

Rock Solid Men

God's Way to Stand Firm in the Faith

Edited Transcript

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With that, good morning, men. Please turn in your Bibles to Romans chapter 10 verse nine. We did go to this men's outing, outreach event. Outing, my wife told me I can't use that word anymore. This men's event on Wednesday night, this cars things, about 60, 70 Corvettes, Ferraris, Lamborghinis, Jaguars, Aston Martins. It was really a tremendous time. Five of us went to dinner before we went to the car place. Then we walked about two blocks from the restaurant to the car place. As we were walking along, over here on the right hand side of the sidewalk is a restaurant called Better Than Sex, a dessert restaurant. I just wanted you to know there were no guys in there. It was all chicks. Obviously, that's very pertinent to us since we're a men's Bible study. We don't talk about things like that. We're going to be talking about this morning our new series, Rock-Solid Men.

We're going to do a couple shout outs to get started. The first goes to Galt Men's Bible study led by Chris Orrock in Elk Grove, California. "Five guys meeting with us at 6:30 on Thursdays. We are a group for men to grow in a relationship with Christ." Then, our second shout out this morning goes to Bob Ryan, our area director in Northwest Arkansas near the headquarters of Walmart. Bob says, "More and more men don't have a deep understanding of the Bible and how to apply it to their lives. Men need role models and guides to become leaders of their families and to impact others." I wonder if you would join me in giving a very warm and rousing Man in the Mirror welcome to Galt Men's Bible study and Bob Ryan. One, two, three, hoorah. Men, welcome. Bob, thank you for your service. Galt Men's Bible study, thank you for being part of the group.

We're going to be talking about this morning **God's way to stand firm in the faith**. The text that we have been looking at for this series is a five-part peroration of 1 Corinthians from the apostle Paul. He picked these five imperatives. These are present imperatives in the Greek language. Be on your guard, stand firm in the faith, be men of courage, be strong, do everything in love. Today, we're going to be looking at this stand firm in the faith. There are five parts to each of these sessions. The first is a key passage. The second is a rock-solid tool. The third is a rock-solid challenge. Then, you'll have a chance to talk about it in your groups. Then, there's an activity or an idea that is recommended.

WHAT PROBLEM IS GOD TRYING TO SOLVE BY SAYING 'STAND FIRM'?

First up, what problem is God trying to solve when he says stand firm? What is the problem that God was addressing when he said stand firm, stand firm in the faith? Before we would understand what it means to stand firm in the faith, we probably should talk a little bit about faith, although this is not actually an imperative about faith itself. It's about standing firm, but it's unique in that it's an imperative to a Christian. This is a Christian audience so it's stand firm in the faith. Stand firm, Christian. That's what it means. Stand firm, Christian. Faith is, Hebrews 11:1, sort of the esoteric definition. It's the assurance of things hoped for, a conviction of things not seen. Why is faith important? Hebrews 11:6, "Without faith, it is impossible to please God." Then, the passage that I want us to take a look at together, Romans

chapter 10 verse nine. You should be there. If you're not, like me, go ahead and get to that. Romans chapter 10 verse nine.

What is faith? Why is it important? Then, this answers how do you get it. How do you get faith? Just the last part of verse eight says, "The message concerning faith that we proclaim." Paul says, "This is the message concerning faith that we proclaim." There are many ways to describe the gospel, but as I was reading this over the last few days, I was thinking, wow, this is like the summa cum laude description of faith. Beginning in verse nine, this is the message concerning faith that Paul proclaims, "If you declare with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." This word saved is S-O-T-E-R-I-A in the Greek language, from which we get the word in theology soteriology. How many of you have ever heard of soteriology? A few of you have.

Soteriology is the study of salvation. It's the study of how people are saved. There's a little something you can impress your wife with when you get home. Verse 10, "For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified." Then, in a form of parallelism here, "And it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved." Those are two ways of saying the same thing. "For it is with your heart that you are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved." Then, Paul continues, "As scripture says ..." I just take a pause there. Today, when we want to make a point about Christianity, what do we do? We quote the scriptures. That's what Paul was doing too to make his points. We won't be pursuing this. It's a sidebar, but four or five times in this passage, Paul's quoting Deuteronomy. He's quoting Joel. He's quoting Isaiah. Paul is quoting the scriptures to make his point just I like quote the scriptures to make my points to you and you quote the scriptures to other people to make your points to them.

Paul was very big on quoting the scriptures. Verse 11, "As scripture says, 'Anyone who believes in me will never be put to shame. For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile. The same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him. For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'" Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. How then can one do that? How do you call on the Lord to be saved? "How then can they call on the one they have not believed? How can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? How can they hear without someone preaching to them? How can anyone preach unless they are sent?" Men, in the name of Jesus, you're sent. You're sent to proclaim this word so that men might hear and believe.

