

I. Rock of Ages

- A. Moses asked to see God. He wanted to see the glory of God. And God told him, you cannot see my face and live.
- B. And then this, which is really interesting.
 - 1. *"And the LORD said, 'Here is a place by Me, and you shall stand on the rock. So it shall be, while My glory passes by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock, and will cover you with My hand while I pass by. Then I will take away My hand, and you shall see My back; but My face shall not be seen.'"* (Exodus 33:21-23)
- C. There's a worship song written 250 years ago today. It was written when a young pastor was worried about not only his church, but all the churches. They were leaving Christ. They were denying grace, and they were doubting faith. They were mocking the gospel. Law, not grace, they said is our salvation. Works, not faith. They were preaching an uncertain salvation set on an uncertain foundation.
- D. And so a worship leader, with the unlikely name of Augustus Toplady penned these immortal words — we sang them today.
 - 1. **Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee;
Let the water and the blood,
From Thy wounded side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure,
Save from wrath and make me pure.**
- E. Jesus is the Rock of Ages. He is more certain and solid and sure than the mighty mountains
- F. And he was cleft for me — split open, cracked open, mortally wounded.
- G. And as God hid Moses in the cleft of the rock, so so God hides you in the heart of Jesus Christ. He is the rock, cleft for you. In him you can see God and live.
- H. After Jesus died, and salvation was complete, a Roman soldier shoved a spear in his side — out flowed blood and water, a sign that he was dead.
- I. So the song says, let the water and the blood, "from thy wounded side which flowed."
- J. The original word wasn't wounded. The songwriter said,
 - 1. **Let the water and the blood,
From thy riven side which flood.**
- K. Riven means split open. It is a synonym for "cleft."
- L. Moses, you know that broken rock you were hiding in? That's Me, says Jesus. That's my body broken for you. Because I am not just the payment, but the over-payment for your sins. Not just the cure, but the double cure.
- M. The Rock of Ages is Jesus Christ, riven and cleft for you. Aren't you thankful for him?

II. The Word

- A. Let's get right into the Word.
 - 1. *"Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always."* (Ephesians 6:14-17)
- B. We have been talking about The Christian in Complete Armor. This message is number 11 in the series. Like last time, we shine the spotlight on the the shield of faith.
 - 1. *"above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one."* (Ephesians 6:16)
- C. So my title today is...
 - 1. **The Shield of Faith, part 2**
- D. You have all this armor on your body — the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, and the boots of the gospel — and then on top of that, you take up the shield of faith. That shield is the defense for your defense. That shield stands up a double layer of protection against all the fiery darts of the wicked one... those daily demonic devices to crush your spirit and pull you away from God.
- E. The devil hates faith.
 - 1. Faith stops him.
 - 2. Faith crushes him.
 - 3. Faith makes him run away.
- F. And here's the thing that I hope I can get across today, and the thing that makes the devil spitting mad... and extra embarrassed.
 - 1. The faith that gives the devil a meltdown is... well, before I say it, let me show it.

III. Jesus and the Suffering Boy

- A. *"And when they had come to the multitude, a man came to Him, kneeling down to Him and saying, 'Lord, have mercy on my son, for he has seizures and suffers severely; for he often falls into the fire and often into the water. So I brought him to Your disciples, but they could not cure him.'"* (Matthew 17:14-16)
 - 1. Here is this poor man's poor son... we're going to find out he's possessed by a demon. This is pure torment.
 - 2. Here's you've got the disciples of Jesus. And in this section in Matthew, I hate to say it, but they are clueless over and over again. They keep misunderstanding Jesus. They won't bring themselves to believe in a crucified Savior. No. They want the victorious Savior riding down from heaven to deliver Israel and make life great.
 - 3. It gets so bad just a chapter before this, where Peter says something so stupid it's almost unbelievable. Peter actually rebukes Jesus for saying he will die on the Cross. He declares that Jesus will never suffer and die like that.

