

Harris Creek Church

Jonathan Pokluda

Series: Forged

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A Faith That Holds

1 Peter 1:6-12

In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls. Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of the Messiah and the glories that would follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things.

Let's go! I should come out like the Undertaker to that music. Man, I was just with my friend Bill Nielsen, and I'm walking out here and realize it's your birthday! Happy birthday! Sorry I didn't say that earlier. He's one of the elders here. You know just hit with that reminder, so when you mess up, you say things publicly.

This week, I knew I wanted a chair up here, and so I texted the staff and asked, “Hey, who has the most basic chair?” And they start sending me pictures—I’m taking auditions for the most basic chair—and they start sending me pictures of chairs. Nolan, who runs facilities here, after like six or seven pictures come in—he sends me this picture (*picture appears of a chair made out of sticks tied together with wire*). I was like, “What is that?” And he goes, “You said you wanted a basic chair, so I just made one real quick.” I was like, “I’m not gonna sit in that...” Which is kind of the illustration, because here's what happened: I grew up in church. I grew up going to church, multiple times a week, church, school... I was very aware of Jesus Christ. I had seen Jesus on the cross many times; I would have told you, “Jesus died for your sins, God raised him from the dead.” I knew that. Jesus died for your sins; God raised him from the dead. A lot of you have grown up in church and you can say that, “Jesus Christ died for your sins; God raised him from the dead.” Is that a saving faith? I believe in that like I believe in history. At some point that happened. Jesus died for your sins; God raised him from the dead. And as I was on this faith journey after college, I kind of came to this point of “All right, what do I really believe?” And someone shared this illustration with me. They just said, “Hey, do you see that chair?” And I said, “Yeah.” They said, “You believe it's there?” I said, “Yeah, I believe it's there. I can see it. I know it's there. I've seen chairs before. I've sat in them.” They said, “Well, do you trust that it's there?” And I said, “Okay, I trust that it's there.” I mean this is the conversation we're having. They said, “So are you trusting in the chair?” And I was like, “What?” They're like, “Are you are you trusting in the chair?” And I go, “I guess. I mean, I trust it's there; I don't know. I believe it's there.” “But you haven’t—you’re not trusting in the chair until you go and you (*JP sits in a chair on stage*) let the chair support you.” Like, now I am placing my faith in the chair. I am testing

my faith that I believe that chair is there, and I believe it will support me. And I am I am putting my faith in that.

Today, I want to talk to you about a faith that holds. We're back in I Peter. Now we kicked off this series last week, and we're calling it “Forged” because you are being shaped into something. I love what my friend Nate shared last week; I told him, “That's one of the best series setups I ever heard.” As he said, there was a professor who was asking, “What’s your favorite book of the Bible?” And people go, “James! You know, the New Testament! Proverbs! Proverbs, the book of wisdom! The gospels! Jesus, you know?” Like we say these different—“Philippians, joy!” and he goes, “But people rarely say I Peter. And when they did he realized: “Oh, they don't live here.” And I thought, “You know, I Peter might be like the most favored book of the entire Scripture—just not here.” Why? Because it's written to persecuted Christians in Asia Minor—modern-day Turkey—who, at the time, had an oppressive government who were killing them and persecuting them, about 63 A.D.

Peter pens this letter for us to read today, and it is perfect if you're going through something, if you're in a trial, if you want to be reminded that you're not home yet: I Peter is a great book to turn to. Today, as we talk about a faith that holds, I want you to know that you all have faith. If you're an atheist here, you have a tremendous faith in things. Hey, I've heard it well said that, “I don't have enough faith to be an atheist.” You don't have faith in in a *theos* or a god, but you have faith in lots of things. If you cross the street in front of a teenager stopped at a stop sign, a teenage driver stopped—you have tremendous faith! That their foot is going to stay on that brake and they're going to hold that thousands of pounds of machinery that can accelerate straight

through you—you're just like, "Yeah, I don't even know you, I don't know what's going on today, you may be a good person a bad person, who knows you—they're distracted or whatever." And you walk in front of them. That's an act of tremendous faith! You have faith. Who was the first president of the United States of America. Any of you ever meet George Washington? You ever shake his hand? You have tremendous faith. Because people have told you this, you say, "Well, it was preserved in history books." Okay. I know someone else who was too. Because this idea has been kept, you say, "Well, yeah, man, just take that in faith; he's been the first president." You say, "Well I've seen a picture of him!" Listen, I've seen a picture of Pikachu, all right? That doesn't mean that's true. We take that in faith. And you can test both of those ideas of faith. When you walk in front of that teenage driver, you are testing your faith. When you're failing a history class and you're taking the test and the question is "Who's the first president of the United States of America?" and you write "George Washington" hoping that that's going to bump your grade because you believe that's true, you're testing your faith. So how do you test the faith? How do you test your faith in Jesus Christ? And Peter's going to answer that question. That faith is tested in suffering. That faith is tested in trials.

