodigal wanderer back to him.

Welcomed home. That Jesus took this so I do not have to take it. Isn't that not glorious truth that we are reconciled with God our Father because of Christ? glorious truth and so understandably Mr. Hebrews says please, please, please do not throw away that confidence.

Do not throw away that confidence. Do not throw away Christ. Do not throw away the one who makes you right with the living and awesome God because confident Christians they cling to Christ.

[17 : 03] And what will that clinging look like? Well it will look like persevering and it will look like enduring. See what he says here keep going with Christ that confidence you have keep going with Christ.

Now you'll notice three let us statements at verses 22 to 25 look at it there three times he uses this phrase let us and you'll notice that he's shifted from talking about you and I to talking about us and that tells us two things firstly it tells us that clinging to Christ is a team pursuit.

We're all in this together as a community as Christ's people and second thing that it tells us is that clinging to Christ is not a passive thing.

Clinging to Christ is very much an active thing. And so after warning the shrinker do you see how he wonderfully encourages the endurer?

Look what he says firstly at verse 22 he wants them to draw draw near to God by faith. Draw near. So he wants them to understand more deeply and more fully the enormity of what Jesus Christ has done for them.

[18 : 15] He wants them to keep pursuing Christ to keep growing in their faith that they understand daily more and more of the gospel. Now I was trying to understand it in my head this week.

What does he want them to say? Well I think he wants them to say in their minds and in their hearts because of Christ I am God's. I am God's.

That when I fall that when I stumble that they would confidently say as John Newton famously said that I am a great sinner but Christ is a great saviour.

That I am his and he is mine. That I am God's. Why am I God's? Well I am God's because of what Jesus Christ has done for me. That in Christ I am a new creation.

The old man he is gone. The new man he has come. I am God's. I have an advocate. I have access before the Father and so I can confidently come to him and pray to him as God's.

[19 : 19] He calls me to draw near to him in Christ and I'm going to claim that. Fully assured that I come before him because I am God's. God's. Do you see what he's saying here?

Draw near. That is the call that God makes to us in Christ. Now I wonder here do some of us need to grasp that this morning? Have we lost sight of that?

That in Christ we are God's. We are his people. And how are we reminded of that you might ask? Well we're reminded of it as we come daily to God's words.

That God's word is the place that he tells us these glorious truths about ourselves and about himself. Draw near to God. Draw near to God.

Secondly, verse 23, clinging to Christ it means holding fast to hope. So what does he want them to do? He wants them to stand on what God has said. Stand on the promises of God.

[20 : 16] We love that hymn don't we? Standing, standing, standing, standing, standing on the promises of God. Fasten yourselves to everything that comes from God's word. Lean the whole weight of your life on what God has said.

On the hope that he has promised and set before you. That's what it looks like to hope. To lean the whole weight of your life on what God has said. What he tells us about us and what he tells us about him.

And why can we have such hope? Notice that word that he uses there. Why can we trust God? Because he is faithful. He is faithful.

And we can trust him. Now it's interesting, we live in a culture that has massive trust issues. Massive trust issues. You look at all the stuff that's going on in our world at the minute with politics.

What are people saying? Can't trust him. You can't trust what he says. You can't trust what she says. You know, Alex and I, we bought a new car recently. We traded in our old one, got a price for it.

[21 : 18] You know the first thing my dad said? Make sure you're not getting ripped off. Make sure you're not getting ripped off. We have massive trust issues in our society. But the thing I want you to understand this morning is that you might not be able to trust a car salesman.

You might not be able to trust a mechanic or a politician, but we can trust 100% what God says in his word. We can fix our eyes on what he has said. We can lean our whole confidence on what God has said.

Every moment of every day we can trust what God has said. And thirdly, confidence in Christ will mean considering how to love and encourage one another. So clearly some of them had decided that meeting together like this in community wasn't so much of a big deal.

We can kind of go out on our own and that's what they'd thought and he's warning them here that that is a dangerous game to play. Why do we need each other? Why do we need to be in community together? Well see, he tells them two things at verses 24 and 25.

