

**But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it,<sup>15</sup> and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.<sup>16</sup> All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,<sup>17</sup> so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.** (NIV84)

Theme: Continue in what you have learned.

1. For the Bible is God's Word.
2. For it makes us wise for salvation.

Well it's finally the day of your confirmation. As of today you are a confirmed member of Holy Cross and the Wisconsin Synod. Congratulations. You actually made it! After years in Sunday School and a lot of hard work and studying for Confirmation Class, you're finally done. Done with studying and learning. You now know all there is to know about God's Word, so there is no need to learn any longer. Right? No. Notice what Paul tells Timothy, **Continue in what you have learned.** And not just what you have learned, but also what you **have been convinced of**, in what you believe to be true. Continue in this because the Bible is God's Word and because it makes us wise for salvation.

For years this is what Pastors have been saying to their confirmation classes for years. Continue in what you have learned and believe in. Continue to learn God's Word. That means reading your Bible at home. And attending Bible Class. Being regular attendees at Worship. And receiving Christ's body and blood for the forgiveness of sins in the sacrament of Holy Communion as often as possible. Continue in God's grace. Don't stop learning his Word. For there still is room for you to grow in your knowledge and faith. What you have been taught is just a summary of what the Bible teaches. It is simply the basics of what every Christian should know. There is so much to learn. Sadly, confirmation is often looked at like a graduation. That once you're confirmed, that is it, you are done with learning God's Word. And if your class is like most, some of you

never will learn God's Word again. Instead of continuing in what you have learned you will stay away from Bible Class, your worship attendance will be sparse, so your knowledge of God's Word will be less and less and your faith will become weaker and weaker.

That's what happens when we're not in the Word on a regular basis. What we used to know—stories, teachings, terminologies, are forgotten. When the children went through the examination just a few minutes ago, how did you do? Did you get all the answers right? Most of them? Half? Just a few? May I remind you that those questions covered just the main points of our class. A class that covered just the basics of Christian teaching. So those questions were the main points of the basics! How did you do? Did you get them all right, or did you forget some of the basics? Even if you did get them all right, there is still room for you to grow too. After all, Paul told Timothy to continue in what he had learned—and Timothy was a pastor. So parents too should continue in what they have learned. But sadly many children don't see their parents regularly attend worship. They don't see their parents growing in their faith. So they get the wrong idea that the learning of God's Word is only for kids, that when they get confirmed their learning is over. And so they often fail to continue in what they have learned.

But why should you continue in what you have learned and believed? The first reason Paul gives isn't really all that important. **Continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it.** Timothy knew those who taught the Word to him; they were true and legit Christians. For Timothy it was Paul. As well as his mother Eunice and his grandmother, Lois. You too know who has taught you the truth. Sure, once a week for the past two years, it's been me. But there is also your Sunday School teachers, your parents, perhaps your grandparents and other family members, and many more. But it doesn't really matter who has taught you the Word. For no matter who taught you God's Word in the end you have had really only one teacher. The Holy Spirit. It is really quite fitting to have confirmation on the day of Pentecost—they day we celebrate the work of the Holy Spirit. On that Day of Pentecost he brought 3000 people

to faith through hearing Peter's sermon. As he worked through that gospel, he still works through the gospel today. He is the one who taught you and convinced you of what you heard. And as long as you continue in the gospel, the Holy Spirit will strengthen and increase your faith.

And there is another reason. Because they are the Holy Scriptures. Holy because they are the Words of God. **God breathed** as Paul says. The Bible isn't man's words. They don't contain the teachings and thoughts of men. It is a unique book, not like anything else. Inspired by God. So it contains no errors or mistakes. It is the truth, which is found nowhere else.

It is through this holy inspired Word that the Holy Spirit increases your knowledge and faith. So as long as you are in the means of grace—the gospel in Word and Sacraments, you will continue in what you have learned and believe. That means regular worship attendance. Receive the Lord's Supper often. Get in the Word in Bible Class and at home. And when you do that the Holy Spirit will continue what he has been doing—strengthening your faith.

We continue in what we have learned because the Holy Spirit works through his Holy Word. Want another reason? It also makes us wise for salvation.

We need salvation because we can't save ourselves. For by nature we are nothing but sinners. We are enemies of God. Our hearts are hostile toward him. And our sins condemn us. We deserve to die an eternal death because of who we are and what we have done. And as his enemies we can't please God. There is nothing we can do that could make God save us. We are completely helpless.

But it is through God's Word the Holy Spirit convinces us of what he has done to save us. We see Jesus give up the glories and riches of heaven to be born of a virgin. We see this true God and true man live a perfect life. We see him give up his life on the cross. He took all our sins upon himself—becoming guilty of everything we have done wrong. We see him suffering through hell in our place as he was forsaken by God. Then we see him, three days later rise from the dead. He defeated death and crushed Satan's head; and he gives that victory to us. Then he ascended to the throne of God and intercedes

before God on our behalf. Now he sends his Holy Spirit to work faith through the gospel.

This is what we have learned. Salvation comes through Christ alone—received through faith in him. This is what you have known since you were an infant. As Paul told Timothy, **From infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.** It wasn't long after you were born that your parents took you to the baptismal font. There your sins were washed away and you were clothed with the righteousness of Christ. It was through the waters of baptism that the Holy Spirit welcomed you into his family and worked faith into your heart. Ever since then the Holy Spirit has strengthened your faith through the gospel. And he will do so throughout the rest of your life.

Your faith is entirely the work of the Holy Spirit. As you learned Luther's explanation to the third article of the Apostle's Creed. "I believe that I cannot by my own thinking or choosing believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to him." We are completely dead in our sins. If the choice to believe or not was up to us we would never choose to believe in our enemy. But as Luther continued, "The Holy Spirit has called me by the gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith. In the same way he calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith." The Holy Spirit has brought you to faith through the gospel. And through the gospel he will keep you in the one true faith. So continue in what you have learned. Remain in the means of grace. And the Holy Spirit will increase your faith.

Your confirmation day is a day to celebrate. But it's not a time to stop. It's a time to continue. To continue in what you have learned and believed. For it is God's Word through which he brings you to faith. And through it he makes us wise to the way of salvation—through faith in Christ. Therefore remain in the gospel, continue in what you have learned and the Holy Spirit will lead you to heaven. Amen.