

Publicly Confess Confidence in Your

Great Deliverer

† **With your praises (vv.5-8)**† **With your firstfruits (vv.9-10)**

In the name of Jesus, our **Great Deliverer**, dearly redeemed, confident children of God:

“How patient are you?” That was the first question I heard about New Life on Call Day at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wisconsin, May 1986. Mission Counselor Bob Hartman explained that I would have to hold off worship services for a year while ringing doorbells and gathering a flock. Support would come from mission offerings of fellow Christians in the Wisconsin Synod, precious souls we will someday meet in heaven. My first responsibility was to **Publicly Confess Confidence in my Great Deliverer**, Jesus Christ, then share His saving grace with all who would listen. Almost twenty-four years later God calls us today to **Publicly Confess Confidence in Your Great Deliverer** – first...

† **With your praises (vv.5-8)**

Some of us work on projects for many years. Scientists or electrical engineers collaborate on many good and useful tools blessing our lives with healthier medicine and more productivity. Recognition for your accomplishments is often lost in the corporate world. Think of the English clock maker who invented a perfect time piece for the British Navy to navigate the globe. His grandson finally secured compensation for his patent. A movie some years ago documented the struggles of the inventor of delayed windshield wipers. Auto makers did not want to credit or pay him. Praising others is hard.

But who can comprehend a project lasting more than a lifetime? Lack of control cuts deep in the creative soul of men like the Preacher in Ecclesiastes. As far as we know it was King Solomon who said: *“I hated all the things I had toiled for under the sun, because I must leave them to the one who comes after me. And who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool? Yet he will have control over all the work into which I have poured my effort and skill under the sun. This too is meaningless. So my heart began to despair over all my toilsome labor under the sun....”* (Ecclesiastes 2:18-26 NIV)

We must learn “to let go and let God.” But God cannot release His grip or people die eternally. God keeps control to keep all His promises even if it takes many generations. You would have to go back over 500 years before our text to hear the LORD first say to Abraham: *“Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated four hundred years. But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions.”* (Genesis 15:13f NIV) Abraham and Isaac would die. Abraham’s grandson Jacob would live most of his life in Canaan until the family escaped to Egypt for food from Joseph in the famine. Generation after generation would come and go as the LORD kept control of His-story. Finally at the Exodus Moses tells us: *“Now the length of time the Israelite people lived in Egypt was 430 years. At the end of the 430 years, to the very day, all the LORD’S divisions left Egypt.”* (Exodus 12:40f NIV)

Try to imagine a project lasting centuries. Then imagine this: What if it failed? What if the people crossed the Jordan into the Promised Land and then began worshiping other gods? Moses is worried they will. If they rebelled for forty years in the desert while he was still alive, what would they do when he was dead and gone? Deuteronomy is his collection of sermons to stand strong in the LORD.

Moses as a teacher does something that helps our faith too. This will keep your kids safe when all else fails. For God “hope and change” is not election talk. God makes no empty promises. He wants to change us from the inside out and give us living hope that can never die. This is what the Lord’s Apostle Peter told his readers: *“I will always remind you of these things, even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have. I think it is right to refresh your memory as long as I live in the tent of this body.”* (2 Peter 1:12f NIV) When kingdoms crumble and mountains fall into the heart of the sea, God wants us to remember all that He has done for us in the past. God keeps all His promises, but we need to remember those promises to have confidence for the future. Sunday School children learn them. Bible Class reviews them. Even if you have them all memorized you need to apply them.

God’s people still need refreshing on the record of God’s faithfulness. At the designated place for worship in the Promised Land, Moses says, *“You shall declare before the LORD your God: ‘My father [Jacob] was a wandering Aramean, and he went down into Egypt with a few people and lived there and became a great nation, powerful and numerous. But the Egyptians mistreated us and made us suffer, putting us to hard labor. Then we cried out to the LORD, the God of our fathers, and the LORD heard our voice and saw our misery, toil and oppression. So the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with great terror and with miraculous signs and wonders.’”*

The God of the Bible is unique. Suffering and tears move Him to help the helpless. Talk about this with your children especially during hard times of worry and distress. Remind them how God helped His people of old. By preserving His people and delivering them from Egypt, God kept the far greater promise to save us from our sins. Slavery to sin, death and hell our **Great Deliverer** defeated on the cross and in the empty tomb. All this Christ did for you. No matter how heavy the burden of your sins, no matter how sorry your disappointment, God gives you more than tender, loving care. He gives you His heart when He gives you His Son and all His blessings in His kingdom. **Publicly Confess Confidence in Your Great Deliverer – With your praises** especially in times of heartache and loss. Laugh at your troubles so light and momentary now. Magnify the wonders of heaven. **Confess Confidence...**

✠ **With your firstfruits (vv.9-10)**

The ancient Hebrew expression for **firstfruits** is ראשית פרי – literally, *head fruit*. Funny how the Holy Spirit captures the heart of our challenge and opportunity in two words. When you start a business, at first the money must be reinvested in equipment, inventory, workers, etc. But like the first cluster of grapes or load of grain for the farmer, your first real paycheck gets your attention. Then what does God do? He tugs at your heart strings when He says, “Give the **firstfruits**, the *head fruit* to me.”

God’s powerful deliverance from slavery to sin, death and hell calls you to **Publicly Confess Confidence in Your Great Deliverer**: *“[The LORD my God] brought us to this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey; and now I bring the firstfruits of the soil that you, O LORD, have given me.’ Place the basket before the LORD your God and bow down before him.”* “Talk is cheap,” but **Firstfruits** point both directions confessing God’s grace. **Firstfruits** look back and praise God for giving us a job and the ability to work. **Firstfruits** look ahead with confidence that the Giver of every good and perfect gift will continue to provide everything we need for this body and life. **Firstfruits** give brilliant confession of solid faith that *“He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?”* (Romans 8:32 NIV)

My joy for giving **Firstfruits** came by command from my father and example from my mother and her parents. Ten dimes Dad showed me. “This first one goes to God; you can spend the rest.” Ten dollars I showed my kids (adjusted for inflation). “The first one goes to God, the second in the bank, the rest you can spend.” Recently we received a generous check from some former members with the note, “We miss you.” The woman’s sister told me years ago how their father scolded her for her checkbook with no gifts for God. Kneel at the cross. Christ washed away all our selfish materialism. He set you free to **Confess** gratitude by word and deed. Praise Christ our **Great Deliverer** with **Firstfruits**. Amen.

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