

Title: SHAKEN CONFIDENCE, 1 JOHN 3:16-24
(Chatham, NJ; 04/26/15, AM) [Pc & Pt – Topical]

Theme: John's first letter informs his church that they can have confidence before God, and there are several ways that a Christian's confidence can be shaken.

Purpose: To build up our confidence.

Introduction:

1. A lot of things can destroy a person's confidence.
2. Bullying can be one of them if we don't know how to stand up to them.
3. Criticism can be another; Mark Twain said he could go two weeks on a good compliment.
4. John's first letter brings with confidence, 2:28; 4:17; 5:14, and here in 3:21.
5. It seems that John's church was reeling from opposition within and without; people needed encouragement.

I. Internal Confidence Shakers

A. Pick one for yourself

1. Guilt – John has already told us that Jesus is our atoning sacrifice, 2:2
2. Uncertainty – He has asserted that if we confess our sins, God forgives us
3. John also confidently asserts, among other things, that God is love
4. Maybe we suffer from certain inward anxieties of faith: "Inward conflict is part of the Christian experience." (Psalm 10:1 and 22:1)

B. John's assurances

1. If you abide in him, you can be confident, 2:28
2. Confidence in the day of judgment, 4:17
3. Confidence that he hears us, 5:14
4. John gives both reassurance and a challenge against complacency in chap. 3
 - God is greater than our hearts, 20
 - We receive because we do what he asks, 22
 - John wants us to keep our balance: be confident not complacent

II. External Confidence Shakers (could be construed as internal as well)

A. The Troubles of Life

1. The Parable of the Sower reveals this
2. Mt. 13:22, the "cares of the world" choke the plants
3. We allow these things to demand our undivided attention
4. They are time vacuums as well as confidence killers
5. Remember the excuses in the Great Banquet Parable: busy with a field, busy with a business, busy with my new bride
6. He also mentions the deceitfulness of riches: they distract and cause misplaced trust

B. Persecution

1. Again the Sower, Mt. 13:20-21, rocky soil lacks depth
2. Jesus assured the disciples this would happen, Mt. 5:10-12
3. Peter also reminds us, 1 Peter 4:12-14
4. This is part of living in a world hostile to God
5. We can be confident of the justice and rightness of our cause
6. God is not only greater than our hearts, he is also greater than our troubles.

III. Vision Blockers, Mark 11:20-26

- A. The Grandeur and Fearsomeness of the Mountains
 - 1. The Rocky Mountains are a sight to behold
 - 2. They are also fraught with danger
 - 3. Hikers get off the mountains before noon: lightening, flash floods, snow storms
 - 4. The environment can be violent
 - 5. Imagine what the old settlers had to go through to cross them
 - 6. But we are talking about a different kind of mountain: the obstacles in our way
 - 7. Frank Capra was inspired to make "Mr. Smith Goes to Washington" at the Lincoln Memorial (*Imprimis*, March 2015, p. 3)
 - 8. We turn to Jesus' words today to inspire confidence and to take up the challenges of the Gospel

- B. A Problem of Vision
 - 1. Good question: is any mountain too big for God?
 - 2. Better question: do we believe that with God's help we can move mountains?
 - 3. Best question: do you want to participate in the mountain moving business of God? (Israel refused the first time)
 - 4. This parable is not about whether God can or will move a mountain; it is about whether we are willing to be a mountain mover.
 - 5. Maybe this isn't really a confidence question but a faith question.
 - 6. Sometimes we wish God would move obstacles, but I think God is waiting for us to demonstrate that we have the faith to go through with it.
 - 7. God will not move the human heart without us first giving our assent

Conclusion:

- 1. Confidence ultimately is a matter of trust in God.
- 2. Is our God big enough to overcome our hearts? John says he is.
- 3. Can we move mountains by faith in Him? Jesus says we can.
- 4. You can be confident of these things.
- 5. Decide for yourselves if you have that kind of confidence.