

## 20251123 Persevere Faithfully Together

Hebrews 10:19-25

In one of my previous sermons, I pointed out that Salvation is not a single event, but rather a journey of faith. Today, I would like to discuss how to develop perseverance in the journey and how to achieve it together as a community. My topic today is “Persevere Faithfully Together”. The passage is Hebrews 10:19-25.

*<sup>19</sup>Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, <sup>20</sup>by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, <sup>21</sup>and having a High Priest over the house of God, <sup>22</sup>let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. ◦*

*<sup>23</sup>Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. <sup>24</sup>And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, <sup>25</sup>not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.*

There is a movie called San Andreas. This fictional story is about a massive 9.1-magnitude earthquake triggered by the movement of the San Andreas Fault in California. In the film, Ray, a rescue-helicopter pilot, risks his life to save his wife and daughter, Blake.

When the earthquake struck, Blake, her boyfriend Ben, and his younger brother, Ollie, were in San Francisco. They were facing a life-or-death situation and had to decide where they should run to for safety. At that moment, large crowds were fleeing toward the coast, an open area with no high buildings. But Blake insisted they run to an unfinished steel-frame high-rise nearby because her rescuer father had taught her that after a major earthquake in a coastal city, a tsunami would follow, and that in such a situation, the safest place would be a high, solid steel structure. The people in the crowds mocked them, calling them crazy. Only the three of them ran toward the steel-frame tower while the crowds surged towards the coast. Blake also believed her father would come for her — and that he would look for her in the steel structure.

Blake believed the truth her father had taught her, and her belief saves them. But if you have not seen the first half of the movie, you may still question Blake’s confidence; it is only if you had watched the earlier part of the movie, which was about her rescuer father, that you would understand why her belief was so firm. In moments of crisis, what a person believes matters. And understanding the story behind the truth is just as important.

For Christians, especially when we are under pressure, what we believe, and who we place our faith in, is critical for our spiritual survival, for remember that the Bible says that 'it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgement.' Whether we believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is the only

Saviour, therefore, is crucial for everyone. And to understand the 'first half' of this truth, that is to know who God is and His plan of salvation as revealed in the Old Testament, is equally important.

In the mid-first century, the Gospel spread throughout Asia Minor. The Jewish believers faced persecution from both Judaism and the Roman authorities. They were rejected by their communities and denied fair opportunities in business and employment. Their lives fell into hardship and distress. It was so overwhelmingly dire that some believers began to waver. They considered abandoning the Christian faith to return to Judaism, which was then the mainstream among the Jews, and they wanted to go back to what some would call “normal” social life. They faced a life-or-death moment for their spiritual lives.

Today, in our own lives, we also have spiritual floods. Young Christians may be mocked or isolated by their peer groups. Christians in family conflicts hear Satan whispering, “You don’t have to suffer this. Leaving this troubling marriage is the way to go.” In the workplace, someone may tell you, “Everyone uses grey practices. Businesses must profit. Advancing in your career requires compromise.”

The purpose of the Book of Hebrews was to strengthen believers who were wavering. The author points out that God’s salvation plan, which was promised and foreshadowed in the Old Testament, is supremely fulfilled in Jesus Christ. The Old Testament narratives, including those of Moses, the Exodus, the Tabernacle, and the priestly and sacrificial system, all point to and are fulfilled by Jesus. Today’s passage, Hebrews 10:19-25, serves as a capstone that joins the doctrinal explanation in the first part of the book with the exhortations and warnings in the latter part.

When danger comes, the Gospel of Christ is the key to our survival, but we also need to realise that the Old Testament, which serves as the root of the Gospel, is also of great importance. Today’s passage, built upon the truth of salvation accomplished by Jesus, offers three important exhortations for the Christian’s survival: draw near to God, hold fast to our confession, and consider one another. We will spend the rest of our time together this morning considering these three important exhortations.

## **I. Exhortation #1: Draw Near to God.**

Drawing Near to God is about the relationship with the personal God. When spiritual floodwaters come, the only safe place for Christians is in the Lord.

God’s salvation is to deliver the sinners from sin and to bring them back to Himself, to restore the life and love relationship with them. But sinners cannot stand before a holy God. Facing God’s glorious Holiness, the sinner would perish instantly. So, God instituted the Tabernacle so that He could dwell among His people, the Israelites. And yet, a veil separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies, so that sinners would not get in and perish. Only the priests could enter the Holy Place, and only the High Priest could enter the Holy of Holies once a year, where the Ark of the Covenant and God’s presence were. Priests needed a solemn sequence of atonement rituals involving sacrifices and blood, so they could be sanctified holy.