I think a lot of us want a faith that holds but we don't want to be put in a situation where our faith has to hold us. We want a real faith; we want to believe in God and to trust that Jesus died for our sins and God raised him from the dead, and that there's an eternity and we're going to be with him forever and ever and ever. Just don't make me prove it. Let me live life under the sun rather than actually go through any kind of suffering. And so that's what we're talking about. What does it look like to test a faith that holds? From the Scripture, I'm going to be in I Peter 1:6-12. And as I move through this, we're going to look at how having a faith that holds means knowing that

there's a plan and a purpose for our pain. That having a faith that holds means that we can find joy in what we don't yet see. And then before you leave here, I want you to understand that, just because there are things you don't see, it doesn't mean you have a blind faith. There's some really logical steps that we can take to place our faith in Jesus Christ. And so I'm going to pray for us quickly.

Lord, as we move into this ancient text that you've preserved, would you open our hearts to these truths that maybe we say that we know and maybe we have some semblance of knowledge toward? Would you awaken our heart so that our whole lives match these ideas that we have in our minds? And conform us more to the image and the character of your son Jesus through what is explained from this text? Would your Holy Spirit just do a work here today? In Jesus's name. Amen.

It's a complex text; it's actually all one sentence in the Greek and so it's one complete idea. All of these things fit together and we're going to try to make sense of it. I'll start here in verse six; he says, **"In all of this you greatly rejoice."** When you see "in all of this" you go, "Well, what is 'this?'" "This" is the verses that Nate covered last week—that we have new birth, living hope from the resurrection of Jesus, an eternal inheritance, and God's protection. So, in all of "this"—new birth, living hope, the resurrection of Jesus, and eternal inheritance, and God's protection—and all of this you greatly rejoice, **"though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials."** Now that feels like a little bit of a "pat on the head" moment. "Now and I know you've had to suffer some grief and some trials," and we think, "What's he talking about?" He's writing this to Christians who have lost family members to murder from the government.

They literally have been lit on the side of the road on fire to be candles to light the path so that, when people walk by them, they think, “Hey we don't want to mess with them. We don't want to follow their Jesus. That's what happens if you follow that guy Jesus.” He's not talking about, “I know you didn't get a front row parking place at HEB, but rejoice in suffering.” Not what he's saying. He's saying, “I know, under the sun you've suffered some real trials. These have come so that—these have come for the purpose of—these have come according to plan, these have come **“so that the proven genuineness of your faith of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire,”** this faith **“may result in praise, glory, and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.”** He says these sufferings have come *“so that.”* He's saying there's an intentionality to them. He's saying, “There is a plan and a purpose to your suffering.” And that's my first point: having a faith that holds knows that there's a plan and a purpose for our pain.

1. *There is a plan and purpose for our pain.*

There's a plan and a purpose for our pain. This verse right here says that it refines us, it proves the genuineness of our faith, it's testing our faith, and it results in glory to Jesus. And then in verse seven he has this baked-in illustration--it's like this parenthetical statement; in the NIV it's separated by hyphens. It says “the proven genuineness of our faith of greater worth than gold—which perishes even though refined by fire.” Now Peter's listeners, those reading his letter, would be familiar with this illustration because of goldsmiths in this day. As you're walking down the path, you might pass a goldsmith, someone who's trying to refine gold. And what they do is they take the gold, the metal, and they place it in the furnace they heated up to where it is liquified. And then they bring it out and all of the impurities rise to the top; these are also called

scum or dross. Those impurities will rise to the top and that liquefied gold will be all crinkly, and you can tell that it has imperfections in it. And so they'll wipe those away and they'll place it back in the furnace; they'll bring it back out they'll float to the top. They'll wipe them away, place it back in the furnace, bring it back out. And they know they're done when they can see their reflection in the gold. When the goldsmith looks at the gold and it's just completely smooth like a mirror and reflects his image, they're done with the refining. This is what God is doing to us. Through our trials, tribulations, situations, and circumstances, He is shaping us into the image and the character of his Son.

