

# Hold Fast Your Confession

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 07 March 2021

Preacher: Rev Kenneth I Macleod

[ 0 : 0 0 ] I want to extend a very warm welcome to everybody this morning and on behalf of Stormy Free Church and we pray that as we gather together under the word that we will know God's blessing in it.

I want us to begin our service this morning in singing from Psalm 34 and this is from the Scottish Sorder, verses 5 to 10, Psalm 34. They looked to him and lightened were, not shamed were their faces.

This poor man cried, God heard and saved him from all his distresses. The angel of the Lord encamps and round encompasseth all those about that do him fear and them delivereth.

O taste and see that God is good, who trusts in him is blessed. Fear God is saints, none that him fear shall be with want oppressed. Verses 5 to 10 of Psalm 34.

They looked to him and lightened were. They looked to him and lightened were, not shamed were their faces.

[ 1 : 1 0 ] This poor man cried, God heard and saved him from all his distresses.

The angel of the Lord encampments and rounden come and said, Then hear him andilities.

And hell of the Lord encampments and provision his blessing and throw theirardiplain. It says, but God does not want as well as long as they successes. In Jesus' In Jesus' name, O knows of the Lord Jesus who died to such die.

Be du■o to■- The angel of the Lord has fixed love, but also relentlessly cider because of his beloved children in blood.

A Let us bow in prayer.

[ 3 : 02 ] Lord our God as we gather before you this morning we give thanks for your goodness and mercy we give thanks as your word tells us that your goodness and mercy will follow us all the days of our life that is a blessing of being one of your people we give thanks that you have not left us to ourselves at any point, even although there may be times along the way that we feel isolated and lonely, help us to remember that your word assures us that you are a constant present with your people and that there is nothing that will ever separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus we give thanks Lord that even although there might be periods of darkness within our lives times of severe temptation, times of severe trial and there may be times when we feel alone and we wonder as the Lord left us your word assures us that that is never the case that you will never leave nor forsake I am with you always, even unto the end of the age is your great promise and so we pray that we might be able to rest in these great truths and be assured that even although we might not feel your presence we know that your presence is here with us and so we ask Lord that you will bless us as we wait upon you and that we will hear your word afresh today we give thanks for the word of God, it is a light to our path it is a word to our ears directing us you shall hear a word inclining you the word tells us of how we will hear a word whether to turn to the right and to the left and we give thanks Lord that your word is a wise word it is a word of counsel help us Lord not to trust in our own, to our own heart and to lean to our own understanding because that will often be deceptive and will take us down the wrong road we are told to trust in the Lord with all our heart and lean not to our own understanding and we are told in all your ways acknowledge him and he will direct your paths and we ask Lord that every day we will know of your direction and your guidance and of your goodness and mercy and grace and that we may discover the joy of the Lord being your strength and we pray that you will feed us with your word and that it will be truly that which nourishes us in the inward being that we will find a strengthening in the depth of our soul and so we ask Lord that you will be with every home and with every family bless us Lord as a town here bless us as an island bless us as a collection of islands bless us Lord as a land bless us nationally and internationally and ask Lord that your word may have greater influence and greater power right throughout this whole world we long for a day when it will be the kingdom of Jesus Christ that will hold sway that people will be the greatest influence on earth will be the influence of the gospel and so often as we look out we think that is just so impossible and sometimes we look around and we wonder what's going to happen to us but the one thing we know is that

