

1/3/21 - Hebrews 10:22-25 - "Gathering Together"

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[0 : 0 0] We're actually in kind of a transition week. We finished our Advent series last week after Christmas, and we're going to be moving into a new epistle next week. But as we transition, I wanted to look today at these three verses as an encouragement and an exhortation as we begin 2021. And so we picked these verses for a specific reason, but before we get to that, I want to ask a question. Does it often cross your mind? Why do we gather together for church every Sunday, right?

For some of us, myself, this is just something I've done since I was born, right? So I've been in church most Sundays of my life, and that's a blessing for others of us. It's something we've learned as we were saved. But I think we could all come up with good reasons for why we come together on Sundays for service. But I want to look at this text, which gives us a biblical answer for why we gather together, right? And so I want to answer three questions as we go through this.

Why do we meet together on Sunday and also regularly? What is the purpose of church, as we call it, or meeting together in the life of the believer? And why is church in the life of the New Testament drastically different from the Old Testament? And I think there are other scriptures that we could use to offer insight into this. First Corinthians comes to mind, but today I want to look at Hebrews 10 and the answer that the author of Hebrews gives. So since we're jumping kind of into the middle kind of end of the book of Hebrews, I want to give a little bit of context on what the author has covered getting up to this point, and then pray, and then we'll look at our three specific verses for today. So the book of Hebrews was thought to have been written before 70 AD, before the temple in Jerusalem was destroyed, and it was written in a time of persecution, as is clear from the text.

And the believers at the time were navigating kind of a transition between the old way of the temple of sacrifice and offering to the new way, the New Testament church. And some of them, as this was in the 60s AD, had grown up under the old way, or maybe they were priests of the temple in the old way, and others of them were converted into Christianity and came directly into the new way. But for many of them, they were accustomed to the temple offering, the sacrifice, right? And this was a regular thing.

And so for them, under the Old Testament law, regular sacrifice and offering was something that took place very regularly, right? I think I said regular twice, but ritual purification was a normal part of their life. And so they were accustomed to, if you think about it, the smell of burnt offerings, right? They were accustomed to seeing animals slain for the purpose of covering their sin and also for offering worship to God. One verse that kind of always stands out to me is in Kings when it talks about them making an offering for the new temple and slain 20,000 oxen at one time, right? Imagine the process, but this was a normal part of their life, and it's not a part of our life. And so part of Hebrews is explaining why this transition took place. But that's not what I want to spend too much time on, but I at least want to put that in your mind, right? So how do we get from the Old Covenant or Old

[3 : 52] Testament to the New Testament? Well, part of the Old Covenant was ritual sacrifice that took place continually and specifically once per year. But there was a problem with this, right? The continual sacrifice could never make perfect those who were coming before the Lord. And so it served as a reminder of sin, but it required continual occurrence. But Jesus, as he's called in Hebrews, the great high priest of a new and more excellent covenant entered once for all into the holy place, right?

By means of his own blood and secured eternal redemption, or as Hebrews puts it, he was a final sacrifice once for all. And so by this sacrifice, he perfected for all time those who are being sanctified, those who have professed faith in him. And so although the blood of animals offered purification for the flesh, the blood of Christ, offers purification of our hearts, of our evil consciousness, and of our bodies from death to life to serve the living God, right? And as Hebrews says, where there is forgiveness of sins or lawless deeds, there's no longer any offering for sin, right?

There's no longer need for offering for sin. And so as we get into our verses for today, as we move into chapter 10, if you have your Bible open and you look up at verse 19, you'll see that the passage begins with therefore. And usually when we see therefore, we know it's a transitional statement that is referencing back to the previous argument. But rather than going back and reading the previous nine chapters, the author offers us two qualifying statements that say since. And so he kind of summarizes what's been said so far. Since he made a new and living or better way and opened the veil, I'm paraphrasing, or the curtain for us into the Holy of Holies, we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, right? And likewise, he says, we have a great high priest over the household of God. And he's referring to Jesus, the great high priest, and the household of God is the church or the body of believers, right? And based on these two statements, he then offers three imperatives, as I'm going to call them today. And he says, let us, in the first one, draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, because he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir one another up to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together as the habit of some, but encouraging one another.