Firstly, so that we can spur one another on towards love and good works and secondly, for mutual encouragement. I find this one of the greatest joys of being part of this church family here.

[22 : 34] I think about some of the interviews that we've seen up here with people recently and I'm massively encouraged. As we had Kate and Bruce and their family up here a few weeks ago and Johnny asked Kate, what is the one thing that we could be praying for you?

She could have said a hundred things really but what does she say? I want you to pray for me that I would live and love Jesus Christ. You know, we had the pleasure of having Caitlin to our home group on Wednesday night and we asked her what could we pray for her?

How could we be supporting her? And she said, I'm starting a new job on Wednesday. Can you pray that I would be a good witness in that new job? For both of those prayers, I thought, yes, that's what I want in my life as well.

I want to be standing out and speaking up for Jesus. I was massively encouraged. You know, and as I listen even this morning, listening to how some of you are serving one another, it massively encourages me.

As I see how some of you are serving us, it massively encourages me. As I hear how you are praying for me and for my family and for other people, it massively encourages me. As I see some of you taking bold steps, speaking of Jesus Christ to your neighbors and your friends, when it's hard, that massively encourages me as well.

[23 : 49] Do you see how this works? That as community, together as God's people, we should be encouraging one another on. It's glorious. Now let me just say in just one little challenge I've been trying to do the last month or so, and I encourage you guys to do it as well.

Before you go this morning, how about you try and ask at least one person how you can be praying for them this week? At least one person. How can you be praying for them and supporting them this week and actually do it?

It would be great if we're all involved in each other's lives, encouraging and spurring one another on. Let us draw near. Let us hold fast.

Let us consider how. And drawing those three statements together, do you notice the lovely little triad there? Faith, hope, and love. What are these Christians going to be marked by?

Faith, hope, and love. Let me ask you this morning, do you see these virtues in your life? Do you see the Lord growing these attributes in your life?

[24 : 55] If somebody from the outside was to look into your life and give a commentary on your life, would they say these things? Would they say of me as my friends looking into my life that, yeah, Graham's marked by love?

Faith, yeah, Graham's got faith. And hope, yeah, he's hoping for something beyond this life. Would people involved in our lives, would they say this about us? What a great prayer to be praying for each other and for ourselves this week.

Because confident Christians, they cling to Christ. Now I wonder if there were some of these readers reading this letter and thinking to themselves as they read these words, we could never be that community.

We can never be that community. we'd rather keep sitting and hiding than we would get clinging if we're honest. We'll see it verses 32 to 39 as we draw our time almost to a close.

What does Mr. Hebrews do? He reminds them of their past. Do you see that? He reminds them of their past as if they say, you can do it. You can do it. And how do I know you can do it? Because you've done it before.

[26 : 03] And presumably he's looking back on a time in these guys' lives, maybe 10 or 15 years ago when it was really tough. And he's looking back on that time and he says, do you remember when you did those things? Firstly, verse 32, do you remember when you stood together?

Now if you notice at verse 32, he uses the word contest there. I really loved it this week. The Greek word there is *aphlazon*. Now why is that significant?

Why is he telling us that? Well it's obviously where we get our word athletics from. So what is he saying? Do you remember the time when you really went for it with Jesus? Do you remember the time when you toiled for Jesus?

Do you remember the time where you sweated it out for him? Do you remember the time when you endured so much conflict that you pushed the pain barriers? That together you stood for Jesus in a hostile world?

Do you remember those days? Yeah, I do remember those days. We'll get back to those days. Secondly, verse 34, do you remember when you spoke up? Do you remember when you spoke up?

[27 : 02] Do you remember when you identified yourselves with the Christians who were getting a hard time, who were getting put in prison for their faith? Do you remember that? Do you remember you spoke up for them? Do you remember you went and visited them, that you identified yourselves with them, that you prayed for them, that you loved them, that you went to visit them, that you didn't care who saw you go to visit them?

Do you remember those days? Yeah, I do remember those days. That's what we used to do. Get back to those days. And thirdly, do you remember when you prioritized rightly? Verse 34.