Lord you are in control of everything and grant us the faith to see grant us a hope to be filled with joy grant us Lord that great sense of love your love in our heart your love shed abroad in our heart so that we will manifest that love in our relationships one with another leave us not to ourselves oh Lord we ask that you will forgive us our sin again we bow before you individually, personally and also collectively and ask you Lord to forgive us our sin our sin is such a barrier between the light of the gospel between our fellowship and communion with you you cannot bear iniquity and we're told in your word has the Lord's hand become short or is he heavy that he cannot hear but we're told what has happened when the Lord wasn't answering the prayers of Israel long ago and it was told that your sins have separated between you and your God and so we ask Lord that our sin might not cause separation we're told in your word that if we harbor sin if we cling to sin that you won't hear us that's what we're told that if we have that sort of inward desire and sympathy to sin and delighting in that sin and playing with it and fondling that sin and giving reign to that sin that it's going to become a barrier and a block to our prayer so we pray Lord that we might be ruthless that we might be ready to put to death by the help of your spirit we give thanks Lord that your spirit does work unaided by us but your spirit also enables us in the fight and so we pray for that enabling day by day we pray Lord for us as a nation at this particular time with the pandemic that's still on the go we give thanks Lord for all the progress that has been made with the vaccine and we're beginning to see that it is having an impact upon society we pray for all those who are ill and still within our own communities we're aware of the impact and we know that some have become very ill with it and we ask Lord that your healing holding hand may be upon all with this virus and ask Lord for returning health and strength and we pray for every broken heart when we think of the when we think of the huge numbers that have lost their lives to this COVID and all the heartbreak that surrounds that and all the added difficulties at a time like this because of death where we aren't able to share in the way that we used to where we're kept back where there are barriers where we cannot express our sorrows and sympathies maybe in the way that we used to we cannot collect together and gather together in the way that we used to and these things are very difficult for us and so we pray for all just now who are struggling in the face of the difficulties brought around by illness and bereavement by death and so we ask Lord that you'll be with us because those again within our congregation who mourn we're aware that week by week we have a we've got families we've got deaths and so we ask that you'll be with us and we pray for our young people we pray for our schools and we thank you Lord for our teachers and for all the great work that they do it's been a difficult time for them as well as for pupils and we pray for our young people because this has been hard for them where they've been separated from their friends and it's

it is so unnatural for children as children it's their norm to play together to interact together it's what they do and so there's this separation and it's it's been it's been hard for them but we pray that they will be strengthened through it that it will be character building for them in the long term and we ask Lord that you will bless and bless those who suffer from issues within their mind and those with illnesses in their bodies Lord we commit them to your help and to your to your grace and grant them help and strength and so we pray to dry up the tears of the broken hearted and be with us Lord we pray pray Lord for what goes on in Sudan we were hearing about that at the prayer meeting and Pastor Job we give thanks Lord for him and for his amazing witness of the church in Sudan and Lord we pray that you will grant protection and in the face of opposition and a real danger that the church of Jesus Christ may grow and we pray for that in all the areas of this world where there is opposition remember Muriel in Cambodia we give thanks for her great witness and work there and ask that you will bless her and encourage her in that work and ask Lord now that you will be with us that you will grant us your grace in everything bless our governments both in Holyrood and in Westminster oh Lord that they would turn to yourself that they would hear your voice do us good then we pray and take away our sin in Jesus name we ask it

Amen right just a wee word to the young folk you know as you go through life you there are times when you come to something and you say you know this is so good I wish it would never stop you may think back on your life and I'm telling you probably just now this is one time you'd be saying oh I don't think anybody is saying I wish this wouldn't stop with regard to the pandemic we wanted to all to hurry up and to get back to normal but there are times in our lives when we've maybe been doing something that we really really enjoy we're having a super day a really really good day and maybe as you think back over your life you remember days like that maybe it was on holiday and you were doing stuff that you used to just dream about maybe you're on holiday and you've ended up you're getting to swim with dolphins something that it was only like a dream and it's actually happened and you're saying to yourself

I wish today would never end or maybe it's a day where you won something maybe you won a competition maybe you won a medal whether it's in sport or in singing or in art or in something and you say oh this is great and the feeling you have is so good and you say I wish today would never end it might be it might have been a birthday party it might have been I don't know there's loads of things and I remember myself as I look back and so enjoying something I would say I wish this would go on and on and on and on but you know it doesn't that's the sad thing about life is that yes we have a lot of great times but we've also got sad times and when we have the really good times we wish that they would go on forever and ever there was a time when Jesus took three of his disciples Peter, James and John up into a mountain and they went up into the mountain with Jesus and then when they were right up away at top of the mountain something amazing happened

