

Hope Christian Church
D. Todd Cravens
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Sermon Series: *Hebrews: The Supremacy of Christ*



We Share in Christ, If We Keep the Faith to the End

What does saving faith look like?

Hebrews 3:6b-19 (ESV)

And we are his house, if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope.

⁷ Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says,
"Today, if you hear his voice,

⁸ do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion,
on the day of testing in the wilderness,
⁹ where your fathers put me to the test
and saw my works for forty years.
¹⁰ Therefore I was provoked with that generation,
and said, 'They always go astray in their heart;
they have not known my ways.'
¹¹ As I swore in my wrath,
'They shall not enter my rest.'"

¹² Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. ¹³ But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. ¹⁴ For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end. ¹⁵ As it is said,

"Today, if you hear his voice,
do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion."

¹⁶ For who were those who heard and yet rebelled? Was it not all those who left Egypt led by Moses? ¹⁷ And with whom was he provoked for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? ¹⁸ And to whom did he swear that they would not enter his rest, but to those who were disobedient? ¹⁹ So we see that they were unable to enter because of unbelief.

Introduction

Last week, as we considered the first paragraph of chapter three, the author of Hebrews was helping us to worship Jesus by pointing out that he is superior to Moses. In the eyes of the recipients of this letter, Moses was considered the greatest Hebrew of who ever lived. He was the greatest leader Israel had ever known. Israel became a nation under his leadership. Israel was delivered from slavery while he was at the helm. Moses stood up against Pharaoh, the king of the most powerful nation in the world at that time. Moses stood his ground and saw his people delivered out of the "iron furnace"¹ of Egyptian slavery.

Moses held out his staff while an ocean was parted and his people passed safely through. Then Moses lowered his staff and the mighty waters of that ocean collapsed in upon the Egyptian army and they were entirely destroyed. Moses spoke to God mouth to mouth² and face to face.³ Moses received from God two tablets of stone upon which God himself had

¹ Dt. 4:20; 1 Kg. 8:51; Jer. 11:4.

² Num. 12:8.

³ Ex. 33:11.

written his law. Moses was so close to God that his face glowed after leaving him. Through Moses food appeared on the ground every morning for forty years. Through Moses water gushed out from rocks. Through Moses mighty armies and stronger nations were defeated. Through Moses God established the tabernacle and the priesthood. Moses oversaw the institution of the sacrificial system. Through Moses God did wonders that the world had never seen. He led God's people right up to the gates of the Promised Land. Moses was great. Moses was magnificent. There was no one like Moses.

Until Jesus.

Yes, Moses was great, but Jesus is even greater. Yes, Moses was faithful *in* God's house, but Jesus is faithful *over* God's house. Moses was a faithful servant, but Jesus is a faithful Son. Moses was, but Jesus **is!** Jesus is to Moses as a builder is to a house. Jesus built Moses, but no one built Jesus, because Jesus is God. If you think Moses is great, then consider Jesus for he is worthy of more glory than Moses in the same way that a builder of the house is worthy of more glory than the house.

And "you, Christian, are Jesus' house if you hold fast your faith firm to the end." Don't you want to be connected to this glorious Son? Don't you want this great Savior at work in your life? How can he be? By you putting your faith in him and keeping it in him. Look at Hebrews 3:6.

Hebrews 3:6b (ESV)

And we are his house, if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope.

Jesus is building you, if you keep your faith to the end of your life. This is the main point of this section. It is stated twice. Here, at the end of verse six, and then again in verse 14.

Hebrews 3:14 (ESV)

For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end.

How do you know Jesus is at work in your life? How do you know you truly belong to him? How do you know that Jesus is building you up just like he did Moses? How do you know you have already come to share in Christ? How do you know you have been united with Christ? The answer is found in this truth;

You have come to share in Christ, if you keep the faith to the end.

How do you know you are a true Christian? You can know you are a true Christian because a true Christian will remain a Christian to the end of life. How do you know you can be faithful like Jesus? You can know that you have saving faith because the kind of faith that Jesus builds

into the heart of his people is the kind of faith that will endure to the end of your life, just as his faith endured to the end of his life. *Saving faith is enduring faith.*

Jesus is the kind of builder who always finishes what he starts. He never fails to complete the projects he begins. Paul said it like this.