Continuing on, "As it is written ..." Again, Paul's quoting scriptures, "As it is written: 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news.'" You want to have pretty feet, men? You want to have beautiful feet? Take this good news to others. "But," verse 16, "not all the Israelites accepted the good news for," again, quoting scripture. "For Isaiah says, 'Lord, who has believed our message?'" I'm answering three questions here with you right now. What is faith? It's the assurance of things hoped for and the conviction of things not seen. Why is it important? Because without faith, it is impossible to please God. Then, how do you get this faith? We're exploring that now. Boom, verse 17, "Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ." It is the word of God. It is the words of Jesus Christ and the whole counsel of scripture, by the way. Not just the red letter words would be the words of Christ.

That's how we come to faith. Now, God says stand firm in this faith. Stand firm. What is the problem God's trying to solve? It's just not that easy to hear this word, to believe, and to walk it out. In fact, if you talk it out and you walk it out, you will suffer, you will be persecuted, you will be insulted, you will be overlooked, you will be written off. There will be times when you have to make choices that may lead to

you not getting the promotion that you wanted, not getting the sale that you thought you should have made because you're not willing to play with the invoice the way the buyer wants it. There are so many different ways that your life will be affected if you live out faith. In your booklet for today, this key passage. Anybody not have their booklet today? Do you remember the deal we had? The first booklet is free. How much is the second booklet? 50 bucks or 500. Who will give me 550? 551, 553, 600. I see that hand. Who will give me 650?

We actually have the two pages, copies of these two pages. Raise your hand if you do not have your book with you. It's not a problem. Don't worry about it. Raise your hand. Guys, take photos of all the guys that have their hands raised. Keep your hands raised, and we're going to hand you out these two pages. Then, we're going to look at this key passage together. Keep your hands raised. No shaming because you were not smart enough to remember to bring your two pages. We're not that kind of group. We're not going to ridicule you for being so stupid to not remember your two pages. We would never do that. Okay. All right. The problem God is trying to solve by saying stand firm is that there's opposition. We have opposition. The key passage here from the bottom left hand corner of page eight, "After the death of Moses, the servant of the Lord, the Lord said to Joshua, son of Nun ..."

Oh, I'm not even in the right section. It would be page six. Now who's stupid? Page six, the bottom corner, key passage, 1 Peter three, "But even if you should suffer for what is right, you're blessed." You're a Christian, you have faith, you suffer because of your faith. If you suffer for what's right, you're blessed. "Do not fear their threats. Do not be frightened, but in your hearts revere Christ as Lord." That's a summary of what we just read in Romans 10. "In your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope you have." That's being sent. That's the being sent to preach the message, to proclaim the message. "But do this with gentleness and respect." There are enough haters in the world. You know, Christians, one of the reasons that Christians have such a bad rep is that a small percentage of Christians are very vocal and very animated, and they're mean-spirited. They're just mean.

You know, if you're a mean person before you become a Christian, guess what, there's a good chance, unless you allow the Holy Spirit to transform your life, you're still going to be a mean person. Anyway, the bottom line is a lot of people hate Christians because they think Christians are haters. Christians are not haters. Christians are lovers, but a small percentage of Christians give us a bad name. When we do give the reason for the hope we have, it says, "But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. For it is better if it's God's will to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous. To bring you to God, he is put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit."

The problem that God is trying to solve by saying stand firm in the faith is this problem of our opposition. Where can we find the faith and the power to stand firm? Where does it come from? Where does the faith and the power come from to stand firm? In your booklet, it tells the story about how some religious leaders were trying to trick Jesus. In Matthew chapter 22 verse 29, Jesus says this. He says, "Here's the problem you're having. You do not know the scriptures. The reason you're confused, the reason you're mixed up, you do not know the scriptures and you do not know the power of God." Jesus links the knowledge of the scriptures to the releasing of his power. Let me give you an example. Paul said that a thorn was given him into the flesh, and he pleaded three times that this thorn in the flesh would be taken away.

In 2 Corinthians chapter 12 verse nine, Jesus says to Paul, "My grace is sufficient for you." This is the word of God now. These are the words of Jesus. "My grace is sufficient for you. For my power is made perfect in weakness. Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in persecutions, in hardships, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong." Unbelievable. Paul actually decides that he's going to boast about his weaknesses so that Christ's power may rest on him. Where in the world would he get this idea that he could stand that firm? He got it from the word of God. You do not know the scriptures and you do not know the power of God, but if you do know the scriptures, you do know the power of God.

Turn with me to Matthew chapter seven verse 24 maybe. Yes. Matthew chapter seven verse 24 in the Sermon on the Mount. Verse 24 chapter seven, Matthew, "Therefore, everyone who hears these words of mine..." What's that? That's listening to the word of God, reading the word of God. "... and puts them into practice..." What's that? Well, there are many different ways to say it, but it's putting his words into practice, obedience. "Everyone who hears and does my word," is what he's saying. Not just hear it, not just be a hearer but also a doer, not like a man who looks in the mirror and forgets what he saw but actually does it, from the book of James. "... is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house. Yet, it did not fall because," why? It had its foundation on the rock.