[14:18] Jesus began to change he began to shine incredibly brightly in fact he was so the brightness that began to shine off him was so powerful that they couldn't really look at him he was shining bright like the sun and then Moses and Elijah came and they appeared with Jesus talking to Jesus on the mountain and there was a spirit of not a bad spirit of heaviness but the disciples were just they felt whoa there's something powerful happening here and they felt this kind of weight but it was wonderful it was so wonderful that Peter said Lord can we stay up here forever that's really what Peter was saying I don't ever want to go back down it was so wonderful that Peter who had a wife he had this word he had all the different things he had everything packed down the mountain and it was that moment was so wonderful with Jesus that he said I never wanted to end but Jesus said no we cannot stay here and we thank the

Lord Jesus today that he didn't stay on the mountain because if he had we wouldn't have the salvation there wouldn't have been the cross and the salvation from the cross but the thing is that it couldn't even that wonderful day couldn't stop but you know when a person becomes a Christian it's one of the most wonderful things happens and whether it happens very quickly or whether it happens very gradually you come to realise that you are right with God that Jesus is your Lord your friend your king and you begin to feel so good and you content and realise this is what I want I know who I am I know what it's all about I know where I'm going Jesus is my friend and sometimes at the beginning like that you say

I never want this to end and in one sense it doesn't the sense of belonging to Jesus doesn't but we don't live up like that all the time we often it's like a roller coaster or a bumpy ride sometimes as a Christian the starting place is not the stopping place the starting place is just a starting place of our journey but you know what Jesus' intention is for you and for me if we follow him and believe in him and rest in him and trust in him is to take us home with himself and you know the day that we arrive home with Jesus in heaven that is going to be the best day of our life and it will remain like that forever imagine living imagine imagine having the very very best day that you've ever had well multiply that by a million and that's what glory that's what heaven's going to be like where we are going to be there in the presence of Jesus and he's going to fill us with all the wonderful things that he has promised in this world and there won't be anything to spoil it or break it or disturb it there'll be nothing but that which is a perfect peace and joy that's the stopping places heaven starting places here you make sure that you've started on this journey so that you will eventually stop in heaven and you will have the most wonderful forever with the

Lord Jesus let's pray our Father which art in heaven hallowed be thy name thy kingdom come thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil for thine is the kingdom the power and the glory forever amen we're going to read God's word now from Hebrews and it's in Hebrews chapter 4 Hebrews chapter 4 therefore while the promise of entering his rest still stands let us fear lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it for good news came to us just as to them but the message they heard did not benefit them because they were not united by faith with those who listened for we who have believed enter that rest as he said as I swore in my wrath they shall not enter my rest although his works were finished from the foundation of the world for he has somewhere spoken of the seventh day in this way and God rested on the seventh day from all his works rest and again in this passage he said they shall not enter my rest since therefore it remains for some to enter it and those who formerly received the good news failed to enter because of disobedience again he appoints a certain day today saying through

David so long afterwards in the words already quoted today if you hear his voice do not harden your hearts for if Joshua had given them rest God would not have spoken of another day later on so then there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his let us therefore strive to enter that rest so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience for the word of God is and active sharper than any two-edged sword pushing to the division of soul and of spirit of joints and of marrow discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart and no creature is hidden from his sight but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account since since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens

[ 21 : 08 ] Jesus the son of God let us hold fast of confession for we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are yet without sin let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need amen and may God bless to us this reading of his own holy word and I want us this morning to focus on verse 14 since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens Jesus the son of God let us hold fast our confession let us hold fast our confession we often tell people to keep going keep on going come on you've got to keep going and that is a very important principle in life it's good to encourage one another to keep going particularly when things are difficult or somebody is going through a hard time it's important to say keep on keep on keeping on that's important and that's a very biblical principle because so often that's the message the

Bible is giving to us keep on and it's important in the Christian life it's so important to realise that keeping going is key to our journey to heaven now all through the Bible God speaks to us about the importance as we said of pushing on of not giving up and in this chapter the Apostle is highlighting the importance of fearing that there should be a fear attached to our Christian life to our Christian journey in other words we don't just drift along to heaven you know some people have the idea that when you become a Christian and you just say right Lord you take over which is right and then from then on you just kind of drift on you live life as you always did before but you just kind of drift your way to heaven well that's not what the

