

Confirmation Sunday – August 15, 2010 – Faith Lutheran Church, Radcliff, KY
Based on Joshua 1:9 – written by Pastor Paul Horn
Confirmation of Shaina deKalands

Listen to the LORD's Command on Your Confirmation Day

- I. **Do not be terrified; be courageous**
- II. **Do not be discouraged; be strong**

Well young lady, here you are. How are you feeling? Relieved that two years of intense study of the great doctrinal truths of Scripture from Luther's catechism is over? You and I have discussed this... and we know that it's not over, is it? This is just the beginning. You and I are both lifelong students of the Scriptures. Are you a little nervous? After all, you've had the last few weeks to think about the promise you're making today. You're making a pledge to be faithful to all of the truths of God's Word and to stand firm in the Christian faith, even to the point of death. So if someone were to stick a gun to your head and say, "Shaina, deny that Jesus is your Savior," You would confidently say, "No." And then the next words to fall from your lips would be, "Into your hands I commend my spirit, O Lord." While the likelihood of that scenario taking place is possible, it's not very realistic living in the nation that we currently call home.

I think that a more realistic and beneficial approach is to talk the temptations that you will face. Satan will use your friends, and the things you see and hear on your television and computer screen, and the teachers and professors in your classrooms to get you to deny Jesus as your Savior. Satan will use whatever means he can to cause you to fall away from the faith you profess here today. But your God has good news for you. Shaina, He says to you today, "**Do not be terrified; be courageous. Do not be dismayed; be strong. The LORD your God is with you wherever you go.**"

Your confirmation passage that I chose for you is Joshua 1:9. To understand this passage we need to look at the context. Moses, the tried and true leader of Israel, the great intercessor for the people, through whom the LORD performed many great miracles, has died. Now the LORD has selected a man by the name of Joshua to lead the nation of Israel into the Promised Land to battle against the inhabitants of the land. How do you think Joshua felt? The LORD had entrusted him with the great responsibility of leading 2million people. Joshua knew what he was getting into. He had watched Moses, and had seen how difficult it was to lead these people, because they often complained and rebelled and were so stubborn. The first task wasn't going to be easy. The first city that stood in their way was Jericho, with walls so thick you could drive two SUVs on the top of them. Did he have reason to be terrified? Through human eyes, yes. But his Almighty commander-in-chief told him otherwise. He said to Joshua, "**Do not be terrified, be courageous. The LORD your God is with you wherever you go,**" even into battle.

Do you know what battles you will have to fight in your future? Just ask any of the adults here. They know, because they've been in your seat. They know the temptations you will face... you will go to a concert with your friends, and someone will

pass a funny looking cigarette down the aisle and ask if you want to take a hit. You will date a young man who will try to convince you to do things that God reserves specifically for marriage. You will go to a party with your friends and one of them will hold a cup up to your lips and say, "Drink this," even though you're not the legal drinking age. Your friends will call you old-fashioned, conservative and "no fun" because you will refuse to participate in everything that your friends or classmates do. You will be tempted to abandon the faith you profess here today, because doing that will seem a lot easier than standing up for the truth.

When you look at everything that is happening in your life, and when you contemplate the future and think about what could happen, your heart could melt with fear and you could become terrified, but then you would be guilty of falling into the same unbelief of the people of Jericho. Because that's what fear is; fear is failure to trust that God will do what he says he's going to do. Fear is failure to trust that God has the power to do what he says he's going to do. Fear is unbelief. Fear is sin.

Do you remember what Joshua did after the LORD gave him the command, "**Do not be terrified, be courageous?**" Joshua confidently led the people of Israel and they marched around the city and the walls came a'tumblin' down.