And you may be a guest with us today; you may be here for the first time or the second time and think, "What a church. I had to wait on Highway 84. I got in here; I may be sitting out in the lobby—hundreds of you are in the lobby. What a sweet church. But nobody's suffering here."

Let me tell you about our sweet church. Every person in this room is undergoing some kind of trial, and some of them are really significant. We have a pastoral staff here that stays really busy throughout the week because there are marriages where they're not talking; there's been adultery; they're broken, separated. There are prodigals who've left, children who are questioning their identity because they've been influenced by cultures and classmates, and parents are trying to navigate that without the tools because this is all new kinds of problems, and there's disease and there's suffering and unforeseen accidents that have caused damage to our health, and again we stay busy. We stay busy in this sweet church. This past Wednesday was the six-year anniversary of the death of Chance King, Gaelic King's teenage son. He had everything going for him.

Athlete. Loved God. Loved Jesus. Loved this place. Involved. A beacon in the youth ministry. And one morning, he just doesn't wake up. It's her only son; it's our only child. No explanation.

They think there's something with his heart so he just didn't wake up. And we remember that, six years ago, Chance King was best friends with Tanner Underwood. That spot right there right beside you, that's where Tanner sat in the 9 A.M service. That's where he sits every week in a wheelchair. And if you're new with us, you think, "Oh, maybe he was just born in a wheelchair." He wasn't born in a wheelchair. No, he ran and played and was involved in lots of things. And in 2012, his mom was driving down the freeway and there's an accident and traffic has come to a stop, so she stops at that accident. But the truck behind her doesn't. Smashes into the back of her. Tanner's in the back seat. When all of the dust settles, she looks backwards and sees that he's unresponsive. That begins a journey of him being in the hospital for over a month where they're praying that he would live at first. And then when it looks like he's going to live, they pray that he would walk, that all of his functions of his brain would be restored, but that prayer wasn't answered with "Okay." And they pushed him out of that hospital home. And I asked Jim, two weeks ago—and this sermon wasn't even in mind; I've wanted to ask him this for a while and I got the courage to do so two weeks ago—I just said, "Are you ever bitter at God?" Empty nester is going to look different for them, more than likely. I said, "Are you ever bitter at God? Are you ever angry at him?" He goes, "No not really. Because, I mean, I was." Let me just say this: there's a joy that marks that family. It's humble; I mean, just a joy and a faith that marks that family. Carol leads our PDO ministry here; Jim is an elder here; there's just a joy that marks them. And I said to you, "Are you ever bitter?" He goes, "No not really. I mean I was for a little while—for a couple days." He said, "A couple days." He goes, "And then I realized: this must just be what God wants because he could change it like that (*snaps fingers*). And we've asked him to. So it seems that there's something that he wants to teach us through this situation."

And so you've got this pillar of this community. I mean Tanner—I wish you all responded to my jokes like he does. He just cheers you on. And we wrestle with that. Man, like I've been in churches that lean more Calvinist, I've been in churches that lean more Armenian, more sovereignty of God, more man's free will, and you can think, “Well, God didn't cause it but He could prevent it, and He could change it but He doesn't because...” and you can do all these mental gymnastics. I'm just going to tell you right now—the God that you believe in? You want that God to be all-powerful. Everything in the Scripture points to the fact that God, our God, Creator God, is all-powerful. You can find some peace in that. That when you're undergoing something, that He has a plan and a purpose for whatever it is. The pain that you sit in? You can turn to Him and say, “I don't like this. I don't want this. But I want to learn everything you have for me in it. Shape me in this refining. Refine me.” There's a temptation in that to turn from God and I would just ask you to borrow their faith. I mean, you've probably seen Carol Underwood worship with her hands high in the air; Gaelic King praising God. And so if you're at this place where you're like, “I don't think I can have faith in my situation,” I would say to borrow theirs. Because if the same hands that push that wheelchair from the hospital can be raised in praise to God, then there's something that we can learn from them, right?

Let's go back in the text verse eight. **“Though you have not seen him,”**--talking about Jesus Christ-- **“though you have not seen Jesus Christ you love him and even though you do not see him now you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving,”** it says, **“the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.”** This is strange sentence structure in the Greek. “You are receiving,” *kamitza menoi*, present-tense “receiving this future reality.” You have been saved; you've received salvation; today you are

receiving salvation, and one day you will receive all the benefits of your salvation. So this is the 'already-not-yet' that we fit into or sit into today. That if I have trusted in the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of my sins, I have been saved, am being saved, and one day will be saved. I am sitting presently in the certainty of a future reality. And so there's a joy that comes from that, even though I don't see all of the benefits of that salvation right now. And that's my second point: having a faith that holds knows joy is found in what we don't yet see.