Bible says the Bible tells us that it's a struggle that we have to strive that's the kind of language when you come to see what the Apostle is saying indeed all the writers that we have to work out that's what Paul says work out your own salvation with fear and trembling that's what he says and the encouragement to do that is because it is God who works in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure so we have to work but God is working in us at the same time as well so the Christian faith involves probing self examining striving pressing reaching it's a life of movement not drifting but deliberate movement we're going in a particular direction so we're told here in verse 11 we're to strive to enter into that rest as we said we don't drift our way to heaven now the

Apostle was writing to Christians who were struggling because these are Christians who were living in a very difficult time and there was a lot of oppression and a lot of anger a lot of hatred directed towards the Christians and he was particularly writing to converted Jews and these converted Jews were getting an incredibly hard time from Jews that hadn't been converted Jews who were adhering to the old way to the old law and these Jews who were adhering to the old way and hadn't accepted that Jesus Christ was the son of God and is the son of God and is the promised Messiah and were still waiting and looking for him these Jews were telling the converted Jews that they had it all wrong and that they were missing everything they said you don't have a priest you don't have a high priest and we're going to remember the high priest was at the very centre of religious life and indeed was at the very centre of the life of the

Jew because the high priest was the one who represented them before God and the great day of atonement for instance when he went into the most holy place with the blood and sprinkled it on the mercy seat the high priest was key to religious life and they're saying to the converted Jews you don't have that anymore so you've had it you can't get to God but the apostle is saying oh no in fact it's you the unconverted that are wrong because we do have a high priest in fact he goes on to say we have a great high priest a high priest that surpasses any high priest that was ever in this world ever in the Aaronic priesthood we have to remember that the the whole Aaronic priesthood and the whole sacrificial system and everything in it in the Old Testament was all pointed to

[ 26 : 36 ] Jesus and it's very interesting when you go through the life in the tabernacle and the temple and all the different things there that it was all pointing everything was symbolic everything was a type of Jesus Christ of his life of his work of his death of everything that regarding your salvation and of course you remember when Jesus died on the cross and when he let out the great cry it's finished I've done all the work do you remember it tells us that the the big the curtain in the temple that separated the holy place nobody was allowed in there a church and a high priest once again that curtain was torn in two from top to bottom in other words God tore that curtain and that all of a sudden that was let open and the Lord was saying it's over Jesus has finished over no need of all these things no need now for the laver and for the altar and the show bread and the candlesticks and all these things

Jesus has done it all and so we're told here since we have a great high priest to us passed through the heavens now of course when it tells us there of how that Jesus is a great high priest who has passed through the heavens that's speaking very simply about his ascension and you remember how he had led the disciples out and how they went up the hill and how he was parted from them remember how he just rose up rose up from them and he rose up into the heavens and went out of their sight remember how angels came and they said just as you saw just as the son of man rose up like this he's going to come back again but as he rose up he became glorified son of God a great change although still retaining the human nature as our mediator he became went into this process this glorification took over and so

Jesus is the great high priest who is in heaven for us and he is there interceding for us now that is the most wonderful thing that we ought to always remember that Jesus is in heaven interceding for us and when Jesus intercedes for us he isn't saying to the father see all my people down there I know they're sinning but you know they can't help it and you know they're sinning and sometimes it isn't that bad or that Jesus is trying to make excuses for us that's what we do we always try to justify ourselves justify why we did wrong justify make excuses for us Jesus doesn't do that before the father at no point is he saying the law is too wrenched for them they cannot attain to it he isn't saying that he's only saying one thing he's only one thing there is a continual presenting of what he has done of his blood that is the only way of acceptance for us to the father and Jesus is saying father see what

I have done for them look upon my finished work and of course that's what the father has done and that is where that intercession is being made for us and so little wonder the apostle says our great high priest because no earthly high priest could come within a million miles of what Jesus has done and so it's in light of what he has done for us and what God has done for us and what God has in store for us that there is this great obligation put upon us let us hold fast our confession now the moment you start on the Christian road you make a confession that's what happens and actually people people see the change that takes place in your life you might not realise it you might not even know or understand what has happened you might not be aware you might be wanting to be a Christian but you don't think you've already arrived there but you know the funny thing is that people begin to notice a difference in your life even when you haven't and it might be a wee while down the road you'll tell somebody that you've become a Christian and they'll say oh I'm not surprised because they've seen things they've seen a change taking place now you know the big problem that people have with the whole idea of becoming a Christian and you might be listening today and this is your problem you're saying to yourself

