

Fil-Am Community Church  
Pastor Rolly Estabillo  
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Key Verse: Matthew 11:28-29

### “FALTERING FAITH”

Good morning! We are kicking off a brand new series today called “Is there an App for that?” I think we all know what an app is. If you don’t “App” stands for application. It’s those tiny icons or logos or tiles on a smartphone that when you press it, something happens. It launches an application. That app is supposed to provide you the answer to your question or do something based on your request. There are over a million apps when you combine those for the iPhone, for the Android phone, for the Windows phone. We know, however, that there’s no app that could give the answers to life’s most important questions.

In this series, we’re going to turn to the Bible to find exactly the answers to these questions. Like if you have a faltering faith, which is the subject of the message this morning, how can you have a faith that is strong and stable? Or your job is joyless or your relationships are rocky or you fear the future. These are some of the things that we want an app for. We want answers. We want real answers. Because these things cause stress in our lives.

So, this series is sub-titled “Finding Rest When You’re Stressed”. The reality is, we all get stressed from time to time. And let us start by finding out

what your stress level is. (Hand out Stress Test). Now, because we don't have much time, you're not going to do it now.

Just keep it aside then work on it after the Service, perhaps, while eating? Then, I'll show on the screen what your score means. So, put it aside for the meantime.

Stress has been called America's number one disease. We all deal with stress and the Bible has a lot to say about this. In fact, there is a very famous passage of Scripture where Jesus talked about how you can find rest when you're stressed. So let's go to that passage. It's from Matthew 11:28-29. Jesus says is, *"Come to Me all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you. Let Me teach you because I am humble and gentle, and you will find rest for your souls."* So look, if you are stressed out today, you can come to Jesus and He will give rest to you. He will take you from the place of stress to a place of rest.

This morning, I'd like to talk about our faith that can be a source of stress. Yes, your faith can stress you especially if it's faltering. When we are not secure in the love of God, when we doubt him and even fear him, that can be a source of stress. So, this morning I'd like to share with you three stress-busting truths about our faith that will help us find rest when we're stressed.

Stress-Busting Truth #1 is:

**1. Getting to Heaven is not about what I do, it's about what Jesus has already done.**

When I was in high school, I played chess, lots of chess. So when Pepsi sponsored a tournament in our school, of course, I entered and competed. There were over a hundred participants. This is where my problem began. I was in second year and most of the competitors were in higher years and were better. I had to prepare really hard. Suddenly, it caused me stress almost every day. Every day I was thinking of chess. And when I played a game during the tournament, I was always nervous. When I won, of course, that was a good feeling. But when I lost, I sulked and really felt miserable. Every day I would see my name go up or down on the scoreboard based on my performance. I wanted to be the champion, of course, but it was causing me a lot of stress. Then I faced the guy who eventually became the champion. It was the toughest game I had. It was the most stressful too. The champion said afterwards that he would have resigned if I made the right move in one instance of the game. But I missed it because of stress. There was too much pressure and I didn't perform as well as I should. I ended up placing 14<sup>th</sup>. Because of the stress, I didn't join again the following year. In fact, I quit playing competitive chess because, believe it or not, my mind was filled with chess even when I was lying on the bed at night. There were nights I couldn't sleep. Think about it, Chess rhymes with stress.

Let me ask you this. Have you ever felt like that in your life, at a job or in a relationship?

You feel like your name is on the board and then your boss, or whoever it happens to be, they move you up and down on the board based on how you performed. It's a stressful way to live. But you know what's even more stressful than that? When we feel that's how God views us. When we look at God as being up in Heaven, and God has this big board, and our name is on the board. When we do good things or we are doing what He wants us to do, our name moves up on that board. And we feel great and we feel loved by God and we feel like we're getting close to heaven. But then there are those days when we feel that we are a long ways from God, and we don't do good things and we live outside of God's will and we think it determines whether we spend eternity in Heaven or in hell.

Now, many people, Christians included, have that view of God. It's all about rules and the way to get God to like you more or for you to get to Heaven is to follow the rules. Because of that, our faith falters. It weakens. It goes up and down too. It's unstable. It isn't a source of joy, it's not a source of comfort, it's a source of pressure and a source of fear and insecurity. I want you to understand, that is not how God wants it to be. In fact, I want you to listen to me. The point of faith in Jesus Christ is to remove the fear, the doubt, the guilt, the regret, the stress

that we feel every day. In fact, Jesus said—the point of faith is that it's not about the rules, but about a relationship.

