

In Whom Do You Place Your Confidence?

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There is so much conflicting information coming out about the Coronavirus that the whole world has become confused about what is true and what is false, about what is real and what is fake news. Is it very contagious? Is it deadly?

Coronavirus is not a new disease. We purchased a can of Lysol about three or four years ago, and on the can's label it says Coronavirus, so it will kill Coronavirus. So how bad can Coronavirus be? Then I found out we have two cans of it, actually. So we are in good shape for whatever is coming here. Now they call it Covid-19.

Are you worried about the Coronavirus? Are you worried about the panic that may result?

What are we to believe, in what or whom are we confident? Since confidence is a matter of faith in what or whom we place our faith, it seems like where we place our confidence would certainly be an important subject, falling under faith. Are you confident that the Center for Disease Control (the CDC) will cure the disease? Are you confident that President Trump will get it under control and stop the spread? Are you confident that the vaccine that will be developed will prevent the disease without serious side effects?

One thing we can be sure of about this Coronavirus is that there is nothing but confusion surrounding it. Confusion causes anxiety and fear, and fear of the unknown and our sense of security becomes undone if we allow it to grab hold of us.

When the Israelites left Egypt, their adrenaline was surging, and they boldly left with confidence. But as the going seemed in their minds to get dangerous, their confidence in what God had promised began to wane. They

were no longer certain as to what God their Savior was going to do to save them, if anything. Because they could not see what God was going to do next they had no vision. And because they had not developed true faith in God's dependability, they had a great deal of fear and anxiety. The worrying Israelites became frightened every time they felt threatened, and when God seemed to slow to intervene, they panicked.

Notice a principle Moses learned about confidence while leading the children of Israel. Moses, in one scriptural account, responds to Israel's provocation with steadfast leadership, while elsewhere in the Bible He responds to similar provocation by the Israelites with exasperation, hopelessness, and even despair.

In Exodus 16:2-3 the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron, who had just helped God liberate them from hundreds of years of horrific slavery. The Israelites pretend, ridiculously, to recall desirable circumstances in Egypt, where they claim to have lacked nothing. Frustratingly, they express regret at having been taken from the comfort of Egypt. In verse 12, Moses, without hesitation, sternly chastises the Israelites for grumbling against God and assures them that they will soon have meat and bread. Through the remainder of chapter 16 Moses leads calmly and confidently, and the people follow him confidently, for a while.

Turn with me, if you will, please, to Numbers 11. Numbers 11 tells us that a year later, the Israelites again demanded meat. Hearing them griping, Moses became deeply distressed. Instead of admonishing them as he did in Exodus, he cries out to God.

Numbers 11:11 So Moses said to the Lord, "Why have You afflicted Your servant [speaking of himself]? And why have I not found favor in Your sight, that You have laid the burden of these people on me?"

Moses renounces responsibility for the people and in hopeless anguish contemplates the impossibility of finding meat for the people. He was looking at it from a human standpoint.

Numbers 11:12-13 "Did I conceive all these people? Did I beget them, that You should say to me, 'Carry them in your bosom, as a guardian carries a nursing child,' to the land which You swore to their fathers? Where am I to get meat to give to all these people? For they weep all over me, saying, 'Give us meat, that we may eat.'"

Sliding swiftly into utter despair, he confesses himself incapable of carrying the people any further and begs God to end his life.

Numbers 11:14-15 "I am not able to bear all these people alone, because the burden is too heavy for me. If You treat me like this, please kill me here and now—if I have found favor in Your sight—and do not let me see my wretchedness!"

Moses seems so utterly demoralized that even when God promises to bring meat for the people, he reacts disbelievingly, asking God if enough animals even existed for them. As if God, after all those miracles, could not bring, create more animals for them to eat.

One clear distinction between the two instances is that in Exodus the Israelites had just left Egypt., While certainly an oppressive regime, at least Egypt was a known evil to them. They knew what to expect back in Egypt. Their future in the wilderness, however, was terrifyingly unknown, and Moses went easy on them because he considered that their fear partially excused their disrespect.

The story in the 11th chapter of Numbers is quite different. A year has lapsed, during which God has unfailingly provided for their every need, and Israel's ingratitude is incomprehensible to Moses. Instead of confronting them as a steadfast leader, he avoids them and complains about his circumstances to God, and the goal of a strong, faithful nation that would trust in God was obscured by distractions and fear, and despair defeats Moses temporarily.

So God's solution was for Moses to select 70 elders to stand with him. Their united stand with him assured the people that their leadership was confident

in God for their protection and their provisions. Their firm vision and complete confidence were contagious. Moses caught some of that confidence and defeated his despair by associating with those who recognize that God's plan is good.

We also come to see that our despair is born of our mistaken assumption that there is no goal, that God has no goal. And with the help of wise family and friends, we realize that the goal is still there, even if hidden and hindered by distraction and trial—or a virus.

Confidence involves a high degree of certainty and faith. It requires that we act in accordance with our expectations or hopes that we trust in something or someone. Although we may have confidence in others to trust them with the intimate details of our lives, we should have an even greater confidence in God, and are standing with Him as His people.

