

The Greatest Story (Part 48):

Unwavering Faith

Hebrews 10:23-25

Memory Verses: Hebrews 10:23

MANUSCRIPT

Introduction (Me, We, & the Struggle)

We're coming to the end of our year long series called "The Greatest Story." In fact, after this week we will have only four more weeks left in this, the year of the Bible, where we have, together as a church, read through the scriptures daily together, and where we have studied around 300 different passages of scripture here on Sunday mornings and in our daily Facebook devotionals and where we have been encouraged to memorize around 50 some passages or verses of scripture.

As we've given such great attention to the Word of God this year as a church, we've no doubt seen that the Bible is not a collection of separate stories but one giant cohesive story; God's story of how he has redeemed sinful man from their fateful outcome of death and destruction through the Messiah who is called Jesus Christ; our Lord, our Savior, and the one in whom we place our trust and throw ourselves upon his mercy. We are a church that is dependent on no one or nothing else than the precious blood, and the precious love of Jesus.

In this story, we see how the Old Testament speaks of the day when the Messiah will come to save us from our sins and give us a new life. While the law was capable of giving the followers of God a temporary means of redemption, the Messiah would one day provide an everlasting means of redemption. While the sacrifices were capable of providing a temporary means of atonement, the Messiah would one day provide an everlasting means of atonement. And so from Genesis 3:15 – to the end of the book of the prophet Malachi and then for another 400 years without prophecy at all... the world waited for the Messiah.

Then came Christmas morning. A day long waited for. A day when some had given up hope. A day unexpected by many and long expected for by many more... Jesus the messiah was born. This is why we celebrate Christmas... because it is the long prophesied day when God became man and dwelt among us.

The blessed child Jesus grew and became a man and as we have seen in the Gospels, he healed the sick, gave sight to the blind, raised the dead, fed the 5000, walked on water, turned water to wine, forgave sins, befriended sinners, resisted the temptation of the devil, and lived a perfect sinless life... and then he willingly laid down his life by submitting

himself to death on the cross.

But that is far from the end of the story, because three days later the stone was rolled away and he rose from his grave defeating death and making it clear that he has the power of resurrection and to give new life to those who are dead in their sins. Then 40 days later he ascended into heaven to take his rightful place at the right hand of the Father... but he did not leave us empty handed.

In the book of Acts chapter 2 we see that he sent his Holy Spirit to dwell inside all of those who would believe upon the salvation of Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit would give each of us the power to live for Christ, to walk in newness of life, to live in righteousness, and break our chains of slavery to the power of sin. Through the Holy Spirit we could love one another, care for one another, serve one another, and bear with one another. It is through the Word of Christ preached by Peter that 3000 were saved and the church began.

And for the past 2 months we've looked at the books of Romans, 1 Corinthians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians and 1 Timothy, and we've seen what it means for each of us to be the church. What does it mean for you and me to live within this community of believers and to live for the sake of the Gospel everyday of our lives. You see the story didn't end when Jesus rose from the grave... in a lot of ways the story had just begun.

You see... Jesus' mission is to see the whole world come to know him as their Lord and Savior...but in his ascension he makes it clear that he has given that responsibility to us. The church is plan A and there is no plan B. We are the vehicle by which Jesus wants the Gospel delivered to the entire world. You are the ones who are to walk in the righteousness of the Gospel... you are the ones who are to show the world the goodness and love of Christ through the way we serve the needy and the less fortunate. You are the way God wants the world to see Jesus... by forsaking your old life of sin and embracing a new life of worship, service, ministry, compassion, joy, love, and faith. It is through our faith in Christ lived out that the world will be compelled to follow Christ and make him the Lord of their lives.

We waited for Jesus... Jesus came... Jesus lived in perfection modeling for us the way we could live by faith in him... Jesus died... Jesus rose again.... Jesus ascended.... the Holy Spirit descended and indwells those of us who have placed our faith in Christ and now we are gathered together as individual believers into groups of believers called the church for the sake of leading the rest of the world to Christ....