Philippians 1:6 (ESV)

And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

We can draw courage from this. If you see the beginnings of Jesus at work in your life or in the life of a friend or a child, then do not doubt that he will finish that work. *What Jesus begins to build, he will never fail to finish.*

Consider the Example of Moses

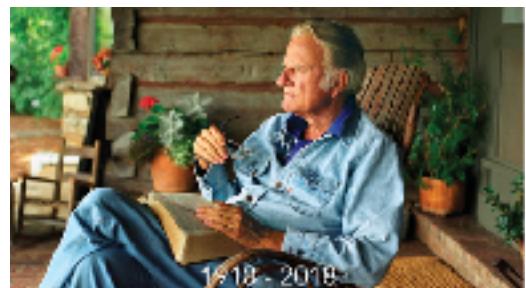
Consider Moses as an example. Moses kept the faith to the end of his life. Moses was great and did great things because the one at work within him is great and glorious, namely Jesus. Moses was a house that Jesus built. And that same Jesus, who built Moses into the man he became, is building you, *if you hold fast your faith in him.*

If you are amazed at the wonders that God worked through Moses, then may you be even more amazed that that same God is at work in you, *if you hold fast to him.* So hold fast your faith in him. Do not disbelieve, but believe in Jesus. Moses was faithful to the end. He kept believing in God to the very last day of his life. So you too, if you keep believing in him, will be faithful to the end.

Consider the Example of Billy Graham

Consider Billy Graham as another example. Billy Graham died Wednesday, Feb. 21, at the age of 99.

Billy Graham kept the faith to the end of his life. Billy Graham was great and did great things because the One at work within him is great and glorious, namely Jesus. Billy Graham was a house that Jesus built. And that same Jesus, who built Billy Graham into the man he became, is building you, *if you hold fast your faith in him firm to the end.*



If you're amazed at the wonders that God worked through Billy Graham—like preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ to more than 210 million people in 185 countries and territories⁴—then be even more amazed that that same God is at work in you, *if you hold fast to him*. So hold fast your faith in him. Do not disbelieve, but believe in Jesus. Billy Graham was faithful to the end. He kept believing in Jesus to the very last day of his life. So you too, if you keep believing, will be faithful to the end.

An Exhortation to Keep You Through Seasons of Difficulty

God is speaking through these words. By saying, "*you have come to share in Christ if you keep the faith to the end of your life*," God is giving us an exhortation intended to help keep us in the faith and carry us through seasons of difficulty and doubt. The goal of God is to encourage and fortify your faith. However, this does not mean that the true child of God will never commit serious sins, never endure seasons of doubting, or never have moments of crisis. These things happened to both Moses and Billy Graham.

Moses' Messy Moments

Moses' life contained some messy moments, even though God had his hand upon him from the moment he was born. Moses was born at a time when Pharaoh had commanded that all Hebrew boys be murdered as soon as they were born. Yet, not only was Moses safely born, God saw to it that he was adopted by Pharaoh's daughter, nursed by his own mother, and had his tuition paid for from preschool through graduate school at the Royal Academy of Egyptian Princes.

Moses was God's chosen man, but he still made grave mistakes. When Moses sought to jumpstart the deliverance of his people out of Egyptian oppression, he wound up murdering an Egyptian. Then, when God finally told him to get going, he was so reluctant and made so many excuses that God became angry with him, and his wrath burned against him.⁵ Moses also failed to circumcise his son and God was so angry at him that "he sought to put him to death" and he would have if Moses' wife had not circumcised the boy.⁶ Later, after leading Israel through the wilderness, Moses grew so frustrated with the stubbornness of the people that he sinned against God so significantly that God would not allow him to enter the Promised Land. Moses was faithful, but he was not sinless.

Graham's Crisis of Faith

Billy Graham also had a season which he described as a crisis of faith. It took place during the summer of 1949. His best friend and fellow Youth for Christ evangelist, Charles Templeton had

⁴ Feeny, Mark, "Evangelist Billy Graham Dies at 99," *The Boston Globe*, Thursday, Feb. 22, 2018, daily edition, front page, available here, <http://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/obituaries/2018/02/21/evangelist-rev-billy-graham-dies/ssEwvLq9R2HGcpFPSjNM6M/story.html> accessed 23 Friday 2018.

⁵ Ex. 4:14.

⁶ Ex. 4:24-26.

begun to doubt the truthfulness of the Bible. Specifically he did not believe that God created the world in the way that God said he did in Genesis 1. Templeton said to Graham,

Billy, it's simply not possible any longer to believe, for instance, the biblical account of creation. The world was not created over a period of days a few thousand years ago; it has evolved over millions of years. It's not a matter of speculation; it's a demonstrable fact.⁷

Templeton was smart and his questions shook Graham. Billy was at a turning point in his life. Would he believe that the Bible is truly God's word and therefore fully trustworthy in all that it teaches or would he believe his friend Chuck who claimed that the Bible was wrong? Would he remain in the ministry and preach that the Bible is God's word? Or would join his friend Chuck and leave the ministry? This all came to a head for Billy at a Christian Camp in the San Bernardino mountains as he was trying to figure this out. His biographer, John Pollock describes the night.

