

Stick With It!

✎ **What God has taught you. (vv.14,15)**

✎ **What God is working in you. (vv.16,17)**

In the name of Jesus, dear family of God and especially you confirmands, Jim Farrell and Noah Johnson:

Since you remember all my stories from Catechism class, what did my Grandfather say to me that time I felled a tree across his fence, driveway and nearly hit his house? It was not like George Washington and the cherry tree; I could not tell a lie. There lay the tree, the chainsaw was in my hand, and Granddad was coming up the driveway. After we discussed better ways to fall trees, his last words were, “Don’t let it make you afraid to cut the next one.” It’s like your Confirmation sermon theme: **Stick With It!**

That’s one characteristic of all the characters in our Scripture Lessons today. King Solomon could dedicate the temple in Jerusalem because his father King David **Stuck With It!** Even though the LORD said David had blood on his hands, he prepared for his son Solomon to build. At the dedication of the temple Solomon prayed for us Gentiles, “*foreigners*” to the Jewish faith, that we would **Stick With It!** in prayer and be confident God will always hear and help. (1 Kings 8:22f,41-43) That’s why Paul was so adamant that Peter not rely on works for salvation, but **Stick With It!** – by faith in this glorious Gospel of full and free forgiveness in Jesus Christ. (Galatians 1:1-10) That’s why Jesus was so impressed with the faith of the Roman centurion. He felt unworthy yet earnestly kept seeking Jesus’ help for his sick servant. (Luke 7:1-10) You too, dear Jim and Noah, **Stick With It!** You never want to quit or let go of...

✎ **What God has taught you. (vv.14,15)**

What if your friend Paul were in prison? He writes this letter to encourage you. **Stick With – What God has taught you**, Timothy, because “*you know from whom you learned it.*” Through your mother Eunice and grandmother Lois **God taught you** sincere faith. He gave special gifts of the Spirit by laying Paul’s hands on Timothy. Dear brothers, you’re just getting started. It’s not time for Tim to be timid, but to “*fan into flame the gift of God*” in “*a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.*” (1:5-7)

Confirmation is not just becoming a church member. Paul wants Timothy to join “*in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God, who has saved us and called us to a holy life – not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace.*” We’ve all done worse things than falling a few trees across God’s fence. Anytime we’ve been careless with our lessons, gives God reason to punish us forever. Instead, God gave us His grace “*in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time.*” His all-forgiving love God “*revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus.*” (1:8f)

Inside and outside enemies of your body and soul will keep trying to strip away God’s blessings of your Confirmation. But “*guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you – guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us.*” (1:14) Don’t be offended when you find unrepentant sinners and hypocrites in the church. They want to please themselves instead of our Lord Christ. But “*the Lord knows those who are his.*” And He says, “*Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness.*” (2:19) Our job as young Christians is to “*flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.*” (2:22) That means finding fellowship with sincere Christians who practice what they preach.

Don’t expect things to get easier. “*There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God – having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them.*” (3:1-5) Timothy, Jim, Noah – build on what you

have already learned from Paul and other faithful Christians. Watch what happens in the lives of those who follow God's Word and those who do not. **Stick With It!** – because *“from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.”*

Too often students and adults just say what the teacher or parents or friends want to hear. They try to “go along to get along.” But Paul is telling us about his personal conviction, not just thinking “happy thoughts.” The written tests are over. Now the real test begins. Will you stand for God's truth no matter who is watching or might be offended? Things may not go your way. Remember when Joseph in Egypt obeyed God's Sixth Commandment instead of his master's wife? Accused of rape and imprisoned, Joseph would still say, “Jim! Noah! **Stick With It!**” God's kingdom comes through Word and sacrament. He wants to rule in your heart. **God has taught you** His holy Law that shows our sin and the damnation we deserve. **God has taught you** His sweet, sweet Gospel that shows our Savior and the salvation of His all-forgiving grace. With Paul in Jim's Confirmation passage: *“I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.”* (Romans 1:16) **Stick With – What God has taught you, and...**

What God is working in you. (vv.16,17)

As we've studied together, we've become more convinced that *“all Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.”* This is not just for Catechism Class. It's not so you can join a church and everyone be proud of you. No, it's *“so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”* **What God is working in you** is useful for everyone you know. **Stick With It!** – because first it's good and useful for you.

Remember when we talked about how we're like sheep and Jesus is the Good Shepherd? We like to keep walking the same trails into ruts. Then we get lazy and lie down, wiggling back and forth until our dirty wool flips us over on our back, belly up to the sun. That's a “cast” sheep. Left like this, we will die from heat or vultures. So our faithful Shepherd has to keep looking for us. Think about this when you're “cast down,” unhappy or depressed. The Good Shepherd is looking for you.

In his classic book, *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23*, Philip Keller recalls what he would do:

“As soon as I reached the cast ewe my very first impulse was to pick it up. Tenderly I would roll the sheep over on its side. This would relieve the pressure of gases in the rumen. If she had been down for long I would have to lift her onto her feet. Then straddling the sheep with my legs I would hold her erect, rubbing her limbs to restore the circulation to her legs. This often took quite a little time. When the sheep started to walk again she often just stumbled, staggered and collapsed in a heap once more.

“All the time I worked on the cast sheep I would talk to it gently...always...in language that combined tenderness and rebuke, compassion and correction. Little by little the sheep would...start to walk steadily and surely. By and by it would dash away to rejoin the others, set free from its fears and frustrations, given another chance to live a little longer.” (Cf. Ps 23:3a – “He restoreth my soul.”)¹

In Catechism class God set you on your feet to run with the flock. But don't run away. Don't ignore the Shepherd's voice when God calls you back again. Kneel at the cross in repentant faith and see your Savior there. Run to the empty tomb and enjoy your victory there. Look up in prayer and always see God smiling down on you. You may feel as if you're running out of grace and goodness from God. But your heavenly father is always calling you in His Word, “Come on back. There's more where that came from.” All our success in this life and the next turns on Noah's Confirmation passage: *“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.”* (Psalm 119:105 NIV) **Stick With It!** And your pathway here will lead to glory there with God in heaven. Amen.

¹ Keller, Philip. *A Shepherd Looks At Psalm 23*. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1970, p. 63.