

MAINTAIN YOUR CONFIDENCE FIRM TO THE END

Note to the speaker:

This information is based on Hebrews chapters 3 and 4. Help audience to see how this can help a person discern if in any way he has allowed his confidence in Jehovah's word to waver

IN THIS WORLD IT IS HARD TO MAINTAIN CONFIDENCE (5 min.)

Pressure, opposition, apathy, and discouragement affect all of us

Like apostle John, Christians say: "Amen! Come, Lord Jesus" (Re 22:20)

Would like to see God's will done on earth as in heaven

Must hold firm to the end either of this system or of our own lives (Mt 24:13)

Are we holding on to that confidence?

Strong counsel to help us hold on given in Bible book of Hebrews (*w83* 2/15 17-18; *w73* 213-16; *it-1* 1077-80)

Written to Jewish Christians, who were having hard time, many pressures

Some of the Christians were apathetic, some spiritually weak or immature, some overconfident

We do well to listen to that counsel (1Co 10:12)

PAUL'S COUNSEL TO HEBREW CHRISTIANS (30 min.)

(Invite audience to follow in Hebrews chapter 3 for verse-by-verse discussion. Read verse[s], then comment)

Verse 1:

Our strength to maintain confidence comes through Christ

"Consider." Meditate on the love he showed on earth, his sacrifice, his resurrection, and his dignity as apostle (or, "sent one") of God, as great heavenly High Priest, and as Head of congregation (Heb 2:14, 15; *w83* 2/15 19-20)

Consider how your life measures up, contemplating some of Jesus' trials that could have caused him discouragement (Mt 20:20, 21; Mr 3:5; 9:19; Lu 9:46-48; 22:24)

Verses 2-4:

Christ was far superior to Moses, even though Moses did many miraculous things for Israel

At God's direction Christ builds all things, including Christian congregation, which was constructed by him as God's Master Worker (Pr 8:30, 31; *w84* 9/15 31; *w81* 10/1 20)

Glory goes to Jehovah God as Architect and Creator

Verses 5, 6:

Moses, great as he was, was only a servant in household, but Christ is *Son* of Owner of house, set over household by God (*w84* 9/15 31)

Do we want to support this great household, the congregation of spiritual Israelites?

Must not give out but hold fast freeness of speech and maintain joy, or "boasting"

Verse 7:

Holy spirit (in Psalm 95:7-11) said: "Today"; now is acceptable time

We do not know what tomorrow will bring

Peter urged: 'Keep close in mind the presence of the day of Jehovah' (2Pe 3:12)

Means that we should be fulfilling our Christian obligations *every day*

"The day of Jehovah" comes like a thief; our own life might end tomorrow

Verses 8-11:

Israel did things to test God as to whether he would carry out his word (*it-2* 350-1)

By complaining, being unhappy with his provisions, they tested God with regard to how much he would bear, how long his patience would last (Ex 32:1-4; *w86* 4/1 23-4)

Verse 12:

Must examine selves as to what our hearts are, not lose faith, realize God's promises will come true

Bad heart does not appear instantaneously but develops gradually (*w80* 12/1 22-3; *w89* 7/15 22)

Verse 13:

Now is the time for *each* of us to be close to brothers, not complaining or showing weakness, but being *strong* to exhort one another (*w86* 4/1 24-6)

Perhaps you feel weak, but by encouraging another, you get encouragement from God

Sin is very deceptive

Attacks weak points, slips up on us if we get discouraged, apathetic, or negligent or if we become over-righteous, criticize others, and become unsympathetic toward problems of our brothers

Verse 14:

How were you at "beginning," when you started to serve Jehovah God?

Enthusiastic, bold, joyful, confident? Are you still that way? (*w80* 8/1 16-17)

Now, with greater knowledge, have you grown to maturity? If not, why not? Have problems arisen?

Your knowledge today is greater than when you began, so you are equipped to face greater problems

If you lack confidence, ask God for help

Verse 15:

It is being said by God *today*, as it was then

We do not hear his voice or that of an angel audibly, but we do have His spirit-inspired Word

God is not far off from us (Ac 17:27)

Also have brothers all over the earth maintaining confidence as an example to us; they are being blessed

Verses 16-19:

Most who saw miraculous works of God, who had confidence when crossing Red Sea, lost out on Promised Land

Though they still could have regained confidence, they kept complaining; because of their lack of faith God decreed they should die in the wilderness

Only Joshua, Caleb, and the Levites survived to enter God's Promised Land (*it-2* 1016)

The Levites were the only tribe that did not send a man to spy out the land, therefore they were exempt from condemnation upon unfaithful spies and their supporters

Considering what happened to the Israelites does not mean we should be worried or *afraid*

Should be concerned and *watchful*; *only those actually disobedient will fall*, just as they did then

Chapter 4:1, 2:

As individuals, we cannot rightly complain against God

Do we not all enjoy the same spiritual food?

We have same good news, the promise of rest in God's new system of things

All, elders and others, must watch; if some seem to be falling short, encourage them

It may only *appear* these are losing faith, so our approach should be with brotherliness, considering others superior to ourselves, and with awareness that we might also be tempted (Ga 6:1; Php 2:3)

More than hearing the promise is necessary; real faith from the heart needed

Do we think and act with that faith in God's promise as a reality, along with those having faith?

WE CAN HAVE CONFIDENCE IN GOD'S WORD (10 min.)

Verse 11:

It takes more than the usual attention now as times become more tense (*w83* 2/15 26)

We have warning example in Israel's lack of faith, loss of confidence

Verse 12:

God's word of promise is sure (*w76* 439)

He has not dropped or neglected it so that it has become dead issue

Jehovah is active, bringing his promise progressively and surely to fulfillment

What is our attitude toward God's word of promise?

God knows our hearts; we are answerable to him

We must not let our confidence weaken, as did Israel

Our action toward God's promise will reveal what we really are (*gm* 175-83; *w88* 5/1 7; *w86* 4/1 6-7)

All of us need to give careful attention to God's promise and all things Bible says in connection with it

More meditation on it will give us *power*; it will make our spirit strong, confident

Verse 13:

Since all things are naked before God, essential to rely on him, becoming his intimate friends

Our accounting is to him alone (*w80* 4/1 27)

Verses 14-16:

Take courage; regain any lost joy; strengthen confidence

Continue publicly confessing our High Priest and King

Approach Jehovah through Jesus for help in our weaknesses

Do so without fear and with full confidence, not relying on our own strength

If we do so, we can be sure we will face the end with strong faith and joy, with full confidence in God's love and the reward he gives (*w89* 2/15 13)

(Adhere closely to the outlined material, and observe the indicated timing of each section. Not all cited texts need be read. Source material in parentheses need not be mentioned)