And so we can see that in his discussion here, he focuses in on this concept of meeting or gathering together for the purpose of encouraging one another. And so that's what I want to focus on. I want to dig into these three imperatives and kind of trace them through scripture. And I think they should be as transformative for us today as they were for the original audience. I think the author of Hebrews, who's lost to history, crafts a beautiful narrative on the excellence of Christ and the excellence of the new covenant. And his purpose in doing so not only was to magnify Christ, but was to encourage those who were facing persecution and also to encourage us today who are reading this. But I think the reality of such confidence to enter the holy place, right, for each believer that did away with the old, it brings about two concerns in the author's mind, right? One concern was that some, perhaps the priesthood, would be inclined to, in face of persecution, return to the old way, to ritual purification and sacrifice, or legalism as we might describe it. And others would tend the opposite way, right? They would tend to neglect meeting together. They would tend to stagnate in their faith and to fade away. And so these were the two extremes that we kind of see in these three verses that the author was trying to protect the church from and encourage them away from. And so I think we often, as the church, not necessarily our specific church, but the church in whole, find ourselves on a pendulum that swings between these two extremes, right? And we see course corrections that take place over time, sometimes decades, but the church may swing one season towards legalism and one season towards liberalism. But through these verses, we find the author's solution to course correct us and to set us on the path to grow towards the image of Christ or sanctification, right? Progressing towards glory and persevering without wavering because

God is faithful, right? And so that's what I want to focus on. I want to set in your minds. Why do we meet together? And how do these verses inform our meeting together? So let's pray before we jump into the first point. Father, thank you for a moment to dig into your word, to be encouraged and to stir one another up, Lord, to love and to good works. I pray that you will open our eyes and our hearts to receive from your word, to grow in our knowledge of you and our love of you. Lord, that you would allow us to hear your word, to understand, Lord, and to grow in faith. We pray this in your holy name. Amen.

[9 : 50] Right, so I'm going to break this down into the three verses and I'm going to break each of the three verses into three points. So I like three, so I'm going to use three, three times. I think that's a good number.

But the first verse, verse 22 of Hebrews 10 says, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

And so in my notes, I said that this verse is literally saturated with biblical theology and it's not, it's figuratively right. But I think there's a lot of biblical theology we can find in this one verse. And so I don't want to spend too much time, but I want to break it down into three aspects. First, we're called to draw near to God. Second, we're to have a true heart and full assurance of faith. And third, we're to have our hearts and bodies purified, right? So at the first part of the verse, we are called to draw near to God. And I think we can skip over that concept, draw near to God.

But I think the best word to describe, draw near to God is awesome, right? That word is used a lot in our culture, but it means extremely impressive or daunting, inspiring great admiration, apprehension, or fear, right? And truly in the minds of the audience who were reading this, that is what they thought of when they read draw near to God. To be in God's presence was awesome, right?

One verse that always comes to my mind when I think of draw near is Jeremiah 30, 21. And it says, part of it says, who would dare of himself to approach me or draw near to me, right? That was the Lord's word. And so under the old covenant, nearness to God was restricted. Not that people couldn't pray or seek God, but they couldn't draw near to his presence except through the tabernacle, the temple, through purification and through offering, right? And this was restricted to the priesthood and specifically to the high priest who was only allowed into the Holy of Holies once per year, right? And he did so at risk of death if he was not pure as he was called to.

[12 : 21] But these continual sacrifices in order to draw near to God's presence were insufficient, right? They required repetition and they also did not make perfect those who would draw near. But under the new covenant, everything changed, right? When Christ arrived and offered his single sacrifice for all sin, a final sacrifice, we were enabled to draw near to God through a better hope, right? Through Jesus, the guarantor of a more excellent covenant, as Hebrews puts it. And so because of this, God prompts us to draw near to him, right? He prompts us within our conscience, within our heart to draw near to him. And I think some refuse to draw near to God. But all people will ultimately draw near to God, right? The prophets make this clear. Some will draw near to him to eternal judgment, but those who put their hope and their faith in Christ will draw near to him to eternal life, right? And also in addition to this eternal hope, we find in scripture that God draws near to us presently when we draw near to him.

And this should be great encouragement. This was meant to be a great encouragement to the original audience. The epistle of James, I think, says it nicely in 4.8. Draw near to God and he will draw near to you.