I'd like to become a Christian but I can't and at this particular moment you're not but you're really interested in Christianity but the problem you have is this and you're saying to yourself and remember you're saying this without Jesus Christ as King and Lord within your life you're saying to yourself I could never keep it up I don't know it's already well there are days when I have an interest in the Bible and I'm really keen for these things but a lot of the time I don't even think about it but then all of a sudden something comes back and makes me say you know I really want to be a Christian it would be it would be so so hard because I can't see myself just living my life that way all the time well that's a problem if that's what being a Christian was just trying your best to live in a certain way do you know that would be an nightmare it would be so difficult but you see what happens is when you ask the Lord to come into your life when you ask the Lord to come in and the Lord comes in then he changes you so that these things which you looked on as impossible they become normal this is the way you become the Lord gives you a new heart a new desires new inclinations new appetites so that yes the old is still there it's still there it's banging away it's still fighting away it's still trying to raise its head but the new has taken over so it's not just all your own effort into yes we work but we are given the inclination the desire to go in the direction of the

[ 33 : 38 ] Lord so you you've got to realize that that the Lord changes your heart you don't change your heart it's a Lord who changes your heart and the great thing is that when you start following the Lord you make a confession a confession is made a profession is made people as I said people see the change your speech changes your attitudes change the way you live your life changes oh yes sometimes some of the old will rise up again and display itself and that hurts you but there is there's a new way about you and eventually gradually you will come to see that is working there away within your life as well but your mouth will make a confession and that's important because we're told in the Bible that with the heart we believe but with the mouth we make confession that Jesus

Christ is Lord and that's a very important thing to do to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord and when you say that Jesus Christ is Lord you mean Lord of your life and when he is Lord of your life that means that he has a rule and that he is in charge of your life that you are willing to submit under his authority and under his rule so it's actually very important to make this confession and indeed that's one of the things that happens when a person applies for membership wants to become to go to the Lord's table to become a member in the church they have to make this confession a lot of people think this is an incredibly difficult thing to do and in some ways it is because you're really nailing your couch to the Mass but it's important because one of the things that you do or the main thing that you do when you come to the Kirk session before you become a member is you confess and you're just saying yes Jesus is my Lord we are to confess before people that

Jesus Christ is Lord so your Christian confession is a life by word and by action that you belong to the Lord Jesus Christ and we're told here that we're to hold fast that's what it says since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens Jesus the Son of God let us hold fast our confession now as I said the Apostle was writing to people who are really suffering for being Christians and they've lost land they've lost possessions they've lost rights they've lost their estate their families have been broken up and sometimes people killed it's been a tough time and there'll be a real I suppose temptation to go back and people say this is too dangerous I'm going back or to compromise and the Apostle say no it's not worth it you've got to keep going you've got to keep this confession you've got to keep you've made a confession keep it and so this is what he says we're to hold fast and we wouldn't be told to hold fast if this was something that was dead easy so when we're told to hold fast it implies two or three things it implies first of all difficulty and as we said no

Christian ever just breathes their way to heaven there are a lot of difficulties to confront a lot of problems along the way Satan will do everything to spoil and to mar your journey he will put every obstacle in the way he will do everything that he can to hinder your progress and that's difficult because you've got to remember that once you become a Christian you begin to live in enemy territory you're living in a world that is opposed to Jesus Christ and if you're living in enemy territory don't expect for one moment life to be plain sailing it isn't no Christian will ever say you know this my life was a piece of cake it never is so that's one of the reasons we have to hold fast another is what we're told to hold fast means that we have to put all your strength all your energy into something and that's how it is in the



