

Good morning Church! My name is Jared Rasmussen, and I serve as the Junior High Director here at Coram Deo. If you recognize me and you're not sure why...it might be because I grew up in this Church.

I started attended as a young Junior Higher back in 2015 and now the Lord has been gracious enough to allow me to lead the Junior High students alongside my wife Erica. We've loved every second of it.

I want to give a huge thank you to Pastor Rob for giving me the opportunity to open up God's Word with you this morning, it's a blessing to be able to do so.

If this is your first time with us let me be the first to welcome you – we're glad you've joined us. I hope you all had a very Merry Christmas.

If you're joining us online, I hope you had a wonderful holiday wherever you may be.

Well, if you have your Bible, go ahead and open them to Hebrews chapter 10.

If you need a Bible, please get the attention of one of the ushers and they will be sure to get one in your hands.

Well like I said I've been the Junior High Director for almost a year now and it's been a joy getting to lead your students. I've loved seeing God grow them even in the short amount of time I've been with them.

If you know a Junior Higher, you are a Junior Higher, or have a Junior Higher be sure to send them my way, I'd love for them to join us on Wednesday Nights.

Well, I was thinking back to when Pastor Rob asked me to step in to preach. It was a pretty surreal moment for me. I was feeling all the emotions.

Mainly because, like I said, this is the church I grew up in. I was discipled in our youth group; went on mission trips; spent a lot of Sunday's and Wednesday's here; and I built a lot of great relationships in this church.

And I don't know about you but as time goes on I realize that many of those relationships, which seemed strong and resilient, no longer exist.

If you've been a Christian for any length of time you've probably seen a lot of relationships end because people have walked away. One day they were here worshipping with us,

but then later on down the road...they left the Church, they walked away from Christ, and they renounced everything they supposedly believed.

Every time I see it, I always wonder...what's the reason?

What's the problem?

And as I see it over and over again I realize: **it's a perseverance problem** [REPEAT]

Times get difficult; suffering arises; pain becomes intolerable, and people refuse to persevere; they refuse to endure in their walk with Christ, so they walk away from the Church.

Maybe that's you this morning...Maybe you're on your last leg. You limped in here this morning thinking that this might be the last time you step into church.

Or maybe you've been following Jesus for years and yet that thought still creeps in, "will I make it? Will I hear Christ say well done good and faithful servant?"

If that's you this morning...I have one word for you – Persevere; Keep going; press on in following Jesus. Persist in chasing after Christ when times get ugly. Persevere...

Like your life depends on it, because it does. But most importantly of all, you can only persevere in the faith if you do it together, if you persevere together **through the Church**.

And Hebrews 10 is going to show us how.

Go ahead and look with me at v. 23 – **"Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near."** [PRAY]

Well, let me give you some context for where we find ourselves this morning...the book of Hebrews was written by an unknown author about 30-40 years after the Resurrection.

And there's one theme all throughout the book of Hebrews: Jesus is Greater. He's greater than angels; He's greater than priests; and He's greater than the old covenant.

And because of that, the author encourages the Church to persevere.

During this time believers were suffering for Christ. They were being placed in prison; their belongings were being stolen; they were blamed for the Great Fire of Rome; they were being killed in the Colosseum and yet...

The author challenges them to persevere in their faith. When all is lost...press on. When your trust is wavering...endure. When giving up looks appealing ...persevere.

And he's given us three ways to do it *[PAUSE]*

First,

- **Cling to the Gospel (v.23)**

Look back at v.23, ***"Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful."***

So, here in ch. 10 the author just got done addressing how Jesus's sacrifice on the cross provided a way for salvation to be given to those who believe by faith.

And now he's turning his attention to them – to the church – and he says ***"Let us..."*** It's a plural statement referring to the family of God – it doesn't say "you," it says "us."

And he says, ***"Let us hold fast..."*** *[PAUSE]* I love what Charles Spurgeon once said about this verse, ***"That exhortation, 'Let us hold fast,' might well be written on the cover of every Christian's Bible. We live in such a changeable age, that we need all to be exhorted to be rooted and grounded and confirmed and established, in the truth."*** Amen.

