

The Threats of Confidence

Acts 4:21-35 | New Collective Church

Where This Fits in the Series

This is the final part of the Rooms of Confidence series. The pastor is intentionally tying everything together. The earlier parts have built up where confidence comes from (Christ, the New Covenant, the Spirit as deposit, God Himself saying "I am confident in you"). This sermon answers the natural follow-up question: now that I have confidence, what is it for, and what is going to try to take it from me? The threats are real, the response is communal prayer, and the result is bold witness and generous giving. Treat this session as a series wrap, not just another week. Make space at the end to reflect on the arc of the whole series.

Sermon Arc and Key Moves

LEADER NOTE

This sermon is built on three threats (Intimidation, Isolation, Inaccuracy) plus a capstone showing what confidence is FOR (Acts 4:31-35). The pastor said the points were not on screen because the sermon was fresh, so listen for them in the audio if you can. The structure below is the through-line.

Core Premise: You Yourself Are the Threat

Before any of the three threats, the pastor reframes the whole sermon. Threats exist because you are a threat to darkness. Everywhere you go, God goes. Wherever you go, freedom goes. The enemy does not bother the complacent. This is the framing every threat conversation has to start from. If you skip this premise, the rest of the sermon turns into spiritual warfare paranoia instead of a posture of bold confidence.

Move 1: The Threat of Intimidation

Multi-part argument worth holding together. Part one: darkness cannot stop God's movement, only intimidate it. Part two: the enemy is often not trying to get us to do evil, just to make us quieter. Part three (the punchline): the enemy aims at reduction, not destruction. Reducing passion, trust, boldness. Part four: in America, the intimidation is psychological and social, not physical. Consumerism, comfort, compromise. Part five: petty threats we never name as threats (the pastor's example was travel sports). The cumulative weight: most of us do not realize we are being intimidated because we are looking for the wrong kind of pressure.

Move 2: The Threat of Isolation

Peter and John do not handle the threat alone. They go back to their people. The pastor's frame: isolation magnifies intimidation. He named the digital age irony specifically: more connected, lonelier than ever. Stats on Gen Z relationships with AI. People disappear after disappointment, offense, criticism, exhaustion, failure, pressure. The antidote is what we see in Acts 4:24, believers raising their voices together in prayer. AI cannot do that. A comment section cannot do that. Real community is the breaking of isolation's grip.

Move 3: The Threat of Inaccuracy

This is the heart of the sermon and where the most pastoral substance sits. Peter and John start their prayer with God ("Sovereign Lord"), not the threat. The Greek word despot here is authority wielded without harshness. The pastor's main claim: many of our confidence problems are theology problems. He named three counterfeit views of God: therapeutic (fix me), sentimental (chicken soup), political (donkey or elephant). Confidence rises and falls with our view of God. Build theology on the unchanging Word, not on shifting experiences.

Move 3 Sub-Point: The Plot vs. The Plan

Within the prayer, the early church holds two truths at once: Herod and Pilate plotted against Jesus, AND God's hand had decided beforehand what would happen. The pastor explicitly warned against trying to resolve this tension. Confidence means trusting that God's plan overcomes because the plot will never outmaneuver Him. God is several steps ahead. This is theologically rich territory (mystery of providence) and the pastor handled it well by refusing to flatten it.

The One Thing They Pray For

This is worth dwelling on. Peter and John do not pray for protection, vengeance, vindication, or even relief. They pray for boldness to keep doing what God called them to do. "Don't let this affect us in such a way that we stop doing what you've called us to do." That is the prayer the pastor is implicitly inviting the group toward.

The Hand of God Motif

The pastor wove this beautifully across Acts 3-4. In Acts 3, Peter and John stretched out their hand to heal the lame man. In Acts 4, the authorities laid their hand on Peter and John to seize them. In Acts 4:30, the believers pray for God to stretch out His hand. Three hands, three movements. The conclusion: "You do not have to live in fear of any of the hands below when you are in the hands of the one above."

