

**FIVE FORKS BRETHREN IN CHRIST CHURCH**  
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*SCRIPTURE: Daniel 3; 1 Corinthians 15:1-8; 2 Tim. 3:14-16*      *DATE: 2019-11-17*  
*Place: Auditorium*

*SUBJECT: Faith*  
*Series: Resilient Faith*

*THEME:*

*SERMON: "Through the Fire"*

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## **Introduction**

We are in the middle of a 3 week series, talking about **Resilient Faith**. When we say faith, we are referring to **believing in**, or **Trusting in Jesus Christ**. The man who lived 2000 years ago, and we believe is still alive, and who we believe is also God himself.

Because of **what** we believe about him, we consider him to be a person worth committing our lives to. A man whose teaching we want to study and know. A man whose example we want to follow. Our lives are transformed or changed by him and we become like him.

We also believe He is the God who created the whole world and each of us. We believe he cares about us. We pray to him and he hears our prayers. We believe he responds to us with grace and compassion, and so we come to love him and trust him. And we believe that in some mysterious way, our faith in this Jesus, unites us to him, and unites us to everyone else who believes in him. This is what I mean when I say faith in Jesus Christ.

**Resilient Faith** is faith or trust in Jesus that **endures** hardship and opposition, even tragedies, but does not cave in. When life gets difficult, resilient faith does not throw in the towel and give up on trusting Jesus. Instead it recovers and grows. I am not saying it never questions or doubts. In the most difficult times there are often a lot of questions and doubts. But resilient faith, somehow keeps going. This is the faith we want to develop.

Along the way in life we have met people who seem to have that type of faith. They

have been through stuff, really hard stuff and still believe, still trust, still love and follow Jesus.

Last week, **Martha** shared some of her story with us. Today I have the privilege of asking Darlyss, my wife, to share some of her journey of Faith.

## **Darlyss**

We saw last week how we can experience **growth** in our faith that will carry us through life. Today we consider faith that endures **through the fires of life**.

When people and powers and life situations seem to be against you, how do you stay true? If God is able to do anything, and he loves us, how do we keep trusting God, when it seems like life is falling apart?

One of my favorite bible stories which is an example of what I am talking about, is from the Old Testament. **Daniel 3**

**King Nebuchadnezzar made an image (a statue) of gold, and summoned all the provincial officials to come to the dedication of the image.**

**<sup>4</sup> Then the herald loudly proclaimed, “Nations and peoples of every language, this is what you are commanded to do. <sup>5</sup> As soon as you hear the sound of all kinds of music, you must fall down and worship the image of gold that the king has set up. <sup>6</sup> Whoever does not fall down and worship will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace.”**

**Some officials came forward and said to King Nebuchadnezzar, “There are some Jews, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego—who pay no attention to you, Your Majesty. They do not worship the image of gold you have set up.”**

**<sup>13</sup> Furious with rage, Nebuchadnezzar summoned Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. And said to them, “Is it true, that you do not worship the image of gold? <sup>15</sup> Now when you hear the music, if you are ready to fall down and worship the image I made, very good. But if you do not worship it, you will be thrown immediately into a**

**blazing furnace. Then what god will be able to rescue you from my hand?”**

**<sup>16</sup> Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied, “King Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. <sup>17</sup> If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he can deliver us from your hand. <sup>18</sup> But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.”**

In other words – “We will trust in our God, no matter what happens to us.” This is a story of people with resilient faith displayed even in the face of extreme and deadly opposition. While many followers of Jesus in our world today face threats just like this, our faith may be tested in different ways. Different kinds of hardships may come our way, but the question remains:

**“How are people able to remain true to Jesus even when facing the fires of life?”**

Darlyss already told of some things that helped her.

If you are familiar with early church history, you may know it was dangerous and difficult to be a follower Jesus. They, just like us, needed resilient faith as they faced life. We learn of three things that were important to them, that helped them keep their faith and I believe will help our faith be resilient.

<sup>1st</sup> The importance of knowing **“The Foundational Tenants”**, the non-negotiables, of the Christian faith.

<sup>2nd</sup> **“The Importance of Scripture”**

<sup>3rd</sup> **“The importance of an Ongoing Witness”** of their faith.

At one point in his ministry, Jesus asked his disciples, **“Who do people say I am?”** in other words, “Who do people believe me to be? What do people believe about me?” The disciples responded with several suggestions, and then Jesus looked at each of them and asked, “But who do you say I am?”

What would you say if Jesus looked at you and asked you that question?

**What do You Believe about Jesus?**

At the heart of being a follower of Jesus is, “what you believe about him.”

The apostle Paul, was pretty confident about his faith. He writes to a struggling church. A church that was being torn apart by divisions and quarrels about what they believed and He writes this:

**I Corinthians 15 Brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. <sup>2</sup> By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.** I want to remind you what matters the most.

**<sup>3</sup> What I received I passed on to you** (this is the ongoing witness) **as of first importance:** **that Christ died for our sins** (I want to remind you what we believe about Jesus – the tenants or pillars of our faith) **according to the Scriptures**, (we get this from the reliable scriptures, not just something somebody made up – a fairy tale or a myth) **<sup>4</sup> that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,** **<sup>5</sup> and that he appeared to Cephas (Peter), and then to the Twelve.** **<sup>6</sup> After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep.** **<sup>7</sup> Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles,** **<sup>8</sup> and last of all he appeared to me also.**

Paul then goes into a lengthy discourse, explaining the implications for his audience, of “**Who** Jesus is” and “**What** Jesus did” in order to rescue us from sin. Paul also says that he received much of his information from people who were eye witnesses of Jesus’ life. Some of them were still alive at the time, if the people wanted to check his sources. The point is, **it matters what we believe about Jesus and what our sources are.**

As time went on for the early church, the eyewitness all died. The apostles – that is Jesus original disciples, all died. People were starting to make up false statements about Jesus, who he was and what he did.