Christian life as well it is something that will consume us it will take our all and that's why the Bible is always talking about us walking and running and wrestling and fighting and pressing and striving they're all activities of motion and energy and that's what it is as Christians it requires our all but again when we're told to hold fast another thing it says if you're to hold something fast if somebody gave you something and said right hold that fast or excuse me it would give the impression that this was something very precious and if you were given something very very precious to hold that's exactly what you would do you would hold it really tight you'd be holding it fast and you'd be concentrating afraid you would drop it or smash it or break it in any way so you'd be holding tight but remember what you have been given the gift that you have been given by God this gift of salvation is the most precious gift that this world has ever known or seen and that's really where the apostle is saying hold that tight hold that fast now of course we're told that no one can ultimately take our crown from us but we as we said before we have to work out our own salvation with fear and the apostle

[ 39 : 58 ] Paul he was saying that I might know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings he was on to say that I press toward the mark of the prize of the high calling of God and Christ Jesus and pressing to it not drifting not wandering not slouching not just meandering along not pressing I'm focused on that that's where I'm going sometimes you see in the games like say for instance the Olympic games supposing in the 100 meters and quite often in the action replay to begin with the first at the race you'll see it side on but often in the camera when you see it afterwards there's different angles and it's facing straight on and if you've ever seen in under 10 seconds concentration like that

I can't imagine where else there's just you think their eyes haven't blinked there's just utter absolute focus and determination in that one every aspect of the being is caught up in what they're doing that's kind of what the apostle is saying that he is pressing toward the mark and so as I said we have to treasure and nourish what has been given to us here and we do so we hold fast by the obvious things by prayer by praise by the word it's important that we feed upon the word and that we're built up in the word we have to be daily in this this is this is this is the only way that we can hold fast is by depending entirely upon the Lord and we do so by reading his word making the word part of our life when we feed upon the word it gives us strength it nourishes us it enables us to keep going you know sometimes you'll meet

Christians and they'll say I'm really struggling I feel like giving up and you know their Bible they're not really reading their Bible they're not meditating of course you're going to struggle because it's food it's nourishment the word of God is a nourishment which gives you spiritual vitality and spiritual thing you won't make any progress if you're not in the word it's vital it's key and so is prayer communicating to the Lord that he communicates to us through his word we communicate to him by prayer and praise but the key is this we're not on our own if we were on our own if we were trying to make keep this confession on our own and make progress on our own you know this we wouldn't make a step we wouldn't take one step we are going in the strength of God the Lord not in our own strength but absolutely and all together in his strength all our enemies are far stronger than we are but he is stronger the Lord than all the enemies put together and that is the wonderful thing greater is he that is in you than he that is within the world you can have all the world together and all the forces of hell together and they cannot destroy what God has begun when he has begun a good work and if you're following the

Lord today he's begun a good work in you if you're not following the Lord ask him today to begin that good work in you and you know when you take that first step by faith he'll keep on and keep on and keep on by holding fast looking to the Lord remember how it tells us elsewhere in Hebrews that we are to run this race looking unto Jesus who is the author and the perfecter of our faith let us pray Lord our God we pray to bless us we give thanks for your word may it be a source of strength and comfort to us may you encourage us in our walk and in our battle take away from us our sin in Jesus name we ask it Amen we're going to sing from sing psalms in psalm number 80 and we're going to sing verses 17 to 19 to the end of the psalm and of course this is a psalm about not going back these verses so that we don't wander or turn back from the

Lord let your hand be placed in blessing on the man at your right hand on the son of man you've chosen whom alone you cause to stand then we will not wander from you turning from you to our shame strengthen us revive and heal us then we'll call upon your name look on us Lord God Almighty let us see your glory bright turn us once again toward you come and save us give us light and sing these verses of psalm 80 from sing psalms verses 17 to 19 o let thy hand be still upon the man of thy right hand bless our man look for thyself thy made it strong to stand so so and so we will not go back nor turn from thee at all hasten material to out as my stay to make thy countenance to shine and so we shall be saved.

[ 47 : 05 ] Now may the grace and mercy and peace of God the Father Son and Holy Spirit rest and abide upon each one of you now and forevermore. Amen. Amen. Thank you very much for joining with us today and we pray that the Lord will go with us and that he will bless his word to us and do tune in again tonight at half past six for the evening service which will be conducted by Reverend James McKeever.