

This Universal Lack of SELF-CONFIDENCE

Most people have a sense of inner timidity, doubt, inferiority
— don't you? It's a terrible handicap. Here's the Cure!

by Garner Ted Armstrong

PROBABLY *you* are afflicted with a serious handicap. It's more nearly universal than you'd suppose!

Most people call it "lack of self-confidence." Psychologists call it "inferiority complex." Millions suffer from it. It's a principal reason for countless failures. It brings worry, frustration!

Those plagued with it are somehow *afraid* to push on to success. They shun the acceptance of responsibility, limiting the success they *should* achieve in life. They shrink from making decisions, from *acting* on decisions, from leaping out where they realize they should. They constantly *fear* insecurity, often flee from reality. They bog down to mediocrity.

But of course they try to *hide* this embarrassment from others.

The Psychologists' "Cure"

My father has told me about a book he read in his late teens, titled, "He Can Who *Thinks* He Can." It was one of the "inspiration" books published in those years — several by this same author, Orison Swett Marden. These books had a profound influence on my father.

He has told me how, as a boy, he was always a follower instead of a leader — filled with a feeling of inferiority. Then, at age 16, away from home for the first time on a summer vacation job, his employer continually expressed confidence in him — told him he was destined to make a big success in life — fired him with ambition and zeal.

For the first time he began to *believe* in himself. Confidence skyrocketed. These "inspiration" or "pep" books im-

planted the idea he could accomplish anything if he only *thought* he could, prepared diligently for it, worked hard and energetically at it, and stuck with it through thick and thin.

Perhaps you've heard him explain, in his broadcasts, how he studied intensively, "burned the midnight oil," adopted a rapid, "hustler" walking gait, generated boundless energy commensurate with a *belief in himself* that displayed intense "cockiness," and simply "oozed" self-confidence and conceit. But because he studied incessantly, thought intensively about what he was doing, and worked industriously, he was becoming successful — unusually successful, in his field, for a young man his age.

He had gone, as the few who leap out of the inferiority rut usually do, over to the opposite extreme. That's human nature. But he has also told you, over the air, how terribly he had to suffer, later, to have this cancerous disease of *belief in himself* cut out, and replaced with THE ONLY RIGHT KIND OF CONFIDENCE! More of that, later.

My father had adopted the psychologists' cure for inferiority. And then he had, in turn, *to be cured of that cure!*

It's human nature to go from one wrong extreme to the other. Instead of finding the REAL CAUSE of his troubles, man has tried to deal with the effect. Many popular modern writers and philosophers have written books and articles telling people how to overcome this timidity and inferior feeling.

The methods usually recommended for developing confidence include posi-

tive thinking, the desire to reach others and the expression of SELF. The doubts and fears will flee, they say, with faith in *yourself*.

To cultivate this faith, you must free yourself from hesitancy and anxiety by "kidding" yourself into believing you really *have* the assurance you lack. This means *flattery* of the self, *careful coddling* and pampering of the *self*.

Among businessmen's groups, speakers' clubs, lodges, and women's clubs, these practices are followed. There is the usual insincere flattery, on-the-surface discussions, empty, useless and profitless conversation.

The real *objective* behind this practice is *what other people think of you!* The only *goal* set forth for gaining self-assurance is that of gaining more friends, having people "think well of you," and the acquirement of material possession. By telling yourself "I'm pretty good" or, "I'll make it all right, I don't need anybody else," the "moderns" assure their eager followers that they may have plenty of *self-confidence*.

The *ways* of this modern society, of flattery, back-slapping and handshaking each other into believing in themselves, leads to the *false* values and the *synthetic* foundation for REAL CONFIDENCE. The flattery will begin to take effect. The one being flattered begins to really *believe* in himself. He begins to think these things are really *true* about him, and perhaps he *is* the best speaker, the most personality-filled and competent man in the group after all.

What a letdown it is — what a disheartening SHOCK it is, when this indi-

vidual finds all the pseudo-confidence has fled, that he cannot meet a difficult situation, and all his ego and trust in SELF is shattered! Then, after being swept to the heights of SELF-confidence and trust in the SELF, he is dashed to the gutter of despair and hopelessness — feeling himself to be a complete FAILURE.

Part of the heritage our father has bequeathed to my brother Dick and me is this very lesson he had to suffer so terribly to learn. And he has passed that lesson on to the vast radio audience. God help us all to heed, and avoid needless suffering by the cruel teacher, EXPERIENCE!