The dude lived in the 1800s and recognized the need for the church to hold fast.

Church, shouldn't we recognize it more today than we ever have before; to hold fast as the raging waves of culture try to sink the ship of Christ's bride?

We have to hold fast...But we have to know what we are holding fast to. Well, he says, ***"Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering..."***

We're being commanded to hold fast to the confession of our hope. And what is that sweet confession? **It's our belief in the gospel that guarantees our salvation** *[REPEAT]* and that guarantee gives us hope.

Which is why we must cling to it. Cling to the good news that God didn't leave you to die in your sin but instead, He sent His Son to save you.

Cling to the good news that Jesus Christ, the Son of God took your place on the cross so that you could live and enjoy Him forever.

Cling to the good news that when you repent and place your faith in Christ you are **justified** in Christ – you're given an alien righteousness; a righteousness that is not your own but His.

Cling to that. The good news that brought you salvation is what you must cling to. Because that's where the hope is.

Hope in the present when life is darkest. Hope in the suffering. Hope in those painful moments when it seems like all is lost.

The great hope in knowing that you belong to God right now AND the future hope in knowing that one day you will see Him face-to-face.

Is that your confession? *[PAUSE]*

Have you confessed your belief in the gospel? Have you confessed your belief in Christ? Not just that He exists but confessing that He is Lord of your life. I hope you have...and if not, I hope you will today.

And if you **have** confessed belief in the gospel are you clinging to it as your main source of life, each and every day?

Church, we need to cling to the gospel in order to persevere together.

Just like a vine clings to a chain-link fence, we need to cling to the gospel.

No matter how many storms arise or how heavy the winds are the vine clings to the fence...and no matter how much you suffer in this life, you need to cling to the gospel in order to persevere.

But also, we need to cling to the gospel in order:

- **To Suppress Falsehood**

In the Greek language, the word "hold fast" conveys this idea of maintaining and restraining. **Holding to one thing restrains something else.**

And in an ever-changing world full of sin and evil and falsehood the gospel stands alone, the gospel stands unchanged, the gospel stands as supreme truth.

If we are going to persevere together then we need to cling to the gospel in order to suppress falsehood.

Just like a Roman Soldier carried a sword for offense and a shield for defense, we need to cling to the gospel which guards us like a shield and suppresses falsehood with an attacking sword – the sword of truth.

But just like a soldier in battle...he doesn't fight alone. He can't...neither can you.

When the Enemy attacks you, when the flesh tempts you, and when the world distracts you...we need to band together as a collective unit, with our sword drawn and our shield raised in order to suppress falsehood.

The fight can't be won alone...and you can't persevere alone.

Persevere together by clinging to the gospel in order to suppress falsehood...

- **And Never Let Go**

It's easy to cling to the gospel and suppress falsehood when we're winning the battle, but how much more difficult is it when we're suffering to cling to the confession of our hope.

When a family member passes away; when your child is hurting; when your job is demanding; when friends are lacking; when nobody seems to understand what you're going through...you must hold fast; don't let go of the gospel.

One of my favorite books of all time is *Pilgrim's Progress* by John Bunyan.

The book is biblical allegory and Bunyan writes about a man named Christian who has left his home in the City of Destruction and journeys to find salvation in the Celestial City.

The journey is one of hardship, difficulty and suffering. Along the way, Christian meets several people. Men like Faithful and Hopeful who persevere with him on the journey.

But he also meets a man named Pliable. Christian persuades Pliable to join him on the journey to the Celestial City and Pliable agrees to join because it sounds like such a wonderful place.

The two of them leave the City of Destruction but soon into the journey, Pliable and Christian fall into a swamp full of doubt and despair and Pliable abandons Christian and walks back to the City of Destruction.

Pliable loved the idea of salvation but when going got tough...he got going.

Pliable didn't cling to the gospel. He was drawn to the reward but lacked the perseverance and he let go...he let go of the gospel.

Don't let it be you. Never let go of the sweet confession of your hope, but Church, hold fast even in the ugliest of times.

