

There is a common enough phrase that I am sure you all can help me finish it. When the going gets tough...[the tough get going]. Today for the purpose of this sermon I would like to change the phrase just a little. For the sermon the phrase will be, "When the going gets tough, the believing start speaking." What exactly do I mean? Hopefully by looking at two different bible passages today it will become clearer exactly what I mean.

First, let us look in the Old Testament at Psalm 116. Psalm 116 is know as a Psalm of deliverance. No one knows for sure who wrote this Psalm. No one knows for sure what the circumstances around the writing of the Psalm were. Some think it was a Psalm written for the celebration of Passover, to celebrate God's deliverance of the people of Israel from Egypt. Others think it was simply one man's celebration of the deliverance God had given to him at a particular point of his life. Regardless of the original context, the message is clear. Believing people trust God even in the tough times, because they are confident of his deliverance. Whatever trouble surrounded the Psalmist, whether it be oppression or famine or persecution, he said, "I believe and therefore I said, 'I am greatly distressed.'" One might ask though, how does the statement "I am greatly distressed" flow from his belief? It shows his faith because of who he said this to. He said it to the Lord. He told the Lord his troubles confident of his rescue. When the going got tough, the Psalmist started speaking.

Paul, in our epistles reading for the day, actually quotes this Psalm. Basically he says, just like the Psalmist said, so also I, Paul say, "I believe, therefore I speak." You see Paul was no stranger to trouble and persecution himself. We know that Paul was shipwrecked many times, he was stoned, he was chased out of cities, he was bad

mouthed, beaten and the list goes on and on. But just like the Psalmist, when the going got tough, Paul started speaking. He spoke of God. He spoke of Jesus. He spoke of salvation to anyone that would listen. Whether witnessing to a warden in the jail where he was or witnessing to the man about to whip his back, he spoke with the confidence he had in Christ. Paul knew that Jesus had been raised from the dead, because he had met him on the road to Damascus. And he knew that if that God has raised Jesus just as he had promised, then all of God's promises were true. Indeed Paul knew that following the pain was paradise. He knew that his death would mean life. He believed and therefore he spoke. For Paul, for the Psalmist, for all Christians, believing and speaking simply go hand in hand. As Peter once told those who commanded him to stop talking about Jesus, "we just can't help talking about all the things we have heard and seen."

No doubt this should always be the case. But is it always the case for us? Does your believing always lead to speaking? Sure it is easy to speak of our great God when there is a healing. It is easy when God provides a bountiful harvest. It is easy when everything is going well. But what about last year when the harvest was awful? Did you speak about how good God was even in the tough times? How about on September 11, 2001 when towers came falling down and everyone questioned what God was allowing? Did your believing lead to speaking, or were you lulled into a quiet daze? For those of you still in school, when people are making fun of Christians and the way we live and the things we believe, does your believing lead to speaking, or do you just sort of chuckle along to make it through the day? At times indeed we must all admit that when God is hard to defend we tend to get quiet.

So, where do we go today to get the strength to believe more strongly that we might speak more boldly? We go the same place that Paul went. We take time to ponder the fact that while Jesus was indeed dead, he now lives. We set our eyes, our minds, our hearts on things unseen, because we know that those unseen things are eternal while whatever troubles we now endure are temporary. We rejoice that while our outer self may be wasting away, our new man is being renewed day by day. And as we ponder those truths, we realize that all of God's promises are in Jesus made yes. We know that if he took care of our sins, broke the bonds of death, destroyed the power of the devil, he can take us through the difficult times in our lives as well. And as we ponder God's great promise keeping, we should not be surprised that our amazement will begin to flow right off our tongue. If you have ever seen a really great movie, it is just natural to want to tell someone else about it. If you saw the fireworks last night, you likely told someone about them. When you see an awesome Jesus dieing and rising for you, you want to tell others about it also. We believe, and therefore we speak. When the going gets tough, the believing start speaking.

In this place today, Jesus forgives us for each time when we have been silent about our great God. And in this place through his word and his sacraments he fills us up with faith through the same spirit that filled the Psalmist and Paul. And then as we leave we speak. We don't speak because we have to, or because it is the right thing to do. We speak because we believe. When the going gets tough, we start speaking.

And as we start speaking, God's grace starts spreading. New people come believe and speak. Faith starts spreading like dominoes as God's spirit goes out to more and more people and they begin to speak. And then all of us together in the same spirit raise

our voices in thanksgiving to God for his great works among us. When the going gets tough, the believing start speaking.

Amen.