



PARRHESIA COMMISSION

† THIS IS OUR  
**CONFIDENCE**

**Kennedy Kwame Owiredu**



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Unless otherwise stated all scripture quotations are taken from KJV and TNIV.

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## **THIS IS OUR CONFIDENCE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This material is the maiden production of Parrhesia Word and Worship Conference held in 2017. The theme for the conference was designed to be an open exposition of the vision and mission of Parrhesia Commission. The current publication is the updated and revised message in 2023. Have a fruitful reading.

### **THIS IS OUR CONFIDENCE**

The Christian life is built on the backbone of divine promises (*and prophecies*) and God's faithfulness to fulfil them. Similarly, the new covenant is based on new (renewed) promises/prophecies and God's affirmation of His faithfulness through His Son, Jesus Christ. The Scriptures are replete with various key covenantal stages of God's dealings with humanity: God's covenants with Adam (*Genesis 1-3*), Noah (*Genesis 9*), Abraham (*Genesis 12-15*), Moses and the Israelites (Exodus to Deuteronomy), David (*2 Samuel 7*) and so on. All these are categorized under the OLD COVENANT or OLD TESTAMENT.

However, under the OLD COVENANT God began to initiate and indicate through His prophets the beginnings of a NEW COVENANT – Jeremiah 31:31ff is such an example; others such as Isaiah (*chapter 2*), the book of Ezekiel and the popular Joel 2 are such key hints. The nature and power of the NEW COVENANT are very

different from the OLD. Nonetheless, the circumstances of the OLD COVENANT are still relevant for us who are partakers of the NEW, so that we may learn to participate fully in the NEW.

Whenever any two individuals or groups or parties decide to establish an agreement or a covenant, the issue of mutual trust is very important: the fact that each group or participant in the covenant can confidently expect the other to hold on to their end of the bargain. Hence, confidence in:

- ... who are partaking in the covenant,*
- ... what has been agreed on and*
- ... the ability of the parties involved to deliver results is very important if any covenant will hold.*

In a quite similar sense, we need to closely reflect on what God has brought us into especially through His Son Jesus Christ in the NEW COVENANT. First, I want to highlight that, unlike any ordinary human-human covenant; the NEW COVENANT is a Divine-human covenant. That is, between God and us. Secondly, unlike any other ordinary covenant, God has, in His Sovereignty and grace, pivoted the efficacy and potency of this covenant solely on His Being. Let me elaborate this second point below with an example, which I believe, demonstrates how God by foreknowing the future NEW COVENANT, made with Abram so that we may discern what He will do for us also in Christ.

In the book of Genesis, the account is recorded in chapter 15:8-21 of how God gave Abraham (*then Abram*) an

assurance and a firm reason to have confidence in what He had promised Him. We read as follows:

<sup>8</sup> *But Abram said, “O sovereign LORD, by what can I know that I am to possess it?”*

<sup>9</sup> *The LORD said to him, “Take for me a heifer, a goat, and a ram, each three years old, along with a dove and a young pigeon.”*

<sup>10</sup> *So Abram took all these for him and then cut them in two and placed each half opposite the other, but he did not cut the birds in half.*

<sup>11</sup> *When birds of prey came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away.*

<sup>12</sup> *When the sun went down, Abram fell sound asleep, and great terror overwhelmed him.*

<sup>13</sup> *Then the LORD said to Abram, “Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a foreign country. They will be enslaved and oppressed for four hundred years.*

<sup>14</sup> *But I will execute judgment on the nation that they will serve. Afterward they will come out with many possessions.*

<sup>15</sup> *But as for you, you will go to your ancestors in peace and be buried at a good old age.*

<sup>16</sup> *In the fourth generation your descendants will return here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its limit.”*

<sup>17</sup> *When the sun had gone down and it was dark, a smoking firepot with a flaming torch passed between the animal parts.*

<sup>18</sup> *That day the LORD made a covenant with Abram: “To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates River—*

<sup>19</sup> *the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites,*

<sup>20</sup> *Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites,*

<sup>21</sup> *Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites, and Jebusites.”*

**GENESIS 15:8-21**

So in the above account, the physical or symbolic items upon which the covenant was made were the heifer, goat, ram, dove and young pigeon. The cutting into half of the animals was an act of oath or warning, signifying that any party of the covenant who breached the oath of the covenant should face the same end as the parted animals. But this oath of warning was to become binding on each partner only by walking in between the parted animals after the words of the oath have been declared. However, we must carefully note that after God declared the promises of the covenant, He caused Abram to fall into a deep sleep and in the end, it was only God (*symbolically represented as a smoking firepot with a flaming torch*) who walked in between the sacrifices. By so doing, God made the covenant, its efficacy and fulfilment solely bound to Himself.