You will persevere until the end if you cling to the gospel. How do I know?

- **Because God is Faithful**

Check out v.23 – “Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, **for he who promised is faithful.**”

God is the assurance of our perseverance. We can rest assured that God will help us persevere because He is the one who promised us salvation.

The Great Promise Maker is a faithful promise keeper. He who promised salvation to you will give you the strength to cling to the gospel.

This God, who signed your adoption papers with the blood of His Son is faithful to bring you to the end.

He who brought you out of darkness by the light of the gospel will sustain you to the end by the light of the gospel...which is why you need to cling to it.

In this...we persevere together.

Second, in order to persevere together:

- **Challenge One Another (v.24).**

Look at v.24 – “**And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works...**”

Notice, the author uses another “let us” statement, which means he's referring to the church; you and me. And he goes on and says let us “consider” how to “stir up.”

“Consider” as in – think or contemplate. Which takes this verse to another level. Instead of saying, “Let us stir up one another to love and good works...” He says, “let us CONSIDER how to stir up one another to love and good works...”

Do you see it? He's challenging us to **think** of ways to stir up one another; to think of ways to challenge each other.

You can't challenge somebody to do something if you haven't put some thought to it first.

So, when was the last time you **thought** of a way to show love to someone else? When was the last time you **thought** about different ways to pursue good works? When was the last time you encouraged somebody else to do so?

We need to be considering these things.

I used to be the guy that would come here every week, would sit and listen to the sermon, walk out, and wouldn't be challenged by anyone. You know what happened?

I became stagnant in my walk with Christ – I needed to be challenged.

Because challenging one another leads to persevering.

And then the author takes it a step further... **“let us consider how to stir up”** That word “stir up” isn't as peaceful as it seems.

It literally means to provoke. And the word is only used twice in Scripture – once here in Hebrews 10 and then previously in Acts 15.

In that chapter, Paul and Barnabas are about to set off on their second missionary journey but Barnabas wants to take John Mark with, and Paul doesn't, and it says, “there arose a **sharp disagreement**, so they separated from each other.”

“Sharp disagreement” is the same Greek word as “stir up.” They were stirred up and separated.

So, this word conveys the idea of provoking or challenging someone to the point of discomfort.

Let us consider how to stir up one another, challenge one another, spur each other on in love and good works...**But in order to challenge one another we have to be with one another.**

In no way can we read v.24 and twist it to make it seem like someone can show love and good works while remaining isolated. It can't be done.

Lone Ranger Christianity is not Christianity. **True Christianity is faith that is bolstered by the Church – Faith in the context of a church.**

That's why the author uses the word “love” because it literally means showing affection from one Christian to another Christian...

And that love cannot be shown if we're separated.

So, what would it look like if we were a Church that challenged one another to love and good works?

What would it look like if we set aside our desire to go home and watch football, and instead we stayed behind and asked people what they're struggling with?

What would it look like if we stopped running out of church and started running toward a hurting brother or sister?

What would it look like if you got comfortable being uncomfortable in order to be sanctified?

I'll tell you what it would look like...it would look like a team, all persevering together to bring glory to the one man, Jesus Christ.

Because perseverance is a team sport – and the best teams are those that are challenged most often.

And the best teammates are those that do the challenging.

They show up week in and week out and challenge out of love. And it's time we do the same. Because what better place to be challenged than in the Church? Amen.

Clinging to the gospel and challenging one another are two means by which we persevere together, but there remains one more:

- **Fight for Fellowship (v.25)**

Look back at v.24 – **“And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, [verse 25] not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.”**

Like any good English teacher would point out: the author is carrying on his thought from v.24 into v.25.

And he commands the believers to meet together. Are they meeting for dinner? Are they meeting for coffee? Are they meeting for small group? No...

They're meeting for church. Because the word he uses for “meet” is the Greek word “episynagogue” which comes from the Hebrew word “synagogue”, which means “assembly or gathering place.”

And in the Old Testament the people of Israel were commanded to meet together at the synagogue to study and hear the reading of the Mosaic Law.