Billy went out in the forest and wandered up the mountain, praying as he walked, "Lord, what shall I do? What shall be the direction of my life?"

So I went back and I got my Bible, and I went out in the moonlight. And I got to a stump and put the Bible on the stump, and I knelt down, and I said, 'Oh, God; I cannot prove certain things. I cannot answer some of the questions Chuck is raising and some of the other people are raising, but I accept this book by faith as the Word of God.'"⁸

Graham said to his doubting friend,

I believe the Genesis account of creation because it's in the Bible. I've discovered something in my ministry: When I take the Bible literally, when I proclaim it as the word of God, my preaching has power. When I stand on the platform and say, 'God says,' or 'The Bible says,' the Holy Spirit uses me. There are results. Wiser men than you or I have been arguing questions like this for centuries. I don't have the time or the intellect to examine all sides of the theological dispute, so I've decided once for all to stop questioning and accept the Bible as God's word.⁹

When the Bible Speaks, God Speaks

There is a direct connection in our text this morning with Graham's conviction that the Bible is the trustworthy and true word of God. You'll see it in verse seven. The reason why the author of Hebrews states so authoritatively that "*We are his house if we hold fast our confidence and*

⁷ Charles Templeton, *Farewell to God: My Reasons for Rejecting the Christian Faith* (McClellan & Stewart, 1999), 7-8.

⁸ John Pollock, *Billy Graham* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1967), 53.

⁹ Templeton, *Farewell to God*, 7-8.

hope" is because he is basing that conclusion upon the trustworthy and true word of God. He is basing that assertion upon a passage of Scripture from the Old Testament. Immediately after making this assertion he then states,

Hebrews 3:7 (ESV)

Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says...

Then he quotes Psalm 95:7-11. Notice that he says the Holy Spirit is speaking through the Psalmist. It is the voice of God that speaks through the text of Scripture. If you ever want to hear the voice of God, you have only to open your Bible and read. This means that when the Bible speaks, God speaks. When the author of Hebrews quotes a psalm he does not say, "As David says," or "As the psalmist says." Instead he says, "*the Holy Spirit says.*" He says this because he understands the Holy Spirit to be the ultimate author of Scripture. This is exactly what Paul¹⁰ would affirm as would Peter.¹¹

This is why Billy Graham's messages were so powerful. He never preached, "And I say" or "my word says." No. When he preached he proclaimed "the Bibles says" or "God's word says." It doesn't matter what any man says. What matters is what God says. This is why the author quotes Psalm 95. It illustrates his main point. Look again at verses 7-11.

Hebrews 3:7-11 (ESV)

*"Today, if you hear his voice,
8 do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion,
on the day of testing in the wilderness,
9 where your fathers put me to the test
and saw my works for forty years.
10 Therefore I was provoked with that generation,
and said, 'They always go astray in their heart;
they have not known my ways.'
11 As I swore in my wrath,
'They shall not enter my rest.'"*

There were two kinds of people among the children of Israel. There were *those who did believe* God and kept the faith firm to the end, people like Joshua, Caleb, and the sons of Aaron. These are those whose hearts were tender towards God and were allowed to enter the Promised Land.¹²

¹⁰ 2 Tim. 3:16.

¹¹ 2 Ptr. 1:20-21.

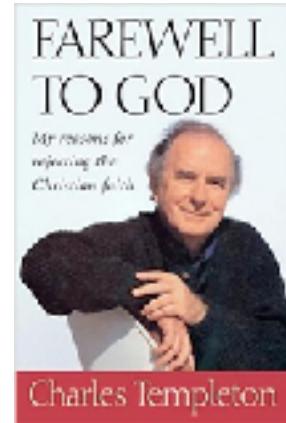
¹² Also included were Joshua and his family, Caleb and his family, the sons of Moses, and the sons of Aaron, along with all those 20 years old and younger.

Then there were those who did not believe God and did not keep the faith firm to the end. These are those whose hearts were hard toward God and were not allowed to enter the Promised Land. These all died in the wilderness because of their unbelief. These were not part of God's house, even though they were descendants of Abraham. These did not hold fast their faith to the end and so they proved not to be true believers.

Billy Graham kept the faith firm to the end. He kept believing. Billy is part of the house that Jesus is building. We know that Billy truly had come to share in Christ because he kept the faith in Jesus firm to the end.

