

Confirming Your Faith

A Sermon by Rev. Joel Christian Glenn

17 May 2026

Children's Talk: Growing in the Lord's Spirit

Having faith in the Lord is an important part of spiritual life. Faith in the Lord means you believe in the Lord and try to follow Him. It's what makes someone a Christian. But it isn't something that just happens once. Faith is something that grows.

This is a process that takes a long time. It takes a lifetime in fact. We as adults are all working on it too. We don't really ever finish. But we can get better. As we grow older, we can grow under the guidance of the Lord's spirit, so that we can become more and more like Him. Jesus showed us this in His own life:

So when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own city, Nazareth. And the Child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him.

...

Now so it was that after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers. So when they saw Him, they were amazed; and His mother said to Him, "Son, why have You done this to us? Look, Your father and I have sought You anxiously."

And He said to them, "Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" But they did not understand the statement which He spoke to them.

Then He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them, but His mother kept all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men. (Luke 2:39-40, 46-52)

Jesus grew in the Lord's spirit. He became more and more loving and wise. That wasn't something that happened once when He was a baby. Nor was it something that He finished right away. He kept growing, as a teenager, so that even the elders in the temple were amazed at the questions He asked. After that, even though He was already so wise, He still continued to grow!

You also can be growing in the Lord's spirit. And you won't be finished growing for years. But right now, you can still be growing in the Lord's spirit. How do

you make sure? You can't just say, "believe in the Lord, I'll grow automatically." And you also can't say, "I'll grow when I'm an adult." You also don't become perfect overnight.

But what you can do is every day ask, "How can I be a little better than yesterday? How can I act a little more like the Lord? How can I learn a little bit more of the Lord's teachings than I knew yesterday?"

You are not anywhere close to being done. But by growing a little everyday, when you are an adult, you will have gotten so far.

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How do you become a Christian? One of the more well-known ways would be through baptism. Baptism marks an entrance into the Christian church and an introduction to the Lord. It also sets the stage for a life of regeneration. Yet in all of these things it is only the very beginning. The further we move through life the further behind our baptism becomes. For those of us baptised as infants it is so far back that we have no memory of it. And even for those of us baptised as adults, it may still be a distant memory. Who you were when you were baptised is very different from who you are today. So how do we confirm the significance of baptism given how different our present reality is and how different we are as individuals?

If you were baptised as a child you had no choice in the matter. You could neither reject nor accept it. Your baptism said far more about your parents than it did about you. And even when someone is baptised as an adult, there is no way that in that moment they can know where their faith will lead them. As we have grown our beliefs and practices have grown along with us. For these reasons, various churches have come up with a service called “confirmation.” In a confirmation service an adult is asked similar questions to the ones asked at baptism. This service is a way for someone to confirm that yes, those promises of baptism, to come to know the Lord Jesus Christ, to have faith in Him, and to live a good life, rejecting evil, reflect their own intentions. Confirmation is a way of publicly declaring that you are not a member of the church because of who your parents were or because of how you were raised; you are a member of the church of your own freewill and choice. And it is a way to affirm that even if perhaps you have strayed from the flock in the past, you are committed now in the present to what baptism represents.

A public declaration of faith can be powerful both for the speaker and the listeners. But it can also become a distraction from real ways of confirming baptism. Jesus told a story that should make us wary of putting too much faith in public declarations of faith as the main way of confirming ones baptism:

“But what do you think? A man had two sons, and he came to the first and said, ‘Son, go, work today in my vineyard.’ He answered and said, ‘I will not,’ but afterward he regretted it and went. Then he came to the second and said likewise. And he answered and said, ‘I go, sir,’ but he did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father?”

They said to Him, “The first.”

Jesus said to them, “Assuredly, I say to you that tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him; but tax collectors and harlots believed him; and when you saw it, you did not afterward relent and believe him.” (Matthew 21:28-32)

A person who is baptised, and then confirms their baptism verbally, and even goes through the process of a confirmation ceremony, but then lives contrary to the Lord’s teachings, has done nothing to actually confirm their faith. Conversely, a person who has never even been baptized, or one who in their youth rejected their faith, but then has gone on to live the Lord’s teachings, has truly confirmed his faith. For verbal confirmation to be meaningful it must be lived.