Jeremiah 30.21 is actually another encouraging verse on this, right? Even though we read it earlier, that was meant to inspire awe. If we read the full verse, it says, I will make him draw near and he shall approach me. For who would dare of himself to approach me, declares the Lord.

And you shall be my people and I will be your God. Pretty awesome, right? That's what we have under the new covenant. And so Jesus Christ's sacrifice has given all believers access to nearness with God and also God nearness to them, as we'll see, right? And the author of Hebrews actually states this concept again earlier on in verse 4.16 when he says, let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need, right? This is meant to be a great encouragement. As we move into the second part of the verse, I want to look at what it means to draw near in full assurance of faith, right? Because not only are we called to draw near, but we're called to draw near with this full assurance of faith. Rather than returning to the old way, the author wants us to see that this new way is more excellent. Faith in Christ has perfected for all times those who are called to draw near, right? And so there's no going back. There is no longer any offering for sin only to come to Jesus. And so what does it mean to draw near in full assurance of faith, right? And I think we can probably all think of a few verses that might clear this up, but Hebrews 1 or 11.1, which comes just a few lines down in your Bible, says, faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. And that helps us define faith, but not necessarily what it means to have full assurance of faith. But then in 11.6, Hebrews says, indeed, without faith, it is impossible to please him that is God, for whoever would draw near to God must believe, or if it goes on, believe that he exists.

And so Hebrews 11 doesn't specifically answer this question, but instead it offers a cloud of witnesses, as it says, right? It offers us a summary of the entire Old Testament of those who in faith received the promise, right? And it calls us to look to the founder and perfecter of our faith, that is Jesus.

[16 : 33] And then if we jump to Romans 10.17, we see a little more insight. Faith comes from hearing and hearing through the word of Christ, right? And so this faith that we're called to comes from hearing the word of Christ. And so we must hear the word of Christ to have faith, and we must continue and cling to the word of Christ to grow in faith. And it is by this faith, faith, this assurance of faith, that we draw near to God. And it is in this that we find that Jesus is the founder and the perfecter of our faith, right?

Pretty awesome. As we move to the end of verse 22, we see a call to have our hearts and bodies purified, right? Hearts cleansed from an evil conscience and our bodies purified if we're to draw near to God.

And so under the Old Testament, this purification implied, again, sacrifice. But as the prophet Ezekiel prophesied in chapter 36, it would be God himself who washed us and regenerated us with a new heart and a new flesh, right? A new heart of flesh instead of stone.

And we actually studied this concept in John chapter 3 a few months ago when we looked at the answer Jesus gave to Nicodemus on washing and regeneration. And so before we move on, I want to kind of take a moment to give us a measure of caution that the writer not only wants us to see the value of Christ of the better covenant, but he also doesn't want us to exceed our new liberties, right? He doesn't want us to go on sinning that grace may abound, as Paul puts it. Rather, we're called to continue in sanctification, continue in becoming like Christ. Back in Hebrews 10, 14, if you look at it, it says, for a single offering has been or has perfected for all times those who are being sanctified. And so notice it says being sanctified, right? And I think this is critical. It implies that the work that was done in Christ once for all time is being brought about in the believer who are growing in godliness, progressing towards glory, and persevering without wavering, right? So we have assurance of that promise, but we are called to grow in godliness. As Paul put it in 2 Corinthians 7, since we have these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God, right? So how did this apply to the original audience? We've kind of touched on that, but some of them feared or doubted the sufficiency of Christ to cleanse them once for all, and so they were tempted back to the old covenant. They were tempted to seek cleansing by legalism, as we might call it, while others were tempted to rest in their purification, believing that they were already made perfect and not growing in sanctification, right? And so I think they needed a reminder that that is not what they were called to. The solution that the author offers is to grow in full assurance of faith, having our hearts clean so that we can draw near to God, and to remind us that this is only possible through Christ who works it in us, right? And I don't think we should fall into the same temptation of either seeking righteousness through works, but drawing near to God through faith in Christ, right?

So that's what I think the author is getting at with this first verse. But I want to move into the second verse, verse 23, which we're going to look at our second point, hold fast to the confession of our hope, right? The verse specifically says, let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful, right?

