

Held Fast, So Hold Fast

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[0 : 00] If you would open up your Bibles to Hebrews chapter 13. I'm going to read Hebrews 13, 20 through 25.

! Now may the God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever.

Amen. I appeal to you, brothers. Bear with my word of exhortation, for I have written to you briefly. You should know that our brother Timothy has been released, with whom I shall see you if he comes soon.

Greet all your leaders and all the saints. Those who come from Italy send you greetings. Grace be with you all. May God bless the reading of his word. Anybody been to Yosemite National Park? No? Nobody? Okay. Yosemite, if you've been there, is home of El Capitan, a 3,000 foot sheer vertical granite rock face.

[1 : 34] And El Cap is the center of the rock climbing world. On June 3rd, 2017, Alex Honnold made rock climbing history by free soloing the free rider route from base to summit.

It took him a little less than four hours. Now, if you're wondering what is free soloing, free soloing is rock climbing without ropes, without anchors, and without a climbing partner.

And to free solo El Capitan is extraordinary, if not insane. Do I have an amen? Amen. I mean, if you think about what Alex did, you start thinking that the only thing from keeping him falling off that vertical granite was his ability to hold fast by his fingertips.

One slip, one mistake, certain death. Now, that's terrifying. Especially when you're 2,000, 3,000 feet up in the air.

You know, it's said of free soloists that it's just a matter of time before a free soloist dies of free soloing. Now, this may be a little overly dramatic, but bear with me.

[2 : 52] Imagine your life is like climbing a rock face. Your 70 to 80 years on this face of this planet is you climbing and making your way on the route of holiness to the summit.

The base is your birth. The summit is your death. Is your salvation dependent solely on your ability to hold fast to Christ until you summit?

Now, that should be terrifying to you. And maybe many of you have lived there. I know I have. I used to think that my salvation depended on me. And not only was I terrified by that, I was miserable.

There are no free solo Christians. Your salvation does not depend solely on you. Our salvation is dependent solely on Christ.

And because our salvation depends solely on Christ, We've got to hold fast to Christ. To the end. Till we summit. We've come to the end of the book of Hebrews.

[4 : 11] And in these verses, we have a very helpful conclusion to the book. And I'm going to summarize it this way. We are held fast by Christ. So we hold fast to Christ.

We are held fast by Christ. So we hold fast to Christ. It's not either or. It's both and. But it all depends upon Christ. So two points in your outline for your sermons in your bulletin.

We are held fast. So we hold fast. Okay. This side of the room. You say after me. We are held fast. So we hold fast.

We are held fast. So we hold fast. Everybody together. We are held fast. So we hold fast.

We are held fast by Christ. So we hold fast to Christ. Let's unpack this. In verses 20 and 21. I want you to see how we are held fast.

[5 : 18] When I was a youth pastor. Many, many years ago. I would take groups of students on these things called adventure trips. And it was during the summertime.

And we would tour Wisconsin over a number of years. And we do a variety of different stuff. But usually we were rock climbing somewhere. And rock climbing is a very powerful lesson in trust. Because you're literally putting your trust in someone else. The belayer. Now imagine stepping up to a six story basalt rock face at Interstate Park in St. Croix, Wisconsin.

It is tall. And it's kind of scary. You put on your climbing harness. And there is a carabiner on the end of your harness. Solid steel.

It can hold up to a max load of 2,000 pounds. You're safe. There's this rope that comes down from the very top of that six story cliff.

[6 : 20] And that rope you attach with the carabiner to your harness which is attached to you. And that rope is rated at 10,000 pounds. You're fine. That rope goes all the way up to where it is anchored in three different spots in basalt.

Which is a hardened lava. And then it is kind of a pulley system over the top. And that rope comes back down behind you. Wraps around a giant tree trunk.

And then is attached to another person. Into their harness. To which they have a breaking mechanism. That person is called the belayer.

Belayer. And it's in his or her hands. That you are entrusting your life. And so when you are clicked in. And you walk up to that basalt.

Before you put your hand on anything. You look back at your belayer. And you ask this question. Belay on? And you know what your belayer says to you?

[7 : 20] Belay on. I gotcha. I gotcha. The Lord Jesus Christ has gotcha. Belay on. We are held fast.

By Christ. Let me show you from this text. How that happens. The first thing I want you to notice. Is that we are held fast.

By Christ. In verse 20. Now may the God of peace. Who brought again from the dead. Our Lord Jesus. The great shepherd of the sheep. By the blood of the eternal covenant.

Christ's death and resurrection. Has established a new covenant. And he will hold you fast forever. That's why the new covenant. Which we learned about in chapter 8.

Is here. Talked about an eternal covenant. Because that new covenant. Established by the blood. And resurrection of Jesus. Will hold you fast. Forever. Forever. By the blood.