Are you afraid of what your future holds for you? Do you have reason to be? Not at all. For your God commands you, "Shaina, **be courageous.**" You will be courageous as you face temptation after temptation. He promises you, "**For the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.**" Did not Jesus himself say, "**Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.**" (Matthew 28:20) Jesus spoke those words just before he ascended into the clouds above and hid himself from his disciples. Jesus left earth because he had nothing more to do on earth. He had accomplished everything that his Father asked him to do to save the world from its sin and from death and hell. In order to save the world from its sins, to save you from your sins of fear and doubt and falling into temptation, Jesus had to satisfy his Father's demand to live a holy life, without sinning, without falling into temptation. Can you imagine? Living even just one day without every falling into temptation, without doubts, without fear?

And Jesus did just that, even during his teenage years. Jesus never allowed Satan to use his friends or the ideas of this sinful world to lead him astray from following each and every one of God's commandments. Even God's command to always be courageous was met by Jesus. That's a first commandment issue, isn't it? Jesus always trusted in his God above all things. Even when he faced death, Jesus was never afraid, but he entrusted his life to his Father's care crying, "**Into your hands I commend my spirit!**" That complete, perfect life is the robe of righteousness that Christ draped over you when the water of life was poured on your little head when you were a baby. At your baptism, God made a promise to you Shaina, that through the washing with water and the Word, Christ's holiness became yours. His life washed over your imperfect life. Christ's death swept away all of your sins of doubt and fear. You are holy and precious in his sight.

As a baptized child of God you also have Jesus at your side always. And that's a good thing, because Satan will come at you like a roaring lion to tear you away from your faith in Christ Jesus. But you will be courageous, like a lioness protecting her cubs. She fears no one. You fear no one. You fear no temptation. You do not even fear Satan. For Christ has already defeated Satan. Christ has seen every temptation and has defeated every temptation. He stands next to you in battle, and gives you the courage to fight temptation. He will give you a way out of every temptation. He will give you the courage to stand firm in your faith, even to the point of death. He promises it. **For the LORD your God is with you wherever you go...**

I cannot imagine how Joshua must have felt after such a convincing victory over the mighty city of Jericho, only to see his soldiers running back to camp from battle like dogs being beaten with a stick. God was not with his people when they marched against the tiny city of Ai. For someone had disobeyed his orders at Jericho. A man by the name of Achan coveted gold and silver and costly imported robes that he saw in the city and took them. And for that sin, God's anger burned against Israel. Do you think Joshua was a little bit discouraged? God had told him that he would win every battle. Now, he was 1-1 because someone didn't listen!

Shaina, as you go through life, there will be disappointments. Again, ask these people sitting around you. They've been there, too. You might bomb an important test in school. You might not get that scholarship you hoped to get. You might not be accepted at the college you applied to. You will have a teacher in high school or a professor in college who will mock you in front of the whole class because you are a Christian. One day you might be sitting in your room all by yourself and wondering out loud, "What am I doing with my life? Where am I going?" We pray that these things won't happen, but we do know that there will be disappointments in your life. And yet God commands you, "Shaina, don't be discouraged. Be strong." And you might question God and ask, "How can I be strong when my life is this way?"

And that's ok to ask God that question, because he will answer you right back, "**Be strong for I the LORD your God am with you wherever you go.**" As you travel the highway of life, you will encounter speed bumps potholes and major detours. The highway may not always lead you on the way you wanted to go. But know that your Lord Jesus is sitting right next to you in the passenger seat. He promises that he will give you the strength to get through the disappointments in life. He promises that that strength comes to you through his Word and Sacraments. I encourage you to follow through on the promise you make today, make God's Word part of your life everyday and you will be empowered by the Gospel to face life with the resolve that only God can give.

After the LORD sorted out the mess with Achan and his sin of coveting, he had to remind his servant Joshua again, "Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged." (chapter 8) And he gave the commander of his people a promise, "You will defeat the city of Ai." Just like Joshua, you will need to be reminded of God's promises. Remain faithful to God's Word in worship and regular Bible study and you will always hear the voice of

your Savior comforting you with his promises, “**Be courageous; be strong. For I, the LORD your God am with you wherever you go.**” May God grant it to you for Jesus’ sake. Amen.