[21 : 01] And I think that is faithful is key there. But again, I'm going to break this into three parts. And so the first part is we are called to hold fast the confession of our hope, and specifically this confession of our hope means our confession of faith in Christ. We're to hold to that confession. And in so doing, we are to hope without wavering is going to be the second part I want to look at.

And then third, we hope without wavering because we know that he who promised is faithful. And that's what I want to look at. So first, first part of verse 23, we must hold fast to the hope we have in him since we have made a confession of faith in Christ, right? Indeed, this is one of the marks of a true follower of Christ. Jesus in his parable in Luke 8, 15 says, as for those in the good soil, they are those who hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart and bear fruit with patience, right? We hold fast to him.

We're called to cling to the words of the gospel, right? The words we receive, as Paul said to the Corinthians, he exhorted them to hold fast the word of the gospel that he preached, unless they believe in vain, right? And to the Philippians, he said, hold fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ, I may be proud that I did not run or labor in vain, right?

Cling to his words. We must hold fast to what is good. Paul said to the Romans and the Thessalonians, hold fast to what is good, rejoice always, give thanks, and pray without ceasing, right?

And that's kind of a paraphrase of two different verses, but they all say to hold fast to what is good and reject what is evil, right? And as we move into the second part of the verse, really it's a continuation of the first part, we are to hope without wavering, right?

[23 : 03] That means without faltering or weakening. Our faith is not to falter or to weaken. We have come to share in Christ if we hold our original confidence firm to the end, as Hebrews 3.14 says.

Timothy was charged by Paul to keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus, right? He held fast without wavering.

And since endurance in the face of persecution and endurance in general comes only through God's grace, as he grows us to face greater trials, I think we can look to the entire epistle of 1 Peter to see that we are called to cling to him in the face of suffering, right?

And it is his promise to grow us in endurance through these trials and suffering. And note also, we're called to hold fast to the Lord because it is only by faith in him that we are empowered to do so without wavering, right?

It seems a little bit circular in reasoning, but we hold fast to him because he empowers us to hold fast to him, right? Three times in the book of Deuteronomy, and I can give you the verse references later if you want, the Lord calls his people to hold fast to him and obey his voice because he is our source of life.

[24 : 34] Holding fast to him is where we find life. And then through the prophet Hosea, God said, it is by his help that we hold fast to love and justice and wait continually for him, right?

As we move into the final part of verse 23, we're reminded that God is indeed faithful. And I think this is meant to be a great encouragement to those who are in Christ, right? I think the entire Bible testifies of God's faithfulness.

If you want to see that God is faithful, you've got to read his word, right? Specifically in Exodus 34, 6, which we looked at just a few weeks ago, God says of himself that he is abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.

He testifies of himself that he's faithful. And the author of Hebrews provides us a great cloud of witnesses showing that God is faithful to his promises, right? We can be assured then in Christ's completed work of salvation.

Hebrews in a few places and also Matthew says that Christ has offered for all time a single sacrifice. And with his work completed, he sat down at the right hand of glory, right?

[25 : 43] His work is completed. First Corinthians 1, 9 reminds us that God is faithful by whom we were called into the fellowship of the Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, right?

We can trust. And he also guaranteed this new covenant with an oath, as Hebrews 6, 17 through 19 talks about.

It is impossible for God to lie, right? Of that we're sure. And so we have a strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope that is set before us. We have a sure and steadfast anchor for our souls.

And finally, we find another encouragement that he who began this work in us is faithful to bring it to completion in the day of our Lord, right?

Hebrews 3, 6 says, Christ is faithful over God's house and we are his house. If indeed we hold fast our confidence and are boasting in our hope, right? We boast in him.

[26 : 41] And Paul encouraged the Thessalonians with a prayer. I love this benediction. May the God of peace himself sanctify you completely and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

He who calls you is faithful. He will surely do it. Amen. So for the original audience, I think the issue was that some were wavering, right?

They were not holding fast to their confession of hope. They were persecuted, right? There was great persecution, and so they were wavering. But they were reminded, since we have a great high priest who's passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast to our confession, right?

The solution that the author offered was to cling to Christ, to cling to his words of promise with full assurance in him who promised. And I think this truth is equally important for us today.

