

21. Confirmation Vow

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Mr. Tessmann conveyed to you some of the thoughts that went through my mind when I was asked to talk about the confirmation vow. It is quite obvious that there are no degrees behind my name, but there is one thing we all have in common, and that is the fact that God sent His Son to die for us so that we might be saved. We don't have to be ordained to know this; all we have to do is to believe. So I now refer to all people present here as chosen, because God chose each one of us to be His disciples, to go out and share the Word of God.

As I thought about the assignment to speak to you, I became more and more apprehensive as to what I would say. The moment of truth for me to speak is now. But the moment of truth for all of us will be coming for each of us when the Lord calls us home.

The dictionary says the word "confirm" means "to make firm, to agree, to make certain, to be sure, to make valid, to make binding, to strengthen." Confirmation is just putting all these things together and saying this is what we will do.

All of us were confirmed. We may remember this mainly because we got all dressed up. After the service our parents served a big dinner for many guests. At that time all this was very important. But didn't we make God a promise on that day? A promise that we may have forgotten, but let me assure you that God didn't forget this promise. God accepted us at our word. In this vow we said that we would be faithful to God's Word and keep it pure even unto death if need be. It seems that many have forgotten that promise. But we can be sure that God our Father has not forgotten.

If we change our mind as to what we want to believe and what we will accept, this means that we will discard what we cannot understand with our limited knowledge. What we cannot understand we cannot verify in textbooks men have written. We cannot verify them in laboratories.

So, in other words, as long as we cannot understand something in the Word and prove it, we don't have to accept it. Now, if this follows, then it means that the whole Bible is written by man and the words in the Bible are man's words and not God's. I am going to ask you how certain would you be if a man came to you and said, "Your sins are forgiven," or "I have a place for you in heaven," or "I created the mountains." I think you would agree that you wouldn't accept this as true. Doesn't it follow then that if all these things are impossible for man, only someone as great as God in His wisdom could do it?

Implications

In our confirmation vow we said that we would be faithful even unto death. Sometimes I wonder if this vow was really confirmed, or was it as I said before, "to affirm, to strengthen, to stand fast," or was it maybe at that time for us a definite "maybe"? We were certain that we meant it as we were kneeling at the altar, but later as we used our human mind, we may have decided that we may have been wrong. Would it be better in view of this to call the confirmation vow a positive "perhaps"? Can we look at our confirmation vow and only pick out those things that we like to hear and not accept that which also shows us our responsibilities?

God has said that with Him nothing is impossible. Jesus said that only through faith in him can we go to heaven. Jesus also told us that the Holy

Spirit would take over when He left us. He would work in us and work in us real hard. Jesus told us to take everything to Him in prayer. If you look at all such statements Jesus made, you will note that they are definite and positive, not "perhaps," not "maybe"!

When we were confirmed, each of us received a memory verse. I went through the catalog and found that I could choose from fifty different memory verses. I should remember mine, but I am ashamed to say I don't. Unfortunately, my confirmation certificate has been lost or misplaced. So I have chosen Luke 12:47-48 to be my memory verse. Verse 48 records that God says: "To him whom much is given, of him will much be required; and of him to whom men commit much they will demand the more." I believe that God has given me much, so He has a right to expect much of me.

My pastor told me that if I have a problem, I should take it to the Lord in prayer. Let me tell you a very personal experience which has just happened to me.

I have a small business of my own with the usual problems in getting qualified help. On Thursday of last week a young man said to me, "Mr. Mohr, I've decided to go back to school. I'm leaving now; I won't be here on Monday." I said, "Wait a minute; at least you can stay until Labor Day." "O.K.," he said, "I'll stay till Labor Day." On Monday he came to me again and said, "I can't stay till Labor Day; today is my last day."

Worrying about coming to this Congress to speak and then having this business worry, I lay in bed that night. My wife knew I was rather disturbed. So she and I prayed for strength for me to be here today. We prayed that the Lord would use me as a tool to His glory. But then I added a personal note and with an apology I said, "I know I haven't the right to say this, God, but only You can do what I'm going to ask. Would it be possible for You to have a man walk in off State Street tomorrow and say, 'I'm looking for a job; I know how to run the lathes you have'?"

My wife commented, "I don't think you have to worry. God will do it in His wisdom."

