



Links Players

ALL WE HAVE GAINED 4: CONFIDENCE

Such confidence we have through Christ before God. (2 Corinthians 3:4, ESV)

WE HAVE ALL MET PEOPLE WHO HAVE EVERY ABILITY to succeed. They understand what it takes to shine, put in the time and effort to reach each next level, and gain from those who've gone before them. But they never quite get there. The missing ingredient? Confidence.

Often in sports, you'll hear commentators speak of the x-factor an athlete possesses. It's the "unseen something" that separates the sheep, as it were, from the GOATS (those who are among the Greatest of All Time). They might be thinking of the brave tone of a quarterback's voice in the huddle or a point guard's ability to make the perfect pass in the time-expiring moment. In our own preferred game, they may be referring to the way a golfer stares down a flag and fires right at it—despite the water's edge so close, despite the looming consequence of loss or another costly missed cut, despite the eyes of 10,000 spectators in the stands and a family at home. And yet behind any and all of these, there it is again: confidence.

Where such confidence comes from in sports is the work of those who mine the mind. Or, perhaps, the heart. But there's better news when it comes to our walk and work in the kingdom of God. Here, confidence comes from the Lord himself.

When Paul wrote his second letter to the Corinthians, he used a beautiful picture to explain the way he saw the men and women there. He called them a letter written on the hearts of Paul and his fellow ministers. These ministers needed no other commendation—no letter from a trusted professor or endorsement from a corporate executive. They could just point to those who had received their ministrations and say, "Let them tell you."

But even this was not the source of Paul's confidence. For if anyone had truly written life on the hearts of these people, it was not this apostle, no matter how much we may venerate him and his cohorts (you know how we call them saints!). No, only Christ can write on a person's heart; only Christ can etch eternity there.

This is significant news for us. We may consider our role in God's kingdom to be that of a lowly pilgrim—nothing much to see in this one. But if we are loving others as Christ loved us, he will write life on their hearts and add confidence to the letter he is writing on ours. He will tell you deep inside that you are doing well in this work, keep going.

Written by Jeff Hopper ©2021 Links Players International. A video introduction for this study may be found here: <https://youtu.be/3Ucc179Eb9g>.

Opening questions Would you say you are a confident golfer? What has an effect on your confidence from round to round? • Where else in life would you call yourself confident?

READING Luke 18:9-14; 2 Cor. 3:1-6; Ephesians 3:12; Hebrews 4:16

Two kinds of confidence (Luke 18)

What contrast do you see between the two men in this parable? How was the Pharisee's confidence misplaced? Where are some places we might wrongly look for confidence?

Two traits of capable ministry (2 Corinthians 3)

What are the two traits of capable ministry revealed in this passage? When you think of yourself as one who might minister to others, how are you doing in terms of these traits? How can you be further strengthened?

Approaching God (Ephesians 3, Hebrews 4)

What does Christ enable us to do (Eph. 3:12)? What difference does confidence make in the way we approach God? What is to be gained by coming to God in this way (Heb. 4:16)?