Charles Templeton died in 2001. The last book he wrote was entitled, *Farewell to God: My Reasons for Rejecting the Christian Faith*. Templeton did not keep the faith to the end. He stopped believing. Templeton is not part of the house that Jesus is building.

For twenty one years¹³ he looked like a true Christian. He was a full-time evangelist preaching along side Billy Graham for Youth for Christ. He wrote two books encouraging people to believe in Jesus. He hosted a weekly evangelistic TV show on CBS called "Look Up and Live." He even planted a church in Toronto. Sadly however, Templeton did not come to share in Christ because he did not hold fast his confidence in Jesus firm to the end.



Two Things to Help You Keep the Faith

So what can we do to keep the faith. In these verses before us, the Holy Spirit reveals two things for us to do that will help us keep the faith. The first is in verse 12 and the second is in verse 13. The first is take care of your heart and the second is get in a small group.

1) Take Care of Your Heart

Let's read verse 12.

Hebrews 3:12 (ESV)

Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God.

You must take care of your heart. Spiritual diligence is not optional if you want to go to heaven. If you remain unconcerned about the spiritual condition of your heart, then you will die and go to hell. If you do not actively cultivate spiritual growth in your heart, then *an evil, unbelieving heart will grow within you and lead you to fall away from the living God*.

¹³ Templeton professed faith in Jesus in 1936 at age 21. He professed himself an agnostic in 1957 at age 42.

Your heart is like your yard. If you do not take care of your yard, then it will not remain healthy, beautifully green, well-trimmed, and weed-free. It only remains healthy, beautifully green, well-trimmed, and weed-free if you diligently take care of it. If you let your yard go, then weeds will soon overtake it. The same is true with your heart. If you let your heart go, then the weeds of evil unbelief will soon overtake it and before you even know what's happening you will find yourself being led away from the living God.

Proverbs 4:23 (ESV)

Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.

Set up a spiritual vigil around your heart to keep it from the evil of unbelief. Guard what you read. Guard what you watch. Guard the things you think about. Be careful what you mediate on. Stay away from people, places, and things that will lead into sin. Take care of your heart with all vigilance, brothers and sisters.

This is the same thing we read at the beginning of chapter two. You must "*pay close attention to this great message of salvation or else you will drift away from it*" (Heb. 2:1-3). If you are not moving closer to him, then you are drifting away from him. You cannot coast into heaven. You must lead your heart to God or else your evil, unbelieving heart will lead you away from God.

We must fight against all unbelief that would creep into our hearts and destroy the faith that is growing there. Unbelief is not spiritually neutral. It's evil. Don't allow the "*cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, desires for things and illicit pleasures of life*"¹⁴ to sneak in while you're not looking and choke out the spiritual life that is now growing within you.

The first thing you can do to help keep the faith is to take care of your heart. Be vigilant. Guard against all forms of unbelief.

2) Get In a Small Group

The second thing to do to keep the faith firm to the end is get into a small group.

Hebrews 3:13 (ESV)

But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

What we need is daily exhortation to keep believing. ***Exhort one another every day as long as it is called today.*** That's pretty much all day every day. We need constant exhortation. Each day can be referred to as "today" all day long. Therefore, we are to exhort one another

¹⁴ Mt. 13:22; Mk. 4:19; Lk. 8:14.

for as long as "today" can be called "today," which is all day every day. You don't just need to hear "keep believing in Jesus" one day a week. You need to hear that exhortation **every day** of the week. You don't just need exhortation to believe in Jesus once a day, every day, but rather all day every day. Being regularly encouraged to keep believing in Jesus is one of the God-ordained means by which we keep believing in Jesus.

Daily exhortations keep you from being hardened by sin and its deceitfulness. Every time you give in to sin your heart is in some degree hardened. You should fear this. We should all fear the hardening that sin produces. Faithful Christians should fear giving in to sin. You should tremble at the thought of giving in to sin. Every one of God's people should run from sin. We don't want our hearts to be hardened. We want tender hearts toward God that are quick to obey. Oh God forgive us for the times we sin. Pour out your Spirit upon us once again and soften our hard hearts.

Sin is so deceitful. It's whispers in your ear, "You can do this and nothing will happen. You're heart won't be hardened. You are under grace, not the law. Go ahead. It'll be ok. God will be gracious to you. He will forgive you." Sin always lies. God will forgive, but sin is never "ok." Sin is always deceitful, always deadly, and always has a hardening effect upon spiritual sensitivities. No sane husband who yearns for a happy and intimate marriage would ever say, "I can habitually call my wife an idiot. It's ok. She'll forgive me. She knows I'm not perfect." That kind of talk is insanity. All sin is insanity.