[8 : 18] Did you see that? It's a reference to Christ's death. Who brought again from the dead. Our Lord Jesus. It's a reference to the resurrection. It's the death and resurrection.

Of our Lord Jesus Christ. That has established. The new covenant. That has bound. Christ. To us. A covenant. Is a promise. God makes to his people. And he will make it happen.

The new covenant. Is God promising to his new people. The church. That on the basis of his death. And resurrection. All of our sins are forgiven.

And that he will never leave us. Nor forsake us. The once and for all death. Of the great shepherd of the sheep. Has secured. Us.

The good shepherd. Laid his life down for us. And then took it up again. In order to secure us. To him. He's the greatest. Belayer of all.

[9 : 16] All. And the result. Of this. Work. Is in verse 20. May. Now may the God of peace.

Who brought again from the dead. It's peace. It's shalom. It's. It's no longer being fearful. That your sins. Stand against you. It's. It's realizing that.

Your eternity. Has been secured. By the death and resurrection. Of Jesus. And this new covenant. In which God has promised. It's all forgiven. And I'm all in.

For you. All the way through. So the first thing you need to understand. In terms of being held fast. By Christ. Is that you're held fast. By the new covenant.

Which he's established. By his death and resurrection. And there's peace with God. Do I have an amen? Amen. Do I have an amen? Amen. That's what I'm talking about.

[10 : 12] The second way that. We are held fast. Is we're held fast. Through. Christ. So. God. The God of peace.

Through the blood. And through the resurrection of Jesus. Through the new covenant. Which is the eternal covenant. He. He has equipped you. With every good thing. That you need. To do his will. Working in us.

That which is pleasing. In his sight. Through. Through. Through. Through. Through. Jesus. Christ. What he's getting at here. Is not only do you have peace. With God.

You have power. From God. And power to do what? Empowered to do every good thing. To do his will. And what is his will?

That which is pleasing. In his sight. He wants us. And empowers us. To do that which is. Pleasing. In his sight. In what is pleasing. In his sight. For us to by faith.

[11:10] Obey him. All the way to the end. To live. For. Him. In verse. Chapter 12. We learn that. We're to. Set our eyes on Jesus.

And that God has. Has laid out. A race for us. He's marked out. A race for us. To. To run. With endurance. Just imagine this. This rock face. In front of us.

It's. If we apply it. To rock climbing. It's like. The Lord Jesus. Has a particular. The route for us. The route of holiness. To scale. Life through. To until we summit.

It's a mark. It's a race. Marked out for us. It's a. It's a climbing route. It's God's will. That we live for him.

And Christ. Empowers us. To do that. Let me push that. Climbing illustration. A little bit more. This may sound ridiculous. But it'll make the point. You know that. That rope.

[12:04] That's attached to you. To Jesus. Your belayer. Just imagine that rope. Not only secures you. That rope. That rope. Mediates power to you. Because you're attached to Christ.

He is empowering you. By the power of the Holy Spirit. Through the new covenant. In order for you. To strive unto holiness. To make progress.

We hold fast. We are held fast. Through Christ. Which means. Power. We have peace.

We have power. And finally. We are held fast. For Christ. Which results. In praise. In verse.

At the end of verse 21. After we learn. That we've been equipped. With everything good. That you may do his will. Through Jesus. Says to whom. Be glory. Forever and ever.

[13:03] Give me an amen. Amen. That word glory. Comes from a Greek word. Doxa. D-O-X-A. In English. That's where we get the word doxology.

Worship. Praise. Now scholars debate. Who is the whom. Here. To whom be glory.

Forever and ever. Some say it's. God the father. In verse 20. Others say it's. Jesus Christ. I lean towards Jesus Christ. But. You could actually say. It's both. Because.

If you turn back. To Hebrews chapter 1. We hear this. Long ago. At many times.

In many ways. God. God spoke. God spoke. God spoke. To our fathers. By the prophets. But in these last days. He has spoken to us.

[13:59] By his son. Whom he appointed. The heir of all things. Through whom. Also. He created the world. He. The son. Jesus. Is the radiance.

Of the glory. Of God. God. And the exact imprint. Of his nature. Yes. Through the son.

God is exalted. Jesus is. The incarnate majesty. Of God. And when you look upon him. With eyes of faith. Do you know.

What should. And must. Rise up. In you. It is glory. It's praise. It's saying like. You are awesome. There is no one like you. That's why we sing songs.

Like this. Don't worry. I'm not going to sing. He will hold me fast. He will hold me fast. For my savior.

[14:58] Loves me so. He. Will hold. Me fast. We sing it. We sing about his commitment.

To us. There are no free solo Christians. We are held fast. By Christ. Peace. We are. Held fast.

