

**Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable — if anything is excellent or praiseworthy — think about such things.**

**Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me — put it into practice.**

**And the God of peace will be with you.**

Can you figure out this riddle? What can be both: Hard & Soft? Wet & Dry? Clean & Dirty? Soaked & Absorbent?

It's a sponge. A sponge has a ton of uses. It cleans up messes. It scrubs away dirt. It soaks up spills. It can be used to paint walls and pictures. It can be used for grouting a tiling project. But really, a sponge has 2 main uses. They soak things up and squeeze things out.

On your Confirmation Day, the Lord you have come to know, to love and to trust wants you to **“Be a Christian Sponge!”** And you can, when you do the 2 things a sponge does: **1) Soak things up, and 2) Squeeze things out.**

Listen again to our lesson, and think about it this time as if you were a sponge: **Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable — if anything is excellent or praiseworthy — think about** (*soak things up*).

Actually, we're all very good at soaking things up. Experts tell us that during the 9 months we're in our mom's tummy, we're soaking up sounds, music and voices. That's why mom's voice is so soothing and familiar the moment we arrive in this world.

We soak up what others are doing around us. Our clothes and shoes and hairstyles — are all things we've seen others wear.

We soak up the behaviors of those around us. We see others do it, so we try it. Jumping off a bed, hitting a baseball, playing the piano or video games, baking a cake ... we soak things up. Why do

younger brothers and sisters do the same things, and talk the same way as their older siblings, only at a much younger age? They're sponges, soaking things up the whole time.

There's something else we've also been soaking up since the moment we were conceived ... and that is sin. **“I've been a sinner from birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.”** We inherited our original sin from our parents. Our Lord holds us responsible. **“The soul who sins is the one who will die,”** is as brutally honest as it gets.

That sinful nature inside of us from the time of our conception, leads us to soak up bad words, hurtful actions, selfish attitudes and nasty thoughts whether we're 8 months or 88 years old. We must take full responsibility for our sins.

The good news you've come to know by soaking up God's Word is that your Lord has taken the sponge of your life, which is soaked and stained with sin and unbelief, and he rinsed it clean in the waters of our Baptism. Through a powerful combination of H<sub>2</sub>O, God's Word and the blood of God's Lamb, the Holy Spirit washed the sin away from our heart and planted faith there.

For you, that happened when you were too young to remember. But your parents and godparents remember. They spoke on your behalf at your Baptism. They watched your baptism as tears rolling down their cheeks. They've been praying for you and with you ever since.

That faith in Jesus, planted deep in your tiny hearts, grew and grew as you heard Bible songs on your mom's lap, sat on your dad's lap in church, and listened to your Sunday School Teachers and VBS Teachers tell you Bible stories about your Savior.

And now, having soaked up that message of salvation, the Holy Spirit has convinced you to publicly confess for yourself, with your own words, Jesus is my Savior. You've known him for some time now. Today, during your examination you

gave testimony to the things you've soaked up from God's Word as you answered questions and recited Bible passages. In just a few minutes, you'll be professing your faith in Jesus before God, with family and relatives as witnesses.

- You love Jesus for coming to this world, as a baby at Christmas.
- You treasure him for the perfect life he lived as your Substitute.
- You cherish him for willingly being crucified so you wouldn't have to be. That painful truth is what made that Friday a month ago so "Good"!
- You appreciate his Easter resurrection. It proves he's exactly who claims to be and who he needs to be – the sinner's Savior.
- Death is finished! Sins are forgiven! That's why you are so proud to confess him and so eager to trust him as your Savior.

Because the Holy Spirit has made your heart his home and your body his temple, you are a Christian sponge: **Whatever is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent or praiseworthy think about** (*soak these things up*).

Now that we've soaked things up, sponges are also useful for squeezing things out: **Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me — put it into practice** (*squeeze these things out*).

We've already identified that we are very good at soaking things up. Are you always soaking up good things as a Christian? Do you sometimes fill your mind with things you shouldn't? How about the shows watched, the movies seen, the websites checked out? That can be a problem. Whatever we soak up is what we'll squeeze out.

That's why your God, using the Apostle Paul, wants you to soak up things that are good, like Paul's first list. As you do, those are the things you'll put into practice, the things you'll squeeze out in your daily life.

The apostle Paul spent a lot of his time teaching and preaching. He taught important things like: Salvation by faith in Jesus, the Lord's Supper, Baptism, Confession of Sins & Forgiveness, Prayer and the 10 Commandments.

As they soaked up God's Word, they wanted to squeeze it out, express it by what they did, said and thought, so that others could soak up these truths vital to their life of faith, too.

It's the same for you. Over the past 2 years, you've been taught important things like: Salvation by faith in Jesus, the Lord's Supper, Baptism, Confession of Sins & Forgiveness, Prayer and the 10 Commandments as you dug deeper and deeper into your Bible by studying it, discussing it and memorizing passages from it.

As you soaked up and believed God's Word, not only were you strengthened or confirmed in the faith you've had since you were baptized, you also wanted to squeeze it out and express it by what you did, said and thought, so that others could soak up these truths vital to their life of faith, too.

Be what God has made you to be: **A Christian Sponge** – soaking up the things that are **true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent and praiseworthy**. Then squeeze them out, put them into practice. As you do, God attaches this amazing promise – **the God of peace will be with you**.