What Confidence Is For (Acts 4:31-35)

After they pray, four things happen: the place is shaken, they are filled with the Spirit, they speak the word boldly, and they share generously. The pastor's closing line: confidence is never about what you can gain or grasp, it is always about what you can give away. As a series finale, this answers the implicit question the whole series has been building toward: now that you have confidence, here is what to do with it.

Key Cross-References

LEADER NOTE

Five solid passages that connect to this sermon. The James and Psalm 2 references were directly quoted in the sermon.

- Psalm 2:1-2, the early church quotes this Psalm in their prayer. "Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain?" The plot happens, but in vain. Pure theology of providence.
- James 5:16, "The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective." Pastor referenced this when describing what believers do for each other in Move 2.
- Ephesians 6:10-18, the spiritual warfare passage. Connects to the core premise that we wrestle not against flesh and blood. Useful for groups who want to go deeper on the threat framing.
- Hebrews 10:24-25, on not giving up meeting together. The biblical antidote to isolation and a strong tie-back to Part 2 (Rooms of Confidence).
- 1 Peter 5:8-9, "Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith." Reinforces both the threat and the communal response.
- Acts 2:42-47, the parallel passage to Acts 4:32-35. Same pattern of teaching, fellowship, breaking bread, prayer, generosity, no needy persons. The early church's signature was visible economic care.

Discussion Questions with Leader Notes

LEADER NOTE

Three threat sections plus a capstone. Plan for 3-4 questions depending on group pace. Questions 1b and 3a tend to bring the most honest conversation. Question (d) on what confidence is for is critical to land since this is the series finale.

Before the Three Threats

LEADER NOTE

Spend a few minutes on the core premise before discussing the threats themselves. If the group does not buy in that they are a threat to darkness, the rest of the conversation will feel paranoid instead of empowering. Ask: do you actually believe you are dangerous to the enemy? Why or why not?

1. The Threat of Intimidation

a. The pastor named the modern threats as consumerism, comfort, and compromise. Which has the loudest grip on you right now?

LEADER NOTE

All three are likely showing up for most people. Push the group past general acknowledgment toward specific examples. Consumerism: where is money or stuff controlling your decisions? Comfort: where are you choosing ease over obedience? Compromise: where have you traded conviction for being liked?

b. Where have you been believing the right things privately but staying quiet publicly?

LEADER NOTE

The pastor said this is the modern American form of intimidation. We have been allowed to believe whatever we want as long as we do not say it out loud. This question can hit hard. Be ready to share something from your own life. The goal is to surface the cost of the silence, not to shame anyone for it.

2. The Threat of Isolation

a. When you are under pressure, do you pull toward people or pull away from them?

LEADER NOTE

Most people pull away. Help the group articulate why. Shame is often underneath it. Pride too. The pastor's frame: isolation magnifies intimidation. Anything brought into the light loses some of its grip.

b. The pastor said people disappear after disappointment, offense, criticism, exhaustion, failure, and pressure. Which is most likely to make you withdraw right now?

LEADER NOTE

These are the six exit ramps from community. If someone names one, follow up: who do you need to reach back out to? What would it look like to come back? Sometimes the most pastoral move you can make is to help someone name the specific person they need to call.

3. The Threat of Inaccuracy

LEADER NOTE

The conceptual heart of the sermon. The pastor said many of our confidence problems are actually theology problems. Make sure this lands. A group can deflect to behavior modification (try harder, do better) when the real issue is who they think God is in the first place.

a. Therapeutic, sentimental, political. Which counterfeit view of God are you most tempted to drift toward?

LEADER NOTE

Most people will recognize themselves in at least one. Therapeutic God shows up in people who treat prayer like venting. Sentimental God shows up on coffee mugs and Pinterest boards. Political God shows up when our theology of Jesus gets shaped by a party platform. Help the group see the drift in themselves before evaluating others.

b. What would change about your prayer life if you always started with who God is before naming what you need?

LEADER NOTE

Peter and John start with "Sovereign Lord" before they ever mention the threat. There is something powerful about that order. The threat shrinks once God is named correctly first. Encourage the group to try this in their own prayer this week.

c. Where in your life are you stuck trying to figure out the plot when you really need to trust the plan?