Through Christ. Power. And we are held fast. For Christ. Praise. And so you know. What you can do every morning. You wake up. You bound out of bed. Pop down.

You're like. I'm glad to be alive. And you turn to your belayer. And say. Lord Jesus. Belay on. And you know. Your Lord Jesus is going to say to you. Belay on.

I've got you. I've got you. I'm holding you fast. By my death and resurrection. By the power that I give to you. Whenever you need it.

[15:54] For my praise and my glory. Belay on. We are held fast. So. If 20 and 21. Show us God's commitment to us.

We are held fast. Verse 22. Shows us. Our response. So we hold fast.

Point to. So we hold fast. Verse 22. I appeal to you brothers. Bear with my word of exhortation. Is the last. Appeal.

Of the book of Hebrews. And the appeal. Is to bear with my. His word of. Exhortation. Now. In this context.

The word to bear. Means. Simply. To take. What he has been saying. In these 13. Chapters. To heart. And put it. Into practice. To what he's calling us to do.

[16:52] And that is to draw near. And hold fast. Fast. Again. And again. And again. That word. Exhortation. Really means to spur you on.

To move you. The book of Hebrews. Is one. Long. Exhortation. To hold fast. To Christ. Until we summit.

Till we breathe our last. And we are exhorted. In two ways. In the book of. In the book of Hebrews. By way of warnings.

And by way of encouragements. And both work together. To catalyze us. To hold fast to Christ. Christ. There are five warnings.

In the book of Hebrews. I've tried to mark them for you. As we've gone through them. The first one comes in chapter 2. Verses 1 through 3. You don't need to turn there. But we are. We are warned. Not to drift away.

[17:53] From God. By neglecting. This. Great. Salvation. That Christ has accomplished. For us. In chapter 3. Verses 12 through 14.

We are warned. Not to fall away. From the living God. Due to an evil. Unbelieving heart. In chapter 6. Verses 4 through 9. We are warned.

That it is impossible. To restore again. Those who've fallen away. From Christ. Because they have refused him. In chapter 10.

Verses 26 through 31. We are warned. That for those. Who go on sinning deliberately. For refusing Christ. There is no longer.

Any sacrifice for sin. Because they have trampled. The son of God. Underfoot. And they have profaned. The blood. Of the new covenant. These are warnings.

[18:49] That's the fourth warning. The fifth warning. Is in chapter 12. 25 to 29. That those who refuse him. Who is warning from heaven. Jesus.

Who seated at the right hand of God. There is the terrible promise. Of judgment. It is a terrible thing. To fall into the hands. Of the living God.

He is a consuming fire. All these warnings. Are aimed at Christians. Who are waffling. In their faith. They are fearful. Of being identified with Christ. Fearful. For suffering for Christ. Because remember. The original audience. Was a church. That had suffered.

And were continuing to suffer. These warnings. Are God calling us. To not give up. On Christ.

[19:45] Don't let go. Hold fast. Don't turn. To false belayers. Don't put your trust.

In things that cannot save you. Your belayer. Is saying to you. Don't.

Don't put your hand. On that outcropping. That. That. That will not help you. That's just going to fall away. Let me tell you where to put your hand. Put your hand right there. Strain ahead for that.

Get your. Get your foot up there. Get a toe hold there. Your belayer. Is wanting you. To summit. For him. And your belayer.

Is saying. Don't. Don't put your trust. In another belayer. These warnings. Are intended to. Make us uncomfortable.

[20:47] They are for those. Whose faith. Has grown cold. Who. Chapter six. Have become sluggish. In their faith. And this.

These warnings. This discomfort. A divine discomfort. Is intended. To catalyze. Faith. To press on. To hold fast. To step back in.

But. Isn't it good. That Hebrews. Is not just one series. Of warnings. It also contains. Repeated. Christological.

Glory. Again. And again. The author. Shows us. That Jesus. Is better. That Jesus. Is greater. And so.

He's. Simultaneously. Throughout the book. Is saying. Don't let go of Christ. No. No. No. Hold fast. To him. And here's why. Chapter one. He is the final word.

[21:39] Greater than the prophets. Chapter one. He's greater than angels. Chapter three. He's greater than Moses. Chapter four. he is the great high priest.

And he's the great high priest because he will never die because he's from the order of Melchizedek, chapter seven. In chapter eight, we learn that he is the guarantor of a better covenant, a new covenant, an eternally lasting covenant, a promise by which God has said, I have forgiven all of your sins.

I have cleansed your conscience and I will never leave you nor forsake you. In chapters nine and 10, this great high priest is the great once for all sacrifice for our sins because it's the blood of one who's totally God and totally man and once for all, he has shed his blood for you.