You accepted wrongdoing and you did it joyfully. Do you notice that word in that passage there, joyfully? And why did you do it joyfully? Well, because in the light of eternity, it didn't matter. You feared God more than you feared man.

You bowed and were obedient to God more than you bowed to man. You were concerned about what he had done in your lives rather than what was going on in the world. You knew that in Jesus Christ, God had given you a far better possession.

The new life that he had given you through him, far greater than any of the temporary possessions on earth. Do you remember those days? Do you remember those days when you prioritized rightly? Yeah, yeah.

[28 : 14] I do remember those days. Get back to those days. Guys, you can do this because you've done it before. You've done it before. Do it again. I wonder if some of us this morning, do we need to remember those days?

Do we need to remember those days? I'm struggling with evangelism, Graham. Do you remember the time when you first became a Christian, you were fearless? You were telling everyone about Christ?

Yeah, I can't remember those days. Come on, guys. We can get back to those days. Pray and seek the community encouragement to get back to those days. Do you remember the days when you used to visit and care for people that used to drive from places?

Oh, yeah. I remember those days. Come on, guys. Let's get back to those days. Let's be encouraging one another. Do you remember the days when you used to go to church and you were the last to leave on a Sunday morning because you were so caught up in speaking to people?

You loved it. Yeah, I do remember those days. Now we're the kind of first to leave. Come on, guys. Let's get back to those days. Do you see what he's saying here? You've done it before. You can do it again. Let's get going as this community.

[29 : 15] And why do we need to get going? Why do we need to maintain and get back to that zeal? Well, look what he says at verse 35. Why do we need to do this?

Why do we need to keep encouraging one another and spurring one another on? Because the reward is so glorious. When Jesus Christ comes himself to bring us home, that eternal home that we have worshipping with him in God's presence, it will be glorious.

Your faith, your endurance will be richly rewarded. keep going. Keep going in your faith. Keep going with this awesome God who's beckoned you in to know him.

Be those people who do not shrink back, but be those people who live by faith and by faith in the Son of God who gave himself for you. Confident Christians, they cling to Christ.

Now as we close, let me just tell you this story that I read in this book this week. It's been a freebie at the front for months. I don't know if anybody's read it, but it's a great one. It's stories of student ministry that goes on around the world.

[30 : 23] This organization called IFES, so International Fellowship of Evangelical Students. I read this story, the testimony of a woman called Ruth. Her husband, Neil, he worked for IFES and he took the whole family to Ecuador for his job.

One night as the family are walking home, Neil is attacked and Neil is shot, held at gun point. Thieves enter, take his car and he's left to bleed to death with his son in his arms sitting by the roadside.

And he bled to death. And two years after the event, Ruth gives her testimony at what is the IFES World Conference. They asked her, what's going on in your life since that traumatic experience, Ruth?

And she said this. She said, today I stand here alone. When Neil was shot almost two years ago, all of our family dreams and ministry dreams were suddenly cut short.

But I am here today to testify to three things. Firstly, concerning the IFES family. Your love, prayers and support meant that myself and my family, we couldn't crash even though everything inside it was wanted to.

[31 : 39] Secondly, to testify to the great God that I serve. He not only accompanies me in my suffering, but he suffered on my behalf. And thirdly, to testify and tell you that brokenness is not the end of the story.

Our pain is deep, but it is not all-encompassing. Our loss is enormous, but it is not eternal. Death is our enemy, but it does not have the final word.

And this is the great part. For the wounded lamb is also the lion of Judah. And one day he will reign in his perfect rule of love, peace and justice.

This is the hope of the gospel. Confident Christians cling to Christ. What an awesome God that we serve. Let's pray. Our Father, we would thank you for Jesus.

Thank you that we can come confidently before you, the awesome God, because of him. Oh Lord, would you help us this week to fear you more than we fear man?

[32 : 51] Would you help us to love and be obedient to what you have said, regardless of the consequences? Father, would you help us to trust fully in what you have told us in your words?

And that you would make our priority in life, loving you and striving after you with all our strength, and make that the number one priority in our lives this week.

Oh Lord, help us love Jesus Christ more, we ask. In his name we ask. Amen.