

I know where I'm going. Those words have gotten me into tough spots quite a few times. Yes, I admit it. I'm someone who likes to believe that I can find my way anywhere, without directions if possible. Now before you say, typical male, understand I am not opposed to directions. I map where we're going all the time on my phone. I prefer visually looking at the map and route. Jennifer prefers written directions printed out. So if I'm driving and she's trying to help me get somewhere and I've done the map on my phone that doesn't help her. And me, well I look at it as little as possible to show I know where we're going. I'm confident.

Now you might say, typical male. Over confident is more like it. Because that over confidence had us sitting in the parking lot of a bank a couple weeks back. The bank is not where we were going, but we had to sit there while we figured out which street I missed and what alternate route to take. All the while Jennifer is telling me I should have printed directions and I should have looked at all this before we ever put the car in drive. Okay true. But why, I was confident I knew where we were going.

It's too much confidence in myself in other situations in life that can lead to downfall. While last week we learned that we must speak precisely when speaking God's Word it really can be easy to wonder where our confidence to speak will come from. So the writer to the Hebrews leads us through an understanding that it isn't because of our own confidence, qualifications, or desires. Rather we speak with confidence because of Christ's promise.

Love speaks confidently

To better understand where the second lesson leads we take a quick overview of the context and chapters right before. In chapter ten the writer tells us of the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ. Chapter eleven marches us down the hallway looking at the pictures of all the heroes of faith from the Scriptures. These were the people who simply trusted in that once-for-all sacrifice of Christ. In chapter twelve that cloud of witnesses who simply trusted in Christ urges us also to fix our eyes on Jesus. Our focus, like the heroes of faith, is always on Christ. How that focus plays out is what's highlighted in the first verses of chapter thirteen.

Five verses highlight five different ways love shows itself all centered around the idea that when love sees a need, love helps. We love our brothers and sisters like brothers and sisters, like the close family they are. Strangers are treated with hospitality. Those in prison are shown compassion not judgment. Spouses are honored and respected and their needs and desires are put before our very own. With regard to money and possessions the Christian is content to make their desires and wants last and elevate others needs and wants above their own.

Hearing those is there any question that love isn't easy? **"Keep on loving each other as brothers."** When you and I interact with each other is it always as brothers and sisters in faith? Or don't we sometimes get frustrated, even angry with those who should be like family? **"Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners."** Do we see ourselves in prison next to those we might look down upon? Instead of looking down we must think we could be them. The leap from the sins we think are small to doing something that gets us into more trouble with the authorities isn't as far as you think. **"Keep your lives free from the love of money."** Easy for the person with a lot of money to say, we figure. But whether we have a little or a lot the thoughts are often the same. How can I get more? How can I keep what I have? Who will take it from me? What must I do to protect it? Arguments between spouses center on money. Teenagers wonder how they can make big sums of it. Kids even pout because they can't have every toy, not understanding it costs money. These actions of love aren't easy. Sin is easy. Just five verses convince us of that.

Sin sees love as what's in it for me. Selfish. But that's not really love. The actions of love can't come from my sinful selfish nature. They must come from God's love living in me and you. You don't have to try to imagine or conjure up God's love inside of you. God showed his love in real life. Jesus wore the shackles of a prisoner. He knew what it was like to be led where he didn't want to go. He knew the problems of the poor. He suffered as an outcast. He understood betrayal. Jesus wasn't pretending, he was living the suffering. And when the suffering reached its peak, he laid down his life. He bore your sins and mine, the same sins that made us strangers to God, Christ Jesus took those from us and removed them. When Jesus rose from the dead we were no longer strangers, but God's friends and his family. We were filled with God's love.

Now you are part of God's family by his love. Now God's love flows through you. That love can't hold back sharing how you got into the family of God. God's love is the solution and love shares solutions. Love speaks confidently about Jesus, about heaven, about what Christ has done for you. **"So say with confidence, the Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?"** The confidence to speak isn't some inner confidence or strength you have in yourself. You speak with confidence because of God's love, his promise, his forgiveness. Christ empowers you with his love and love speaks confidently.

I know it can seem like you're not all that confident. Speaking about Jesus, talking religion with someone, these can create anxiety. Worst case scenarios run through your imagination. A friend laughs in your face and says he never wants to speak with you again. The family member asks a tough question that you immediately don't feel like you have an answer to. Maybe the worst case scenario is even worse. Maybe someone you speak with tries to physically harm you, maybe even tries to take your life. By the time you reach these worst case scenarios your confidence is gone.

But has God's promise changed? **"God has said, never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."** The friend might laugh but God stands with you, not with them because they're laughing against God. The family member's tough question might cause a pause, or it might cause you to search the Bible for answers and your faith grows. The person trying to harm you physically might succeed, might even end your life. But if that were to happen what have you lost? More important, what have you gained? Confidence doesn't have to waver, Jesus promises he's with you through everything. Love can speak confidently.

I stood on the porch of the evening's last visit. Another new mover to the area. I rang the doorbell and immediately dogs started barking. Big dogs with deep loud barks. The inner door opened and a large dog jumped at the screen door causing me to jump back. The owner took one look at me and said that if I was selling something he would open the door and let the dog go. The implication, leave now or get the dogs. With my heart racing I nervously told him I wasn't selling but giving, inviting to church if he didn't have one. Thankfully his demeanor changed. Standing on doorsteps that's about the most intimidated I've been. I understand the nerves and fears of speaking up about Jesus. At work, home, or school, I don't want to diminish that even the idea of speaking might be as terrifying as a dog barking and jumping. But remember the promise of God **"The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid."** God's love and the love he's put in you through Christ, that's where your confidence comes to speak.

With the Lord as your helper you need not try and defend God's position in the Bible. People might bristle at the thought of waiting to take communion when they first start coming because they don't understand our close communion practice. Your family might think you're unloving for going along with the Bible's teaching regarding homosexuality as a sin. People might not understand why you choose to not live with someone you're dating because you respect God's teaching about marriage and sex. You can and should speak confidently about the Bible's teachings in these areas. Don't apologize for believing and doing what you do. Have confidence you stand in the truth of God's Word and God's love.

You've seen that love of God at work in you and in others. **"Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith."** Your parents who drive you to Sunday school, practice home devotions, and participate in a place like this where Christ is taught and worshipped. Maybe it was the person who came to your doorstep, heard the dogs barking and stayed to talk to you about Jesus. Maybe it was a friend who brought up the subject at just the right time when you were feeling hurt. Think of all the people who struggled to build this building and provide financially so that Jesus might continue to be preached and taught here with confidence. Love speaks here too, confidently.

Where does your confidence lie when you speak? **"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever."** With a Savior who never changes and sins that are paid for and gone forever, you have been shown love. God's love to you in Christ. Love like that can't help but speak. Love speaks confidently.