For this is exactly what happened to him. God was calling him for a very special mission. So God took away his business — his success — shattered his self-confidence — plummeted him from the heights of egotistic conceit all the way down to the deepest chasm of despair, disillusionment, and feeling of utter failure. Then God was able to reveal to him the only REAL confidence, and start him toward REAL success!

The Right Kind of Confidence

What does GOD say about the way to confidence? WHY, THE EXACT OPPOSITE, OF COURSE!

God said through the prophet Isaiah that the wicked man had to *forsake* HIS WAY! God tells us to THROW SELF AWAY — not to pamper and fondle it. God says to GET RID of self — *man* says to FLATTER self. Man talks about “positive thinking,” and God says to forsake even your own thoughts! (Isaiah 55: 6-9).

The wisest man who ever lived, under the inspiration of God, wrote many scriptures concerning the differences between those following the customary way of this world and those who were willing to listen to the instructions of God. Solomon knew the difference between confidence in the SELF and the *right kind* of confidence. He called the person who trusts in his OWN heart a fool! (Prov. 28:26.)

Jesus Christ directed one of His parables toward those who TRUST IN

THEMSELVES. Christ said those who *exalt themselves* shall be abased; and those who *humble themselves shall be exalted*. (Luke 18:9-14.)

The *real test* of one who has the RIGHT KIND of confidence comes when the “chips are down.” The man who sets his jaw and says: “I will NOT quit!” despite all the handicaps and apparent obstacles, is the one who has the quality for success. Solomon wrote, “If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small” (Prov. 24:10).

How can YOU have *this kind of* strength and confidence? God plainly says He will RESIST the proud, but give *grace* to the humble. His instructions for finding the only true source of confidence is to BE CLOTHED WITH HUMILITY! (I Peter 5:5-6.) And so, once again, we see that GOD’S WAY is the exact *opposite* from man’s way!

Confidence in Others?

In this modern age of pact-making and peace parleys, you are constantly seeing men putting their confidence in one another. Nations place trust and confidence in allies, who, perhaps a few short years later, become their bitter enemies. Strange though it may seem, this, too, is another extreme. Because of the widespread lack of confidence in SELF, people begin placing their confidence in other people!

At this moment, the United States is putting her confidence and trust in many foreign nations, two of which were our hated enemies a few short years ago. What is the reason? IT IS BECAUSE THIS NATION HAS FORGOTTEN ITS GOD!

God shows that putting confidence and trust in another *man* is also an evil — and commands man NOT to put his trust in a fellow human like himself! “Put NOT your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; *in that very day his thoughts perish*” (Psalm 146:3-4).

David wrote in the Psalms that it is better to trust in the Eternal than to put confidence in man! (Psalm 118: 8-9).

Christ, an Example of Confidence

Today, you hear a good deal *about* Jesus Christ. You are constantly told what a great man He was — what a great PERSONALITY He had. But few have heard very much about the MESSAGE CHRIST BROUGHT! Jesus plainly said He came as a messenger into this world, bringing a message directly from God the Father to mankind! (John 8:38, 42.) But Christ also said that He COULD DO ABSOLUTELY NOTHING BY HIMSELF! “The Father [GOD] that dwelleth in me, HE doeth the works,” He said. (John 14: 10.) Christ said it was the WORKS He did that bore witness of Him (John 5:36).

THINK OF IT! The very Son of God, for all His personality and energy, said He could do NOTHING by Himself! CHRIST had absolutely NO *self-confidence*! *How much less, then, can you and I accomplish by trusting in ourselves?* (John 5:19 and 30.) Yet Jesus Christ had MORE CONFIDENCE than any man who ever lived!

What was this source of dynamic CONFIDENCE exhibited by Christ? *Let’s not assume!* Let’s ask Jesus Christ Himself! He said it was the FATHER DWELLING IN HIM that did the works! (John 14:10.) THERE was the source of the absolute CONFIDENCE of Jesus Christ! It was *faith in GOD!* The FATHER who lived *in* Jesus through the power of His Holy Spirit did the mighty works which Christ performed! *Christ did not have one iota of self-confidence — but He had ALL confidence in God!*

Notice the *complete* confidence that was in Jesus Christ. Confidence such as NO OTHER MAN has ever possessed — because it was not confidence in Himself — but confidence in the Almighty God! When Jesus was called to the tomb of Lazarus, He demonstrated the constant *attitude* of mind that gave Him this great confidence. Christ did not have to “beg” or “plead” with God to raise Lazarus from the dead, but was in the *attitude* of SUCH CONSTANT CLOSENESS and ONENESS with God that He simply “lifted up His eyes, and

said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me" (John 11:41-42).

