

Behold Our God
Keep the Faith
November 6th, 2011

Text - Isaiah 26:1-7

Scripture Reading - Isaiah 26:1-7

Though some interpreters believe that most of the events of chapters 26 and 27 have already occurred (probably during or shortly after the reign of King Hezekiah), others, including myself, believe that they, like chapters 24 and 25, are references to eschatological or “end times” events that are have yet to take place.

In today’s passage Isaiah envisions a contrast of two cities.

- One strong and safe
 - **Isaiah 26:1 (ESV)**
¹ ...“We have a strong city; he sets up salvation as walls and bulwarks.
- The other weak and helpless
 - **Isaiah 26:5 (ESV)**
⁵ ...He lays it low, lays it low to the ground, casts it to the dust.
- One trusting and at peace
 - **Isaiah 26:3 (ESV)**
³ You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you...
- The other humbled and laid low
 - **Isaiah 26:5-6 (ESV)**
⁵ For he has humbled the inhabitants of the height, the lofty city. He lays it low, lays it low to the ground,...
- One full of the righteous and faithful
 - **Isaiah 26:2 (ESV)**
² Open the gates, that the righteous nation that keeps faith may enter in.
- The other full of the wicked and proud
 - **Isaiah 26:10 (ESV)**
¹⁰ If favor is shown to the wicked, he does not learn righteousness;...

- o **Isaiah 26:5 (ESV)**

⁵ For he has humbled the inhabitants of the height, the lofty city...

At the end of the book of Revelation, the Apostle John envisions a similar contrast.

- **Revelation 21:1-8 (ESV)**

¹ Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. ⁴ He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."... ⁷ The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son. ⁸ But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death."

- **Revelation 21:22-27 (ESV)**

²² And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. ²³ And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. ²⁴ By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, ²⁵ and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. ²⁶ They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. ²⁷ But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.

- **Revelation 22:14-15 (ESV)**

¹⁴ Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates. ¹⁵ Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and

the sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.

How do we enter that city and avoid being left outside forever?

- Isaiah tells us in Isaiah 26:2.
 - **Isaiah 26:2 (ESV)**
²Open the gates, that the righteous nation *that keeps faith* may enter in.
 - How do we enter the City of God? *By keeping the faith.*
- John puts it a little differently in Revelation 21:6-8, but says the exact same thing.
 - **Revelation 21:6-8 (ESV)**
⁷*The one who conquers* will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son. ⁸But as for the cowardly, *the faithless*, the detestable, etc. ... their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire...
 - Who is the one who conquers and inherits the City? He who is not faithless. He who *keep the faith.*

One of the defining characteristics of all those who will spend eternity with God in Heaven will be that they will all *keep the faith* to the end.

- **Revelation 2:8-11 (ESV)**
⁸(To the church in Smyrna Jesus writes) ¹⁰Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. *Be faithful unto death*, and I will give you the crown of life. ¹¹...The one *who conquers* will not be hurt by the second death.'
- **Revelation 3:7-13 (ESV)**
⁷“(To the church in Philadelphia Jesus writes) I know that you have but little power, *and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name...*¹⁰*Because you have kept my word about patient endurance*, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world,.... ¹¹I am coming soon. *Hold fast what you have*, so that no one may seize your crown. ¹²*The one who conquers*, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God. Never shall he go out of it, and I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my

God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down from my God out of heaven,...

- **Matthew 24:9-13 (ESV)**

⁹ “Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name’s sake. ¹⁰ And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. ¹¹ And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. ¹² And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. ¹³ *But the one who endures to the end will be saved.*

You see, not everyone keeps the faith.

- Just look again at what Jesus says in Matthew 24....

- o **Matthew 24:9-13 (ESV)**

¹⁰ ...*many* will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. ¹¹ ... (*many* will be led astray) ¹² ...the love of *many* will grow cold.

- Jesus puts it like this in the parable of the soils...

- o **Mark 4:16-19 (ESV)**

¹⁶ And these are the ones sown on rocky ground: the ones who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy. ¹⁷ And they have no root in themselves, but endure for a while; then, when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, *immediately they fall away.* ¹⁸ And others are the ones sown among thorns. They are those who hear the word, ¹⁹ but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things enter in and *choke the word, and it proves unfruitful.*

- The author of Hebrews says this...

- o **Hebrews 6:4-6 (ESV)**

⁴ For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, ⁵ and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, ⁶ *and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt.*

- Thus the Bible makes it clear, *not everyone keeps the faith*.

Now, what the Bible also makes clear is that *no one can lose their salvation*. In other words, once God gives the gift of salvation to someone, *He will NEVER take it back*.

- **Ephesians 2:8-9 (NIV)**
⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is *the gift of God*--⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast.
- **Romans 3:23-24 (ESV)**
²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified by his grace *as a gift*, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,
- **Romans 6:23 (ESV)**
²³ For the wages of sin is death, but *the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord*.
- **Philippians 1:6 (ESV)**
⁶ *And I am sure of this*, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.
- **John 10:27-30 (ESV)**
²⁷ My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸ I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and *no one will snatch them out of my hand*. ²⁹ My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and *no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand*. ³⁰ I and the Father are one."

Thus we must conclude from the Bible, that those who fail to keep the faith, those who eventually fall away, *were never actually in the faith in the first place*.

- **1 John 2:19 (ESV)**
¹⁹ They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.
- **1 Corinthians 11:19 (ESV)**
¹⁹ for there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized.

This can be a difficult truth to believe experientially because some who fall away seemed to have been so genuine.

- Take for instance, Charles Templeton...
 - *'For Charles Templeton ironically, once Billy Graham's pulpit partner and close friend questions about God hardened into bitter opposition toward Christianity. Like Graham, Templeton once spoke powerfully to crowds in vast arenas and called for people to commit themselves to Jesus Christ. Some even predicted Templeton would eventually eclipse Graham as an evangelist. But that was before the crippling questions. Templeton's faith repeatedly punctured by persistent and obstinate doubts leaked away. He died in 2001 claiming there was no way to be sure about the fact that God exists, while still professing a yearning for the faith he once had. (Wikipedia and other internet sources)*
- I've seen examples of this myself. We've seen examples at TWE.
- **1 John 2:19 (ESV)**
¹⁹They went out from us, but they were not of us; for *if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.*
- Those who are truly of us keep the faith.

How do we avoid the fate of Charles Templeton? How do we keep from falling away? How do we keep the faith, endure to the end, be the one who conquers, and enter the City of God?

- First, we ask Jesus to save us.
 - **Matthew 7:7-8 (NIV)**
⁷"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. ⁸For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.
 - **Matthew 11:28-30 (ESV)**
²⁸Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

- o **Revelation 3:20 (ESV)**

²⁰ Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.

- o **Romans 10:13 (ESV)**

¹³ For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

- Second, we keep the faith in complete dependence on God.

- o **Philippians 2:12-13 (ESV)**

¹² ...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³ for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

In summary, it is ultimately God who allows us to keep the faith.

- **Psalms 121:1-8 (ESV)**

¹ I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come? ² My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth. ³ He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber. ⁴ Behold, he who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. ⁵ The Lord is your keeper; the Lord is your shade on your right hand. ⁶ The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night. ⁷ The Lord will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life. ⁸ The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in from this time forth and forevermore.