Our experience in the New Covenant of God's assurance is a far better and more excellent one (*see the Book of Hebrews*). Unlike Abraham or any of the Old Testament Patriarchs or prophets, God has given us (*not heifers, pigeons, doves, or bulls but rather*), first His Son as the evidence of what His promises are able to do and consequently, His Holy Spirit as the full guarantee of the fulfilment of these promises and prophecies. But one most important similarity between God's covenant



with Abraham in Genesis 15 above and that of the NEW COVENANT is the fact that, just as in Genesis 15 God alone walked through the sacrificed animals and by so doing bound the covenant to Himself, in a much greater manner. Through Christ Jesus going on the cross for us, the Father secured the verities and realities of the NEW COVENANT solely by Himself and not by anything to do with us. This aligns precisely with what the writers of Romans and Ephesians tell us:

*But God demonstrates his own love for us, in that **while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.***

**ROMANS 5:8 NET**

*even though **we were dead in transgressions, made us alive together with Christ— by grace you are saved!***

**EPHESIANS 2:5**

In other words, like Abram who fell into deep sleep (as good as dead), we also were sinners and dead, completely unresponsive, and unable of our own selves, to make any oath binding contribution to the completeness and fulfilment of the NEW COVENANT. God in Christ is the beginning and the end of the NEW COVENANT. Based on this, it is bound to uphold itself and never fail. This, indeed, is our CONFIDENCE.

Perhaps this revelation raises questions in your mind, such as – “so what is there for me to do?” Or “what does God expect from me in all this then?” It is for questions

such as these that the connecting part of this confidence must be added to supplement our understanding of this insight. Let us complete this understanding and give a response to these questions.

## **JESUS**

There are many legitimate ways of recounting the 'why' of Jesus' coming. Here, I want us to observe two.

Jesus came to show us the Father. He came so that, we who come to believe in His name, will, by His person and life see the God who has become our Father. By looking at Jesus, his authority, his power, his love, his holiness etc., we are given a glimpse of God's nature.

As the writer of Colossians, referring to Jesus, puts it:

*He is the image of the invisible God,*

**COL. 1:15 NET**

The writer of John's Gospel also highlights this truth as well:

*No man has ever seen God at any time; the only unique Son, or the only begotten God, Who is in the bosom [in the intimate presence] of the Father, He has declared Him [He has revealed Him and brought Him out where He can be seen; He has interpreted Him and He has made Him known].*

**JOHN 1:18 AMP**

And later when Thomas and Philip expressed their doubt, Jesus once again affirmed the above:

*Thomas said, "Lord, we don't know where you are going. How can we know the way?" Jesus replied, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you have known me, you will know my Father too. And from now on you do know him and have seen him." Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father, and we will be content." Jesus replied, "Have I been with you for so long, and you have not known me, Philip? The person who has seen me has seen the Father! How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"*

**JOHN 14:5-9**

The second objective, which is actually the purpose of our theme is the fact that Jesus came as a pioneer or captain or forerunner of the new life. I know some or many people may have reflected on this and hence it may not be so new to you. The popular explanation is that Jesus' life is an example for us. Hence, we are often called upon to imitate Him. A popular Presbyterian Hymn even stresses this fact (*PH 146*). The English version of this hymn is as follows:

*Stanza 1:*

*To us, Jesus gave His life,  
Example, He set for us,  
His Word shows us what to do,  
Lay our lives for others here.*

*Stanza 2:*

*Jesus left His Father's Throne,  
Meekly, became flesh like us.*

*Patiently, He sought His own  
Gently, we must seek to serve....*

*Stanza 5:*

*As, Christ Jesus lived on earth,  
Seeking always to do right;  
So we must flee from all sin,  
Be like Him in all conduct.*

The words of this beautiful hymn invoke discipleship in the sense of studying about Jesus and emulating His life. The similitude shown in the words of the hymn through example and emulation is clearly laid out for us His (*Christ's*) followers.

But, beyond this dimension, there is a deeper perspective to what I want to bring across here. Jesus is not merely our example. He is far more than that as well. People of other religions- Muslims, Buddhists and even non-theists often have no problem regarding Jesus simply as a prophet or a great teacher whose actions and words are worth emulating. Hence, many of these groups even adopt life principles from His teachings and sayings which they apply to their businesses, religious and social lives. However, there is a dimension that sets our (*Christian*) regard of Jesus in this respect apart or beyond what these people regard. A dimension which is made available to the believer only because of the new birth. Let me elaborate this below.