2. *Joy is found in what we don't yet see.*

Joy is found—joy, an emotion, is found in what we don't yet see. So what does this mean? Well, first it means that God desires us to worship Him with our emotions. This seems obvious; I think we can wrestle with this. God desires us to worship him with our emotions. He is asking for an emotion from us and, in fact, commands it, that we should experience joy--even in suffering, even in trials. I'm like, "Man, how do I experience joy and trials? Because my emotions are so often tethered to my experiences." And he says that, with the Holy Spirit, when God's Spirit lives in your life and you have a future hope, this means that your emotions don't have to be tethered to your experience; that your emotions can actually not even make sense to the watching world based on what you're experiencing. He wants from us joy in suffering. And you say, "Well, man, I don't know. What if Peter just kind of went rogue here? Can we really trust that--because that seems crazy?" Well, it's kind of repeated in the Scripture. James says it like this--this is Jesus's brother: "**Consider it pure joy when you face trials.**" Paul writes to the church in Rome in Romans 5 like this: "**Not only so but we also glory in our sufferings because we know that**

A friend of mine helped an elderly person. This elderly person--all of their immediate family wasn't around and had passed on--they were left alone; no one was left to care for them. And so my friend just saw it as their Christian obligation with great motives to care for this person, not even knowing what they had available to them. And at some point in that journey, as they tirelessly cared for this person, the elderly person just said, "Hey, all of my inheritance goes to you." And that was millions and millions and millions upon millions of dollars. And once you got through all of the awkward, "No I can't, no that's not—you know, give it to charity," all the things and you just accept that reality, it's good. It's life-changing stuff. There's going to be a joy attached to that gift. What you have received in Jesus is infinitely greater than any illustration under the sun, any amount of money, any amount of material treasures and blessings. And right now, you struggle to believe that because you don't yet see it. But you're going to. And so behind us, Jesus has paid for our sin—we don't have to pay for our sins—and that's good news. But in front of us, He's given us an eternal inheritance forevermore. We don't yet see it, but it's still good news and it still should stir up in us joy.

Let's go back into the text verse 10. **"Concerning this salvation"--it's talking about the salvation--"the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you searched intently and with the greatest care trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of the Messiah and the glories that would follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels look into these**

things what.” What in the world? That's one of those sentences, when you're in your little Bible study, where you read it and then you read it again and then you read it again and then you read it again; you're like, “Okay, what does that say?” It's just hard to get our heads around it, and once you understand what it says it's like, “Oh, that makes so much sense.” But it takes a little bit of sentence structure—we think Peter was dumb; we write him off. Peter was like C.S Lewis, man. I'm reading this 16 times, like, “What in the world does that mean?” Let's just start with that part about the angels. The angels long to look into these things. Luke 15 tells us that the angels throw a party when a sinner repents, so we're talking about salvation, right? That angels celebrate. And so, in the same way when your team wins the national championship, the team that you love and you've celebrated and you've been heartbroken every time they lose or you know they're out early, and then, “Yes!” And you're on that high for at least a week; it's high five; you're buying the jerseys; you're celebrating that win. You can't sleep that night. They're saying that angels, even more so, celebrate when one sinner repents, when someone comes into salvation, comes into a relationship with God through his son Jesus Christ. There is a party. And then, Hebrews tells us that we entertain angels, both in our hospitality, but I believe they are watching us like a movie. They're cheering, "Come on, come on, trust in Christ. You could; come on come on... Oh he did it! He did it!" They're celebrating. Sorry; I woke some of you up. They're celebrating. Right? And so, this is what he said: angels long to look into these things, you coming into this saving faith.

But then you have this long sentence about the prophets. It says that the prophets wrote these things, not for their benefit, but for yours. You've got to think about the faith that the prophets had; they didn't look back on, “Oh, yeah, the calendar changed...” They were like, “Hey, there is

a Messiah to come. We believe it; we've not seen it, but we believe it.” And they wrote about Him. They said He's going to come and be born in this town, and live in this city, and born to this woman, and this is going to happen around Him. And they're writing these things in faith for whose benefit? They died and never saw Him. So you and I have faith now.

