

Thesis: Every believer can experience rock-solid living!

INTRODUCTION (Video clip from Rocky Balboa)

It ain't about how hard you can hit; it's about how hard you can get hit and keep moving forward.

Rocky Balboa is a fictional character created by Sylvester Stallone and introduced to the world through six movies spread over 30 years. Stallone describes his motivation by saying: *I relished stories of heroism, great love, dignity, and courage, dramas of people rising above their stations, taking life by the throat and not letting go until they succeeded.* The story of the making of the movie seems to parallel the drama itself: The film, made for only \$1.1 million and shot in 28 days, was a sleeper hit; it made over \$117.2 million, the highest grossing film of 1976 for the US, and won three Oscars, including Best Picture.

If you had a nickname spiritually, what would it be? Would people call you “Kid” because you have never grown up? Would they call you “Shaky,” because you lack stability? Would your nickname be “Sleepy, Sneezzy, Dopey, Doc, Happy, Bashful, or Grumpy?” Would they call you “Rocky” because no matter how hard you get hit you get up and keep moving forward?

I have a burden: to raise up strong followers of Jesus who can raze hell! I also have a challenge that is very personal: to become Rocky in my spiritual life, to develop a rock-solid faith that will never give up! My further challenge is to lead you, those who are part of Ridgecrest or some other church; those listening here or on the radio or internet; to lead you to be strengthened by the Lord to overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil; to **raze hell!**

How can we have rock-solid living? Is it even possible? Yes! **Every believer can experience rock-solid living!** Turn with me to the end of the Sermon on the Mount, recorded in Matthew 7:24-27, and listen to these powerful words from the lips of our Lord: *"Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his*

house on the rock: 25 and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.

26 "But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: 27 and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall."

Verses 24 and 25 describe the life I want to live. I want to be a Rocky! I want my life to be characterized by rock-solid living.

“How can I experience rock-solid living?” I begin with a disclaimer:

I. IT WILL NOT COME AS A CONSEQUENCE OF MY CIRCUMSTANCES!

Expl. Notice that the first 16 words of verses 25 and 27 are identical.

The rain falls on every life – the floods come – the winds beat on every life.

There is absolutely no difference in the circumstances!

Illus. There are those who believe that sufficient faith will stop the storms.

I don't think Jesus always stills the storms, but I know He stills my soul in the storms!

Appl. Procrastination is a serious spiritual problem in many of our lives.

We think, “When my circumstances change, I will . . .”

Do you want to be a Rocky? Do you want to experience rock-solid living?

It is not about your circumstances!

Illus. It is interesting to me that the etymology of the word “circumstance”

is from the Latin word *circumstare*; where *circum* means “around” and *stare* means “stand”; so, literally, “to stand around.”

Appl. Have your circumstances caused you to “stand around” spiritually?”

Are you ready to move beyond your circumstances?

Are you ready to begin the journey to rock-solid living?

Every believer can experience rock-solid living!

It will not come as a result of my circumstances!

Remember the question of the day: “How can I experience rock-solid living?”

We know it will not come as a consequence of my circumstances. So how will it come?

II. IT WILL COME AS A CONSEQUENCE OF MY CHOICES!

Illus. *If we cannot choose our circumstances, we can always choose our response to them. If we cannot choose who we are, we can always choose to become something more. To stop choosing is to start dying.* (*Tough Choices*, p. 11, Carly Fiorina)

Expl. Jesus said, *whoever hears these sayings of mine* (vv. 24, 26).

Hearing Jesus is a choice! Hearing God’s Word is a choice!

I can choose whether or not I will expose myself to God’s Word.

I can choose how often and how long I will sit at the feet of Jesus.

I can choose to read, to listen, or to watch in a multitude of ways.

Jesus also said: *and does them* (v. 24). (James 1:22 – doers)

Appl. Children of God, we have to choose to obey God’s voice!

Expl. This was the only distinction between the wise man and the foolish man!

Both made choices.

The wise man (Rocky) chose to obey; the foolish man (Sinker) chose to not obey!

Illus. *The main message of our work remains: we are not imprisoned by our circumstances, our setbacks, our history, our mistakes, or even staggering defeats along the way. We are freed by our choices.* [*How the Mighty Fall*, Jim Collins (Page 120).]

Appl. **Every believer can experience rock-solid living!**

Rock-solid living will come as a result of my choices!

CONCLUSION

This brings me to what I believe is one of the most significant moments in my ministry. Today I bring to you a challenge, a challenge I am calling the **7/24 Challenge**. Here it is: **Seven days a week I will spend at least 24 minutes each day interacting with God’s Word.** This is not a new legalism; it is an invitation to liberty! This is not a way to get Jesus to love you more, it is a way to spend time with the One who loved you and gave Himself for you! It is your “face time” with the faithful Lover of your soul!

You may be thinking, “Given my circumstances, this is impossible.” It is not about your circumstances, it is about your choices. If it feels like an elephant-sized commitment, eat it one bite at a time. How about 12 minutes, twice each day? How about six minutes, 4 times each day? I am asking for 1 minute out of each hour of your life! By the way, Shayla Hale, our Associate Minister for Children, suggested a modification for younger children: **I will spend 7 minutes out of every 24 hours interacting with God’s Word.** That works!

You might say, “Pastor, I don’t know how to do this!” In the coming weeks I will be carefully teaching you how to hear and respond to God’s voice. Today, let me suggest a structure which I have modified from an ancient practice called Lectio Divina (Spiritual, Holy, or Divine Reading):

1. Listen slowly!
2. Think deeply!
3. Pray fervently!
4. Obey faithfully!

Never forget that your purpose is communion with your Father! Out of that communion comes the power to raze hell!

Where do you start? Let God’s Spirit guide you, but it would certainly be proper to start with the Sermon on the Mount. Live in Matthew 5-7 for the next week or several weeks. Read it repeatedly. Memorize Matthew 7:24-25 or Matthew 7:24-27. Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly (Col. 3:16)!

What if reading is not your primary means of learning? Consider using a CD with scriptures or one of the web sites that stream scripture readings to your computer. Pause it as often as needed to allow time to think and pray.

A final word: As you prepare to hear God’s voice, think about these four questions:

1. Am I saved?
2. Am I submissive to God’s will?
3. Am I depending on the Holy Spirit?
4. Am I willing to commit the time to hear God’s voice?

You can be a champion! You can be a Rocky! **Every believer can experience rock-solid living!** Embrace the **7/24 Challenge!**