Sin always promises what it can't deliver. Remember the words of Satan. "Come on. Take the fruit. You won't die. Actually it will make you wise, so wise that you'll be as smart as God." That's what sin always promises. "Come on. You can't believe the Bible. It's old and outdated. It's non-progressive and socially repressive. Embrace the advance wisdom of the age. Get with the program. Catch the wave. Everyone's doing it. You'll be left out. History will condemn you for being unenlightened."

We need people in our lives who will daily help us keep loving the truth. We need spiritual friends in our lives who will daily remind us to keep believing in Jesus. We need to be surrounded by godly people who love us enough to every day tell us to keep loving and trusting and believing in Jesus. And we need faithful friends who will tell us when we've gone off the spiritual rails. This is why we need to be in a small group.

True Christians need daily exhortation to be faithful. This is not something for only the weak or immature Christian. This is a truth for **every** true Christian. If you don't have people in your life whom you have given permission to daily exhort you to keep the faith firm to the end, then you're cutting yourself off from one of the means of grace. You won't get to heaven if you don't have these kind of people in your life. Your faith will fail if you neglect to heed this exhortation.

If you think you can get to heaven without being connected to the “one another’s” who will daily exhort you to keep the faith firm to the end of your days, then you know better than the Holy Spirit for it is the Spirit of God here saying that Christians need daily exhortation to avoid the hardness and deceitfulness of sin. This is why I say you need to be in a small group. You need to be connected to your spiritual brothers and sisters like this in order to keep the faith. If you’re not in a small group, then see Iain or me. If there’s not a small group for you to get connected to, then we will do everything in our power to start one.

Conclusion

Let’s summarize. The main point of this text is that the faith that Jesus builds into the life of the people he saves is an enduring faith. Saving faith is an enduring faith. The faith that saves is the faith that endures to the end. *“You have come to share in Christ (today) if you keep the faith (tomorrow and) to the end of your life”* (v.14). Only those who keep the faith to the end will go to heaven. Jesus said it like this,

Luke 21:19 (ESV)

By your endurance you will gain your lives.

Matthew 10:22 (ESV)

and you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.

Paul explains that Jesus died for you...

Colossians 1:22-23 (ESV)

“...in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him,²³ if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.

Can A True Christian Lose Saving Faith?

“You have come to share in Christ if you keep the faith to the end.” Does this mean that a true Christian can lose his or her salvation? No. It means that only the people who keep the faith to the end are the ones who truly had saving faith in the first place. The apostle John explains.

1 John 2:19 (ESV)

They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.

How are we to understand those who turn away from the faith? Are we to understand them as having lost saving faith that they once had? No, says John. You are to understand that they never had saving faith in the first place. *They walked away from Jesus to make it plain that they never knew Jesus.* If they truly knew Jesus—truly loved him and cherished him—and truly had saving faith then they would never walk away from him *permanently*. They may stumble for a season but they would always discover him to be sweeter than whatever substitute they are flirting and will then return to him. No true Christian will die in unbelief. You and I both should fear toying with unbelief. If Jesus is the Son of God, then why would we toy with turning away from him?

Should We Go After Wandering Professors?

So are we never to go after those who walk away? Not at all. Of course we are to go after them, every day until death. That's why God puts us in community. As long as there is life in the lungs, there is grace to be had at the cross. That's why Jesus himself leaves the 99 sheep and runs after the one who is lost. Jesus' brother James makes this plain.

James 5:19-20 (ESV)

My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

Jesus is the perfect Builder. He never begins building a house that he does not intend to finish. *"He who began a good work in you will be faithful to complete it"* (Phil. 1:6). *"You are his house if indeed you hold fast your confidence and hope in him."* As long as you keep hoping in him, he is still at work in you. And he intends to keep his work going in you by telling you to keep hoping in him. So keep hoping in him. Keep your confidence in his strong hands as he fashions your faith. Keep the faith of the one who never fails.

Take care of your heart. Weed out all unbelief. Cleanse your heart of the evil weeds of unbelief. Don't allow unbelief to lead you away from the living God. Invite daily exhortation. Exhort your family to keep believing in Jesus. Encourage those around you every day to keep the faith.

You truly belong to Christ,
if you keep the faith to the end of life.
So when you hear his voice,
make quick, the choice,
his will to obey,
today.

I exhort you friend,
stay true to the end.
Don't wander away,
stand firm, don't stray.
Oh, guard your heart,
or sin will tear it apart.

The pleasant pleadings of sin,
sound sweet to men,
but deceitful is its call
intended to make you fall.
So fly to him, heart full of unfailing faith,
and Christ will carry you home to heaven, where the Father joyfully waits.