And that faith is comprised of two realities: one, that these people wrote about events that were going to happen, and then those events happened. And they're behind us and the calendar did reset on this guy's birth; and so we have the benefits of what the prophets wrote and the benefits of the events that they wrote about, both behind us. Who had more faith, the prophets or us? Right? We benefit from the faith that they have. We borrow from the faith that they have. And so what I'm trying to say is yes, there are things that you have faith in that you can't see, but your faith is not blind. Having a faith that holds is not a blind faith—my third and final point.

3. Our faith is not blind.

Our faith is not blind. There are some real logical conclusions that we can draw. There are over 360 Messianic prophecies. That's 360 prophecies in the Bible that tell who Jesus would be. Messiah would be born in Bethlehem: Micah 5:2. Messiah would be born of a virgin: Isaiah 7:14. Messiah would come from the line of Abraham: Genesis 12. A descendant of Isaac, a descendant of Jacob, from the tribe of Judah. Messiah would be an heir to King David's throne. Messiah's throne will be anointed and eternal. Messiah would be called Emmanuel. Messiah would spend a season in Egypt; a massacre of children would happen at Messiah's birthplace. A messenger would prepare the way for Messiah. Messiah would be rejected by his own people.

Some of those were written 2,000 years before Messiah shows up on the scene; all of them were written at least hundreds of years before he shows up on the scene.

Peter Stoner is an authority on the topic of probability. He is accredited by MIT—a very liberal university—his work is accredited there. He’s the chairman of the Department of Mathematics and Astronomy, a scientist and a mathematician. And he took eight prophecies and, mathematically, wanted to determine the probability that one man would fulfill all eight prophecies. There’s 360, but the probability of one man fulfilling eight prophecies is one in 10 to the 17th power. That’s one in one hundred trillion. For comparison purposes, the odds of you winning the lottery, the big jackpot, are around one in 300 million. So just so we’re clear on what I’m talking about, if I put 10 tickets in a hat and I mark one of those tickets and you draw one of those out of the hat, the odds of you drawing the one I marked is one in 10. The odds of one man fulfilling eight prophecies, according to the scientist, is one in a hundred trillion. That’s a number difficult to illustrate, but the way that they do is this: if you covered Texas with a hundred trillion silver dollars, they would stack up two feet thick over all of Texas. And if I marked one of those silver dollars and buried it in that two-foot thick silver dollar sea, and you started in Dallas and walked down to Waco and then to San Antonio and over to El Paso and then down to McCallum, and you just were trying to figure out where you wanted to check, and at some point you just reached down and you pulled up one out of 100 trillion silver dollars, the odds of you pulling up the one that I marked--that’s the odds of one man fulfilling eight prophecies. He fulfilled 360. The odds of one man fulfilling 48 prophecies is one in 10 to the 157th power—that’s the number I can’t illustrate. I cannot illustrate that number. And you say, “Well sure you can, it’s like a grain of sand on the beach.” No, there’s more grains of sand on the Earth than that number. It would be

like a grain of sand compared to all of the grains of sand and all of the planets of our known galaxy. It's an unfathomable number. He fulfilled 360, leading Peter Stoner to say this, "Any man who rejects Christ as the Son of God is rejecting a fact proved perhaps more absolutely than any other facts in the world." You believe in George Washington, but there's more evidence—according to Siri—of the existence of Jesus Christ than George Washington. That's what he's saying. That's what he's saying. But I'm not talking about trusting in Jesus like you trust in George Washington. Your belief in George Washington has zero implications for how you live your life and your belief. What you believe about Jesus has every implication for how you live your life; it impacts everything you do, think, and say, everywhere you go, everything you spend, the way that you love, the way that you serve, the way that you help, the way that you sleep.

And so, while we have faith in someone we cannot see, our faith is not blind. Did Jesus sin? Did He sin? No, that's where you shake your head violently. You guys are like, "This is a test? Man, where's he going with this?" Did he suffer? Yeah. He suffered more than any person who will be in this room today. Jesus suffered when He was suffering on the cross. He said something that should strike you as peculiar. He said, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Why would Jesus say that? My God, that's problematic—wait, the Trinity—Jesus is God. "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" One of His last acts on the cross was an extension of incredible mercy to us, because He's quoting a prophecy in Psalm 22. Psalm 22 starts out in the first line: "My God my God, why have you forsaken me?" And He's trying to give those around him, encircling him, a clue as to who He is, because Psalm 22 was written hundreds of years before the cross has ever been invented. Hundreds of years before anyone has ever seen a crucifixion. It reads like this, **"I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint.**

my heart has turned to wax; it has melted within me. My mouth is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth; you lay me in the dust of death. A pack of villains encircles me; they pierce my hands and my feet. All my bones are on display people stare and gloat over me. They divide my clothes among them and cast lots for my garments.” And He’s saying, “Hey guys, I’m the one. It’s me--the one they wrote about. Let me give you a clue. ‘My God my God why have you forsaken me?’” And so we benefit from miracles like that, that stir our faith and strengthen our faith so that we can live our lives here and have a faith that holds.

