

BE CONFIDENT IN CHRIST

1 Corinthians 1:8-9 | Confirmation Sunday | May 6, 2018

He will also keep you firm to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ God is faithful, who has called you into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

VIVIT!

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, and especially you ten young Christian brothers and sisters:

Confidence is a funny thing. One moment you can be brimming with it. The next moment it can all go away.

This happens to me on the golf course. Sometimes I get out there and things just go pretty well. I'm feeling loose, comfortable, relaxed. I hit a few good shots, a green or two in regulation. I even make a few pars. I begin to think: *This game isn't so hard*. Then I shank one in the woods, or drop one in the drink. Before I know it, it's all three-putts and triple bogeys.

Coaches and sports psychologists will tell you that self-confidence can give an average athlete or team the courage and focus to defeat a more talented opponent. On the other hand, a lack of self-confidence can cause a great athlete to perform way below her potential. Self-confidence can make all the difference.

When it comes to matters of faith, self-confidence is always a disaster. In fact, my goal in this confirmation Sunday sermon is to take your self-confidence away. I want you to take your eyes off yourself and focus them squarely on Christ. I want

you to BE CONFIDENT IN CHRIST. On the basis of God's Word before us this morning I'll give you two reasons to have that kind of confidence: (1) Because the faithful God promises to keep you strong in Christ. (2) Because the same faithful promises that you are blameless in Christ.

I. Because he will keep you strong

The word *confirmation* means "strengthening." For the last two years we have studied God's Word together as outlined in Luther's Small Catechism. You have grown in the grace and knowledge of your Lord Jesus Christ. Your faith in him has been strengthened. You have matured and are now ready to receive his body and blood in Holy Communion.

Get the idea out of your head right now that you're done. Forget about any thought that you don't need to grow any more, that you've arrived, that your faith is dialed up as high as it will go.

You need to keep growing. All the time. Your whole life. Faith maintenance is a never-ending exercise. Why? Because insidious enemies are constantly trying to destroy it. Because the devil keeps on lying and the world keeps on distracting and your own flesh keeps trying to find something better to do with your life than

follow Jesus. Because these awful, incessant attacks will not end until you are safe in heaven.

You guys love my old sayings. Half the time you think I'm making stuff up. For the rest of you, an example of what I mean: One day in class I used the word *flabbergasted*. They were all convinced that I was just making stuff up.

Here's one, and I promise I am not making it up: "An army marches on its stomach." In other words, soldiers can only function and fight effectively if they are well fed. For this reason, our military has developed special food designed just for soldiers. MRE's or Meals Ready to Eat are self-contained meals – entrée, side dishes, drinks, dessert – with about 1,200 to 1,500 calories each. That's a lot. But there's another type called a First Strike Ration. Those have about 2,500 to 3,000 calories per meal. The daily recommended caloric intake for the average person is just 2,000 calories. Why so many calories for soldiers? Because battle requires a lot of energy. Fighting is intense and exhausting work.

Every day you go into battle. There are forces around you and within you that want to take you down. Satan, the world and your own flesh are vicious enemies dedicated to your destruction. They're going to try to convince you that all this religion stuff is garbage, that Jesus is just a teacher and not your Lord and Savior, that God's Word is full of lies and the church just wants to separate you for your money and take away your fun. They

desire your spiritual death! You need to fight them! To fight them you need to be well fed.

Listen to the Lord's promise: **He will keep you firm to the end.** In other words, he will feed and nourish your faith and keep it strong. He will empower you through Word and Supper to wage your daily battles, to fight the good fight of faith, to cling to Christ. If you were left on your own to fight these battles, in two seconds there'd be nothing left of you but a scorch mark on the ground.

But you are not left on your own. A Christian like you, armed with the Word of God, can tell Satan to take his lies elsewhere. A believer like you, fed and nourished by the Lord's own body and blood, can fight the world's distractions and deceptions. A child of God like you, baptized in the name of the Triune God, is empowered to live not for yourself but for the Lord who died and rose.

My dear young friends, you are soldiers in Christ. You are armed to the teeth. You carry the razor-sharp sword of the Spirit, the Word of almighty God himself, in your hand and in your heart. Be confident! Because through his powerful gospel the Lord promises to keep you strong.

Through that gift of faith you are also blameless in God's sight.

II. Because in him you are blameless

You are all very young. And therefore I think of you as better than me. What I mean is that you haven't had nearly as many opportunities to sin as I have. I have

more than forty years of evil memories to trouble my conscience: high school and college years, marriage and ministry. Words have come out of my mouth that have cut and hurt and belittled. I have done things that have been 100% about me and what I want, rather than about others and what they need. Thoughts have entered my mind that would make the devil himself blush. Thousands and thousands of each variety, day in and day out, year after sin-filled year. I have utterly failed to love my God and my neighbor. I have done all the bad things he hates. I have failed to do all the good things that he desires. Frankly, I'm a mess. And that's not going to change this side of heaven.

Before you get too cocky, let me remind you that you are sinners too, just as messed up and hell-deserving as me, in spite of your short time on this earth. Trust me – when you're old like me you'll have a lifetime of evil memories to keep you up at night. For now, let's remember the simple, sobering truth: **All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God** (Romans 3:23). You. Me. Everybody.

But, you know what? Our God has done something about this. He's taken action. He's done something that not only allows us to sleep at night, but to live in joy and confidence every day. He sent his Son!

He sent his Son into the Virgin's womb, into our flesh, into our place under the law. Jesus lived a holy life that counts as if we lived it.

God sent his Son onto the cross and into the tomb, bearing our sin and guilt and shame, and paying for it all with precious and priceless blood.

God sent his Son out of the tomb again, fully alive, victorious over sin and death and Satan, securing for you and me and all people what we need most: forgiveness of sins, friendship with God, an eternity of peace and pleasure in his presence.

Because of Jesus saving work – because he lived and died and rose for you – you are blameless in his sight. Perfect. Holy. Sinless. Justified. Remember what that means? Each of us can say, "In Jesus, it's just as if I'd never sinned."

Here's another one of my phrases: "Getting called on the carpet." Have you ever heard that one? It means having to stand before an authority figure – your parents, the principal, a police officer – and having to answer for your wrongdoing.

One day, we are all going to be called onto God's carpet. We're going to meet our Maker. On the Last Day we're going to stand before God in all his terrifying holiness. And yet we won't have to be afraid. When he says, "Why should I let you into my heaven," we have something to say. Not: "I did my very best." Not: "I was better than most people." Not: "I tried really hard to keep my confirmation vows." With confident faith and holy joy we can answer: "Jesus! That's why you should let me into heaven. Because Jesus' holiness covers my rebellion. Because

Jesus' blood washes away my sins.
Because Jesus, my Substitute, lived the
holy life I can't live, and made the
payment for sin I can't make. Father,
because of Jesus, you have to let me in!"
And you know what? He will. That's his
promise.

God is faithful. That means he keeps his
promises. Without exception. Every single
time. Dear confirmands, he promises
today to **keep you firm to the end, so that
you will be blameless on the day of our
Lord Jesus Christ.** Trust in those promises.
Be confident in Christ. Amen.

S.D.G.

REMAIN SEATED