4. Peter is actually erasing and obliterating the one work of Jesus Christ that unlocks his grace and offers salvation to unworthy sinners like us.
 - a) Over and over again, the disciples are hopelessly mired in their Cross-denying, Jesus-redefining, grace-crushing, self-righteous ways.
5. What Peter said was so stupid, Jesus literally turns on him and basically says, "Shut up, Satan" TO PETER!
6. So, these are the, um, malfunctioning disciples that this heartbroken man brings his demon-afflicted son to see.
7. I'm sure the disciples imagine themselves to be something like King Arthur's knights. The Knights of the Round Table get to work on this poor boy. They command, but the demon does not obey. They bully the demon, but he laughs at them. They cry louder, but the demon doesn't hear.
8. Epic fail.
9. So finally the desperate father brings his suffering son to Jesus.
- B. *"Then Jesus answered and said, 'O faithless and twisted generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him here to Me.' And Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of him; and the child was cured from that very hour." (Matthew 17:17-18)*
 1. Yes, Jesus is mad.
 2. I want you to understand something about the heart of Jesus, the heart of the Father, and the heart of the Spirit.
 3. Jesus is upset at the things that break your heart. He is upset at human suffering.
 4. And he's mad when his ministers fail to bring the healing powers of grace to a desperately hurting world.
 5. So in one simple rebuke, out comes the demon, and the little boy's demonic abuser is evicted. No more being thrown about like a rag doll by a demon. No more falling into fire and falling into water.
 6. Jesus does what the disciples could not, and he is exasperated that this kid had to suffer even one minute longer because of their failure.
 7. So...
- C. *"Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, 'Why could we not cast it out?' So Jesus said to them, 'Because of your unbelief...'" (Matthew 17:19,20a)*
 1. The normal Greek word for faith is *pistis*. When you put an "a" in front of that word, it negates it: *apistis*. No faith. Lack of faith. Unbelief.
 2. Why did the devil gain the upper hand? No faith. Not little faith, no faith.
 3. But I find this a little bit confusing. Is Jesus saying that of all the ways they used to try to expel the demon, they tried everything but faith? Yep. That's just what he's saying.
 - a) You can't muscle out the demons. You can't outsmart the demons. You can't lawyer out the demons. You can't ritual out the demons.
 4. If you come riding in like a Shining Knight on a steed and put any trust in yourself whatsoever, the devil's going to laugh in your face.
 5. And when those disciples went after that demon, and tried to heal that boy, they went right back into the same Cross-denying, Jesus-redefining, grace-crushing, self-righteous ways Jesus has been trying to get rid of for three chapters.
 6. Why could we not cast it out? We? Us? I, me, my? Jesus would say, because you're not me. I do that, through my blood. And you don't get it yet.
 7. No. Faith. A-pistos. Jesus said so... Church, faith in yourself is no faith at all.
 8. Now, you might think, well, they had faith, but it wasn't enough faith. It wasn't big faith or strong faith.
 9. No, because look at what Jesus says next:
- D. *"For assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you." (Matthew 17:20)*
 1. These mustard seeds are powdery little seeds. They're nothings. Jesus described them as the smallest of seeds (Mark 4:31).
 2. When Jesus compares faith to a mustard seed, he's saying it's not the size of faith that matters, it's the size of who the faith is in that makes the difference.
 - a) It's not the size of the one who believes. It's not the power of the one who believes. It's not the virtue of the one who believes. It's the size and power and virtue of the one who is believed IN that makes faith real.
 3. You see, faith has a subject and an object. I believe in Jesus. I am a nothing. Jesus is everything. The subject of faith, the person believing, is a zero. But the object of faith, the person we're believing in, is everything.
 4. And when you put your faith in Jesus, that's the faith that moves mountains — meaning, faith in Jesus Christ can move every obstacle the devil raises up to block you from your abundant life of abundant grace.
 5. For three chapters, Jesus has been trying to correct his disciple's misplaced faith. The object of their faith was wrong.
 - a) They trusted themselves.
 - b) They trusted their status as FOJ (Friends of Jesus).
 - c) They even trusted Jesus, but only in his miracle-powers, and not in his real power, which is death and in his resurrection.
 - (1) And in return, the demons laughed at them.
 - d) So for two whole chapters, Jesus is trying to point their faith to the one and only object that makes faith real, which is Jesus Christ, the Savior nailed to a cross and risen again.
 - e) And because they didn't get it, Jesus actually told them to stop talking about him. He wanted them to wait till they understood; to wait till he was risen again (v. 9)!
 - (1) **You can't have faith in Jesus the Conqueror without first having faith Jesus the Crucified Savior.**
 6. The disciples' faith wasn't there yet.