In summary, having a faith that whole means there is a plan and a purpose for our pain. Having a faith that holds means that we can know, that we can find joy in what we don't yet see, and just because we don't see it, having a faith that holds, it’s not blind—it’s not a blind faith. There's a lot of evidence that supports the faith that we have. I gave an illustration over a decade ago and then kind of became fascinated with the story, because there's a lot written about it—articles and photos. It's something that happened in the 1800s, the early 1800s. French Entertainer Charles Blondin was a tightrope walker. And so in the 1800s they didn't gather around the TV; they would go to circuses; they'd watch circus entertainers. Well, he was known as the best tightrope walker in the world. He walked 1100 feet across Niagara Falls on a two-inch rope. And after he did so, there was a lot of criticism; in fact, the New York Times wrote an article about him saying, “Oh, there's mirrors.” Well, actually, the New York Times wrote an article criticizing him, but the criticisms around him were like, “Oh there's mirrors, there's strings you can't see. No one would do that” because there was no net underneath him. He falls; he dies. And so after all of the criticism he said, “I'm going to do it again.” And he goes back out there,--there’s 25,000

spectators on the American border and the Canadian border. And they're watching on and they stretch a rope 1100 feet across Niagara Falls, and he gets a wheelbarrow and he fills it with cement and he walks across that tightrope, a feat that took a little over 20 minutes. And he gets to the other side and the crowd just goes crazy. Twenty-five thousand people. Reporters cheering. He is an entertainer, he goes, "Do you believe I can walk across the tightrope?" "Yeah! Yes, you're the Great Blondin, we saw you do it!" He said, "Do you believe I can walk across with the wheelbarrow?" And they say, "Yes, you're the great Blondin and you did it; we saw you do it!" He said, "Do you believe I can walk across this tightrope with the wheelbarrow?" And they're like, "Yeah." They're confused like, "Yes! Does he just want us to cheer 'yes?' We believe!" Hands raised! "We believe." "Great--who wants to get in the wheelbarrow? Okay, who wants to get in the wheelbarrow?" And everyone did exactly what you just did. "I thought you believed?" says Blondin. "It's easy to say, Blondin. We believe, we believe you can!" "Get in the wheelbarrow." Nobody took him up on it. He went back across with the wheelbarrow with nobody in it. It turns out he did it again and went back to Niagara Falls now a third time, stretches her out 1100 feet across Niagara Falls. Harry Colcord is his manager; he says, "Hey, I'll do it. I've seen you do this so many times—we've spent so much time together I know you can do it. I've seen you do crazier things with that. I'll just go on your back. Just give me a piggyback ride across this rope; I know you've got this." This is what he said; it's as I said: well preserved. Blondin said to his manager, "Look up, Harry. You know you are no longer Colcord; you are Blondin until I clear this place. Be a part of me: mind, body, and soul. If I sway, sway with me. Do not attempt to do any balancing yourself. If you do, we will both go to our death."

Faith that holds. “I no longer live; Christ lives in me.” Where He walks I walk. Who He loves I love. When He wants me to share, I share. What He wants me to give, I give. It’s not my life but His. My faith is in Him—not, “I believe you can come back from the dead.” I *know* I will come back from the dead. My faith is in you; I’m going to live for you. “I believe there’s a chair there.” Trust in it. It’ll hold you. He will hold you. Your suffering is your greatest opportunity to display your faith, to test your faith. Let me pray you would.

Well, Father just help us believe that. It’s easy to say and shout, yell, and read. It’s much harder to practice every day, to walk in. It’s easy to praise you, but it’s difficult to drive down the road in the storm by ourselves and keep praising you. I asked you to refine us; we want to be refined but we don’t want to be refined. We want the end result, but we don’t want the process. We want what you’ll produce, but we don’t want the process. Help us now. Amen.