Boom.... now everything is peachy keen, right? Everything is perfect. Because of all of this now everyday we all live with such a perfect faith because we never have any more struggles, and we are constantly encouraged by the droves of people who are placing their faith in Christ through our example and we never struggle with sin anymore and we are

never discouraged. Right? Well if that is you... then you need to come up here and preach... cause we all need to know how you do it.

In reality, everything isn't always peachy keen. In fact, as followers of Christ and as a part of his church we are often met with discouragement because our lives are not perfect. We still struggle with sin, we still struggle with depression, we still struggle when our friends who reject Christ, even after we've done everything we can do to lead them to him. We work so hard to see the kingdom of God built... many of you have worked so hard to see the new worship center built for the glory of God... and at times we are tired, overwhelmed, frustrated... and ready to throw in the towel. We say things like.... Jesus, I've done so much for you... when will I see the fruit of my labor. When will I be rewarded for my faithfulness. Sometimes we may even shake our fist at God and say.... it's not fair. And we find ourselves in a state of wavering. We may even ask ourselves... is this all there is to being a follower of Christ... cause if this is all there is then maybe I don't want to be one anymore.

I've been there. Have you been there? Perhaps you are there this morning. You've lived the Christian life but life has beat you down, you haven't seen a lot of reward for your effort...and you are wavering in your faith and perhaps about ready to throw in the towel.

Then I want to draw your attention to this verse here. Look with me at **Hebrews 10:23**. Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering... because he who promised, that's Jesus, is faithful. If you are there... if you are wavering or you have ever wavered... I want to encourage you this morning to hold fast... because Jesus is faithful.

Even if you haven't ever wavered know that one day you may... and this is your hope. Jesus is faithful. **When Our Faith Becomes Fragile... Jesus Remains Faithful**

So let's go back to this verse and let's read **Hebrews 10:23-25** and I want us to see two ways in which Jesus remains faithful to us today and how those two ways keep us holding fast to our faith when we begin to waver.

OUTLINE

Teaching (Expand on the Problem, God)

The first thing we notice here is... **We Hold Fast To Our Faith Because Christ Will Never Forsake Us.** Looking again at **verse 23** we are encouraged by the writer of Hebrews to hold fast. Hold fast in the greek is the word *ketecho* which means to keep secure or keep firm possession of. When translated into English the word borrows from a sailing term used for sailors to hold tight to a ship's many ropes which may be attached to the sails or riggings. If a sailor were to let a certain rope slip through their fingers it could result in injury to another sailor or in

extreme situations cause a ship wreck. The term used here, "hold fast" gives us a sense of the seriousness of the situation. If one does not hold fast to the confession of their hope they could wreck their relationships, their ministry, or their lives.

And what exactly is it that they are to hold fast to? The confession of our hope. Every believer is marked by a profession of faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and their hope. As **Romans 10:10** says "with the mouth one confesses and is saved." Our confession is a confession of hope. We believe that in Jesus as our Lord we will be resurrected to an eternal life with him in heaven... that death is not an end to be feared but a door to a new and better life. Notice, it's not the hope itself that we are encouraged to hold fast to... but rather the confession of that hope. Meaning... our faith in Jesus as the means of our hope. For most of us, losing faith isn't about doubting whether or not Jesus is Lord and Savior... but in doubting whether he is good in all circumstances and whether he is our hope in the present as well as the future. To let our confession slip is to let our determination in following Christ heartedly slip.

And so what is our motivation to hold fast to our faith? Why should we not allow our faith in Christ as our hope to waver at all? Simple... because he who promised is faithful. Who is he who has promised? Jesus of course. And what has he promised exactly? Well many things... but most assuredly as it relates to this verse... is what he says in **Hebrews 13:5**; "I will never leave you nor forsake you." We are encouraged to remain strong in our faith because Jesus will always be faithful to us.