7. It makes no difference how big and blustery your faith might be, because what counts in faith is ALWAYS the object. And...
- a) **When the object of your faith is the Lord Jesus Christ in the fulness of his person and work, then even one powdery speck of mustard seed faith will make the devil flee from you.**

E. And that is what I'm trying to say.

F. Because... let's go back to the shield of faith.

IV. The Shield of Faith

- A. When you have faith, you don't have to do a big thing. You don't have to be strong. You don't have to be successful. You don't even have to be moral — your righteousness is a gift anyway.
- B. God is not telling you to do a big, glorious, magnificent thing. He is telling you to get over yourself enough to believe in a big, glorious, magnificent Savior for one shining moment. Make yourself small, and Him big, and you're good to go.
- C. The thing that makes the devil spitting mad... and extra embarrassed is exactly this.
- D. The faith that gives the devil a meltdown is so embarrassingly small.
- E. The tiniest speck of the tiniest faith when that speck of faith is resting on the bedrock of Jesus the Savior... that faith is kryptonite to the devil.

1. **You human, made of mud, armed with this speck of faith in that mighty Savior, makes the devil shiver in his boots.**

F. Lift up that shield. Lift up that effortless faith in that mighty Savior, and the devil will flee from you.

V. The Formula of Faith

A. Faith has a formula. Here it is. **A human soul has three parts: mind, will, and emotions. Faith happens when all three parts respond to the Grace of Christ in the Gospel.**

1. **Emotions — your conscience convicts you that you are a sinner and you need a Savior.**

- a) Your conscience wakes you up to God.
- b) You don't need to be a rocket scientist to know you fall short. One look at the starry sky tells you there is a Creator who is bigger than you can imagine, better than you can please, and higher than you can reach by human power alone.
- c) Your inner sense of God's moral laws combines with your inner awareness of your own imperfections to produce guilt and shame. And guilt and shame produce a sense of need. You have a sin problem, and you need a Savior from your sins.

2. **Mind — your mind understands that Jesus is that Savior, the only Savior, and the real crucified/risen again Savior.**

- a) You hear about Jesus. You hear that he died on the cross. You hear he died for a reason... Christ died for your sins.
- b) Somebody explains that. Somebody preaches the gospel to you. Somebody shows you it's not your works, it's his sacrifice.
- (1) It's not your performance, it's his unmerited favor.
- (2) It's not your religion and morality. It's his grace and love.
- (3) It's not your human righteousness, for those are filthy rags. It's his perfect righteousness, given as a gift.
- (4) It's your self-sacrifice, it's his sacrifice on Calvary's Cross.
- c) The truths of grace comes into your mind. The Holy Spirit helps you understand. The gospel becomes clear.
- d) As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, and as Jesus was lifted up on the Cross, you realize that the sin problem that is plaguing your conscience can only be solved by him.
- e) Jesus Christ, crucified and risen again... those facts, those truths, those transcendent eternal realities, come into your mind, and the Spirit turns the lights on.
- f) You realize it's true. You realize He's true. He's the one.
- (1) You need a Savior, and it's Jesus. You need salvation, and he brings it. You need forgiveness, and he procured it on the Cross. You need heaven, and he opens it. You need a cleft in the rock to shield you from his holiness. You need a mighty object for your powerless faith and it is this bleeding dying Savior.
- g) It's Jesus. It's Jesus plus nothing. Yes, you get it... you understand it. You believe it. So now, there's the third part of your soul.
- h) You need to go from believing that Jesus is the Savior to believing in Jesus as your Savior. And that happens in...

3. **Will — here you choose Jesus as your Personal Savior.**

- a) Will you say yes to Jesus?
- b) When Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, the people were dying of snake bites. He put that bronze serpent on the pole, and sent out the word... Look and Live!
- (1) Their conscience told them, I need this.
- (2) Their mind told them, this is true.
- (a) So now what... now go and look. That's the choice. That's the will, the volition, that's free will.
- (3) What if they believed that looking would save them, but they never went and looked? They would perish in their sins.
- c) It's not enough to believe the facts in your mind... or as Bible experts put it, Mental Assent is not enough. You don't have the whole formula. Even the demons believe that Jesus is the Savior. They have mental assent.
- d) But they have dug in their heels. They don't have the will to cast their hopes on him. (Not that demons could ever be saved, they're sealed in their doom... unlike you).
- e) Saving faith is all three... mind, will, emotions.
- f) Saving faith is claiming him by personal faith, and relying exclusively upon Jesus, Crucified and Risen again, as your only hope for salvation.