We must never cease to remember and be reminded of the words of Christ, right? We study the scriptures. We gather together.

[27 : 50] We worship and take communion for the purpose of that, of remembering, of being reminded, of being encouraged, of living in his word, right? So as we move into the final two verses, we're going to slow down a little bit and dig into this concept of meeting together and stirring one another up.

If we read verses 24 through 25 in Hebrews 10, it says, Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good work, not neglecting to meet as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another in all the more as you see the day drawing near.

Right? And so this is one imperative, but it's a little bit longer than the previous two. And so I'm still going to break it into three parts because I like consistency. See, so the first part, we are to stir up one another to love and good works, right?

We're going to look at what does it mean and look like to stir one another up. We must not neglect meeting together, right? Indeed, that's part of the question we asked at the beginning. We must strive to encourage one another, right?

That's what we've been called to. And so the first part I want to look at is this idea of stirring one another up to good works, right? To stir one another up requires unity.

[29 : 10] It requires togetherness, right? How are we to stir one another up if we don't spend time together doing so? The Corinthian church in 2 Corinthians was commended by Paul for their readiness and their zeal, right?

Their passion that stirred one another up to love and good works. And I think Peter sums this up better than I could in 2 Peter 1, and I'm condensing 15 verses here.

But God has empowered us to all things that pertain to life and godliness through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, right? We should make every effort to supplement our faith with virtue.

Virtue with knowledge, knowledge with self-control, self-control with steadfastness, steadfastness with godliness, godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. We need always be reminded of these qualities to stir one another up by way of reminder, right?

These qualities are indeed the good works to which we've been called, right? When it says good works. We should be outdoing one another in love, as Paul put it in Romans 12, 10, right?

[30 : 26] We need not fall back into legalism and self-righteousness, but we should be abounding in good works, not forsaking them. In Matthew 15, 16, Jesus said, In the same way, let your light shine before others so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

And I wanted to give a list of these good works, but I don't have two hours to preach today, so we can look at that another day, right? But in 2 Corinthians 9, 8, we're encouraged to walk in good works, empowered by God who provides through grace.

It is God who empowers us to these good works. In 1 Timothy 6, and I think this one hits to us who live in America, the rich in the present age are charged to be rich in good works and ready to share, right?

We're called to that. As God's workmanship, as we were created in Christ for these good works, our heart should be comforted and established in good works, right?

In fact, we've been cleansed for this very purpose. We're vessels for honorable use. We've been set apart as holy and ready for every good work, right?

[31 : 40] Several verses speak about being trained and equipped by God's word, ready for good works and to bring him glory. Timothy is reminded, and I think this one is particularly important, that all scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness.

Why? So that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. The writer closes out the book with a prayer that the God of peace would equip us with everything good so we may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight through Jesus Christ.

And finally, our good works are a testimony or an overflow of our faith, right? James makes this clear in 2.18 that we cannot show our faith apart from our works, but it is through our works that we demonstrate our faith, right?

And our good conduct reveals our good works in the meekness of wisdom. So as we move into the second part of the verse, the author now transitions to not neglect meeting together as is the habit of some, right?

And so stirring one another up to love and good works requires not only intentional time with one another, but I would say a life lived in togetherness or unity, right?

[33 : 10] Hebrews 10.25, this verse is the sharpest verse on the entire New Testament about meeting together, right? It calls us to it. Revisiting the first imperative, we're called to draw near to God, right?

And my logic here might be a little bit vague, but I'll try to clear it up. We're called to draw near to God because we are his temple and his spirit dwells in us, right?

Paul emphasizes that God's spirit dwells in his people. We are his temple and we are holy as his temple is holy. To the Ephesians, he says, Christ is the cornerstone on which the temple is built and that we are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the spirit, right?

And I think we often read these verses as individuals, right? Looking at ourselves as the priesthood of believers, but I think we can also look at these as the collective church meeting together of God, right?

And so I don't think these verses supersede the gathering of the church. I think the household of God is a gathering of the body of Christ in unity. As Paul wrote to Timothy, I'm writing so that you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth, right?

[34 : 35] And so building on this foundation, I want to posit four roles that the church serves in the life of the believer, right? The church is built on the cornerstone of Christ.