Sure, Jesus is God, God is all around us, so in a metaphysical sense Jesus will never leave us cause he's everywhere we go right? But that's just part of it. You see... when you were saved, when you became his child, when you were adopted as his son or daughter, you were sealed with a seal that can never be broken. You were given a new name that will never be taken away. You are his and he will not let you go. What has he promised? Look at **John 10:28**; when you are in his hand no one can snatch you out. You are there to stay. Once saved always saved. You say, well what if I run too far away from Jesus... once I was all about the Christian thing but now I'm not so sure. Look at **2 Tim 2:13**; even when our faith wavers, he remains unwavering in his faithfulness towards us. The point is simple... **you may at times want to leave Jesus... but he won't let you go!** Once you are saved... you are eternally saved. You cannot walk away from Christ, even if you want to. If you are in Christ at all you are in Christ always. There will be times when we are unfaithful... but in those moments Christ doesn't say... they failed so the deal is off... instead he says... they are my child and I will passionately pursue. I will love them and lovingly discipline them until they make their way home. As **Matthew 18:12** illustrates... he truly leaves the 99 to pursue the 1. He never leaves one of his own behind.

Are you familiar with the story of Private Desmond Doss. Private Desmond Doss walked into the bloodiest battle of World War II's Pacific theater with nothing to protect himself save for his Bible and his faith in God. A devout Seventh Day Adventist and conscientious objector, Doss had enlisted in the army as a medic and refused to carry a rifle. In April of 1945 during the battle of Okinawa, Private Doss's regiment was ordered to take the Maeda Escarpment... also known as Hacksaw Ridge. The U.S. Forces knew that taking the ridge was the only way to win the battle. Without it there could be no victory. But there was also one big problem... it was a suicide mission and the Japanese who were bunkered down all over the ridge in trenches would mow down any army that dared to advance. After hours of fighting it was clear that Private Doss's Regiment would have to retreat. But there was just one thing... Private Doss would not retreat. He could see all of his fellow soldiers bloodied and dying on the field and he could not conceive of leaving them behind.

What happened next is one of the greatest acts of courage in U.S. History. Doss proceeded to run back into the line of fire... and being the only moving target attracted all of the enemies fire at once. Despite the overwhelming odds stacked against him, Doss was able to run back into the battle and rescue one of his fallen soldiers. He took him and lowered him down the ridge to safety. He did this time and time again that day.. each time he prayed to God, "Lord, please help me get one more." By the end of the day Private Desmond Doss, armed only with his Bible and his prayers, was able to singlehandedly rescue and lower almost 100 men to safety.

Private Doss's extraordinary heroism reflects the way Jesus feels about you and me. No matter how heavy the fire, no matter how injured we are by the war with the flesh... Jesus will not leave any of his children behind. He will not let you go! You can backslide, you can give up, you can walk away, but Jesus will fight through the fire of hell to bring you back home! And it is for this very reason that we should never lose faith. How could we ever give up on one who will never give up on us. **The realization of Jesus' faithfulness should encourage us to remain faithful . When Our Faith Becomes Fragile... Jesus Remains Faithful**

But there is still more here. The second thing we notice from this passage is that... **We Hold Fast To Our Faith Because The Church Will Never Forget Us**. Jesus will never forsake us and the church will never forget us. Listen, The Christian life is hard... it is a battle... and the church is our family. The Church is the support mechanism for each believer that makes sure no one is forgotten and all are encouraged to keep fighting. If we are tempted to stop fighting for the cause perhaps we will not stop fighting for the sake of our comrades. This is the power of the church... that when the fight gets tough for each of us individually the

church has our backs. Look at **verse 24**. The church is called to stir one another up towards love and good deeds. The church is called to disciple one another and build our faith in Christ. **When discipleship is absent people's faith begins to waiver** . How does that work in church. I'm sure some of you don't think of the church as being a support mechanism. Church is merely a place you go to one hour a week for a service. And if that is all the church is to you then your are correct it won't be effective. But thank God that's not the church... well at least not this church. The church is meant to be a close knit group of believers. We are meant to be as close as brothers and sisters. When we are close with one another, we encourage one another in our faith journey.