Just as the ancient Israelites look back to Egypt, Christian sometimes look back to the world and its people for physical solutions to spiritual problems. Scripture condemns those who place their confidence in themselves or in unrighteous people. Jesus spoke harshly against such arrogance and tells the Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector to warn against confidence in ourselves.

Luke 18:9 Also He [Jesus] spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised others [at the same time].

Now, please turn with me to Micah. 7, verse 5. Total confidence in another person may supersede God and eventually result in misery if God is excluded.

Micah 7:5-7 Do not trust in a friend; do not put your confidence in a companion; guard the doors of your mouth from her who lies in your bosom. For son dishonors father, daughter rises up against her mother, daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; a man's enemies are the men of his own household. Therefore I will look to the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me.

It is not saying that we cannot trust anybody for anything. But it is saying that in serious matters especially, we must trust in God. Verse 7 again, "Therefore I look to the Lord [which we should do, of course]; I will wait for the God of my salvation [which indicates that He does not always answer immediately]; my God will hear me." God hears the words of His people, He hears the prayers of His people.

Confidence in oneself or another not only takes the place of God, but it also results in disappointment and ruin in the long run. Finite beings cannot bring the fulfillment that God does. Only God has control over life circumstances. There are more biblical warnings about whom we place in our confidence. Many people betray a confidence, as we just saw warned in Micah 7. Proverbs 20:19 says, "He who goes about as a talebearer reveals secrets; therefore do not associate with one who flatters with his lips." We are all familiar with how Samson's confidence in Delilah led to his eventual capture by the Philistines into his humiliation and death.

Psalms 118:8-9 It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man. It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes.

So we obviously should not put any confidence at all in the news media, the leaders of this nation, the leaders of the world, and those who are telling us all these distracting and conflicting information about the virus, whether the Corona or SARS or whatever it may be, every one of them does not make sense. It does not matter who the originator is. Everyone that has an opportunity will take advantage of it. Psalm 65:5 says, "O God of our salvation, You that are the confidence of all the ends of the earth."

The main Hebrew word translated confidence, *batach*, means to be open. And this is interesting because this shows the biblical origin of the idea of confidence. Because where there is nothing hidden, a person felt safe, and this Hebrew word is very frequently rendered "trust." You have heard of the saying, "fear of the unknown." Well, that is mainly where fear comes from, not knowing what is going to happen. But with our confidence being in God, we do not have to worry about what is going to happen, because only good will come of whatever God decides, whatever His will is.

Please turn with me to Proverbs 3. If we trust us, follow sound judgment in living God's way of life, we will have mental stability, discernment, and wisdom in normal life and in the disastrous times. In other words, our lives will be enriched, safe and secure, and without fear. Trust that places its confidence in God will never disappoint.

Proverbs 3:25-26 Do not be afraid of sudden terror, nor of trouble from the wicked when it comes; for the Lord will be your confidence [that is a guarantee to God's people], and will keep your foot from being taken.

Confidence here comes from the Hebrew word *kecel*, meaning firmness, stoutness. So with God as our confidence, no one will be able to knock us down by sweeping a leg out from under us, by deceit, or by lies, or by confusion, because God is our confidence. Those who trust in God will not be disappointed. But those whose confidence lies elsewhere will be brought down.

So our spiritual roots must be well established in the written Word of God. We must know what promises God gives us there, and He gives us many, many, many promises of confidence, trust, faith. A person without deeply-rooted faith in God's truth is like a ship without a rudder and he is swayed by every wind of doctrine, or lies of any type, whether they be secular or spiritual.

The faith of the faithful remains firm among the agitations and distractions of the world because it does not govern itself according to the instability of the affairs of this world, but according to the promises of God, which are for all eternity.

Please turn over to I John 3. Confidence of where we stand with God enables us to understand that God's goodness is all around us. We can approach God with confidence, knowing that we will not be destroyed by His wrath because of our sin, but rather will be loved and heard because of our redemption. Notice where our heart must be.

I John 3:21-23 Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God. And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight. And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment.

So the wise discern whom they may trust and are careful to be worthy of the confidence of God.

Now, if you will turn with me to another scripture, Ephesians 3, verse 11. The Bible teaches the value of confidence, but neither in gold nor man, however great, nor in self, but in God as revealed in Christ.

Ephesians 3:11-12 According to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith in Him.

So we have a goal. We have to have a goal if we are of Christ, because the eternal purpose *is* our goal that Christ teaches us through His Word. We have the eternal purpose in Jesus Christ. So faith in Him gives us access to Him.

Ephesians 3:17-19 That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height—to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you might be filled with all the fullness of God.

That eternal purpose guarantees us everything—everything we would ever want.

We may now come confidently and boldly to the throne of grace for mercy in the name of Jesus Christ. And boldness is not rashness and faith is not presumption. But we may come without hesitation and with an assurance that our prayers will be heard. And we should pray about such things as the

viruses that hit this world, the pandemics, and ask God for protection. But He has promised us if we do these things that He has told us to do, that we do not have any worry at all about what may come in this world. But only good will come to us, either short term or long term, because that is the will of God. And whatever He does and decides is good.

My question is, in whom do you place your trust and confidence?

Jeremiah 17:7 "Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, and whose hope is in the Lord."

So do not worry about these crises and disasters and tribulations that come because God is our confidence and He is always there, and He never, ever leaves us.