



Links Players

RESCUED FROM DEATH 7: OUR CONFIDENCE

Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort? (Galatians 3:3, NIV)

IF YOU HAVE PLAYED GOLF LONG ENOUGH, somewhere along the way you've been forced into a layoff. Business or family obligations can keep you from the game; extended illness or injury do the same.

When I was a young man playing every day, I remember being told that one of the best players at our club had not played for two years but was now back to his competitive excellence. I couldn't fathom how this was possible. Working hard at the game every day, I was improving like we all do: a little at a time. Taking two years off was antithetical to everything I thought I knew.

Years later, it was my turn. My wife and I moved with our sons to a foreign country where golf was nearly unheard of. I touched a club just once in 22 months. My only guess for why someone even had a club where we lived was to ward off snakes. No sooner had we returned, but my dad signed us up for a three-day tournament. It turns out my body remembered what to do. But my mind wasn't so sure. And by the third day, my hands were raw meat.

You need confidence to play well day in and day out. Such assurance comes from a good hold on the fundamentals and a commitment to practice. In the 20 years since that first big layoff, I've had other sabbaticals, and the truth is always the same: My trust in me slips away quickly.

Gladly, I don't need to trust in me when it comes to the life I live in Christ. Indeed, because it is *in him*, that is where my confidence rests. This is perhaps the most important thing the apostle Paul learned when he understood the fullness of God's plan in Jesus. And it's something he passed on to us.

As we learned last week, sin will still follow us around, even as we walk with Jesus. It will reach out with its long toes and try to trip us up every chance it gets. But this is why we must recognize where our confidence comes from. We do not so much walk *next to* Christ. Rather, as we have said, we live and walk *in him*. And our exalted Savior cannot be tripped up. He has overcome sin. Greater than this, his righteousness is what God recognizes when he sees us. Through all this, we do not have to wonder whether we are, in our human effort, good enough for God. Instead, Christ is the good we possess, and in him we walk in ever-renewing confidence.

Written by Jeff Hopper ©2019 Links Players International. An introductory video for this study is available at https://youtu.be/0lmKiySf_D4.

Opening questions What part of your game are you most confident with? What's the longest layoff you've had from the game? What did you find hardest about coming back?

READING Hebrews 4:14; Ephesians 2:4-9; Galatians 3:1-9

The level of your confidence (Hebrews 4)
What increases or cuts into our confidence in Christ? Would you say your confidence in him was greater in the beginning or greater now? Why?

Christ and grace (Ephesians 2)
What words here give you great assurance that what you need has been done by Christ? Do you recognize boasting that you need to set aside?

Christ and grace (Galatians 3)
What did Paul call it when the Galatians trusted in their own efforts? How can we fall into this trap today? What is it that brings us true blessing in Christ?
