



Hold Fast to Your Faith

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By Rev. David Koch

Introduction:

This week I read the story of a man who fell off a cliff, but managed to grab a tree limb on the way down. Here is the conversation that ensued:

“Is anyone up there?”

“I am here. I am the Lord. Do you believe me?”

“Yes, Lord, I believe. I really believe, but I can't hang on much longer.”

“That's all right, if you really believe you have nothing to worry about. I will save you. Just let go of the branch.” A moment of pause, then: “Is anyone else up there?” *Bits & Pieces, June 24, 1993, p. 3.*

While this New Year is still young, I want to encourage you as we travel this year with God, to be all that God wants you to be. That includes being a person of faith. If we follow Jesus, then we will become like Him. In the process of following Him we should become what He wants us to be, and as a result we will do what He wants us to do. The things that we do should be an outgrowth of who we are and His influence in our lives. There are times we attempt to do things that we think we should, without being what God wants us to be and the end result for us and others is less than desirable. *If we are becoming like Him, we will find ourselves doing what He wants us to do.*

As we study scripture we learn that our faith will be tested and tried. Our faith can also grow, stronger or weaker. We realize that even though faith of the righteous is unseen, if accompanied with prayer it is powerful and effective. Observing the things that are happening around us, we need to be people of faith. The first two weeks of this year, there has been prophecy telling us not to be afraid, but to be people of faith. We have been encouraged to trust God, to look to Him and not to look at other things around us that would distract us or that would weaken the faith that we have in Christ and His word.

So this morning we are challenged from Hebrews to hold on firmly to the faith we profess.

Hebrews 4:14 -15

Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are, yet was without sin.

I. Let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. To hold on firmly means to keep, to retain, with strength to preserve.

There have been a few times in the years of ministry when I have shaken hands with an individual who had a grip that was firm enough to hurt.

I'm not one to ride many amusement rides, but several years ago, Julie and I were visiting her parents in Indiana and each year they have a local community festival called Harlan days, and they would bring in amusement rides for the public. Julie's cousin, David, talked me into riding with him on a ride called the zipper. Let me tell you what. I held on firmly. There

was a bar in front of me and they locked us up in a cage that went up and down and around and I was petrified. I held onto that bar with all my strength. I had determined to grip that bar in front of me and not let go. If I had died on that ride, they would have had to pry my fingers loose from the bar. That is the kind of holding on with firmness to your faith that is spoken of in Hebrews.

The word “profess” here means to acknowledge. What are some of the aspects of faith that we are to hold firmly to as followers of Jesus Christ?

There are several I could list:

- Human life is sacred
- We are made in the image of God
- God loves us
- Sin is forgivable
- Jesus is coming back again
- Jesus heals and answers prayer today

Here are a few that we see from our text this morning.

1. Jesus is our high priest

The reason we need a priest is because of our fallen nature. We need someone to go to God the Father on our behalf who is pure and holy and spotless and that One is Jesus Christ our great high priest. These are some of the functions of the high priest from the Old Testament.

The high priest would offer gifts and sacrifices up to God. (Hebrews 5:1) It was his job to take care of keeping the lamps lit in the sanctuary. The priest had to have oil replenished daily so the light would not go out in the house of God. It was the job of the high priest to make atonement in the holy place for the people once a year. It was his job to bear before the Lord the names of the 12 tribes of Israel. Their names were engraved on the stones in His breastplate and on his shoulders. It was his job to consecrate the Levites and appoint other priests to serve the Lord. He was responsible to take charge of the money that was collected in the sacred treasury. He took a census of the people, He blessed the people and he presided in the superior court.

I cannot think of anything stronger that we need to hold firmly to than the fact that Jesus is our mediator. He is the one who goes between us and God. In His laying down His life, He accomplished all of these functions as high priest.

Hold onto the truth that Jesus, who is holy, stands in the throne room of heaven this morning. He is interceding for you and me. He wants us to make it. We are vessels for His use. He fills us with the oil of His Spirit so the light of His salvation doesn't go out. Whenever there is need for His atoning blood, He stands in the holy place, before the altar of God and there He offers His blood that cleanses and purifies. He continually bears before the Almighty the names of the 12 tribes of Israel before God as well as the names of those written in the book of Life. It is because of His touch that those who serve Him are consecrated. He appoints us as kings and priests unto God. He takes what is brought to Him as tithe and offering and adds His blessing to that. He presides in the superior court of the universe, and when accusations are brought against the people of God, the high priest of heaven is there to say. **“It's under the blood, not guilty, not guilty.”**

I want to hold firmly to the faith that I profess that Jesus Christ is my high priest.

2. Jesus has ascended

Hold fast to the faith that Jesus ascended. Understand friends that if we don't hold fast to this truth, it puts other truths we believe, in jeopardy.

Without Jesus going back to heaven and our heavenly father, the work done on the cross, would have been useless. It was when Christ went back to the throne room of heaven, that He there offered His own blood before God as the high priest of heaven. In presenting His own blood before God, Jesus made the payment for the sin of all who would believe. There is nothing that can wash away our sin but the blood of Jesus. There is no soap, no cleansing agent, nothing that we can do to get sin out. Sin doesn't come out by shouting, by the laying on of hands, by anointing with oil, by baptism. The only way to get sin out of our life, is by trusting Jesus to wash away that sin through His blood.

What can wash away my sin?
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.
What can make me whole again?
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.
Oh precious is the flow,
That makes me white as snow,
No other font I know,
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

In Ephesians 4:8-10 we read this. “When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men.” ⁹(What does “he ascended” mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? ¹⁰He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.)

Some other things happened when Jesus ascended into Heaven, besides His offering His blood. He led captivity captive. What does that mean? When someone is held in captivity, they are a prisoner. Basically what Paul is saying here is that Jesus came and took those believers who had died with Him into God’s presence. Their body still awaits the day of resurrection. If Jesus had not done this, then how would He have had the power to raise us from captivity of the grave and death?

Conclusion:

Let’s make this practical to apply it today to our lives.

Here is the bottom line this morning. Jesus has come. He died and rose again and ascended into heaven. He lives there now as our great high priest. His word to us today is to hold fast to the faith we professed. Don’t let your faith be shaken by doubt. Don’t loosen your grip on these truths. Jesus has taken captivity captive. He has given gifts to us that are available to you and me today. How do you strengthen your grip on faith? You strengthen it by being in the Word, by being in prayer, by trusting in the accomplishments of our Great High priest.

God delights to increase the faith of His children...I say, and say it deliberately – trials, difficulties and sometimes defeat, are the very food of faith. We should take them out of His hands as evidences of His love and care for us in developing more and more that faith which He is seeking to strengthen in us.

George Mueller

3. Jesus has given gifts to men (Ephesians 4:8)

The original language means “present” as we would give a present. The giver presents something to the recipient that would please them, or make them be joyful, or be useful to them.

Here are some of the gifts that Jesus has given to men.

- The gift of eternal life
- The gift of forgiveness
- The gift of the Holy Spirit – to comfort and empower
- The gift of God’s Word to read and nourish us spiritually
- The gift of healing

These gifts should help us have a tight grasp on the faith we have laid hold of.