

Hold On

42 - Living the Simple Gospel: Philippians
Church on the Park | Sunday, 25 FEB 2018

Text: Philippians 4:8-14

Theme: Trust and hold on to God through all things. You can go through every circumstance through Christ who strengthens you.

Intro: Picture a man in the sea, clinging to a plank. His ship has just sunk; all he has is this piece of wood. He's getting tired, very tired, and he wants to let go. He sees no help in sight. He doesn't realise that just a few miles away a boat is coming and will rescue him. He lets go with one hand, he's beginning to sink. If you could speak to this man, you would shout, "Hold on!" You would say, "help is on its way. You may not see it, but it's coming." Today, I want to conclude this series of messages on GROWTH. Do you remember the acronym?

G - God first
R - Rest
O - Obey
W - Wait

Today, we will finish with:

T - Trust
H - Hold On

1) Christ strengthens you in all things and through all circumstances (Phil 4:13).

- And it's Christ's **strength** that is **needed**.
- In Philippians 4:8-9, Paul is teaching us to let the **Word** of God **shape** what we **think** about. The **gravity** of this world is always **pulling down** our thinking. We tend to remember the **painful things**, rather than the **good things**. The times we've been mistreated and sinned against. We **forget** what **God** has **done**. And when you forget what God has done, you **lose hope** about what God is going to do. And when you lose hope, you lose **inward strength**.
 - We grow in trusting God, when we **remember** what he has done. As Paul said, "**Faith** comes from **hearing**, and **hearing** by the **word of Christ**."
- In your **head**, constantly **hear the good, pure and excellent word of Christ**. This will enable to to trust God **in ALL THINGS**. **Psalm 1** is the Psalm of **spiritual maturity**. "But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law he meditates day and night."
- In Philippians 4:10-14, **Paul** goes on to talk about **all the things** he has been **through**—times of **humility** and times of **prosperity**, times of being **filled** and times of going **hungry**, times of having **abundance** and times of **suffering lack**.
- **Life** is like a **journey**. At times you are walking through the **desert**, at other times through a **fertile field**. Sometimes you are viewing things from a **mountain top**, at other times you are being tossed by the **ocean's waves**.
 - However, the **Christian life** is not **defined** by **circumstances**.
- Usually someone comes along and says, "Christians are meant to be **rich**, to be millionaires." Then, a poor missionary comes along arguing, "Christians are meant to be **poor**, riches will corrupt you."
 - However, **both sides are wrong—deadly wrong**. Christians are **not defined** by outward circumstances. You may have times of lack and times of abundance.
- God doesn't want you to get **discouraged** during times of **lack**. Nor does God want you to feel guilty or **complacent** during times of **abundance**. Instead, he wants **his presence to fill you wherever** you are in the journey.
- In **every part** of the journey you need **strength**, Christ's strength.
 - When **David** was being **harassed by Saul**, he needed strength to hang on until God's Word was fulfilled.

- When **David** was **prospering** and his Kingdom was strong, he needed strength not to fall into the sin of complacency. Because he didn't rely on God's inner strength during the good times, he fell into adultery and murder. You need **Christ's strength in ALL THINGS**.
- Christ's **strength** is needed to **hold on**. Christ's **strength** is needed to **make it through** the **bad** and **good** times.

2) It takes strength to trust, but also it takes trust to receive strength (Prov. 3:5-6).

- First, some reflections on **Billy Graham**.
 - In a 2011 Fox News interview, Graham was asked what he would do differently in his career. "I would study more. I would pray more, travel less, take less speaking engagements," he said. "I took too many of them in too many places around the world. If I had it to do over again I'd spend more time in meditation and prayer and just telling the Lord how much I love him." (quoted from Sydney Morning Herald)
- When I think of Paul and Billy Graham, I am reminded of the classic verse: "**Trust** in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge [**know, yada**] him, and he will make your paths **straight [level/smooth]**" (Prov. 3:5-6).
 - Here's the problem with verses we know **well**. We often don't **meditate** on them. We become **familiar** with them, but don't **honour** them as we should.
 - We lose the **meat** that is **in them**—the **power** and **nutrition** they hold.
 - One of the issues with this verse is that the translation doesn't hit the **bull's eye** when it says, "**acknowledge him**." Really, what is to **know God through personal and intimate knowledge**. (See Endnotes - **Bruce Waltke's** well-respected Proverbs Commentary)
 - Now, if you know God, and especially **know his voice**, he will **guide you** in smooth paths.
 - **Anna** did an excellent job talking to us about **removing stumbling blocks** in our lives. When you **listen to God**, he leads you on **smooth paths**, paths that you will not stumble on. That's what Proverbs 3:5-6 is telling us.
 - **DON'T BE LED BY SIGNS, CONFIRMATIONS OR CIRCUMSTANCES**.
 - **Be led by the Spirit of God**—by the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the Lord (Isa. 11:2).
 - **A great illustration** of Proverbs 3:5-6 is seen in **Genesis 26. Isaac illustrates trusting** in God.
 - One of the great lessons of **Isaac's life** is this **silent** trusting in God. We see it all the way back in his youth when he says not a word when his father, Abraham, is about the sacrifice him.
 - Isaac is **confronted with a famine** in the land (Gen. 26:1). The land is referring to the land of Israel before it was properly Israel. God had our forefathers leaving in tents in the land before actually inheriting it. And this is a great example for us, but I don't have the time to go into it.
 - So Isaac is confronted with **a very difficult circumstance**.
 - "*What do I do?*"
 - His **natural reaction is to run to Egypt**. Egypt is well-off and its not going through a famine.
 - However, God's ways are higher and he is teaching Isaac, as well as us, something.
 - God tells **Isaac to stay in Gerar**—that's southern Israel (again, before it was Israel, Gen. 26:2-5).
 - Here the thing: he's telling him to **stay where the famine is**.
 - And there's more: God's telling him to **sow** in this land of famine.
 - This **requires trust**. It's useless to sow during a famine.
 - But, God promises him that if he does he will be **blessed**.

