

**HOLDING FAST THE WORD OF LIFE**  
**Philippians 2: 12-18 October 25, 2015 –Reformation Sunday**  
**The Church of the Covenant**

I am alone in my interest in reading old plaques placed in churches. Have you ever carefully studied the plaques in the room next to the sanctuary with the World War veterans from our church on them? I have. Reminds me of the old joke –an older man was speaking to a young child and said: “These plaques commemorate those who have died in the service.” To which the child chipped up and said: “Which one –8:30, 943 or 11:00 o’clock?” But I am thinking of a plaque at Old First Presbyterian Church in downtown Pittsburgh that lists all of its former pastors, going back to the very beginning of the Presbyterian Church here in Western Pennsylvania, and there on the top of the plaque was our Bible verses for today from Philippians –*“Holding fast the word of life...so that...I may be proud I did not...labor in vain.” (Philippians 2: 16)* So on this Reformation Sunday, where we wear plaid and remember our founding in Scotland amid the turmoil of the Reformation, we also remember we are to “hold fast the word of life” today.

First, remember it is indeed LIFE. How much life we forfeit because we do not know and study God’s Word. How much life we lose because we do not read it devotionally and ask God to speak through it again to us today. As God has spoken through His Holy Spirit into the Word of Life from the beginning He speaks still. God spoke words of life through the Word at the beginning, God spoke words of life into the church throughout the millennia, God spoke to the church through the Reformation, and God speaks through the Word of God to us today. Why would we ever choose to miss out on that? Why would we miss out on LIFE because we are trying too hard to live it on our own? Why would we take no time to quiet our souls and listen to what God might speak into our lives today? How much LIFE we needlessly forfeit because we do not allow God to speak LIFE through His Word into our lives.

Second, consider it this way. Use scripture to speak into your life in times of need or trouble. Use it and repeat it to yourself as an absolutely certain promise, unshakable and unchangeable. It is the Word of God. It is the Word of God to you today...

Consider Hebrews 13: 5 –*“I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.”* You’re in the midst of some terrible situation in life, it seems impossible, how will you make it through, where is God in the middle of it, has God deserted you in your moment of greatest need? *“I will never leave thee nor forsake thee”* promises the Lord God Almighty. Never! Never leave thee by thyself. Never not walk with you each step along the way. Repeat it over and over and over again to your heart until you hear the voice of God speaking to you through the scripture –*“I will NEVER leave thee not forsake thee”*, promises Jesus. Hold fast the Word of LIFE!

Consider Psalm 46: 10 –*“Be still and know that I am God”* sayeth the Lord. Your life is at sea, you are upset about everything, there is no peace in your heart, your mind is like a popcorn popper on steroids, there is no quieting of your soul. *“Be still and know that I am God”*, speaks the Lord into your life. Just “BE” in my presence, it is enough for you today. Then “Be still” in my holy presence, says God. Quiet your heart and quiet your soul and use MY Holy Word’s power to do so. “You cannot hear me if you are not still”. Be still and in the silence know that I am still God and I still love you and I always have and I always will. Hear God speaking through His Word –*“Be still and know that I am God.”* Hold fast the word of life!

Consider Psalm 27: 1 –*“The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?”* You are beset and surrounded by difficulties and problem people, people assaulting, gossiping and criticizing. They cannot touch you nor harm you. They cannot harm your heart or wound your soul and spirit or take away your joy. The Lord is the stronghold of my life; God is the strong tower, the mighty fortress. When we sing on Reformation Sunday, Martin Luther’s hymn, “A Mighty Fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing” we are singing these words from Psalm 27. If we enter into the midst of the shelter and protection of the Almighty, if we enter into the very center of His power and His love, if we bar the stout door with His Spirit, who can harm us? Who can bring us down? Repeat it over and over again –*“The Lord is the stronghold of my life, of whom (and of what) shall I be afraid?”* Hold fast the word of life!

Consider Philippians 4: 13 –*“I can do all things in Him who gives me strength.”* So you are overwhelmed by life, there are too many things to do, which is most important, what thing must I address first? You are so beset with issues all around you, you are frozen in place and unable to address even one of them. Then you speak the Word of life again into your heart –I CAN do. I CAN do...ALL THINGS. I CAN do ALL THINGS (not on my own or according to my own power) I CAN do ALL THINGS...through HIM...and Through HIM and in HIS strength. Repeat over and over again –*“I can do all things through Him who gives me strength.”* Hold fast the word of life!

Consider Matthew 28: 20, the last word spoken to His disciples by Jesus on this earth –*“Lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age.”* We speak this word at every child’s baptism at every adult baptism. I spoke it today. It is a promise from Jesus to all who are baptized. Wherever you are, whatever struggle you are in the midst of, whatever else is going on in your life today, Jesus promises through His Word: “Lo, I am with you.” And not just some of the time –*“Lo, I am with you always”*. Not just in this life and not just when everything seems good and right, no, He says to us through His Word, *“Lo, I am with you always, even to the close of the age.”* Hold fast the word of life!

This book, the Bible, filled from beginning to end with the word of life. It has gotten me, personally and many times, through every sort of situation, trial and turmoil in my life. That is why I share it with you all now today. So, of course, it can do the same for you. If you believe indeed this is the Word of God and if you allow it to speak into your life and heart.

The Scots Confession is one of the statements of belief in our church. During the Reformation, which we celebrate today on this Reformation Sunday, in 1560, four ministers, one of whom was John Knox, the founder of the Presbyterian Church in Scotland, wrote it down. It concludes thusly: “Arise, O Lord...Give Thy servants strength to speak Thy Word with boldness, and let all nations cleave to the true knowledge of Thee. Amen.” HOLD FAST TO THE WORD OF LIFE! Amen and Amen.

*By: The Reverend Dr. Stuart D. Broberg, The Church of the Covenant, Washington, PA  
IF THIS HAS BLESSED YOU, PLEASE PASS IT ALONG TO A FRIEND!*