**Psalm 50:15** May 15, 2022

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*Psalm 50:15 Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor me.*

**When You, Josh, Get in Trouble**

Dear Friends in Christ,

Have you noticed how beautiful things are out there—the weather, the leaves, the flowers? Of course you have! Especially you, Josh! With all your outdoor time playing soccer, baseball and football, how could you not? As budding trees turn into full-fledged, rollicking summer life, we celebrate many things.

One thing we celebrate at this time of year is graduations. Kids, young people, young adults are all stepping up to the next level of life. Graduation speeches speak of opportunity, the chance to make a difference; all of life is open before you. There is unbridled optimism. That is mostly a good thing!

Confirmation happens at the same time of year. In some respects it is very similar to a graduation. Your two year course in catechism class has been completed. Today you become a communicant member of this family of believers. How special that you and your entire family can receive communion together! You are stepping up to the next level.

Like graduation, confirmation is not just completing something. It also has an eye to the future. The promises you make today are life-long promises that, God-willing, will be lived out in a long life. Two years of catechism class, hundreds of Sunday School lessons, personal devotion with God, all have prepared you for living life under God’s blessing.

**I.** But confirmation tends to be a little more… realistic… than graduation. We see it on the front cover of the bulletin: a picture of a weapon and the command to put on your battle armor. We heard it in the hymn we just sang, “Rise! To Arms!” Of course, physical violence has no place in the Christian’s struggles. No, our struggles are much more serious than that. The reading from Ephesians said, *“Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against… the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.”*

And then there is your confirmation verse, your verse, directing our thoughts this morning: ***“Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor me.”*** It, too, has a serious side.

How did it get to be your confirmation verse? It was back when you were just starting the second year of classes. I can’t remember what the lesson was, but we read Psalm 50:15 and your eyes lit up. “Hey, I remember that one!” you almost shouted. Then you added, “I think that is my favorite Bible passage.” A couple months later it came up again. You see, this passage comes up every year with the Second Commandment and again with the Lord’s Prayer. And you said, “I really like that one.” Then, about two months ago, when I asked you to start thinking about confirmation verses, I handed you a sheet of paper with a couple dozen great Bible passages and you said, “I’m thinking about Psalm50:15.” It wasn’t on the paper. But we made an exception.

This confirmation verse you love so much is a little more realistic than most graduation speeches. If you don’t listen carefully, it can sound all sunny and warm: ***“Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor me.”*** But did you hear what you verse assumes? ***“Call upon me in the day of…”*** the day of what? Trouble.

Yes, unlike most graduation speeches, your confirmation verse actually takes into account the realities of life. There will be trouble. We can take it for granted—God does—that there will be trouble. There will be the troubles of friends who turn out to not really be friends. There will be the worry of what future to pursue. There is the pressure of trying to meet other people’s expectations, and wondering why they won’t leave you alone just to be the person you want to be. And then, some day, there will be dating, and making ends meet, and… All the while there will be temptations to take short-cuts, peer pressure to do what God does not want you to do, and just plain old Satan whispering to you, “Did God really say?” When God says to you, ***“Call upon me in the day of trouble,”*** he isn’t saying, “If trouble comes.” He is saying, “When trouble comes.”

In spite of the reality of living in a fallen world, this *is* a warm and sunny verse because God simply tells you: “In your day of trouble, ***Call upon me.”*** He puts no condition on it. He granted you that inalienable right, long before you started catechism class. It happened over 13 years ago when you weren’t even two weeks old, on the 8th of March 2009. Your parents brought you to be baptized. I imagine it was over at that storefront on Wilson Rd. There and then you were adopted into God’s family. There and then Jesus Christ’s sacrifice for your sins, for all your sins, was credited to you. You were given forgiveness, spiritual life and eternal salvation. And once you have been adopted into God’s family, you have the family privileges.

One of those privileges is prayer, the right to call upon, to shout out to God for help. Cleansed by the blood of Christ in baptism, you have the clearance to burst into the throne room of heaven at any time and present your request to God, and he will listen. In the book of Luke Jesus describes the exact same thing about prayer: *“Will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? …I tell you, he will see that they get justice , and quickly”* (18:7-8).

**II.** But I think this Psalms passage is a better confirmation passage because it has a compact portableness that you can take anywhere. It’s easy to memorize. And there is a matter-of-fact-ness about it that takes all the worry and complication out of prayer. For God’s people, God’s children, there is always a line open. Simply close your eyes, fold your hands, and call on God’s name. *And* there is something so simple promised in God’s response, ***“Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you.”*** No lengthy explanation, just the promise that God will act.

Now, one thing. How he delivers you is up to God. There are times that God will simply and quickly do amazing things, maybe even something we can call a miracle. Sometimes he will have people show up at just the right time, too freaky to be a coincidence. At other times it will be direction from God’s word that gives us the wisdom or power to do what needs to be done. God’s deliverance can be correction, rebuke, even getting caught, and that is God’s way of keeping and delivering you from even greater trouble. But God’s final goal in deliverance is always to get you to heaven. We leave the “how” of deliverance to God, and simply call upon him, confident that he hears and acts.

**III.** Then there is the last part of your verse, ***“and you will honor me.”*** In choosing this verse, you tying yourself to the mast. What does that mean? It’s a word picture that comes from a classic Greek poem, Homer’s *Odyssey*. Without going into the long (and interesting) story behind it, it is the picture of a boat in a dangerous situation, so dangerous that a sailor let’s himself be tied to the mast of the ship so that he can’t be lost at sea. The metaphor means to give up some of your freedom to avoid something hugely dangerous. When you really take to heart what this verse says, ***“and you will honor me,”*** you are tying yourself to the mast of God’s will and Word. You are voluntarily, even joyfully saying that because of all God’s goodness to you, you are going to limit your freedoms. You will do what brings honor to God, because that is only right. It won’t always be convenient. It won’t always be popular. It won’t even always be cheap. But it will never be any less than God deserves for all he has done for you in Jesus.

Honoring God does involve giving God credit. But honoring God is not merely tipping your hat to God when he does something awesome for you. Honoring God means your entire life. We spent a lot of time on that in class. We not only talked about who God is and what he has done for us. Especially in the Ten Commandments we learned how we honor God through the way we live. As Christians, we do the things that God desires, and refuse to take part in what God hates. That is honoring God.

And suddenly we see that this passage doesn’t just talk about prayer, but in a way, it covers your relationship to God every day of life. Because when you are in a time of trouble, God wants you to cry out to him so that he can deliver you. And when you are not in a time of trouble, do you know what you are doing? You are honoring God for the trouble he got you out of.

May you, Josh, carry this Bible passage with you, every day; so that in every moment of tension, worry, temptation, disappointment, pain or sorrow you call on God. And so that every day in between you are joyfully, thankfully bringing honor to God. Amen.