3) Despite the circumstances, God causes you to thrive when you trust in him (Genesis 26:12-14).

- Look at the **outcome** of Isaac's faith.
 - He sows in that land and **reaped** in the same year a **hundredfold**.
- You also need the **courage and strength to stay** where God wants you to stay. **Don't run back to Egypt**.
- **God's laws** are above **natural laws**. You thrive when you obey, not when you look to the clouds. "He who **watches the wind** will not sow and he who **looks at the clouds** will not

reap” (Eccl. 11:4). *So, where do you look?* As **Anna** said last week, look to Jesus. **Fix your eyes on him.**

- **God causes growth** when you listen to him and **obey** his word.
 - This growth **may be material growth**, but it is **always inward growth**, that is **becoming like Jesus** and **equipping others** to be like Jesus

Conclusion: Like the man clinging to the plank in the sea, cling to the cross. The cross will remind you that every curse will be turned into a blessing for those who believe. Death will end in resurrection, sorrow will be swallowed up by eternal joy.

END NOTES

“The father now adds to his demand for **entire and exclusive commitment an exhaustive commitment**—in all [see v. 5] your ways (derākeykā; see 1:15; 2:8). Instead of the gloss desire his presence, **most English versions gloss dā‘ēhû (lit. “know him”; see 1:2, 2:5) by “acknowledge him” (e.g., NIV, NASB, NKJV, NRSV). Delitzsch, however, rightly argues that the verb “is not fully represented by ‘acknowledge Him.’**”³² **“Acknowledge” in the sense of “to confess” could represent yāda‘ in Hiphil, but doubtfully in the sense “to recognize the Lord’s rights and authority.” “To know” in this book means personal knowledge, intimate experience with a person’s reality (see p. 77; 1:2; 2:5–6). The noted connections between the spiritual consequences in Lecture 2 and the spiritual admonitions in ch. 3 infer that “know” in 3:6a has the same sense as in 2:5b. Personal knowledge of God ensues from risking oneself to obey the specific teachings that pertain to all sorts of human behavior in full reliance on God to keep his promises coupled with them (see 2:1). Jeremiah equates knowing the Lord with having the tôrâ written upon the heart (Jer. 31:31–34). So does Solomon (see 3:1), even if 3:4 is not original (see 7:3). It is difficult, however, to get the mind around the notion of knowing God in connection with all of one’s ways. But when the psalmist says: “The Lord knows the way of the righteous” (Ps. 1:6), he means, “The Lord is aware of sympathetically (i.e., existentially, not merely noetically)” > “enters into their way (and so protects it) > “watches over” (NIV).³³ **Independently, Fox glossed the expression by “hold him in mind” and commented that it denotes “awareness of what [the Lord] wants as well as a desire to do it.” Unfortunately, in this rare instance he based himself “on the rabbis, not on philology.”** Moreover, as in Ps. 1:6 it may also connote “desire his protective presence.” The significance of the imperative mood is ambiguous because in this poem volitional forms are used for both pure admonitions and forceful promises (cf. “find,” v. 4; “let it be,” v. 8). The pattern of placing the divine promises in the even verses favors taking the verb as a promise (i.e., by trusting God entirely and exclusively you will know him). **However, the consequence in verset B, “and he will make your path straight,” implies that the admonition in verset B functions as its condition vis-à-vis “know him personally, and he will....” Straight and smooth (see "; cf. 11:5) renders the pun of this one Hebrew word to denote its physical reality and connote its ethical sense.** Figuratively, Alonso-Schökel rightly says that it denotes either “straight” (i.e., yāšar “right, honest, upright conduct that does not go astray or out of bounds,” 2:13; 9:15) or “smoothness” (i.e., “the success of an undertaking or action”; cf. 3:23; 4:12; Isa. 40:3). The structure of 3:1–12 shows that at the least “smooth” is meant here. Since, however, to know the Lord one must abstain from evil for there is no evil in him, that relationship also makes one walk “straight.” Your paths (ōrehōteykā; see 1:19; 2:13) probably functions as a stock-in-trade parallel to derākeykā “your ways” (see 2:20). **One has to view the course of one’s life from a bird’s-eye view, not from a worm’s-eye view, to see this truth. A Portuguese proverb says, “God writes straight with crooked lines.”**”**

Waltke, B. K. (2004). The Book of Proverbs, Chapters 1–15 (pp. 244–245). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.