

THE POWER OF ENCOURAGING ONE ANOTHER HEBREWS 10:22-25

Jesus promised hardships in this world!

Matthew 24:9-13 - You will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.

In the last days, the Bible teaches us that persecution will increase for Christians. Those who espouse values, the world will hate. False teaching will run rampant as God's people get sucked into the world's ideas. Gullible people will search for something to build their lives on and will find it in the world's system. Temptations will multiply as wickedness increases.

2 Timothy 3:1-5 - There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God— having a form of godliness but denying its power.

Christians around the world are facing serious persecution (though it hasn't happened in America yet). Temptations are intensifying as well: TV is telling us that we should swap wives, get a face-lift, and buy, buy, buy when we are not happy. Just this past week, in the news, it was reported that Nike is making huge profits. How? By advertising selfishness. The Chinese are known for their sense of honor and community. Nike recently release commercials that tell the Chinese, "reject your sense of community. Be an individual. Buy Nike and you will be happy." The people there are hearing it loud and clear: happiness comes when you are selfish! The church is also hurting. Mainline denominations continue to decline. Why? Because people see no difference between the people in the world and the people in these churches. Pews are empty and cold. We have even seen how Palestinians have attacked Jewish religious sites and killed people this past week because Yasser Arrafat died! They have lost their hopes and dreams and feel the need to lash out!

With the world becoming more corrupt and the church at large becoming more cold, we need each other! The past two weeks, I have been preaching exactly that! Two Sundays ago, I shared that we need to love one another. Last Sunday, I shared that we need to serve one another. Today, with all that we are facing as Christians, I want you to know once again that WE NEED EACH OTHER! Primarily, we need the encouragement we get from one another!

There is so much the world throws at us that is discouraging! Fears, death, hard & tiring work, sorrow, disappointments, bitterness, gossip, slander, setbacks, heart ache, broken trust, poor leadership, stale worship, temptations, etc., etc.! If we don't have each other, then we will not make it! If you are not actively involved in encouraging the people in this church, then our church will not grow!

I want to look at a text today, that addresses this issue. TURN WITH ME TO HEBREWS 10:22-25

HOW DO YOU ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER?

1. BY GETTING CLOSE TO GOD (vs. 22)

- a. One of the things we need to realize is that as we face this world, we are an example to others. If we are not in a close relationship with God ourselves, then how can we encourage others? This is why the writer of Hebrews begins this section with the command, "let us draw near to God."
- b. Right before this command that tells us to draw near to God, the writer of Hebrews tells us how. Look at vs. 19-21.
- c. We get close to God by going to Him through Jesus! Jesus said, "I am..."
 - i. ...the Bread of Life – John 6:35 & 48
 - ii. ...the Light of the World – John 8:12 & 9:5
 - iii. ...the Door – John 10:7-9
 - iv. ...the Good Shepherd – John 10:11-14
 - v. ...the Resurrection and the Life – John 11:25
 - vi. ...the Way, the Truth, and the Life – John 14:6
 - vii. ...the True Vine – John 15:1

- d. Verse 22 tells us that we should have a sincere heart, full assurance of our faith, a clean heart, and a clear conscience. Only Jesus can bring these things!

HOW DO WE ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER?

§ FIRST, BY GETTING CLOSE TO GOD

2. BY HOLDING ON TO YOUR FAITH (vs. 23)

- a. When you are facing a difficult time - Luke 8:49-50 - *While Jesus was still speaking, someone came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue ruler. "Your daughter is dead," he said. "Don't bother the teacher any more." Hearing this, Jesus said to Jairus, "Don't be afraid; just believe, and she will be healed."*
- b. When you are attempting great things for God - Matthew 14:29-30 - *"Come," he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!"*
- c. When you are wondering, "When, Lord?" - Romans 4:19-21 - *Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead—since he was about a hundred years old—and that Sarah's womb was also dead. Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised.*
- d. When praying - Daniel 10:12 - *Then God continued, "Do not be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them.*
- e. When your doing the right thing - Galatians 6:9 - *Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.*

What are you facing that causes you to loose grip of your faith?

HOW DO WE ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER?

§ FIRST, BY GETTING CLOSE TO GOD

§ SECOND, BY HOLDING ON TO YOUR FAITH

3. BY MOTIVATING OTHERS (vs, 24)

- a. Toy illustration: Rip Cord Car
- b. Motivating others includes 2 things:
 - i. Be an example in the good deeds & love
 1. Some may think, they don't have much to offer.
 2. An elderly widow, restricted in her activities due to health, was eager to serve Christ. After praying about this, she realized that she could bring blessing to others by playing the piano on the phone. The next day she places an ad in the Oakland Tribune that said, "Pianist will play hymns by phone daily for those who are sick and despondent – the service is free." The notice included the number to dial. When people called, she would ask, "What hymn would you like to hear?" Within a few months her playing had brought cheer to several hundred people. Many people poured their hearts out to her, and she was able to encourage them.

