

Hebrews 3:5–6

Holding Fast...

Last week we ended with the idea of our eternal reward and hope. I'd like to take a step back and think with you about that hope and the truth that we are called to hold fast as a strengthening agent for our confidence and for our hope. We addressed the fact that our reward IS Jesus and that He brings with Him gifts, rewards for those upon whom He sets His infinite love... we spoke of

- Adoption, that precious truth that we are made into beloved sons and daughters of the Most High
- Forgiveness, the wiping away of all our sin, the cleansing of our natures and the giving of the full inheritance belonging to unstained children
- The hope of heaven as our eternal home
- The timeless, unending nature of eternity, pouring out hope into the midst of darkness...

All of these are part of our reward... it is such a strange concept, the idea that we are going to be rewarded for something that someone else did... but that is the nature of it. That is the heart. And as unexpected and wondrous as the promise may be, it is still true. But that doesn't convince our frail hearts sometimes. Sometimes in the darkness that presses around us, we find ourselves doubting, wondering and afraid, unsure of where to turn, and unsure of what to believe. We find ourselves ravaged by the tempter and assaulted by his minions, fear and worry. We find ourselves in the camp of the enemy and not sure how to get back out. So, I want to aim us this morning. I want to aim us at the hope that is ours and equip us to hold fast to it when we are shaken to our core. I want to help us all press in close and cling tenaciously to the Father Who holds us in His unbreakable grip. Because we must understand this fact: It is not the strength of our grip that saves us, but the strength of HIS grip. Our clinging and holding fast, helps us, comforts us, and strengthens those around us... but we can NEVER lose Him, for He will never lose us!!

I. IF/SINCE/WHEN

The statement could be read to say that if WE hold fast, we are safe. If WE do not, we are doomed. But that puts our salvation in our hands rather than in God's hands. The testimony of scripture speaks differently.

A. Consider the words of Jesus

John 6.35- 40.

B. Or the word of Peter

1Peter 1.3-5

C. Or Paul –

Ephesians 1:3-6

We do not save ourselves, and we are not able to lose what God has given... so how then do we understand the word IF? The writer of Hebrews is using it to demonstrate the truth that our

holding fast (or being held fast to be more accurate) is an assurance and confidence to us in the midst of dark days. We all know our own struggles, and we all know our own temptations to doubt and to allow fear and worry to creep in and steal our joy. But remembering that you have held fast, that you have continued to believe through darkness before lends itself to encourage and strengthen you when darkness rises again. So consider and praise Him who has allowed you to hold fast and who will surely strengthen you as you move ahead.

- D. Hold fast to the inward emotions, and hold fast to that upon which they are based. So how do we hold fast to an emotion which ebbs and flows and waxes and wanes?
- i. We can cultivate the habit of honest speech to God. If you want to hold fast your confidence, cultivate the habit of coming near to God, and telling Him everything.
 - ii. Beware of dropping into the evils which certainly will break that communion and will

darken that confidence. For no man will be on open terms with God that has coiled in his heart some evil which he knows to be a devil, and yet will not even consider casting out.

E. As we have to cultivate the inward emotion, so we have to cultivate our firm grasp of the outward thing, the material and ground of our hope. Our constant clinging to truth.

All muscular effort tends to relaxation. Grip a rope as tight as you can. Now, unless you are constantly, purposefully renewing your grip, clinging tighter, squeezing harder; your grasp WILL loosen, bit by bit. Until all you are holding is air... it works the same way with clinging to truth. There are three basic ways by which we can lose our hold of God's truth:

1. Some let it be dragged out of their hands by violence;
2. some let it drop out of their hands by carelessness;
3. and some fling it away out of their hands because they want to hold something else.

The tragedy is that continuing in any of these ways will ultimately prove the falsehood of our Christianity: So then, here is the command: hold fast the ground of your confession, and keep a tight grip of Jesus Christ. Those who let Him go generally open their hands a finger at a time; one a joint at a time, and do not know what they are doing until the palm is open and empty. There is room for a caution here:

if all of this means nothing to you and matters not at all, if you can hear and not know, see and not be changed, even so far as to WANT, then perhaps you need to examine the truth or falsehood of your conversion. This steadfast hope may wax and wane, but it is ALWAYS a certain and sure thing in the end.

