

# Confirming Our Baptismal Covenant

Many people are baptized as an infant and don't remember the ceremony. Yet they have been brought into a covenant with God. The endeavor of faith begins and with it the promise to walk according to His will and teachings. Later, after eleven years of Sunday school, it is time for confirmation school. There one will confess a willingness to walk in faith with the help of God. It is a confirmation that the covenant is still in effect.

In classes the students learn more about God's Word, become strengthened in faith, and make new lifelong friendships. A student may not get first choice of confirmation school location, but can still recognize the blessings that it brings. Confirmation school can be a blessed experience when one goes with the right frame of mind.

## **The Covenant of Baptism**

God, our dear Heavenly Father, Creator of all, has given the gift of life and living faith to all people born into this world. In this faith we have the hope of attaining eternal life in heaven one day. It is His will that all people would remain close to Him and live according to His Word. He has made a general covenant (promise) with His own to be their God if they will be His people.

One personal promise made directly between an individual and God is to keep faith and a good conscience. The outward sign of this promise is baptism. A child is God's own already before birth and is heaven acceptable because of the Lord Jesus' redemption work. Since even newborn babies have faith, they are baptized. The covenant is in effect as long as a person keeps faith and a good conscience.

The disciples asked, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" Jesus called a little child to Him and answered them, saying, "Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 18:4). Jesus emphasized that unless they become as little children and believe in Him, they cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.

## **The Baptisms of Water and the Holy Ghost**

God established the first covenant with Noah and his sons. He made a promise to them and all people, that the world would never again be destroyed by a flood. God also made a covenant with Abraham. He promised Abraham that his seed would be as the stars of the heaven. And Abraham "believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness" (Gen. 15:5,6). As a sign of this covenant with Abraham, God instituted circumcision, which was the Old Testament covenant that corresponded to baptism.

John the Baptist was sent as a messenger to prepare the way for Jesus. He proclaimed, "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire" (Matt. 3:11). In such a spiritual baptism, the Holy Ghost works within one's heart to deaden (mortify) the deeds of the body (Rom. 8:13).

## **Jesus' Mission Command Includes Baptism**

Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist. "And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:16,17).

Following His resurrection, Jesus gave the baptismal command to the disciples, “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world” (Matt. 28:18-20).

### **Parents and Godparents Have a Responsibility to Teach**

God never breaks His promise to us, but a child of God is weak and faulty. Sin attaches daily in one’s life. The source of power in our life of faith, and in the care and rearing of our children, is in the gospel of the forgiveness of sins. Parents desire to do what Christian love teaches and bring their children into the covenant of Holy Baptism. This means giving a Christian upbringing according to the teachings of God’s Word and His kingdom.

Godparents are usually part of the baptismal ceremony and become lifelong special escorts for the child. They share in the parent’s prayer that God would protect the child and support the parents in the work of rearing the child.

### **Being Confirmed in the Covenant of Baptism**

On confirmation Sunday a minister will pray, “May God bestow upon you His grace, that you would be able to walk accordingly in your faith,” and then ask the students, “Are you willing to walk accordingly, with the help of the grace of God, in your life of faith?” By answering affirmatively, he or she confess to be living in the baptismal covenant with God to keep faith and a good conscience. The congregation is a witness to the promise.

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#### **Discussion Points**

1. Who are acceptable to be baptized?
2. What responsibilities does this covenant give to the parents?
3. How can the godparents help in supporting this covenant?
4. Does God ever break this covenant?
5. Do we have to be baptized before we can go to confirmation?
6. If someone is baptized, leaves faith, and later repents, do they have to be baptized again?