

### **“Three-fold Testimony” 1John 5:6-8 Confirmation Sunday**

My words are for everyone gathered here but especially for those who will stand up here to own their faith and vow to keep it, even to die for it rather than deny it.

It is one thing to stand before family and friends of the faith you share and say I believe in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. It is quite another to be as firm in your faith in a country that kills Christians, ridicules them, or treats them as second-class citizens.

If you have to, will you endure all that, even death, rather than deny Christ? It is also quite another thing to confess the faith to those who have no idea what salvation by grace through faith alone means. Can you explain it so they will understand it?

I wish that I could tell that the challenges to your faith will be isolated or infrequent, or just the thing of fiction or far-away places. But that isn't true, never has been, and never will be. The world has always been at odds with God.

We could not stand here today confessing faith if God did not first love us enough to give up the life of his son for our salvation. Since He did die for us, we can understand that nothing is worth having, even life, if it means denying what Jesus has done for us. There is no power that can outlast the eternal love of Christ, nor overcome the new life His love gives us.

Today's epistle is well suited for a message on confirmation. It is God's confirmation of how we can overcome anything that seeks to overwhelm and destroy our faith. It is about His three-fold testimony.

If one friend tells you something, you might believe him. If another one tells you the same thing, you are even more confident to believe, but if a third agrees with the other two you are absolutely sure to believe.

We sang Jesus loves me three times in each chorus. Yes, Jesus loves me, for the Bible tells me so. But what does the Bible tell us? It speaks of the water, the blood, and the Holy Spirit as the witnesses of Christ's redemptive work.

Yes Jesus loves me. The water tells us so. This water is that into which Jesus was baptized. God told John the Baptist that the one on whom the spirit rested when he was baptized is the Christ, the Son of God. When he was baptized God spoke from heaven, calling Jesus His beloved Son. After baptizing him, John testified that He is the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. He baptized others to forgive their sins. He baptized Jesus to give their sins to Him, who carried them to the cross and there paid their penalty.

Yes, Jesus loves me. The blood of the cross also tells me so. Hebrews 9 says that without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness. In his blood, we are cleansed, forgiven and given eternal life. No threat by evil people could ever cancel out the gift Jesus gave with his blood.

Yes, Jesus loves me. The Spirit tells me so. Paul makes it clear that we cannot know the things of God or believe in Him unless the Spirit of God is at work. When we say the Bible tells me that Jesus loves me, it is because the Spirit is speaking through it. Paul calls the Word of God the Sword of the Holy Spirit. Thus, it is sacred and sanctifying thing, powerful and piercing, truthful and transforming. It is the work and word of God himself. It is in you and so you have confidence to say, Yes, Jesus loves me.

This is a truth not just to confess, but also to live. As of today, it is your faith to own and in the face of all opposition, including that which arises from your own doubts.

Yes, Jesus still loves you. The Water, the Blood, and the Spirit tell you so. The water of your baptism joined you to Christ's saving work. The blood, along with the body, given for you to eat and drink in the Lord's Supper, strengthens your faith and reminds you of your dependence upon his grace. The Spirit that speaks to you in God's Word keeps faith alive.

An ancient church patriarch named Bede wrote, "All three are present in us. The Spirit makes us children of God by adoption, the water of the sacred font cleanses and the blood of the Lord redeems us. They are invisible in themselves, but in the sacraments they are made visible for our benefit."

Earlier we sang about the gifts God freely gives to you and me. The water, blood, and Holy Spirit are God's gifts to help you confirm your faith--not just today in the safety of this sanctuary, but also in the everyday dangers of the world. They tell you again and again, "Yes, Jesus loves you. Yes, Jesus loves you. Yes, Jesus loves you." Amen .