B. The formula

1. So let's put the formula all together. I think you already know it.

- a) ADMIT — I am a sinner and I need a Savior (Conscience/Emotions)
- b) BELIEVE — I believe that Jesus, by his shed blood on the Cross, is that Savior and the only Savior. (Mind)
- c) CHOOSE — I choose to trust Jesus as my only hope. (Will)

2. Faith is what happens when your whole soul responds to the amazing grace of God.

VI. Where does faith come from?

- A. I can't close this sermon without showing where faith comes from.
 - 1. **"So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of [Christ]." (Romans 10:17)**
- B. I put Christ in brackets, because that's what it actually says, and that's how all the modern translations translate it. The King James said "the word of God." But all the better Greek manuscripts say the Word of Christ.
- C. What's the difference between the Word of God and the Word of Christ?
- D. Nothing but emphasis.
- E. The Word of Christ is the Word of God as it emphasizes Christ.
 - 1. The Word of Christ is the message of grace. The Word of Christ is the new covenant teachings. The Word of Christ is the end of the Law as a way to God. The Word of Christ is Jesus smiling out from every page of Scripture. The Word of Christ is the Good News in Scripture as it has a basis in the finished Work of Christ.
- F. Faith doesn't come when the preacher beats you up with the Bible. Faith doesn't come when you're burdened down with guilt and shame. Preaching the laws of God won't give you faith. Preaching that you need to stop this and start that won't give you faith. A lot of preachers preach the Word of God all around in circles and never preach the word of Christ which is the word of Grace.
- G. Paul asks...
 - 1. *"This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?"* (Galatians 3:2)
- H. Paul says to lift up the shield of faith... but
 - 1. *"...How shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?"* (Romans 10:14)
- I. So here am I to preach to you the good news. Here am I to preach to you the good news of Christ.
- J. He wants you to hear...
 - 1. The love of Christ which passes knowledge, so that God can't love you any more than he loves you right now. (Ephesians 3:19)
 - a) And even on your very worst days, and even when you hate yourself and everybody else does too, the love of your Father in heaven doesn't even flicker.
- K. He wants you to hear...
 - 1. That there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1).
 - a) No guilt or shame, no punishment or hell, not even a disapproving frown darkens the face of your Father in heaven, for your payment is complete in the finished work of Christ.
- L. He wants you to hear...
 - 1. That God made him who knew no sin (Jesus) to be made sin for us (on the Cross) that we might be made the righteousness of God in him! (2 Corinthians 5:21).
 - a) You are perfect in his sight. Perfect on good days. Perfect on bad days. Perfect on holy days. Perfect on unholy days... when you're using again, or nasty again, or dirty again or anything again, because he always sees you robed in the shimmering robes of the perfect righteousness of Christ.
 - 2. Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of Christ... this is the Word of Christ.
- M. He wants you to hear... That God causes all things to work together for good to those who love him. (Romans 8:28)
- N. He wants you to hear... That if God is for us, who can be against us. (Romans 8:31).
- O. He wants you to hear... That my God will supply all your need according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:19).
- P. That Jesus has come that you might have life and that you might have it more abundantly...
- Q. That once you're saved you're always saved,
 - 1. For, what shall separate us from the love of God? Shall famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword, or any other created thing? No, no, no. For nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:28-39).
 - 2. Where is your faith? Where does your faith come from? Where do Christians turn to take up the shield of faith?
- R. Get yourself to the place again and again where you hear again and again the preaching and the teaching of the Word of Christ...
 - 1. Of the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world...
 - 2. Who invites you to come boldly to the throne of grace to find mercy for every need...
 - 3. Because as far as the east is from the west, so far as he removed our transgression from us...
 - 4. So that once you're saved you're always saved, because no one will be able to pluck you out of your Father's hand...
 - 5. So that he now invites you, Come to me all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest,
 - 6. Which was purchased by the finished work of Jesus Christ, on Calvary's cross, once for all,
 - 7. So he will never leave you or forsake you,
 - 8. So you can shout to the heavens, We are more than conquerors through him who loved us...
 - 9. And... I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength.
 - 10. And when the fiery darts are thick around us, we can hear God say, "Fear not, for I am with you; Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand." (Isaiah 41:10)
- S. Looking unto Jesus... the author of our faith. The Rock of ages, cleft for me.
- T. He is your shield of Faith. Take him up.