The second thing, "motivating others" includes is: Pointing People to the right things. We need to be sure to help people see that things will turn out for them. We need to open people's eyes in times of stress because they may not be able to see. What do we need to point people to?

1. Point people to the future - 1 Peter 1:5-7 - *And God, in his mighty power, will protect you until you receive this salvation, because you are trusting him. It will be revealed on the last day for all to see. So be truly glad! There is wonderful joy ahead, even though it is necessary for you to endure many trials for a while. These trials are only to test your faith, to show that it is strong and pure. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold—and your faith is far more precious to God than mere gold. So if your faith remains strong after being tried by fiery trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world.*
2. Point people to examples of others who made it - Philippians 1:12-14 - *Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel. As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. Because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly.*

So who do you need to MOTIVATE? Write that person's name down.

HOW DO WE ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER?

- § **FIRST, BY GETTING CLOSE TO GOD**
- § **SECOND, BY HOLDING ON TO YOUR FAITH**
- § **THIRD, BY MOTIVATING OTHERS**

4. BY EXHORTING ONE ANOTHER (vs. 25)

- c. Verse 25 in the King James Version says that we should “exhort one another”. What does exhort mean? To exhort someone means to: “make urgent appeals towards.”
- d. Verse 25 is telling us not just to encourage one another, but to **URGENTLY** encourage one another! How do we do this?

How do we exhort one another?

1. Watch our tongues:
 - a. Proverbs 12:18 - *Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.*
 - b. On January 12, 1997, two Swiss men set out to be the first to circle the earth in a high-tech, solar-powered, pressurized, hot-air balloon. Not long after the launch, however, strong fumes from a kerosene leak forced the craft down into the Mediterranean Sea. A fail fuel clamp, costing \$1.16, brought down a craft costing \$1.5 million. The tongue is the same way! A small word of discouragement can tear down the ministries of this church. The opposite is true: when we exhort someone with our tongues, we can build our church up!
 - c. We are commanded to exhort our neighbors:
 - i. 1 Thessalonians 5:14 - *Brothers and sisters, we urge you to warn those who are lazy. Encourage those who are timid. Take tender care of those who are weak. Be patient with everyone.*
2. One other way to exhort someone is found in our text today. Look at verse 25. It tells us to “not give up the habit of meeting together”, or put simply, “don’t stop coming to church.”
 - a. This verse gives us a direct command. So I ask you, who do you need to encourage to follow this command?
 - b. I believe that the writer of Hebrews put this in this list of encouragement commands, because he knew that Christians should depend on each other. If you take church attendance

lightly, then you are saying to God, I really don't need your church. We need to be sure to encourage one another in attendance.

HOW DO WE ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER?

- § **FIRST, BY GETTING CLOSE TO GOD**
- § **SECOND, BY HOLDING ON TO YOUR FAITH**
- § **THIRD, BY MOTIVATING OTHERS**
- § **FOURTH, BY EXHORTING ONE ANOTHER**

So, What happens when we don't do these 4 things?

On December 3, 1979, thousands of young people stood outside of Riverfront Coliseum in Cincinnati, OH, anxiously awaiting the gates to be open for the Who rock concert that evening. The seating was all general admission, no reserved seats. People had been waiting for hours so they could be the first in the stadium and rush to the front for the best seats. The crowd was growing more restless with each passing minute. When the gates finally opened, there was a mad scramble to get the best seats. The frantic pushing and shoving at the gate caused a great tragedy. The massive crowd crushed eleven people to death just to get the best seats.

The intense concern for the best seats resulted in considerable grief and the loss of lives. I wonder how many people's spiritual lives have been crushed or killed as people in the church at large have tried to make themselves look better by stepping on others and injuring them. I've seen people be crushed because of negativity and self-promotion.

When we are not willing to encourage others, it shows that we are not truly following Christ. In fact, James tells us that when we are not encouraging to others, but are using our tongues to put others down, we have a useless religion.

James 1:26 - If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless.

I believe our church needs to begin to do this, not just think about, but actually do these things, RIGHT NOW. God wants us all to lay our lives out before Christ, be humble, and encourage one another. Why? Because of the end of verse 25 - *let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.*

We are told to:

- § **FIRST, GET CLOSE TO GOD**
- § **SECOND, HOLD ON TO YOUR FAITH**
- § **THIRD, MOTIVATE OTHERS**
- § **FOURTH, EXHORT ONE ANOTHER**

because Jesus is coming back!

So I ask you: are you ready for that? Are you ready for the time when Christ will return? Are the people around you ready? Some may not be because they are discouraged!

It is time to make a decision:

- § Will you repent of discouragement and begin to encourage others?
- § Will you seek someone today who needs encouragement?
- § Will you be ready when Christ returns?

Maybe there is someone here who is not sure if they are ready for the end. Today, I WANT TO ENCOURAGE YOU! God wants you to know that there is freedom and forgiveness in the cross! God promises that if you put your faith in Christ, then you will be saved! Do you trust Christ? Now is the time to say it by walking down this aisle.

Hymnal, a Worship Book #504 – *Have Thine Own Way*