

## God's Light Confirms You

In the name of Jesus, the Light of the world, dearly redeemed, especially you dear Confirmands:

Seeing you boys here for Confirmation today shows God has a sense of humor. Not many years ago as 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> graders, your energy level made me wonder how we would do Catechism. But God is good. He hears our prayers for each other, for your parents and teachers too. God blessed us with one of the best years ever. And seeing Allie in class with Mr. and Mrs. Barry and Joy Gostchock made it even better. Allie's pictures show all the Bible stories you studied. God has shined the **Light** of His Word on all of you so that today we celebrate the fact that **God's Light Confirms You**. Your Confirmation sermon text is the key: ***"Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path."*** (Psalm 119:105 NIV)

And yet, with each Confirmation Sunday comes a shadow. Generations of boys and girls, now moms and dads, have stood before God's altar and promised to stay faithful to our faithful God even in the face of death. They confessed their gratitude for God's grace in the full and free forgiveness of our sins. They sincerely answered, "Yes, and I ask God to help me." Will their life prove their good intentions were empty words? Will they despise preaching and God's Word? Turn their backs on the sacraments?

We all prove God's Word true as He describes us: sheep who love to wander. The weeds of worldly wisdom look so inviting, but deadly are they to sheep and lambs. Drinking from the polluted water of false doctrine is so natural for sheep who contaminate their own water supplies. And the predators of our souls, especially Satan as a roaring lion prowls about to devour many. Alone we're lost.

In Catechism we learn that Ten Commandments are not ten suggestions. The Holy Spirit inspired Jeremiah (23:28f) to compare God's Word to hellfire that burns and a hammer that crushes. God is deadly serious about His commands and cannot merely overlook sin or sweep it under the rug. ***"For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any double-edged sword. It penetrates even to the point of dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow, even being able to judge the ideas and thoughts of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from him, but everything is uncovered and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we will give an account."*** (Hebrews 4:12-13 EHV) How can we survive Judgment Day?

Isn't it all because Jesus our Good Shepherd backs up His gracious words with powerful works? He says: ***"I am the Good Shepherd [who] lays down his life for the sheep....I have the authority to lay it down, and I have the authority to take it up again. This is the commission I received from my Father."*** (John 10:11,18 EHV) His laid down life and shed blood you have been preparing to receive in His Holy Supper, powered by that same Word that enabled the water of Baptism to wash your sins away.

God's love for you is so great that He makes a great comparison for Mother's Day: ***"Can a woman forget her nursing child and not show mercy to the son from her womb? Even if these women could forget, I will never forget you. Look, I have inscribed you on the palms of my hands."*** (Isaiah 49:15f EHV) **God's Light Confirms You** in the message of law and gospel, sin and grace. Amazing!

So there's the power of my Confirmation passage which goes to Sawyer: ***"I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile."*** (Romans 1:16 NIV) Most young people struggle to memorize Bible passages and Catechism, but, Sawyer, you never gave up. You never complained. You are a fine representative of the determination shown by your parents and all this year in a powerful desire to learn God's Word. And He has given you a special gift to apply God's Word to real life. Often when my questions left blank looks on others, you answered simply and clearly from God's Word. The Good News is so powerful. I pray you and your classmates will consider using your gifts to tell others as pastors and teachers, please God.

Garrett, you too have been gifted by God in practical application. Along with this is a winsome leadership skill to draw your classmates and siblings in God's grace and hope. This is such a good and useful gift to help others. Your Confirmation passage is also your blessing today: ***"May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage your heart(s) and strengthen you in every good deed and word."*** (2 Thessalonians 2:16f NIV) God's strength will never fail you in the worst of times. He promises, ***"My power is made perfect in weakness."*** (2 Corinthians 12:9 NIV) We honestly confess our *weakness* and discover God's strength because, ***"Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path."*** (Psalm 119:105 NIV)

The longest Confirmation verse goes to you, Caleb, and I know you'll have no trouble memorizing it – if you haven't already. All of these are favorites of mine, but Isaiah 43:1-3, reminds me of the first time I saw you playing piano for Chapel at Christ Lutheran School. I was impressed that you were cool under pressure. When I tried to play in high school, my knees shook the whole grand piano. But God gave you that family gift of music and the confidence to share it. Still, you know that life can throw extreme difficulties at all of us that can rattle anyone at times. You'll need to preach to your heart to stay calm and fearless. Think about times you've waded through rivers hunting and fishing with your Dad as I with mine. Maybe even putting down some flames. Already God has proven His faithfulness in your passage: ***"Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior."*** (Isaiah 43:1-3 NIV) Pure gold.

Ah, Davis, the one hard-nosed football player in the class. You've heard some of my stories of lessons learned on the gridiron. Like that long drive to the state border where the whole county had one high school of rough boned rancher's kids. Body aches from those games made the bus ride home even longer. Doubtless, you can give as good as you get out there, but here's what impresses me most. God has given you a truly tender heart. If we talk about when your sister Allie was little, you get a little tear in your eye like a diamond from God. Thanks to Allie, God has given you insights into serving others that few young people your age ever receive. And for all those times when you feel your own need for strength and encouragement, you have this from God: ***"So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."*** (Isaiah 41:10 NIV) **God's Light Confirms You.** It makes you strong in faith and hope.

Now, Allie, you know I saved my best memory for last. The first time I met you, you were so tiny, small enough to fit inside a shoebox. Really! Your mom and dad asked me to come and baptize you in the hospital. We did not know if God would let us keep you here on earth or if He was going to take you home to heaven right away. Right after I baptized you "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit," I sang to you the verses of today's first hymn, "I Am Jesus' Little Lamb." While I was singing, your itty bitty, tiny little fingers were wrapped around my finger. You were squeezing so tight. And I was so thankful to God for that reminder of how the Holy Spirit was already working in your heart. When you got big enough to help with our Sunday School Christmas Service, your brother Davis helped you so you could have such a big smile when you said your part. And now when you see me give the blessing from God, you give me the blessing too. So today, Allie, as the Word of **God's Light Confirms You**, I give you the shortest and sweetest passage of all. If ever you wonder about how much you are loved, remember what God says to you, Allie: ***"I have loved you with an everlasting love."*** (Jeremiah 31:3 NIV) God loved you before time began. And God will love you forever and for always.

All of these Bible passages and the rest you memorized in Catechism are diamonds God wants you all to keep and treasure. And even if you wander away for a time, remember Jesus is always waiting with open arms to welcome you back. Staying close to Him during these teen years, God will help you make good life decisions. None of us can really confirm you today. **God's Light Confirms You** with His strength so you can praise God, ***"Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path."*** Amen.