For many people, religion is spelled with a two letter word—DO. Religion is about doing. If I want God to love me, I need to do the right things. If I want to get to Heaven, I need to do the right things. I need to be a good person. I need to follow God's rules, and the more I do that the more God is going to like me, the more God is going to love me. And that's how I work myself into Heaven. So religion is about do.

Every major world religion sees it that way. Every religion is about doing. That is, except one. And that is biblical Christianity. Because you see, for Christians, getting to Heaven, or having God love us, has absolutely, positively nothing to do with what we do. It has nothing to do with doing good things and not doing bad things. Christianity is about receiving what Jesus has already done. In fact, if you want to spell Christianity and see it compared to the rest of the world religions, it would be spelled this way—done.

Ephesians 2:8-9 says this, “God saved you by His grace when you” became a better person. No, “God saved you by His grace when you” followed all the rules. No. What does it say? “God saved you by His grace when you believed. You can't take credit for this. It is a gift from God.” Underline those three words. Gift from God. *“Salvation is not a reward for the things that you have done so*

*none of us can boast about it.*” Salvation has nothing to do with following the rules, or being a good person, or doing good things.

It’s about believing in Jesus and knowing that He made the ultimate sacrifice for you by dying on the cross. He shed his blood on the cross so that your sins may be forgiven. Then, he was buried and after three days he rose again to conquer sin and death forever.

The next stress-busting truth (Stress-Busting Truth #2) has to do mostly with those of us who have made the decision to follow Jesus. And it’s this:

**2. Once I commit my life to following Jesus, I can never lose my salvation.**

You see, even after deciding to follow Jesus, we can hold onto that old mindset in the back of our minds, thinking that we still have to earn God’s love that we have to earn our way into Heaven. So when I mess up, I can lose my salvation.

Sometimes we struggle with this. We still have doubts. Maybe we have fallen away from God recently, and we look at our life and we know we haven’t been living the way that God wants us to live. And we feel guilty and worry that we have messed up so much that maybe God doesn’t really love me. Maybe He is going to reject me.

Do you remember that feeling you got the first time, when you were baptized, like when you came up out of the water, that warm fuzzy feeling inside, and you felt close to God and you were on fire for God?

Maybe you haven't felt that in a long time. Maybe you feel like you are a long ways from God. Maybe you don't even feel like praying, you don't feel like reading your Bible, you don't even feel like going to church sometimes. You think—you know what, maybe I'm not saved. Maybe I'm not going to Heaven.

I want you to listen. You didn't earn your salvation by working for it. It was a free gift from God. And if you didn't earn your salvation by being good, you can't lose your salvation by being bad. If you didn't earn it through your actions, then you can't lose it through your actions either. It was a free gift from God. God didn't save you because of anything you did. He saved you because He loves you. Once you become a follower of Jesus, God is going to begin working inside of you to make you more like Jesus.

Now, you have to also remember, a relationship with God is not about feelings either. It doesn't matter how close you feel to God. Feelings have nothing to do with it. I've been married to my wife, Anabel, for 11 years next Sunday. That's why we're not here next Sunday. During those 11 years, there have been times that I felt really close to her, and there have been times that I didn't feel very close to her. But when I didn't feel close to her, it didn't mean that we were no

longer married, did it? You know, there were times when we had really good conversations, and there were times in our relationship where we did not communicate well at all. That didn't mean we were divorced, did it? No.

And the same way with God. There will be ups and downs. There are times when we feel closer and we don't feel close, but the thing to know is that you always belong to God. You are always in His hand and your salvation is secure. Look at what Jesus says in John 10. He says, "My sheep listen to My voice. I know them and they follow Me. I give them eternal life and they will never perish." Underline this next phrase, "No one can snatch them away from me. My Father has given them to Me, and He is far more powerful than anyone else. No one can snatch them from the Father's hand."

Now, I'm holding something here. A quarter. Can I ask a volunteer to come here in front. Try to pry this out of my hand. That's what it means. You are the quarter inside that hand and no one, even the demon, even yourself, can take you out of God's hand.

I want you to understand that once you give your life to God, it's secure. Nothing can ever take you away from the love of God. That's our next verse. Romans 8:38-39 says, "And I am convinced that nothing", underline the word nothing, in fact, I looked it up in the Greek, and you know what that means? It means nothing. It says, "I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from

God's love. Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor demons, neither our fears for today, nor our worries about tomorrow, not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. No power in the sky above, nor in the earth below, indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord." Amen?

So, the truth is, because once you give your life to God, it's not about earning His love. He already loves you. You belong to Him for eternity. Your eternity is secure.