Now, the first exhortation is that all, not just priests, but all Christians should “draw near to God.” For Jewish Christians who were familiar with the Old Testament, this was a stunning statement. We Christians are still sinners in our old flesh. Without holiness, no one will see the Lord. How can we draw near to God?

The passage tells us that we come by full assurance of faith in Christ. It summarises the implications of Jesus' death and resurrection, pointing out that God has provided two foundations and two conditions for us to draw near to Him.

*Foundation #1: Boldness through Christ's saving work.* Because of Christ's sacrifice, we now have confidence to enter God's presence through a “new and living way.” When Jesus' body was broken on the cross and His blood was shed, the temple veil was torn from top to bottom. The way into the Holy of Holies—the way to God Himself—was opened.

*Foundation #2. A great High Priest in the Heavenly Tabernacle.* Jesus was raised from the dead and ascended to heaven. He is the eternal High Priest in the Heavenly Tabernacle. Also, Hebrews 4 tells us that Jesus, the incarnate Son of God, was tempted in every way as we are, yet did not sin. Therefore, He can sympathise with our weakness. Every time a believer sins, this High Priest has already offered Himself as the ultimate sacrifice for atonement. He covers our sin and also intercedes for us at the Father's right hand.

Because of these two foundations, we can “draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith.” And God also makes two conditions ready that make us fit to approach Him.

*Conditions #1 Our hearts have been sprinkled clean by the blood of Jesus.*

*Condition #2. Our bodies have been washed.* Jesus Himself washed us.

Jesus fulfilled the foreshadowing sprinkling and washing rituals at the foreshadowing earthly Tabernacle, which made people holy before God. Now, Jesus, as the Heavenly High Priest, has washed and sprinkled us with His blood. He prepared the two conditions so we can come into God's presence.

With everything prepared by God, our task is simply to draw near to God with full confidence that comes from faith. The word “boldness (παρρησία)” needs some explanation. The original word denotes the unmistakable freedom to speak, act, and approach without fear. It means we may come into God's presence openly, freely, and with complete confidence. Every Christian has the Holy Spirit testifying together with our spirit that we are children of God. Therefore, we can come to Him with intimacy, calling Him, “Abba, Father.” We can come to God at any time in need.

A Taiwanese pastor, Pastor Chueng, once shared this story. He gets up very early and works intensely every day. To refresh his energy, he usually napped for 10 minutes at noon. He will turn off the lights in his office. When the light was off, the church staff didn't get in there.. They did not want to disturb him. But one day, his five-year-old daughter happened to be at the church. She needed to talk to her father. She didn't care that he was resting. She simply ran straight into his office—and spoke

to him. I'm not saying the little girl did the right thing to interrupt his father's rest; that's not the point. The point is this: she had no fear; she felt unmistakable freedom to get in, because he is her father. That is exactly what "having boldness to enter" means. What Christians believe is not an abstract idea, not a set of moral principles, but the personal living God. Salvation is not merely escaping judgment; it is coming into God's presence—physically, relationally, and spiritually. Let's draw near to God with boldness in faith.

We come to God's presence to worship Him, to thank Him, to glorify Him. In the context of persecution, the Book of Hebrews emphasises that we come to God's presence to get help. "Let us then approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need." (Hebrews 4:16)

And there is something more: the verb "draw near" is in the first-person plural. It means we draw near to God together. This first exhortation is not only personal—it is communal. It calls us to seek God as a church, as a fellowship, as a spiritual family.

For believers wavering under pressure, the passage gives us a clear exhortation: draw near to God together in Jesus.

## **II. Exhortation #2: Hold fast the confession of our hope.**

Holding fast to the confession of hope can strengthen our faith when things seem to be hopeless.

Scripture does not say to hold fast to "faith," but to hold fast to our "confession"—the confession of our hope. Confession is a verbal and lived declaration of faith, an allegiance to Jesus Christ, and a continuing lifestyle that displays that allegiance before a watching world.

Hope is one of the core pillars of the Gospel faith. Our faith includes the past—God's revelation in the Old Testament and also the salvation Christ already accomplished; our faith includes the present—our spiritual experience of walking with God in Jesus; and it also includes the future—the hope of Christ's second coming, when God will judge the living and the dead, remove all evil. We will be raised with new bodies and be with God face to face. That is the consummation of God's Salvation.

Coming to God does not mean that our difficulties will be solved immediately. To persevere in the journey of salvation, our faith must include hope. We believe that God is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. Hebrews 11 is often called the "Hall of Faith." Every one of the heroes of faith listed there held fast and did not give up, even though they did not see the final fulfilment of God's promise in their lifetime. They held fast to their confession of hope.