He is the foundation and he supports the truth, right? But in gathering together, we actually are able to carry out these verses to stir one another up and to encourage one another.

And I'm going to make clear that when I say gather together, I'm not shaming you for not being in church and I'm not calling you to spend more time in church, right? When we're called to gather together, it exceeds church, right?

It's not literally speaking on a building. It's literally spending time with one another. And so I want to provide four things that gathering together provides in the life of a believer, right?

And so the first is instruction and discipleship, right? And so hearing God's word preached is, of course, a form of instruction.

[35 : 42] But I don't think this is meant to be the only form of instruction that we have in our life. I don't think that it refers specifically to hearing preaching on Sunday.

I think Sunday is meant to be a time of corporate gathering to worship together. It's meant to be a time to learn together, to fellowship together, and to encourage one another. But instruction and discipleship are to be ingrained into every aspect of our lives, into everything that we do, right?

The Great Commission in Matthew 28, 18 gives us our mission to make disciples and teach them to observe all that Christ has commanded. And this doesn't just mean mission strips, right?

This means our very lives are to train up others, right? A few examples where instruction and discipleship can take place would be as individuals, right?

When we study God's word, when we pray and we meditate. Another good place is in our families, when we train up our children, when we study the word with our spouses or with our extended families, right?

[36 : 45] Also, as brothers and sisters in Christ, when we take time to read God's word together, right? One-to-one Bible reading or small Bible studies, small groups, right? There's a variety of ways that we can grow together and also to encourage one another, right?

I think other examples could be our men's breakfast, our women's brunch, right? It could be going out into the community and serving, training up through our physical actions, right?

It should be something that overflows out of our lives as we go out of our way to make disciples in every aspect of our lives. And I think each of us as followers of Christ should not only be learning, but we should be teaching, right?

As a teacher, kind of going to go on a side note here, I can promise you, at least in the secular world, that there is no better way to learn something than to teach something, right?

You will never know it as well as when you teach it to someone else. And so I would encourage you, the same is true of God's word. The more time you spend encouraging others, teaching others, the more you will flourish in knowing God's word, right?

[37 : 55] The second role of gathering together in the life of the believer is sanctification and growth. Each of us is to always be growing in sanctification, right?

And this is a lifetime pursuit of God and godliness. None of us are perfect, right? None of us have hit the mark of the high calling, right? But we're to be growing.

We're being sanctified, right? And so I want to remind you that this is not meant to be done alone, right? It can be done alone. And I only say that because there are those who live in circumstances where there is no one for them to meet together with.

And so that's tragic, but I'm not telling you that it can't be done alone, but that it was meant, it was God's intent for us to do this together, right? Through encouraging one another, uniting in sanctification.

And if we can be real with each other and confess our sins, as 1 John 1 and James calls us to, be cleansed from unrighteousness, and we can grow together in sanctification, and we can do as this verse calls us to.

[39 : 01] We can stir one another up to love and to good works. And so the third role of meeting together is accountability and discipline, right? And none of us like this one, but apart from gathering together, there's no structure for accountability.

There's no structure for discipline. And so each person is then left free to go where they're accepted, to find somewhere that meets their preferences, rather than having fellow believers correct them and encourage them, right?

This is not the way that we're meant to do things. As Christians, we're called to comfort or rather confront sinful behavior. Yeah, that'd be bad.

And to reprove, rebuke, and exhort with patience and teaching, right? That's from 2 Timothy 4. I think as individuals brought up in a society that celebrates autonomy, this is difficult, right?

As individuals, we want to do things our ways, and we don't want anyone telling us that we're doing it wrong or that there's another way that it's meant to be done. But I think Matthew 18, 15 through 17 lies out the path for correction, right?

[40 : 13] It's something that's meant to take place in our lives. We are to be corrected, and we should even encourage being corrected of ourselves, right? I'm speaking of myself, right? I don't want to go on in my sinning.

I want, as the psalmist prays in Psalm 19, my secret sins to be revealed so that I can repent of them and not grow into greater sin. And so that's something that takes place through fellowship, right?

Through togetherness. And the fourth role is encouragement, right? Encouragement. And so this is what I want to spend the last bit of my sermon talking on. And so the last part of my last point is going to be speaking on encouragement.