For the Christian, Jesus is God's prototype of the new life. As God's first-begotten, He became the first fruit of the

resurrection. Therefore, by Him, we all can be born anew of the Spirit when we receive and believe in His work of salvation. When we look at Jesus, therefore, we see the first-model of our type. We see the archetype of the new life. This is central in the Father's plan for us. It is as if the Father is saying to us, "just as you see what and how the first model (*Jesus*) operates, in the same manner you will also be."

This effect was exactly what Jesus was referring to when John captures his words in 12:23-24:

*Jesus answered, "Time's up. The time has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. "Listen carefully: Unless a grain of wheat is buried in the ground, dead to the world, it is never any more than a grain of wheat. But if it is buried, it sprouts and reproduces itself many times over.*

**[EMPHASIS MINE.]**

Jesus was speaking about the effect or results of his death and resurrection. It is crucial we capture the imagery He gives to the effect His death will have on us who have received the new birth. Therefore, it is also important we acknowledge and come to believe this aspect of what Jesus' death and resurrection make us. Because it is through this death that this first-model was replicated. Take note of the highlighted expression above: 'it sprouts and reproduces itself many times over.' We are products of his death and resurrection. He had to die so that like a grain of wheat, he would multiply/reproduce Himself in us through the outpouring of His Holy Spirit, who is

the 'spiritual-DNA.' So, this is why we don't join churches to become Christians or sons and daughters of God, but rather we are born of the Spirit, and that is what makes us children of God. Christ the first-model is now in us, and hence, just as He is, so have we now become.

*By this love is perfected with us, so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment, because **just as Jesus is, so also are we** in this world.*

**1 JOHN 4:17**

This is an awesome revelation. You are not just at the mercy of trying to copy what Christ will say or do (*that could possibly lead to religious legalism*), but rather, you have His life flowing in you, you have His inherent presence in you and so, by His Spirit and His Word in us, we can always and at all times discern what Jesus will do. Just as His was a victorious life, in the same manner, ours is also a victorious life. The confidence we have therefore is that, when we see Jesus as the successful prototype, similarly we must gather boldness; because if we have borne the image of the first Adam (*an image of failure, shame, defeat, sin*), now in Christ, let us bear the image of the last Adam. If we would do exploits and be authentic in our Christian expression, we must hold on to this truth and revelation.

*According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: **In whom we have boldness and access with confidence** by the faith of him.*

**EPHESIANS 3:11-12**

## **WHERE IS YOUR CONFIDENCE?**

Now, the problem is that many of us, who have become Christians often place our confidence in all the wrong places. We often place our confidence of making it successfully through life in our educational status, social-standing, and various life achievements. The point here is that some believers end up creating the perception that if God denies them these or if they do not reach these goals in life, then they are worthless and cannot be of any benefit in life. Furthermore, some fall into the thinking that God has not loved them or been good to them. This may further lead to low self-esteem, living in mediocrity and even missing out on our entire purpose in life. We have all found ourselves in these situations at one place or another. So I believe a deeper understanding of what God is demonstrating to us through His Son is very important for us to grasp.

As an archetype, Jesus had to be taken through every worst situation possible so that we who follow can observe and learn that if the first model could not be destroyed by any negative or adverse situation then the same is true about us. Indeed, Jesus suffered. Today, by benefit of hindsight, we all praise Him and celebrate His glorious and victorious life. But we often forget that Jesus went through a great ordeal even though He was the Only Begotten of the Father.

His birth itself was a social, religious and biological abomination. Today we celebrate the virgin birth and recognize it as the glorious work of the Holy Spirit. But at his time, it was not easily accepted that Jesus was born of

the Spirit. It is possible that many of his peers and relatives despised Him. I have often said in my sermons that living in a typical patriarchal society, Jesus is likely not to be accepted in His 'foster' father, Joseph's family. They will regard Him as a 'bastard.' If that is not bad enough, you should recount the social and economic hardship of living in Nazareth and furthermore, being raised in not so much a well-to-do family.

As 'carpenter's son,' he may not have likely received the kind of education or opportunities that people of his age-group in affluent settings would receive. Nazareth was not one of the enviable places to live during the time of Jesus. Growing up and coming to accept his calling and identity as the Son of God was perilous. His own family rejected Him, perhaps only Mary had some inkling of what her Son's life would be. The storms of rejection were clear and the threat of death from his own kinsfolk and leaders of the day was so obvious. No one has suffered so much like that. Of necessity, the cross seems to be the icing on the cake of all this suffering. His loneliness in life was indescribable. Jesus' life, then, by all our modern standards of measurement was clearly a recipe for failure, defeat, mediocrity, poverty and every negative outcome we can ever imagine.