At 9:30 yesterday morning, I received a telephone call from a man who said, "Mr. Mohr, I'm looking for a job. I'm a lathe operator. Is that job still open?"

At 11:30 this man came in and looked at my shop. We discussed the whole deal. I sent him home to get his tools and safety glasses. At 2 P.M. he was working.

I had chills when I thought of this. I looked at my wife who was sitting in the office. Both of us had tears in our eyes, and I said, "I wonder whom the Lord heard. Did He hear you or did He hear me?" "That's not important. Let's not question the Lord," she answered, "God knows what He's doing."

What We Promised

Now this is what I learned during my confirmation days—to trust God. Today I would like to jog your memory back to your confirmation day. It might be fitting if you would answer these questions:

"Dearly beloved: When you were little children, you were received into God's covenant of grace in Holy Baptism. And now, having learned the meaning of this covenant from your instruction in the Word of God, you are gathered here before God and this Christian congregation publicly to make profession of your faith in the Triune God and to confirm your covenant with Him to dedicate yourselves body and soul for time and for eternity to your God and Lord. Lift up your hearts with me, therefore, to the God of all grace, and cheerfully give answer to what, in the name of the Lord, as a minister of His holy Church, I now shall ask you.

"Do you this day, in the presence of God and of this Christian congregation, confirm the solemn covenant which at your Baptism you made with the Triune God?" At that time you answered, "I do."

"Do you then renounce the devil and all his works and all his ways?" And again, without flinching, you replied, "I do."

"Do you believe in God the Father?" And you said not just "I do," but "Yes, I believe in God the Father."

"Do you believe in God the Son?" And again you answered, "Yes, I believe in Jesus Christ."

"Do you believe in the Holy Ghost?" "Yes, I believe in the Holy Ghost."

Then the pastor asked if you desired to become a member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church and of this congregation, and you said, "I do."

"Do you hold all the canonical books of the Bible to be the inspired Word of God and the doctrine of the Evangelical Lutheran Church drawn from the Bible as you have learned to know it from Luther's Small Catechism, to be the true and correct one?" And you said, "I do."

"Do you also, as a member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, intend to continue steadfast in the confession of this Church, and suffer all, even death, rather than fall away from it?" And you answered, "I do so intend, with the help of God."

"Finally, do you intend to faithfully conform all of your life to the rule of the divine Word, to be diligent in the use of the means of grace, to walk as it becomes the Gospel of Christ, and in faith, word, and deed to remain true to the Triune God, even unto death?" And you replied, "I do so intend, by the grace of God."

Then the minister said to you, "Give your hand at the Lord's altar as a pledge of your promise, and, kneeling, receive His blessing."

This I think, fits the description of what the dictionary gives of "confirmation" or "confirm."

Blessings

Some of the blessings you have heard are these:

"Blessed rather are those who hear the Word of God and keep it." (Luke 11:28)

The Gospel is full of love but it also speaks of expressing love responsibly. So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in Him, "If you continue in My Word, you are truly My disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." (John 8:31-32)

"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them and they follow Me; and I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of My hand." (John 10:27-28)

How can I just take the fact that I know He hears my voice and be willing to throw the rest of it away? I've got to take it all, because this Bible is not a smorgasboard.

Jesus said, "I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life; no one comes to the Father, but by Me." (John 14:6)

"I am the Vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing." (John 15:15)

Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. Listen, the devil will put you to the test by having some of you thrown into prison. "Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life." (Revelation 2:10)

So I now ask you: When you were confirmed, did you take it as a confirmation vow, or did you take it as a "maybe"? Did you take it as a vow that you would keep as you promised the Lord and He has remembered, or did you take it as a vow with reservations and make it a positive "perhaps"?

My prayer for the Lutheran Church and for all of us here is that what we have learned from the distinguished, learned men who have spent their lives

studying the Word of God, has rubbed off on all of us, that we may go home and speak this Word of God to others.

Get back to the Word of God. Ask God to send His Holy Spirit to work mightily in our hearts so that those of us who may have decided to make our vow a "perhaps" or a "maybe," may see that there is no "perhaps," and no "maybe." We need to pray much about this.

We need to thank God always that He has given us this Bible, His certain Word. So, I ask you, think of your confirmation vow, pray for the church, and ask the Holy Spirit to work as He has never worked before. Share this precious Word of God freely with others and always regard and respect it as God's inspired and certain Word.