Hear this. This is chapter 10, verses 11 through 14. And every priest stands daily at his service. Every Levitical priest offering repeatedly the same sacrifices which can never take away sins. They pointed to the ultimate sacrifice, but they could never take away sins.

[23 : 00] But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God. Done! He sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time until his enemy should be made a footstool for his feet.

We're living in the gap. For by a single offering, he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified. To him we look.

He is the founder and finisher of our faith, working in us that we can endure to the end. Remember Philippians 1.6, he who began a good work in you will carry it unto completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

That's what we're talking about here. He's gonna hold you fast. And so by faith, we hold fast to him. We endure. Remember chapter 11?

All of those 20 plus Old Testament saints who by faith waited, pressed on, endured hardship, ran the race, and they came through.

[24 : 11] And they're waiting for us. We make our way up the rock face of this life along the route of holiness and it will be looked down upon by many, but not by our Lord Jesus.

Because in light of what Christ is, who he is, and what he's done, brothers and sisters, we are Zion bound. Our heavenly homeland awaits.

We're one day closer. It's a city whose architect and builder is God. It's unshakable chapter 12. It's the home of all Christ's blood blot who's gone before us, holding fast to the end.

And of course, what makes the new Jerusalem, the heavenly Jerusalem, worth everything is that it's God is there. Jesus is there.

Jesus is there. So we bear with this exhortation. Taking to heart both the warnings and the encouragements looking to Christ in order to hold fast to Christ to the end until we summit and breathe our last.

[25 : 25] for those in the room who disregard these warnings and encouragements from the book of Hebrews, you are refusing and rejecting Christ.

God's great salvation. And you are in terrible danger of God's unrelenting judgment. But it's not too late. If you have ears to hear, you can turn to Him and you can throw yourself upon His mercy and you will find yourself brought into the family of God.

For those of us who have taken to heart both these warnings and encouragements, we hold fast to Christ together.

together. Our salvation is bound up together. There are no free solo Christians. And so, we take this to heart and we strive to the rest together.

Let me just read you some passages that emphasize that we're doing this together. Hebrews 3, 12-14.

[26 : 44] Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil in unbelieving heart leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it's called today, that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

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

Remember chapter 10? Verses 23-25. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering for he who is promised is faithful.

Great is thy faithfulness. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

Chapter 12. Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight in sin which clings so closely and let us run with endurance.

[27 : 54] Let's climb the rock face together. The race that's been set before us looking to Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.

13-1. Let brotherly love continue. 13-7. Remember your leaders. 13-17. Obey your leaders and submit to them. This is all about together, holding fast to Christ all the way to the end, all the way to we summit.

Our salvation is bound up together. We are on our way to the heavenly Jerusalem together. Maybe, maybe this is a way to think about it. You can imagine yourself as belayed just to Jesus.

It's just you and Jesus, but it's not. On that rock face, on the route of holiness to the summit, there's all of us. We're all belayed in And we're somehow all attached to each other.

And we are encouraging one another. As long as it's called today, we're saying things, keep going, keep going. Keep your eyes focused on Him all the way to the end.

[29 : 00] And the way we do this is in verse 25, by God's grace. The final word of the book of Hebrews is grace.

Grace be with all of you. It's by God's grace we hold fast to Christ. It's by God's grace that Christ has held fast to us.

And so we hold fast to Him. Our great high priest in chapter 4, verse 16, calls us. He says, hey, draw near to the throne of grace when you are in a time of need and you will have grace in that need.

He will provide strength for you to summit, to press through, to endure. the warnings and encouragements of this 13 chapter exhortation is designed to spur us on to hold fast to Christ until we summit.

Isn't it good to know that your risen and reigning priest and king is right now interceding for you to that end?

[30 : 13] There are no free solo Christians. No Alex Humbolds in our midst.

None of us is relying on our own strength to get us to the summit. We are held fast by Christ so we hold fast to Christ together.

together. Before the throne of God above I have a strong, a perfect plea. A great high priest whose name is love who ever lives and pleads for me.

My name, our names are graven on his hands. Our names are graven on his heart. I know that while in heaven he stands and he stands forever.

No tongue can bid me thence depart. No tongue can bid me thence depart. All right, one last time.

Would you repeat after me? Christ is my risen and reigning priest and king.

[31 : 30] King, the anchor of my soul. The same yesterday, today, and forever. He holds us fast so we hold fast to him.

We are held fast so we hold fast. Let's pray together.

God in heaven, thank you that in your grace and mercy from before the foundation of the world, you set your love on us and you have sought us. Thank you for establishing the new covenant in your blood.

It is a tremendous source of confidence for us and we will not be lax in this. We will strive to enter the rest that you have purchased for us. We will press on and hold fast all the way until we summit and we do this together for the glory of your name.

Amen.