The truth of the matter is that living your faith confirms it far more than anything else you could do. This is especially the case when you continue to live out your faith during temptations, hardships, and challenges. This is illustrated in an interesting story from the book of Exodus, a story about the Egyptians trying to snuff out the Israelites living in their land:

Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. And he said to his people, “Look, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we; come, let us deal shrewdly with them, lest they multiply, and it happen, in the event of war, that they also join our enemies and fight against us, and so go up out of the land.” Therefore they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh supply cities, Pithom and Raamses. But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew. And they were in dread of the children of Israel. So the Egyptians made

the children of Israel serve with rigor. And they made their lives bitter with hard bondage—in mortar, in brick, and in all manner of service in the field. All their service in which they made them serve was with rigor. (Exodus 1:8-14)

The Egyptians planned to crush the Israelites through hard labour and slavery. But the plan backfired. Instead of weakening the Israelites, the more they were afflicted, the more they grew stronger. Now that does not mean that the Israelites happily flourished; far from it! They suffered greatly for centuries. But in the end the hardship strengthened them.

We experience a similar process when our faith is put under attack. When faith is under assault, we are given an opportunity to fight back, and in the process strengthen and grow in faith. It's comparable to how putting muscles under strain breaks them down so that they can heal back stronger than before. The Teaching of the New Church lay out how this takes place in our spiritual lives:

When this is being done, not only are the truths and goods strengthened which had been implanted before, but more are instilled; this being the result of every spiritual combat in which the combatant is victorious. That it is so is also plain from common experience; for he who defends his opinion against others who attack it, confirms himself the more in his opinion, and then also finds other confirmations of it which he had not before observed, and also others which deny the opposite; and in this way he strengthens himself in his opinion, and also illustrates it with further considerations. This is still more perfectly the case with spiritual combats, because the combat takes place in the spirit, and has to do with goods and truths; and especially because the Lord is present and leads by the angels; for the contest is concerning eternal life and salvation. (*Secrets of Heaven* §6663)

You've probably been on the other side of this equation: you attack someone's opinion, you list all the reasons they're wrong, you provide overwhelming evidence in your own favour, and yet they simply dig their heels in and believe their own opinion ten times more strongly than they did before. As frustrating as this experience is to have, it is hugely beneficial when what someone is defending is good and true.

Likewise, when hell attacks our faith and our love, and we are able to remain committed, their attacks in the end strengthen us, confirming us in truth and good.

Take for example someone who is impatient, and really trying to shun anger. If he has a calm, relaxed, well-organized day, in which everything goes according to plan, all well and good: maybe he could have gotten impatient with a thing or two, but no big deal. Contrast that with a day on which everyone else seems to be running late, people keep interrupting his schedule, and everyone is just getting in his way. If he can manage to keep his cool and remain patient with others even then, when his patience is under so much strain, then his commitment will have been greatly strengthened and confirmed. Interestingly, even if he is not able to do that perfectly, his faith might still be confirmed in the breach: if he loses his anger, but manages to limit it, his faith will still be confirmed. And even if he really feels like he's let the Lord down by how badly he has handled his impatience, that can still be an opportunity for confirmation: he may look back with regret and guilt, and so double down in his commitment to not repeat those mistakes. Faith is confirmed in the times of greatest struggle and doubt, and that can even be true when to some extent we buckle under the weight of it. The Lord prepared us for this in His words to Simon Peter shortly before the Crucifixion. Simon stands for faith, and yet the Lord knew His faith would soon be sorely tested, and in fact fail for a time. But the Lord called Peter, when the time came, to return and even strengthen the others in their faith:

And the Lord said, "Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren." (Luke 22:31-32)

We all go through our own spiritual crises. Yet far from being signs of weakness, when we have returned to the Lord, we can strengthen our brethren.

There is one last part of confirmation that I want to mention. There is a specific ceremony called "confirmation;" but Holy Supper is also a kind of confirmation ceremony. Just as Baptism is an introduction to the Lord and the

church, Holy Supper is the confirmation and coming to maturity of that introduction. Even in the differences in the ceremonies we see a kind of maturity: baptism is done *to* someone: the water is poured on, symbolically washing away uncleanness. But in Holy Supper, the person does something himself: he takes in the bread and wine, and the nutrients are absorbed into the body and become part of the person. Every time that we take Holy Supper it is a confirmation that the Lord, along with His love and His wisdom are becoming part of ourselves. More than that it is a confirmation that love and wisdom are becoming our own. They are not just ideas taught by others by conscious parts of who we are and the choices we make. In taking Holy Supper we declare or confirm that we intend to make the Lord part of our lives. His love becomes our love, His wisdom becomes our wisdom.

Of course, you don't have to wait for Holy Supper or to do a confirmation service. If you want to confirm your faith, start living it. Start fighting for it. Start making a change based on what the Lord teaches. Your efforts will confirm that you are indeed committed to the promise of baptism: a life of following the Lord.