

*Overwhelmed
He Still Moves Stones
Matthew 28:1-10*

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Text Introduction: We are in the middle of a series of messages on the theme of being overwhelmed. Even though today is Easter, we continue with that theme, because at the heart of the message of Easter is God's ultimate answer for those who are overwhelmed. Nothing gives hope to the overwhelmed like the resurrection of Christ. Our greatest hope and greatest source of encouragement when life seems too much is to magnify the fact that Our Redeemer Lives.

I want to read two New Testament texts today. The first gives us the scene of the resurrection. The second gives us some insight into just how powerful and meaningful the resurrection is to our overwhelming moments of life.

Text: ¹ Now after the Sabbath, as the first day of the week began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb. ² And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it. ³ His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. ⁴ And the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men.

⁵ But the angel answered and said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. ⁶ He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. ⁷ And go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead, and indeed He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him. Behold, I have told you."

⁸ So they went out quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring His disciples word.

⁹ And as they went to tell His disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, "Rejoice!" So they came and held Him by the feet and worshiped Him. ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell My brethren to go to Galilee, and there they will see Me."

Then, in the book of Hebrews, a text written to people overwhelmed with the threat of persecution, the writer calls on them to hold on to their faith when he says,

³⁵ Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. ³⁶ For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise:

Pastor and author, Charles Swindoll seems to get it when it comes to the overwhelming stuff of life. Across the years he has written several books on subjects related to the difficult experiences of life. Listen to some of the titles: *Living on the Ragged Edge of Life*, *Living Beyond the Daily Grind*, and *Stress Fractures*. A more recent book is entitled, *Getting through the Tough Stuff of Life*. The subtitle of this book says it all: “It’s Always Something.” Listen how Swindoll concludes his book.

*I don’t care how old you are, where you live, or what you do for a living; if you’re single or married; childless or have a household of kids; own your own home or rent your place...it’s always something. It makes no difference which hobby you enjoy, who you know, how much money you make, whether you’re a workaholic or completely retired from the workplace, whether you’re a person who has little or no faith or you’re a stronghearted follower of Jesus...it’s always something!*¹

It really is always something, isn’t it? So, what are we to do? Well, one of the best things that we can do is to remember that He rolled the stone away from the tomb. He still moves stones. He still moves the stone of divorce, the stone of cancer, the stone of unemployment, the stone of uncertainty, the stone of helplessness. He still moves stones. Therefore, since this is our hope, what are we to do? We are to remember the resurrection. In the resurrection, we are reminded that ...

We need to keep our confidence!

That’s the first point of the encouragement in the Hebrews text. The writer said, “Do not cast away your confidence.” To us, the resurrection reminds us not to throw away the confidence that we have in Jesus.

We can keep our confidence because of ...

- The Empty Tomb—We could not be eyewitnesses of the empty tomb, because we did not live in that day. However, we can have great confidence in knowing that the original eyewitnesses certainly believed in the validity of the resurrection. They were so certain of the resurrection of Jesus that many first century followers of Jesus were willing to die. That’s how certain they were.
- Early Testimonies—Luke recorded these words in Acts 1:3. Speaking of these early eyewitness, Luke said of them, “to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.
- Everyday Life—Be your own witness as to why you need to keep your confidence. Hasn’t God strengthened you in difficult times? Haven’t you

¹ Charles R. Swindoll, *Getting Through the Tough Stuff: It’s Always Something!* W Publishing Group, 2004, 223.

faced uncertain, overwhelming times before, but been delivered? That same God who delivered you then will deliver you again.

The resurrection gives us incredible hope. We can keep our confidence because of the resurrection.

When I think of keeping our confidence I think of the story that I heard about an elementary schoolteacher who was asked to go by the burn unit of the local hospital. A child had come through a tragic house fire, and was in critical condition. The instructions were rather odd. "Go by and talk to him about nouns and adverbs." She thought that was bizarre, but someone had decided it would help the child, and anything that would do that, she was in favor of.

A nurse showed her into the PICU. The child was wrapped in bandages with only portions of his face visible. The nurse said he had been unresponsive up to that point. The teacher pulled up a chair and introduced herself, then said, "They asked me to come by and talk with you about nouns and adverbs." So she did, feeling more and more foolish the whole time. After a bit, she wished the child well and left.

The next day, she decided to check on the child. As she approached the intensive care unit, a nurse met her in the hall. "What did you do yesterday?" The teacher stammered and began apologizing. "I know it was silly to talk with him about nouns and adverbs, but those were my instructions. I'm sorry." The nurse said, "No--whatever you did worked wonders. Come and see. The boy had showed marked improvement even in just one day." Later the boy would say, "I didn't think they would send a teacher to talk to me about nouns and adverbs if I was going to die."²

We can have even more confidence than that knowing that Christ is risen, and that we will share with Him one day in eternal life.

We must keep our commitment.

The resurrection also reminds us that we must keep our commitment. In short, we must keep doing God's will. The recipients of the letter to the Hebrews had begun to shrink back from their faith. Converts of Judaism, these new Christians were beginning to suffer intense persecution. Some were beginning to think that perhaps it was not worth it to serve Christ. They didn't want to abandon their relationship with Christ, they just didn't want anyone to know of their commitment. Serving Christ had become too difficult.

Keeping our commitment requires endurance. In the midst of some things not going our way or when the goal in sight is not clearly before us, we must have endurance. The book of Hebrews is a call to endurance. The Christian life is a call to endurance. If we do not endure, we may miss God's answer. If we do not endure, we may miss God's assignment for our lives.

² From a writer named Joyce Halliday.

Keeping our commitment requires looking unto Jesus as our example. Indeed, Jesus is our greatest example of endurance. That's why in the twelfth chapter of Hebrews, the writer encouraged that "we run with endurance the race that is set before us looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith." The writer of Hebrews said, "For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. Are you discouraged today? Look to Jesus as your example. Are you weary? Look to Jesus. See him as your ultimate example of keeping a commitment.

I am sure most of you have seen the video of Derrick Redmond running the 400 meters during the 1992 Barcelona Olympic Games. Redmond tore his hamstring about half-way through the race. By the time he gets up, the other sprinters have finished. Determined to finish, he gets up and begins to hobble to the finish line. In one of the most touching moments in sports ever, Derrick's father comes down out of the stands and the two finish the race with Derrick leaning upon his father.

Isn't that what God does for us? Maybe you feel like you are limping along right now, but God will be with you until the finish line.

God keeps His promises.

Finally, the resurrection reminds us that God keeps His promises. Remember that Jesus said He would rise. As Jesus was coming down the Mount of Transfiguration with Peter, James, and John, He told them not to tell anyone what they had just seen until after the Son of Man is risen from the dead. (Matthew 17:9) As Jesus entered Jerusalem, he told all of the disciples that he would rise on the third day. (Matthew 20:19) The resurrection, among many other things, is a reminder that God keeps His promises.

God's promises are too numerous to detail, but we must think about a few. What has God promised?

God has promised...

- Salvation
- Himself
- His Return
- Home in Heaven

God keeps His promises. If you are feeling overwhelmed, remember that God keeps His promises. If you think, "It's always something," remember that God keeps His promises. Just when the womb gets too old for babies, Sarai gets pregnant. Just when some sins seem unforgivable, David is forgiven. Just when a giant seems too big, God produces a slingshot and a shepherd. Don't give up. For all we know, God may be rolling away the stone in your life right now. The call may be on the voice mail. The check may be in the mail. The promotion may be on the boss' desk. The lost heart may be repenting. God still moves stones.