It is also critically important that the hope of our faith be confessed with our mouth. Again, the confession in Hebrews is a communal imperative. We confess and hold fast together the faith and hope in Jesus. Each time we make such a confession, we allow ourselves to focus our minds on the Gospel and reaffirm our faith.

The Bible calls us, as a community of faith, to hold fast together to the hope we confess and to persevere to the end. This is the second exhortation to believers in the face of trials.

### **III. Exhortation #3: Consider one another."**

It is about walking together as a community through difficulties. Life in the community of believers keeps us from being isolated and falling behind.

The Bible says, "Let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching."

The word "consider" translates the Greek "κατανοέω", which means "deliberate, penetrating attentiveness." It describes more than casual observation. It speaks of weighing, discerning, or viewing with the intention of understanding and responding. The word "Stir-up" (παροξυσμός) means a surge of emotion that moves people to action. The literal translation of verse 24 is: "Let us understand one another deeply and respond to one another, so that a strong passion for love and good works may be stirred up." This is the essence of the Christian fellowship. Salvation has made the church the body of Christ, and believers are different members of this unified body. When we face the invisible spiritual tsunami, deep edifying fellowship is an imperative. It is our way of living out the gospel.

Verse 25 further explains how we "consider one another." First, the text warns us "not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together". Our old nature tempts us toward a self-centred life, unwilling to pay the cost of participating in fellowship, thinking that believing privately is enough. When issues or conflicts arise in the church, we are especially tempted to withdraw from those who differ from us and to search for a "better" church.

In 2017, the Pew Research Centre conducted a survey of churches in the United States. Among those who did not participate in church activities, 37% said they "worship God in their own way," and 21% said "it was because they had not found a church they liked".

They failed to understand the corporate nature of the Gospel faith. They did not understand that going to church is not about making ourselves feel good, but about worshipping God together as the body of Christ and caring for other believers, even if it costs us. In times of testing, a so-called lone-ranger Christian cannot hold fast to the faith to survive to the end.

Verse 25 continues the manner of considering one another. The text says, "but exhorting one another." The word "exhorting" (παρακαλέω) conveys both offering positive comfort, support and warning and correction. Christians encourage one another, correct one another, and build one another up. Only in this way can we persevere in faith amid difficulties and avoid drifting away.

There was a sister China. Her husband had an affair and had already moved out to live with someone else. She was so desperate. Another sister from our church shared the Gospel with her and led her to faith. She also invited her to my small group. We come to God together, crying out for help.

In the following weeks, the situation remained difficult. She even thought about the divorce. The small group members encouraged her to come to God and to hold fast to the hope in Jesus. The group prayed for her together with greater earnestness. Her faith was strengthened, and she held fast to the hope in Jesus.

A few weeks later, things start to change. She told the group that she called her husband. The husband said that he felt very bad for having the affair. He continued to say, "I already did bad things to you. If I leave the other woman, I am doing another bad thing to her. I cannot make that hard decision".

Seeing the light at the end of the tunnel, she and the small group members were all encouraged. We prayed even more earnestly. We prayed that the Lord would get the other woman herself to leave the sister's husband. Two weeks later, the other woman left the sister's husband.

At our church, there are many similar testimonies. Brother Frank gave his testimony a few weeks ago. He prayed when suffering from a very painful kidney stone. Before he went for the second CT check, the Lord told him that His healing was on him. But he was not sure and hesitated a bit. CT showed that the stone was still there. The pain remained the same. In the Friday group, we all prayed for him. His faith was stirred up. The next day, the stone and pain were miraculously gone. Our faith is strengthened in the fellowship, and we experience God's grace together.

This is the meaning of "understanding one another deeply, responding to one another's needs, so that a strong passion for love and good works is stirred up" and "exhorting one another".

## Summary

To recap, Hebrews 10:19-25 gives us three communal exhortations: to draw near to God together, to hold fast our confession together, and to consider one another together.

When an earthquake or tsunami strikes, survival does not come from blindly following the crowd, but from believing the truth and acting accordingly. Facing spiritual floodwaters, Christians' survival and perseverance in faith also come from having conviction in the truth of Jesus Christ. We hold fast to the faith that God the Son, Jesus, took human flesh, sacrificed Himself for us and fulfilled all the types and promises of God's Salvation revealed in the Old Testament. Christ has brought the ultimate salvation. He forgives our sins and restores our relationship with God.

To persevere in the Gospel truth, the Bible gives us three exhortations: 1) Draw near to God together; 2) Hold fast to our confession together; and 3) Consider one another together.

May God preserve every one of us so that we will persevere to the end, to that Day of Jesus' second coming.