As we look at the end of verse 25 in Hebrews 10, we're called to encourage one another, and all the more as the day draws near, right? As we approach the end of this age, we're called to encourage one another.

And I think for the original audience, this was very important, right? They were facing great persecution, and so they were in great need of encouragement. The passage says that they willingly gave up their property to plundering because they had better possession and an abiding hope, right?

[41 : 26] The writer encouraged them, though, not to throw away their confidence because it has a great reward. And instead, they must endure hardship while obeying the will of God to persevere and finish the race, right?

To receive what was promised. And I think this is the very thing to which we have a full assurance of faith, right? God guaranteed it with an oath so that they and we might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope that is set before us, right?

That's what Hebrews 12, 1 says. Paul explains in 1 Thessalonians 5, we are to encourage and build one another up, right? We're called to this. We are to exhort, right?

These are all synonyms for encourage used in the Bible. Exhort, appeal, implore, entreat, urge, comfort, and beg, right? The same word, which I don't know if I can pronounce, perikaleo, is translated to these things.

And so encouraging one another means, as the verse says, stirring one another up to love and good work. It means reminding one another of the gospel, right? Reminding one another to cling to God's word and that he is faithful.

[42 : 42] Romans 15, and I can't read the entirety of it, but I would encourage you to, right? It makes clear that we're to bear with the failings of the weak and to build them up, that the scripture was written for our encouragement and also for their encouragement.

And in it, in the scripture, we have hope, right? And so God grants us through his word to live in harmony with one another so that we can bring glory to one another, or glory to God, right?

And I think this is what it means to encourage one another. And hopefully you can see the logic here, right? It would be impossible to stir one another up if we neglected meeting together, right?

So as we conclude the sermon, I want to look first at what this meant to the original audience, and then to look back at these verses one last time.

For the original audience, I think there was a growing neglect for gathering. They were facing great persecution, right? From both sides, from Judaizers and from the Romans who were seeking to destroy them.

[43 : 47] And so they were tempted to drift away from what they'd heard, as Hebrews 2, 1 puts it, right? But then in Hebrews 3, 13, we realize that this book was meant as an encouragement, an exhortation to them, to exhort one another every day, as long as it is called today, that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

And so the solution, right, to the discouragement, the solution to neglect, the solution to stagnation of their faith was to stir one another up to love, to good works.

And in this, obviously, it required gathering together, right? And I think this is equally important today. If we neglect gathering together, then we'll drift away from what we've heard.

And more than that, we don't have the excuse of persecution, right? The danger of persecution, at least not in our lives today. And yes, there is a pandemic, so that does make it a little bit more difficult.

But we have Zoom, right? We have text messaging. We have phones. So I think we have little excuse to neglect meeting together, right? But as we finish and close, I want to just look at these nine points that I made, right?

[45 : 02] Three points and three subpoints each in reverse order, right? We're to encourage one another. We're to do this by meeting together. And in meeting together, we're to stir one another up to love and good works.

We're to trust in the one who's faithful without wavering and to hold fast our confession of hope. We're to pursue and grow in godliness. That is sanctification, right?

We're to have full assurance of faith. And in that, we're to draw near to God. And I know when I write it this way, it looks like I'm building everything on top of encouraging one another and meeting together.

And I don't want to overstate the importance of meeting together, right? Salvation is by faith alone in Christ alone. But this growth that we're called to is founded on the cornerstone of the church, on meeting together, right?

And so I don't want us to neglect. I don't want us to grow stagnant, right? I want us instead to grow in encouraging one another. And finally, in answering the first question based on what we've talked about today, I want to remind you that meeting together, as we're called to, is not restricted to church gathering on Sunday, right?

[46 : 16] Meeting together in a variety of ways throughout the week, I would say, is meant to prepare us for Sunday so that we are charged up on Sunday to encourage one another and to worship together.

And in turn, Sunday, being here today, is meant to encourage us more, to stir us up to good work so that as we go about our weeks, we can meet together, encourage one another, and remind others of the gospel.

And so I'll leave you with this, right? If we truly desire to grow in godliness, as we rightly must, we should be using meeting together as an excuse to escape the world rather than the world as an excuse to escape meeting together, right?

So let's pray.