Christ thanked the Father for having already heard Him before He prayed aloud.

This complete and total *confidence* in God gave Christ the assurance and faith to call out "LAZARUS!, COME FORTH!" And a man who had been *dead* four days was brought back to life, and walked away from his tomb!

We, too, may have this *same* kind of confidence! "For the LORD shall be thy confidence, and shall keep thy foot from being taken." (Prov. 3:26.) Jesus Christ said: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and GREATER works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father" (John 14:12).

Confidence with Obedience

Confidence, faith, trust; all these are closely linked to and are inseparable from obedience. Without obedience, you cannot have confidence!

Abraham, called the Father of the faithful, had the kind of obedience that God wanted. It was this obedience that gave Abraham the complete CONFIDENCE he needed! God said it was BECAUSE of Abraham's obedience that He would make the promise given to Abraham of inheriting this earth UNCONDITIONAL! (Genesis 26:5.)

Abraham met one of the greatest tests ever placed on a human being. God told Abraham to take Isaac, the son he had waited so long for, and to go to a certain place to kill him. (Genesis 22nd chapter.)

Abraham did not question God's command! He didn't ask WHY — he did not try to remind God this was the son God had given him, after waiting for so many long years — he simply OBEYED!

WHY?

Because Abraham BELIEVED God! (James 2:23.) Abraham had COMPLETE CONFIDENCE — NOT in *self* — but in God!

God had PROMISED to give Abraham many multiple thousands and thousands of sons. Abraham knew *immediately* that God could either raise Isaac from the dead, or bless him with other sons according to His promises. Abraham was FULLY PERSUADED that, whatever God had promised, He was ABLE TO PERFORM! (Rom. 4:21.)

What a sad lack of that kind of confidence today! People do not believe God WILL keep His word! People do not FEAR God — neither do they want to OBEY Him! But to those who WILL OBEY, who WILL believe His word and DO those things God shows them they must do — God says "BLESSED are they that keep His testimonies, and that seek Him with the whole heart" (Psalm 119:2).

How YOU May Have Confidence

How can YOU come to have the real ASSURANCE and KNOWLEDGE that you need in making decisions in this life?

The Apostle Paul gives us the first step toward the *only real confidence* in Romans the 12th chapter and the first two verses: "I beseech you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God, *that ye present your bodies* a LIVING SACRIFICE, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And BE NOT CONFORMED to this world, but be ye TRANSFORMED by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God."

God's way to find confidence is the DIRECT OPPOSITE from the *false* ways of this world! God's way is the way of GETTING RID OF ALL SELF, of *throwing away* the rebellious, cast-iron human WILL that is *contrary* to God — of CRUCIFYING THE OLD SELF with Christ!

Paul explained in Galatians 2:20 that He was *crucified* with Christ, but that he still lived by the FAITH of the Son of God!

The only worthwhile confidence is the knowledge that you have actually *given* your very SELF — your will, your desires and your complete MIND — into God's hands. If you have *real* confidence, you'll be saying with Christ, "Not *my* will, but YOUR will be done, Father."

God inspired John to write, "And now, little children, *abide in Him*, that when He shall appear, we may have CONFIDENCE, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming" (I John 2:28).

The one most central reason for the FALSE confidence on the EXTERIOR that people have today is because they are much more CONCERNED about what *people* will say, what *people* will think — the impressions they are making on other *people*, than they are about WHAT THE ALMIGHTY GOD THINKS OF THEM! *Jesus Christ did not fear what man thought of Him!* Rather, He had the Spirit of the FEAR OF GOD! (Isaiah 11:2.) And Christ was HEARD of God — *because He feared!* (Heb. 5:7.)

If you really FEAR God — you will want to obey Him! The WAY to real confidence is through *unquestioning obedience!* God tells us through John, "Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then we have CONFIDENCE toward God. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, *because* we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His [not our friends' and relatives'] sight!" (I John 3:21-22.)

Do you want *this* kind of confidence? Or do you, like most "moderns" of today, want God to "keep His nose out of your business?" God says, "See? I HAVE SET BEFORE YOU THIS DAY LIFE AND DEATH . . . CHOOSE LIFE!" (Deut. 30:15-19.) God offers life on the one hand — *eternal* life and rulership with Christ, and *death* on the other. God *commands* you to MAKE YOUR DECISION which one you will take! He will not make that decision for you.

God grant that *you* will make *your* decision with CONFIDENCE!