It is very important that the church remains close. This is why the leadership is already thinking of ways that as we grow larger to help us grow smaller. You see, small groups are the key to close personal soul care and encouragement within the church. One on one personal relationships with Christ as the focus is the surest way to disciple believers. This happens best in a small group setting. It is a proven method.... more time with fewer people leads to greater kingdom impact. So... you may say... I've been in plenty of churches where I feel on the outside... where I don't feel very supported. Where I feel a little forgotten. My question is.... were you in a small group? Let me ask you that question this morning... are you in a small group? Are you connected to a few people who are your inner circle, who encourage your spiritual discipleship and maturity? If not, why?

The church helps encourage us through our closeness to one another... but also through how much time we spend together. Look at **verse 25** again. The church is not to refrain from being together. As we've already said... church isn't just a once a week meeting, church is the body being together as much as is humanly possible for the sake of encouraging one another in their faith. The less we meet the less encouraged we are in our faith. Want proof... look at some verses with me. **Matthew 18:20** shows us that where two or three are gathered there Christ is with them. **Proverbs 27:17** shows us that just as iron sharpens iron so does one person sharpen another person. And then the real kicker... **Ecclesiastes 4:9-12** shows us that when we fall into a hole... when our faith is wrecked... when we begin to waver... the only hope we have in that hole is for someone to help us out. When we are freezing the only hope is someone to warm us up. A cord of one is easily broken... but a cord of two or three... that is hard to break. So... who are your three? Who is your small group... and how often are you with them?

One of the biggest reasons people leave the church is because they feel that no one cares for them... they are forgotten. **The sure way no one is ever forgotten in the church is when everyone is faithfully meeting regularly in a Christ centered small group**. Cause you see what happens is this. When you fall in love with the people in your small group...

and they start to fall on hard times and their faith starts to waiver... here's what happens. The group prays for them... then the group reaches out to them... then the group pursues them. When I look out here I see those who are in my small group. I see Chris, and David and Chip and Steve... these men are my brothers. And if they miss small group they get a call. If they are hurting they get a hug. If they are wavering and walking away from their faith then Shevi goes on the hunt and I won't come back without them! You see... the church is called to go after those who waiver. Look at **James 5:19-20**. I will go after you and I will do everything I can to save you from wavering in your faith. And you will do the same for me... cause that's what the church does! Jesus has given you one of the greatest gifts in the world... the church so don't neglect it...

When Our Faith Becomes Fragile... Jesus Remains Faithful

Application (Resolution, You)

Listen, Jesus will never let you go... and your church family will not let you go. You may struggle with your faith or lose sight of the hope we have in Christ... but in those times turn to these two things: 1) Jesus is faithful even when we aren't and he will never let you go. And 2) your church family exists to help you through these times of struggle.

As a covenant partner of Stone Creek Church you have made a commitment to love, nourish, encourage, and fight for your brothers and sisters in this room. Jesus will never quit on them and so we must also never quit on them... no matter what. So if you are struggling with wavering in your faith I want you to do this this morning... I want you to close your eyes and I want you to picture Jesus. Picture him on the cross dying for your sins. Picture him raising from the grave to give you new life. Picture him tending a flock of sheep... and you begin to wander from the herd... picture him chasing you down and lovingly bringing you back. Jesus will never let you go.

Now open your eyes and look around this room. Make eye contact with each person as best you can. This is your church. This is your family. And every one of them is committed to fighting this fight with you. To praying everyday for you. To carrying your burdens. To doing whatever it takes to help you in your walk with Christ and in the wavering of your faith. This is one of the main reasons the church exists and it won't forget about you. Never! Amen, church?

When Our Faith Becomes Fragile... Jesus Remains Faithful

Conclusion

As I was preparing for this message one song kept coming back to my mind time and time again... it is a promise to the faithfulness of our

God and a reminder that in my wavering he never waivers

My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness
I dare not trust the sweetest frame
But wholly lean on Jesus' Name
On Christ the solid Rock I stand
All other ground is sinking sand
All other ground is sinking sand
When darkness seems to hide His face
I rest on His unchanging grace
In every high and stormy gale
My anchor holds within the veil
On Christ the solid Rock I stand
All other ground is sinking sand
All other ground is sinking sand
His oath, His covenant, His blood
Support me in the whelming flood
When all around my soul gives way
He then is all my Hope and Stay