They gathered in the name of the Lord, at a specific location, studying and obeying God's word, having fellowship with one another, to glorify His name.

Sound familiar? The Church is the fulfillment of this structure.

And the author is commanding the church to be the church – to meet together, to open God's Word, to study it, to obey it, and to fellowship together.

But it seems as though, at this time, certain Christians we're no longer meeting together. He says that some were not meeting together, so much so that they had made it a habit of not meeting together.

And if Christians weren't meeting together then they certainly weren't persevering together, which leads them further away from Christ.

But don't we see this today...how many churches have closed their doors, or how many quote-unquote "churches" have walked away from sound biblical doctrine in order to tickle the ears of those who don't want to be challenged by the gospel.

Bible-believing, bible-preaching, Christ-exalting churches are the exception nowadays not the rule. Church, if we're going to persevere together we have to fight for fellowship. At all costs.

But what is true biblical fellowship?

Fellowship is belonging together in mutual partnership [REPEAT]. We have to fight for this...

But here's the thing:

- **It's Unnatural**

Absolutely it is. That's why v.25 says the believers were neglecting to meet together and they were making it a habit. Do you realize how long it takes to form a habit?? A long time!

If fellowship was natural and easy then everyone would do it, but how many times have you heard someone say, "Oh I don't need the church. I can worship Jesus from anywhere."

Sadly, I used to be that guy. I got really good at reading my bible when I felt like it, praying when I was struggling, and not being held accountable. Fellowship is unnatural.

Because in our sin nature, we don't want to step into the light. We don't want people to look at us differently for the sins we've committed.

We don't want people to know us for who we truly are – and who are we? Well, we're completely and utterly depraved sinners...

Oh but don't forget about Ephesians 2:4, **"But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ..."**

And if we're alive with Christ, then certainly, we should be alive with one another.

You can't do this alone. **Like Pastor Rob always says, "Your faith is personal, but it's never meant to be private."** You need fellowship and so do I, even though it's unnatural.

So, fight for it. Because:

- **It Brings Blessing**

Look back at v.25 – **"not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another,"**

We're being instructed to meet together in the church and when we're in the church what are we to do...we're to encourage one another.

There is no greater blessing apart from salvation than being encouraged by a brother or sister.

An encouraging word goes a long way, and it produces massive blessings in the life of any believer. Encouraging someone is a Christian's responsibility.

If we can't encourage one another...who will?

And if we refuse to fight for fellowship then discouragement sets in, and blessings will no longer continue – who would want to be a part of that??

Encouragement comes in many different forms. Sometimes it's as simple as telling someone how you've seen them grow and increase in the Lord. Other times it's thanking someone for how they've blessed you recently.

Fellowship and encouragement are not about what we receive, but what we can give. Blessing upon blessing is given through fellowship,

but blessings aren't given when you skip Church. Blessings aren't given when you only watch online. Blessings aren't given when you leave after the last song.

We have to fight for fellowship because it brings blessing. And those blessings help us persevere together.

Fight for Fellowship because it's unnatural, it brings blessing, and:

- **It's Vital**

Check out v.25 – “not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, **and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.**”

Fighting for fellowship is vital because the Day of Christ’s return is sooner today than it was yesterday.

Fellowship is vital because Christ has called us to it.

Fellowship is vital because in it we magnify our King.

Fellowship is vital because in it our Savior is glorified.

Fellowship is vital because in it we are the Church.

Fellowship is vital because in it we are His bride, pure as snow and unpolluted by sin because we’re persevering together. *[PAUSE]*

Fellowship is vital because it keeps you from leaving Christ and His Church.

The Day of His return is on the horizon, when our future hope of salvation is fulfilled in Jesus Christ. When all suffering, despair, doubt, and pain are no more because Christ is coming back for His Church.

Persevering together is worth it...

But, Church, we can only persevere together if we cling to the gospel, if we challenge one another, and if we fight for fellowship.

Let your faith in Christ be bolstered by the Church of Christ...and persevere together until He returns.

Let’s pray...