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St. Paul's Lutheran Church  
2100 16<sup>th</sup> Street SW  
Austin, MN 55912-1749  
Pastor Ted Barthels  
Sermon preached on  
July 27, 2014  
CONFIRMATION

Scripture Lessons: Josh. 24:15-18, John 6:60-69 Psalm 119:97-105  
Hymns: 798; 433; 334; 800

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord  
and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: Acts 16:29-31, Revelation 2:10

Acts 16:29-31 Then he called for a light, ran in, and fell down  
trembling before Paul and Silas. 30 And he brought them out and  
said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

31 So they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be  
saved, you and your household." 32 Then they spoke the word of  
the Lord to him and to all who were in his house.

Rev. 2:10 Do not fear any of those things which you are about to  
suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison,  
that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be  
faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth.  
Amen.

In Christ Jesus, dear fellow Redeemed, and especially you, are  
confirmands, Caidyn and Teah,

INTRO: It is time for Confirmation

That is what we are doing here today, a confirmation of an  
arrangement that was started some time ago, but one that is still in  
place. We do this from time to time in life with a lot of our

arrangements. We may have some travel plans or vacation plans that have been put in place, and we will confirm that the flight is on time and that that have our name on the list of passengers. We may confirm the rental car reservation we made to assure that a car will be waiting for us when we land, or the hotel reservation we made to be sure that when we arrive we have a place to stay. All of these confirmations are made out of a concern that the other party is really going to do what they have promised to do. We would never, ever think of questioning God as to whether He was on task, and doing that which He has promised to do! **God is faithful!** So then why is there a need for this ritual, and all of the instruction that preceded it? There are really two answers to that question.

The first is that these confirmands, and most of the rest of us as well, entered into the covenant of God's grace, the arrangement that God offered which brings us our salvation, when they were very young. They were too young to comprehend the details. That is true for most of us. We were too young to comprehend what all this meant for us and our lives. We were too young to understand that it very much involved our whole lives as well as our very being.

The second reason we do all this instruction and have confirmation, is that we are not so faithful to God as the Lord is toward us. We need to review and confirm that we understand the truth of God's grace, and the response of faith and love that the child of God should earnestly desire to incorporate in the life he lives.

This is to be our highest priority in life! In the rite of confirmation we are swearing, not just saying a very casual, "Yeah sure, whatever!" No, we are swearing to Almighty God that we will remain true to His Word and the teachings of God's Word. We are taking an oath before Almighty God, **swearing** that we will be faithful in our use of the means of grace, that is reading and studying His Word, participating in worship with the congregation, and attending the Lord's Supper. All this with the assistance of God the Holy Spirit, for apart from the Spirit we can do nothing.

So it is today that Caidyn Kruse and Teah Kesler are presenting themselves before the Lord and this congregation of Christians to confirm the covenant they entered at their baptism. They have been

instructed in the truths of God's Word, including the special grace of the gospel of Christ Jesus by which they were redeemed, and through which the Holy Spirit worked faith in their hearts at their baptism. You are here --

## **THEME: Confirming Your Baptismal Covenant.**

Before we ask them to do this, let us all review this covenant on the basis of the simple scriptures chosen for their confirmation memory verses. Caidyn's verse is Acts 16:31, "**Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.**" From this verse of Scripture we are reminded of how this is --

### **I. A Covenant of Grace.**

In our text we included the context of this memory verse. It takes us to the city of Philippi. Paul and Silas had been arrested and severely beaten, then sent to the local prison. The jailor had been told to make sure they were secure, and he wasn't about to take any chances. He placed them in the inner prison cell and locked their feet in stocks. It was a very difficult, painful situation for Paul and Silas to be in, all because of their testimony to the truth about Jesus, but instead of complaining they were praying and singing hymns to God.

That was when the earthquake happened, and the prison doors all opened and the stocks sprang open from off their feet. The jailor assumed the worst, that all the prisoners had escaped, and he was about to take his own life, when Paul's voice lifted him from his despair. He came into their prison cell and asked that most important of all questions, "**What must I do to be saved?**"

How would Paul answer this question? Would he present this man with a list of deeds that must be done to prove himself worthy of God's love or forgiving grace? Not at all, he simply pointed the man to Jesus.

**Acts 16:31-32** "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household." 32 Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house.

Paul and Silas preached the Word to them. They told the people in this jailor's house all about Jesus, and the Spirit opened their hearts to believe. That's it! That very night the jailor's household was received into the covenant of God's grace through baptism, just as our confirmands were when they were infants, and so most of the rest of us also.

From this we learn this marvelous truth this covenant which they are confirming today: it is not a covenant to which we contributed in any way. This is not a covenant founded upon our works.