So the early church began to develop “**confessions of faith**” or creeds. These were short concise statements of what the bottom line was to say one was a Christian. It is what all Christians believed. Here is one of the creeds and I invite you to read aloud it with me. The Apostles Creed

**I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth;**

**And in Jesus Christ his only Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,**

**born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, dead, and buried; he descended into hell;  
the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven,  
and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty;  
from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian church,  
the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.**

I will admit, there are some statements here that I don't fully understand. I need explanation on some of these. Questions come to my mind when I read this and think about it. But you may notice most of the things that Christians argue about and split churches over, are not mentioned here. It doesn't mean we should not talk about those other things. But it means they are not essentials for what it means to be a believer in Jesus – and they should not divide us, even when we disagree about some points. The early Christians valued the unity of the Church. We should too.

If you and I want faith that can withstand all opposition and attacks on it, it is faith that is reminded regularly of these essentials – the **foundational tenants of our faith**. I encourage you to sit with this creed for a while this week – maybe 30 mins – and reread out loud and ponder what Christians believe.

Interestingly, these are all statements that we find **in the bible**. And that brings us to a second characteristic of the early church. Even from its infancy, Christianity recognized:

**“The Importance of Scripture”** (the written Word)

They were certainly influenced by their **roots** in Judaism, which placed a lot of

emphasis on following the **ancient written Law** and revelation of God. Christians also relied on these texts. They considered the ancient Jewish texts to be **God's revelation** of himself and they saw that these texts **pointed forward to Jesus**. It was common in the Jewish synagogues for someone to read these texts, since most people could not read. Then someone would expound on or explain what was read.

This practice was continued by the followers of Jesus. Paul, tells Timothy, his young protégé to study the scriptures and then preach and teach them.

**I Tim 4:13 Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching.**

**2 Tim 3:14-16 Continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, <sup>15</sup> and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. <sup>16</sup> All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup> so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.**

At first the texts were the Jewish texts. What we call the **Old Testament**. Jesus, when he was **tempted** by Satan, in his **teaching** made frequent reference to the written word – giving the ancient texts validity and authority. The disciples came to recognize that the ancient written word was pointing to Jesus. And then John wrote in his gospel that Jesus was the Word becoming flesh. So there was this very **close connection between scripture and Jesus himself**. Jesus was the living human expression of the written Word.

Following Jesus' ascension to the Father, the **Gospels** were written – which were compilations of the stories being told about Jesus by eyewitnesses to his life and teaching. These Gospels were crucial to the early church.

Later, **Paul's letters** were considered on par with scripture and they started to be read and explained regularly in the church gatherings, and eventually they became part of scripture.

What was important to the Apostles, to Paul, Timothy and on into the next generations of Christ followers, was an **accurate record of who Jesus was and what He said and did**. This record is the written scripture. And so the early Christians devoted themselves to studying, understanding, memorizing, even singing from “The Scriptures.”

The importance of bible study was, as one early church father stated, **“It kept the apostles memoirs about Jesus, alive.”**

But it was even more than just having a head knowledge of the scriptures. The scriptures were **internalized** – so that the believer’s very behavior changed. Perhaps somewhat similar to when someone reads about a healthy diet and chooses to make changes in the way they eat. You internalize the written word.

Studying and obeying the bible became a regular daily occurrence for believers.

Even today, those who wish to develop resilient faith will make the study of God’s Word a priority. And then faith develops as that Word is then applied to our lives.

### **How important is the study and application of biblical truths in your life?**

A third aspect important to the early church was **“The importance of our Ongoing Witness.”**

Just before Jesus ascended to his Father, he gave instructions to his followers.

**Matthew 28:18-20 Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup> Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”**

Jesus is clearly commissioning them to tell other people about him, and to teach them how to obey his teachings and follow him. Despite all the persecution and opposition the early Christians encountered, fulfilling this commission from their Lord and Master, was never abandoned. They were so convinced of who Jesus was, and the good news of His Gospel,

that they kept talking about it and living it out. Parents told their children, who told their children, and on down the generations it went.

Paul reminds young Timothy of this.

**[2 Timothy 1: 5](#) I am reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also**

Here is the strange thing about genuine faith in Jesus Christ. If you have it, you cannot **keep it to yourself**. The nature of it is such that you will be **compelled to share** it in some way with other people. As you talk about your faith in Jesus, not just what you believe, but also how your faith in Jesus has **affected your life**, as you talk with other people about your relationship with Jesus, you will discover that your own faith will increase. And as you hear about the faith of others, your own faith will increase.

The early Christians gathered regularly and part of their time was spent sharing this ongoing witness about their faith. (Some gather over the internet and share regularly)

It was on **Jesus' authority** that the early disciples went out telling everyone about the good news of Jesus' gospel. They had confidence in the power of the gospel to change people's lives – because their own lives were changed. They had the sense of a commissioning by Jesus to go and they believed his promise that he would be with them. So they went to tell others who told others, who told others. Until we have heard the good news today. It has been an ongoing witness for over 2000 years. Let's keep it going.

Would you be willing to share some of your story of faith with someone else this week? Parents, have you ever shared with your children, what you believe and how Jesus has been involved in your life? Or it may be a co-worker or friend.

If you are here this morning thinking, I want to know more about this Jesus you are talking about, please contact me this week. **PRAY**

**May the God who revealed himself to us through his Son Jesus, and Holy Spirit, increase our faith as we go this week.**