What is that rock? It's his words. It's like the wise man, everyone who hears these words, the word of God. The word of God is the place where we find this power to stand firm. Here are those verses that I mentioned. The Big Idea today: **God's designated way to stand firm is to build on the solid rock of his words.** If you want to stand firm, there's really one Biblical prescription for that, one designated way to stand firm. That's to build our lives on the voracity and the efficacy of his word, the solid rock of his words. That's what this passage says. That's what this passage says. "If anyone hears these words and puts them into practice, he's the man who's like the one building his house on the rock." Verse 26 says, "But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand," not the solid rock of his words but on sand. What happens to that man who does not build his house on the rocks, the rock of God's words? "The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash." I probably shouldn't have done that.

HOW CAN WE DO THAT?

That's part one. Part two is: How can we do that? How can you and I build our lives like this? The rock-solid tool for the day is devotions. It's devotions. I do a lot of driving around all over, really, but a lot of driving around the state of Florida. I like to listen to NPR when I'm out on the road.

What happens is that I tune into the local NPR station. Then I get 50 miles away or 75 miles away, and it starts to be staticky, a lot of static on the line. Then, I go 100 miles, and other stations start bleeding over. It kind of goes back and forth from NPR to some rock station. There's usually good rock music too. I'm enjoying that too. Then, all of a sudden, I get 125 miles away, and everything goes away, and it's just static. Here's the point. The point is that even though I am unable to hear the message, the station is still broadcasting. God is always broadcasting. The only difference is whether or not we're keeping ourselves in range. The way we keep ourselves in range of the words of God is to have a time, a regular time really, of devotions. It's to do personal devotions and read his word.

This word, Hebrews 4:12, this word is amazing. It says, "For the word of God is alive and active. It's sharper than any double-edged sword. It penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow. It judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. The word of God will reveal to you God. The word of God will reveal to you you. The word of God will reveal to you everything you need to know for both faith and life." Westminster Confession of Faith. The word of God is the final rule for all matters of both faith and life. It's not just for salvation. It's also for sanctification, to become more and more like him. It says, "Memorize this." That's what it says in the book. The Big Idea today: **God's designated way to do this, to stand firm, is to build on the solid rock of his words.**

THE ROCK SOLID CHALLENGE

The rock-solid challenge is this: Read the Bible for yourself. Most of you are already doing this. This is hopefully a reminder for all of us to get your dog going, this is a Pete Alwinson term, daily appointment with God. The reason to have a time of consistent daily devotions, five, 10 minutes, 15 minutes, 30 minutes, 60 minutes, whatever you feel comfortable doing, but to have it every day or virtually every day. I say shoot for five days. You know, you're here. Okay. You can either be here or be home, be seven days a week. Now you're down to six days. Then, you need to get your car has a flat tire, you need to get that fixed before you go to work. Now you're down to five. Let me just tell you that I've been very consistent. You've heard me talk about reading through the Bible once a year for 30 years and now reading through the gospels and so forth. I'm a man of prayer, and I do that all the time. Nobody does this perfectly. Nobody does this consistently.

Here's what I find. If I miss five days in a row, and I have on let's just say once a year maybe. I don't know how often because I don't keep track of it. Let's just say for hypothetical, once a year, I'll go five days without reading the word. I am almost suicidal. Five days, just imagine those of you who are married, just imagine if you're in the same house but you didn't talk to your wife for five days. Now, some of you might be thinking that'd be pretty nice, but think about that. Five days with the person that on this earth you are the closest to and you just choose to ignore her. You're in the same house and you ignore her for five days. Guess what. You're going to feel pretty crummy at the end of five days. Guess what. So is she.

The Father wants to have this conversation with us. He wants to speak into our lives with his word. He wants us to talk to him. Have that time of daily devotion. Then, because when you do, you're going to be able to stand firm. It is the word of God. It's a mystery, but it is the word of God. The famous Teddy Roosevelt quote, I'm going to close with this. This is the ultimate and most exquisite explanation of standing firm that I'm aware of, non-Biblical explanation of standing firm that I'm aware of. The Christian gets to this place by using God's designated way to stand firm by building on the rock of his word. This is what Teddy Roosevelt said. All of you will recognize this.

"It is not the critic who counts, not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood, who strives valiantly, who errs, who comes short again and again because there is no effort without error and shortcoming. But who does actually strive to do the deeds, who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions, who spends himself in a worthy cause, who, at the best, knows in the end the triumph of high achievement and who, at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat." If you want to stand firm, stand firm on the solid rock of God's word.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, thank you so much for this series on Rock-Solid Men where we're getting right down to the nitty-gritty of things that you led Paul to perorate about at the end of his book, 1 Corinthians. We pray, Father, that you would tutor your word to our hearts, that you would give us the grace that's sufficient, that you would make your power perfect in our weakness as we stand firm on the solid rock of your word. We ask this in your name, Jesus. For your glory, amen.