

Jesus' Commitment to You is Perfect

Romans 8:31-39

Confirmation 4-20-23 Pastor Pufahl

Today should be a very scary day for all of our confirmation students. I'm not talking about having to stand in front of all y'all to give their speeches because after all, that was done on Thursday. I'm not talking about that they soon will be facing you all to sing a stanza of *In Christ Alone* all by themselves. I'm not talking about how all eyes will be on them.

So, why should it be a very scary day? I am actually going to make it even scarier for you all by not telling you right now.

One cannot help but think about confirmation on Confirmation Weekend. But what does confirmation mean? What is it all about? There could be a wide array of answers. However, I would think most would think about the vow of faithfulness, right? Soon all 25 of them are going to stand up together and make those vows to Jesus to be faithful to him, even if it would mean death to confess they believe in Jesus.

Do we have any other areas of life where we make such a commitment vow? In a strange way, that is what I was thinking about this week. Think about some other areas of commitment. To your job. In a way, you make a commitment. You will be faithful to the work. You will show up on time. You will do what you are asked. Commitment. What happens if you don't follow through with the commitment? Written up, stern talk from the boss, fired. I am definitely not making light of that situation, but more talking as the world views this commitment. In today's environment, is that even a big deal? You could probably find a job as you are walking away from your former employer. Everyone is hiring, good wages, and you hardly need to have previous experience.

To your marriage. You make a vow in your marriage. You will be faithful to your spouse. You will love your spouse and treasure your spouse. What happens if you break that vow? Again, this isn't coming from a pastoral voice, but the voice of the world. Is it even a big deal to break your vow of faithfulness in your marriage, at least to the world? Breaking up is almost glorified in today's society, or at least it is seen as the norm. Jokes are made that half of all marriages end in divorce, so you can take your vows lightly.

Yikes. We can see how the world takes vows lightly today. To the world, a vow isn't that big of a deal because, are there *really* any consequences for failing to be faithful? And, couldn't you say the same about the confirmation vow you made and that the confirmands will be making today? Let's face it, more than half of all confirmation students don't attend church on a regular basis shortly after they make that vow. Should that be to the shame of the student or the parents? This vow they will be taking, which so many of us have also taken, is that no matter what, nothing will get in their way of being faithful to Jesus. They would be willing to stare death in the face, mocking death all the while they are confessing and professing their faith in Jesus. And if the world was in charge of seeing the seriousness of this vow, it wouldn't be that big of a deal. "Just another vow to break...who cares?!"

But this isn't just a worldly vow. This is your spiritual vow to Jesus. And Jesus actually has a consequence for breaking this vow. Ready for it? This is the reason why I said this should be the scariest day of your life. Jesus says: **"Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven. ³³ But whoever disowns me before others, I will disown before my Father in heaven** (Matthew 10:32-33).

This is serious. This isn't just a friend not wanting to be your friend for a few hours, but by the end of the day all is good again. This is Jesus talking about the end of time, when he comes to judge. If we claim to have faith but have denied Jesus, Jesus will not be there for us in the end.

Are you starting to see why this should be the scariest day for these students? Are you ready to make that vow with all that on the line? Before you answer that question, I want to do a little exercise with you all. Raise your hand if you have been 100% faithful to Jesus. Raise your hand if you have kept all his commands and therefore have never denied Jesus or what he has to say. My hand isn't in the air. In this crowd are the parents and relatives of the confirmands. Their hands should

not be in the air either. In fact, none of our hands should be in the air. There is not ONE person who has been faithful to Jesus 100% of the time. Does that mean we are all destined to be denied by Jesus and therefore not allowed into heaven?

One more exercise. Now raise your hand if you know that, in spite of the fact that you have sinned by not being faithful to Jesus, that you know and believe that all of your sins are forgiven and wiped away because Jesus was 100% faithful to you. Raise your hand if you trust and believe that heaven is yours because of Jesus and only because of Jesus because in him, you are forgiven and through him you get heaven. Now all hands should be in the air. And in that exercise, you can see where our confidence lies. We are confident, not because of our faithfulness, but because of Jesus' faithfulness. Not that I want you to take your vows lightly. I don't want you to treat your vows like the world treats most vows...not a big deal. I want you to take these vows seriously and think about them.

But it is not your vow that gets you into heaven. It is not your vow that forgives your sins. It is not your vow which would make Jesus want you in heaven. It is in fact Jesus' vow. Listen again to these words from Romans 8: **What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³²He 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? ³³Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. ³⁴Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. ³⁵Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ³⁶As it is written: “For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.” ³⁷No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

This is a vow from God. What is he going to allow to get between he and his love for you? NOTHING. God's vow. Nothing will stop him from loving you. Nothing will be a threat to you. How can you be so certain? Just look again at verse 32 - **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?** Not even sparing his own son from the gruesome death on a cross was going to get in his way of showing his love for you. He vowed to send Jesus. He kept that vow and sent Jesus.

Now he has a vow to continue to shower his love on you. And you know with 100% certainty he will keep that vow.

Yes, if you choose to walk away from him and choose to deny him, then we know the outcome. But Jesus will never give up on you. He will never walk away from you. He will continue to search for you because that is who he is and that is what he vowed to do.

So no, today should NOT be the scariest day of your life. It should be the happiest. Yes, confirmation is a vow, but it is so much more than that. It is a vow in Jesus' commitment TO YOU. And his commitment is perfect.

So, let's practice, shall we?

Do you believe that you are sinful and haven't been faithful to Jesus, if so answer: **I do.**

Do you believe God sent his son Jesus just like he promised? **I do.**

Do you trust in the promises of God that when Jesus died on the cross all your sins died there too? **I do**

Do you confess Jesus as the only way to heaven and that, since he has taken all your sins, heaven is yours? **I do!**

That's it. That really is what confirmation is about. Not scary at all. You are confessing that Jesus did it all. And he did. Now he is making even more promises to you. NOTHING can separate you from God's love. And in the end, Jesus will proudly confess you before his Father in heaven. How do we know? Because Jesus' commitment to you is perfect. Amen.