Yet, we see such a great counter-effect. He did not succumb to any of these. In all these and through, He never doubted a moment the love of His Father, even on the cross where he felt forsaken. He was confident that His Father was in control and had an expected end for Him. Today nobody is praised, celebrated, worshipped,



adored, talked about, preached about, books written about Him, songs in his name and honour, hospitals, schools, churches and institutions established in his name and reputation like Jesus. Not even the Roman Emperors nor any other person of history has achieved this feat of glory. Jesus amidst all, stands out glorious and highly exalted.

Child of God, if Jesus our first model could go through all these negativities and could still rise and be glorified, why would the writer of Romans not declare boldly that:

*If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead **dwells in you**, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.*

**ROMANS 8:11** ESV

The point I am raising here is that our confidence and boldness to face life and do exploits despite the vicissitudes of life is Jesus. He, by the eternal plan and intention of the Father, is our blessed, bold and confident assurance. Because that prototype could not fail, it is our utter confidence that we are not able to fail. We are of the same brand.

Whenever a grain of corn is sown and it produces, the new crop bears the image, likeness and nature of the original that was sown. In like manner, through Christ's death (*sown*) and resurrection (*sprouting*); we have by the Holy Spirit received this Christ-life which has become the source of our confidence and boldness. And that is the

spiritual relevance of the outward act of baptism. There is that symbolism of us being buried with Him and then we rising up in Him with this new life. Again, the writer of Romans demonstrates that the early believers understood this well:

*For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:*

**ROMANS 6:5 KJV**

Many English versions, like the KJV do their best to capture the imagery of the Greek original. But for me, it is our Asante-twi Bible which brings out perfectly what Paul says here (I will translate below):

*Na se wɔate yen ne no wɔ ne wuo mu a, ennee ye-nam ne wusɔree no so ne no bebom afifiri.*

*[Translated: And if we have been planted (grafted) together with Him in His death, then we through His resurrection will together with Him sprout.]*

The imagery of planting a seed in the soil and that seed/plant sprouting to produce fruits of its same kind and nature is very present in the verse. We are of His nature. We bear His image in us. We are of the same brand and make, as Christ. That is the assurance God has given in this new covenant. It is the fullest and the best assurance God can ever give us. If this does not provoke confidence and boldness in you for life; it is difficult to think that any other thing such as money, social status and so on will do.

We cannot afford to live in fear or as cowards no matter the situation. God has fully proved Himself true and faithful through His Son. Now, He expects us to respond in all confidence and assurance of faith.

SO NOW...! We must accept that life comes with all kinds of challenges. Objectively, these challenges come to question our make. Are you original? Are you of the same make as Christ? When gold is passed through fire, it is not to destroy it. The troubles of life are the fiery conditions in which our make is tested. We are all gradually growing and maturing into His nature. Do not give up if you have fallen or failed several times. Your Maker is in control, and He will keep on shaping you and fashioning you until you fully become like Christ.

## **CONCLUSION**

Two important assertions have been made and these two are both sides of the same coin. That the NEW COVENANT is established 100% in Christ and not on us. That Christ, by His death and resurrection, has so worked in us such that, it is Him that lives and moves in us and causes us to have our being in Him. The result? That confidence and trust/faith should overflow in us towards Him in our walk with the LORD in this life. This is our CONFIDENCE.

## THE PARRHESIA COMMISSION

Parrhesia Commission is a group of Christian youth who bear the vision of reaching out to Christian youth from all over the globe by empowering through word, prayer, worship and mentoring.

Parrhesia is a Greek word which can simply mean boldness – a state of boldness and confidence, sometimes implying “boldness” or “courage” in intimidating circumstances. The Greek word is used directly in such instances as *Hebrews 4:16* and *Acts 4:31*.

It is about facing your challenges and making the most of your opportunities. With the right Word, worship, prayer, and mentoring atmosphere, we believe many young people of our generation and beyond can be brought to the saving knowledge of Christ and raised up to impart their generation/ society with the grace and potential they have received in Christ.

Rev. Dr. Kennedy Owiredu is the founder and president of the group. Rev. Prof. B.Y. Quarshie, Rev. Dr. G.N.N. Odonkor, and Prof. Akosua Anyidoho are the group's patron. Together with dedicated team members, supportive sponsors, and volunteers, we hope to reach the world with this vision.

We call on you to partner/ support, volunteer and be part of this Commission – *‘for the love of Christ’*.



## **THE BOOK**

God's words to Joshua when he received the leadership mantle from Moses was that he should be courageous and not fear. Boldness or confidence is still a crucial element in our Christian walk today.

This publication is a sound and charismatic reflection on this subject.