



Links Players

LOSSES AND GAINS 4: CONFIDENCE

So they shook the dust off their feet as a warning to them and went to Iconium. And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit. (Acts 13:51-52, NIV)

ON A DAY WHEN A GREAT PUTTER “SEES THE LINE,” you can count on watching that player make a bunch of putts. Confidence takes over and even the longest putts look like they’re going in every time.

I have always been a good putter, but not like that. My confidence peters out. If I make a string of putts early in the round, I start talking to myself about the law of averages. Can I just say that data never wins over confidence? When you start telling yourself that you probably won’t make many more putts today, you won’t make many more putts today.

Confidence is one of golf’s great mysteries. Like momentum in most every sport, you just hope to ride it as long as you can. This is why in recent years, as sport psychology has become more broadly prevalent, the hunt for confidence has been replaced with a commitment to process. Because confidence will always wane sooner or later, it’s good to be able to trust in a routine that can’t be so easily disrupted.

Confidence can again become a casualty when trouble comes in life. Here’s an example: If you were heavily invested heading into the 2008 recession, it is probable that you left that downward season a bit gun shy. You may have moved to much more secure (though less promising) positions for a time. Closer to the heart, you may have been spurned in a marriage proposal or lost a child in pregnancy. These are gut-wrenching experiences, so it’s no wonder you’d be more tentative the next time out.

In the accounts of Acts, we read of many times when the apostles and their companions could have fallen into a hole of lost confidence. Their ministry was rejected and even outlawed. Their detractors came at them with riots and rocks. It would have been easy to step into the shadows and turn to “resource ministry,” mailing out a monthly newsletter from a place of safety. But their confidence was held fast by something far greater than their own courage: the Holy Spirit.

Confidence to do what you know is right and good, especially when trials and tragedy would rob you of your usual assurances, comes from a source simultaneously beyond you and within you if you are one who believes in Jesus.

Opening questions How many missed putts or bad shots does it take before you start slipping in your confidence during a round? Do you have a way to keep your confidence up when this happens?

READING Acts 13:42-52; Nehemiah 6:1-15, 16

Enemies of your confidence (Acts 13)

Do you have (or have you had) those in your life who have tried to strip you of your confidence? Did they succeed? What difference does it make to know that you can remain confident—even joyfully so—in Christ?

Nehemiah’s resolve (Nehemiah 6:1-15)

What routine did Nehemiah adhere to in this passage? How did this routine, which was based on the job given to him by God, help him to stand up to fierce opposition? What spiritual routines can you establish and maintain to counter discouragement in your life?

God’s ultimate authority (Nehemiah 6:16)

When God is working in your life, how might this put them “on notice” about you? Do you see how God can glorify himself through you? What does it do for your confidence when you know your strength and success come from the Lord?