LEADER NOTE

This is where the plot-vs-plan tension lives. People will often be wrestling with a specific situation that feels chaotic, unjust, or out of control. Help them hold the tension without resolving it: yes, the plot is real. AND, God's hand decided things beforehand. Both true. We trust the plan even when we can see the plot.

4. What Confidence Is For

LEADER NOTE

This is the most important question of the session. As a series finale, the group needs to walk out with a clear sense of what to do with what they have learned over seven weeks. Do not skip this.

d. Of those four outcomes (speaking boldly, being united, testifying, giving generously), which one is God most pressing on you right now?

LEADER NOTE

Push for specificity and a real next step. "Speak boldly" is not an answer. "Have a conversation with my coworker about Jesus this week" is. "Give generously" is not an answer. "Pay for the next person's groceries on Tuesday" is. Help the group make their answer concrete enough to be accountable to next week.

Application Options

LEADER NOTE

Present all four. Let each person pick one out loud before they leave. Because this is the series finale, frame the choice as a posture for the next season of life, not just this week.

- Name the quiet threat. Take an honest look at where consumerism, comfort, or compromise has been winning quietly. Write it down. Tell one person.
- Break the isolation. Reach out to one trusted believer this week and tell them what you have been carrying alone.
- Start your prayers with God. For one week, before you bring a need to God, name who He is first. Sovereign Lord. Maker of heaven and earth. The one whose hand decided things beforehand.
- Give something away. Money, time, a meal, an apology, an invitation. Confidence is for giving, not gripping.

Closing Prayer

LEADER NOTE

Walk the group through the same prayer structure Peter and John prayed. Start with who God is. Bring the threats. Ask for boldness, not relief. Ask God to stretch out His hand.

- Praise: Start with who God is. Sovereign Lord. Maker of heaven and earth. The one whose hand decided things beforehand.
- Name the threats: the loud ones and the petty ones. The ones we have not been calling threats.
- Ask for boldness: not protection, not relief. Boldness to keep doing what God called us to do.
- Ask for His hand: to heal, to move, to give signs through the name of Jesus.

LEADER NOTE

At the close of the sermon, Pastor Mark gave a row-by-row application across the entire series. He spoke directly to different kinds of people in the room. As a series finale, this is a natural way to close your group. Read through the five postures below and invite each member to identify which one God is highlighting for them this season.

“For some, today is the day to start praying with confidence again. For some, it is time to get back in the Word so theology can shape your confidence. For some, it is time to get back into community out of isolation. For some, it is time to testify and speak boldly. And for some who have been waiting on a dramatic move from God, it is time to share, to give, and to bring what God has already blessed you with.”

— Pastor Mark • Closing of the sermon and the series

Series Reflection (Series Finale)

LEADER NOTE

Because this is the last session in the series, leave time for the group to look back. Ask: What is the single biggest shift God has made in your understanding of confidence over these seven weeks? Where did one of the earlier parts come back to you in real life?

The pastor closed the series with this line, which can serve as the final benediction over your group:

“Threats reveal the source of your confidence. And your confidence will be revealed in your commitments. Confidence is not an aura. Not a vibe. Not a swag. Confidence is revealed in commitments. What are you committed to?”

— Pastor Mark • Closing of the series

Series Alignment Check

LEADER NOTE

Final version of the series table. Confirm with the pastor any parts whose details you are uncertain about.

Part	Title / Focus	Core Scripture
Part 1	The Fires of Confidence	John 18 & 21
Part 2	The Rooms of Confidence	Hebrews 4:14-16; 10:19-25
Part 3	The Chains of Confidence	Philippians 1:3-14
Part 4	Counterfeits of Confidence	2 Corinthians 3
Part 5	The Alwaysness of Confidence	2 Corinthians 5:1-21
Part 6	People of Confidence	2 Cor 7-8, 10
Part 7 ← HERE (Finale)	The Threats of Confidence	Acts 4:21-35

“You do not have to live in fear of any of the hands below when you are in the hands of the one above.”

— Pastor Mark • The Threats of Confidence