Remember the words of the apostle Paul in –

**Ephesians 2:8-9** For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast.

It is by grace, and grace alone. It is also through faith, again not of works, it is the gift of God. We have come to know and trust not the good that we have done, but the good which Christ has done! We are led to trust in Jesus' merit for our righteousness. Yes, the law must be fulfilled and we cannot do it, but Christ did and God in His grace credits us with Jesus' perfect fulfillment of the law. In their catechism lessons our confirmands learned that this is called **the active obedience of Christ**. Apart from this righteousness of Christ we cannot be saved. And so the hymnwriter says:

**TLH 380:1,6** *“Thy works not mine oh Christ. Speak gladness to this heart; They tell me all is done, they bid my fear depart. To whom save Thee who canst alone for sin atone, Lord, shall I flee?”*

*“Thy righteousness, O Christ, Alone can cover me; No righteousness avails Save that which is of Thee. To whom save Thee who canst alone for sin atone, Lord, shall I flee?”*

That took care of our lack of righteousness, but what about the curse of the law, you know, “**the wages of sin is death**”(Rom.6:23), “**the soul that sins shall die**”(Ezekiel 18:4), ‘**Cursed is the one who does not confirm all the words of this law by observing them**’(Deut. 27:26). Those are some scary passages, and they are very clear, and we cannot dodge the fact, as

much as we might try, that we also have sinned, indeed that we continue to sin each and every day of our lives.

We need that covenant of God's grace in Christ. We are led to trust in His sacrifice for our redemption. "**Jesus bore our sins in His own body on the tree**" 1 Peter 2:24, just as Isaiah had prophesied.

**Isaiah 53:5** "But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed."

Our confirmands learned that this grace is referred to as the "**passive obedience of Christ.**" Again the hymn writer put it this way:

*TLH 380:2,4 "Thy wounds, not mine, O Christ, can heal my bruised soul; Thy stripes, not mine, contain the balm that makes me whole. To whom save Thee, who canst alone, for sin atone, Lord, shall I flee?"*

*"Thy death, not mine, O Christ, Has paid the ransom due; Ten thousand deaths like mine Would have been all too few. To whom save Thee, who canst alone For sin atone, Lord, shall I flee?"*

Caidyn, this is what your confirmation memory verse is all about, this is what your confirmation is about: "**Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved!**"

One of the things the Lord would impress upon us at this time pertains very much to this rite of confirmation, that you realize that your baptismal covenant is --

## **II. A Covenant for Life.**

Now the words of Teah's confirmation memory verse are pertinent to our meditation.

**Revelation 2:10** Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

It is such a wonderful truth for you to grasp that in the end what God holds for you, **reserved for you in heaven** is a crown of life. He is simply going to award this crown of life to you because you

hold to the truth of the gospel. You hold the love of Christ is your heart. God grants you life. Now we appreciate this fact about the grace of God. You already possess eternal life. On the night before He died, Jesus was praying, talking to His Father in heaven. In that prayer Jesus said:

**John 17:3** And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.

You know who the only true God is, the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. You know that God the Father sent His Son into the world to deliver you from sin and death. Through faith God grants you eternal life. That life is yours now, even as that faith is in your heart right now. But that faith needs to be nourished and protected and treasured. That precious faith which you ought to hold so dear, will be under attack from the devil, the world, and your own sinful flesh continually until that day when God receives you to Himself in heaven. That is what Jesus told us to expect in that verse of Scripture:

**Revelation 2:10** “Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days.”

So with your passage Teah, as we consider this as a covenant for life, it isn't only that in the end you will receive that life in glory that God has now implanted in your heart, but that you, and me, and the rest of us who believe, must treasure, guard, and keep that life through all of this life's challenges and tribulations, and temptations. Jesus talked about the importance of staying in the Word, and holding to His truth.

**John 8:31-32** Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. 32 And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”

To abide in the Word means to live in it. That is where you find the truth, the truth about Jesus that we already reviewed this morning, the truth that sets you free from sin and death and hell. That truth is constantly being challenged in the world, and even in the visible

church. If you don't go along with the world the world will not be happy. You might find yourself being called stupid, bigoted, backward, out of step with the times. You will be laughed at. I have been. More than once. Sometimes you don't care, but other times it hurts, because it comes from people you know, who you thought were your friends. That is called persecution. Jesus tells us in our text we shouldn't be surprised by it, or thrown by it. Stay in the Word. The Word endures. And at the end you will still have that life.

On this day we want to remember how blessed we are! We are the undeserving recipients of God's grace. He loved us and sent His Son into the world **“that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”** (John 3:16).

God received you into the covenant of His grace back at your baptism. Now we are celebrating how that grace is still with you, indeed how you now possess a deeper understanding of all the wonders of God's love. It is God who works this faith in your hearts. It is God who **“works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure”** (Philippians 2:13).

**AMEN.**

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.