Our first stress busting truth was getting to Heaven was not about what I do, but it's about what Jesus has already done. Our second stress busting truth was once I commit my life to following Jesus, I will never lose my salvation. And the third and final stress busting truth concerning our faith is this:

### **3. Living to please Jesus is less stressful than living to please people.**

Many people hesitate to follow Jesus because they think if they become a Christian that their life will end there. That there will be no fun and that Christianity is just a bunch of rules, to do list, or not to do list, and so when they have the opportunity to say yes to Jesus, they may like Jesus, they may be attracted to Jesus, but they say—thanks, but no thanks. And one of the truths that I have had to communicate today is that faith in Jesus is not about rules, it's about an exciting life changing relationship with God. And when we begin following Jesus, and we

begin trying to please Him, our life becomes a lot less stressful than when we live our life trying to please other people.

In fact, look at our next verse in Galatians 1:10, this is Paul writing, and he has come to this conclusion as well. This is what he says, “Obviously, I am not trying to win the approval of people, but of God. If pleasing people were my goal, I would not be Christ’s servant.”

You see, in your life, you are not going to be able to please everyone. That’s hard for me to say, because I am a people pleaser. Anyone else here a people pleaser? I am a people pleaser. I mean, I’m happy when you’re happy. If you’re not happy, I’ll try to make you happy. That’s why my wife loves me. I’ll try not to displease you and if I did, I will do everything to make you happy. I hate it when people are disappointed in me. I hate it when everyone around me isn’t happy.

It causes me stress. Because if you live your life trying to please people, you are always going to feel the stress of trying to live up to someone else’s standards with your life. And that is a stressful thing to do. It’s a miserable way to live. You know what it’s like? It’s like giving someone permission to put your name up on a board and then move you up and down depending on how you perform. Like what happened to me in high school. What you are doing is, you are giving other people power to determine how you feel about yourself. You are giving other people the power to determine whether you are happy or not by saying—I am

going to live my life trying to please you. And if I fail, if I fall short, and I don't please you, I am going to be miserable. And that's how we live our lives.

We try to live our lives pleasing other people. But, if you decide if you are going to live your life trying to please God, that's freedom. Because I want you to understand—God loves you and He accepts you just the way you are. He doesn't say—change your life, get rid of your baggage before you come to Me. He says—come to Me, as you are. And then we will do this together.

When you live outside of God's will, it's called sin. And with sin there are consequences. Sometimes sin hurts, but it doesn't determine how much God loves you. It doesn't determine whether or not you get into heaven. God's already decided that, because He loves you that much. Plus, when you live your life to please God, you are going to be doing what God already created you to do. There's nothing more fulfilling than living your life doing what God intended for you to do. Look at our next verse. Ephesians 2:10. It says this. "For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus and He can do the good things He planned for us long ago." I want you to turn to the person sitting next to you and say—you are God's masterpiece.

Beginning today, I want you to make the decision that no longer are you going to live your life, trying to please your boss, trying to please everyone in your

family, trying to please all of your friends, trying to please other people. I want you to lay down that stress, and accept the rest that God wants to give you.

And from now on, I want you to say—God, from now on, I'm going to live my life trying to please You. You have loved me and You accepted me, and I want to live pleasing You.

Let's bow our heads and pray.

If you are here today and you have never made a decision to follow Jesus, you have never asked Him to come into your life, maybe that's the decision you want to make today. Say—you know what, I am no longer going to live my life trying to be good and trying to earn my way into Heaven. Beginning today, God, I want to receive Your free gift. Come into my life. Maybe that's the decision you need to take and you need to apply to your life. I want you to pray this prayer in your heart. Dear Jesus Christ, I don't understand it all but I realize that you love me and I need to learn about that love. I don't understand all about the cross but I want to accept what you did for me. Thank you for loving me. Thank you for dying for me. I ask you to forgive all my sins. I ask you to come into my life and make me a new person. Please help me to understand it all as I follow you. In your name I pray. Amen.

Please keep your heads bowed. Maybe you are a Christian and you are a follower of Jesus, and have been for years, but you struggle with doubt, fear,

anxiety, worry, stress. You say—I'm not good enough, I'm falling short. Maybe I'm not really saved. Maybe I'm not in God's hand.

Maybe your decision today is simply saying—you know what, I am no longer going to live my life trying to please others. Today, I am going to make a commitment that I'm going to perform for an audience of one and I'm going to try to please God. If that's it, pray this prayer in your heart.

Father God, I thank you for the gift of salvation. Thank you that I don't have to earn it or work for it. Please remind me this week that I belong in Your hand, and Your hand envelopes me. My eternal salvation is secure. Father, I make a commitment today to live my life to please You, and not others. And I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

## **LORD'S SUPPER**