II. DOUBTING AND FEAR IS NOT ITSELF SIN.

consider Thomas.

John 20.26-29

- a. Christ met his doubts
- b. Provided opportunity for him to see what evidence he needed
- c. Did NOT rebuke him
- d. The doubt and the emergence from it transformed Thomas's understanding of who Jesus was in profound ways.
 - a. Knew Him as Lord
 - b. Knew Him as God
 - c. Didn't really need to touch Him to believe...

III. HOW TO HOLD FAST

It is a two part thing to cling to Him.

- a. First it is to the confidence we have in Him that we must cling with all the hope we possess. The idea here conveyed about holding fast is a nuanced one, the word confidence is the word

trust. It is the idea that we know God through Christ, and we trust Him because of Christ.

1. The sure and steadfast knowledge that we possess is rooted in relationship.

- A child who fears that his father will punish him ruthlessly will seek to hide his failure, and will have no confidence in that father's love or acceptance
- A child who knows that the father will always love and accept him, feels the breach of relationship caused by error and cannot wait confess his failures. Because the ground of trust and affection is firm.

2. Our hope is never grounded in OUR perfect obedience, faithfulness or compliance.

3. Rather our hope is grounded in our growing and strengthening knowledge of HIM... hence, our holding fast is really about our deepening relationship. We

trust because we have learned to trust. We have learned to trust because we have walked through deepening waters with Him. And in His abiding faithfulness, we find the bedrock which anchors our soul in the midst of the strongest gales life has to throw.

- b. Which brings us to the second part of holding fast - we must cling to the TRUE understanding of Who, of What, of How and of Why
1. Who? The Christ of the Bible who is God made flesh.
 2. What did He come to do? He came to reveal and to honor the Father. Creator God who demands and deserves the unadulterated worship of all His creation. He came to redeem a people to display and declare the wisdom of God in the heavenly places. And one day, He will come again, establish His kingdom and take us to be with Him forever...

3. How does He accomplish this? By dying on the cross, taking our sin upon Himself and becoming our payment for that sin. He accomplished this feat by the righteous life He lived, in complete obedience to God, both positive and negative; doing all that was commanded and avoiding all that was prohibited. Further, He ascended into heaven where He is now seated at the right hand of the Father waiting the day of His triumphant return and the terrible day of His long pent up wrath for sin and judgement against all who do evil.
4. Why would He do this? Because in the wisdom of His own counsel, He chose to love us. He desired that we would know Him fully because He is the only thing WORTH knowing fully... and thus He created us so that we could know the redeeming love of the Most Sovereign God. He created us, sustains us, and works all thing according to that

perfect will which He held in Himself before the beginning of all things...

c. Therefore - cling to the One you know, but be sure that you know the One that IS. Fight for truth, tenaciously dig it out of the scripture, worry it out like a terrier on a bone, don't ever relax your pursuit of truth and know that God will grant you understanding in the fullness of His time!

IV. REJOICING IN THE HOPE TO WHICH YOU HOLD FAST

a. Glorifying - the idea is not the act of glorying, but rather the thing IN WHICH we ARE glorying. It is the truth that the thing itself which sits outside us is that thing which so powerfully stirs up all that is within us... that which is without us, the person and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, excites the hope, courage and tenacity to hold fast in the joy and delight which He brings us. We keep our eyes steadfastly fixed upon Him and He picks us up and carries us to the peace which He

promised us in the beginning. So the confidence and glory we have are really the child of hope made manifest in us!

- b. Delighting in the God who gave this, who made us His own at great cost to Himself and because of no good in us
- c. Praising Him in the fullness of His beauty, love and wonder. His power and strength are absolutely worth praising, and so overwhelmingly good that they spontaneously erupt into praise.
- d. Let the words of your mouth bring praise before the throne for we often are strengthened by the truths we utter. Perhaps they were known to us, but in the utterance of them we begin to believe and delight in them all the more.