

The Fellowship of God's Love

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[0 : 00] In Hebrews chapter 10, page 1007, Hebrews 10, let's read again from verse 22.

And notice the three times that the author here begins with his word of encouragement with the words, let us. Verse 22, let us draw near with a true heart and full assurance of faith. With our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. The first, let us. The second, let us. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering for he who promised is faithful.

The third, let us. 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 day more as you see the day drawing near. Believe it or not, well, believe it. It's ten years since I became minister, pastor of Livingston Free Church.

[1 : 13] I can hardly believe it. It just seems like yesterday when I first stepped in this pulpit. When I first preached to you as ministers, the first sermon I preached, anyone can remember it.

It was Acts chapter 2. It was in the whole subject of the fellowship of believers. Believers in unity and commitment within the God-given church of the Lord Jesus.

And, well, you might say, as it were, to closing this ten years, again I want to really focus on this whole subject of fellowship.

Now, I know this morning we touched on that subject. We were looking at, you know, relationships within the church. We looked particularly at the matter of spiritual fathers and godly mothers.

We looked at, you know, these aspects of, we might say, active fellowship of believers within a community, within a congregation.

[2 : 13] And this evening I want to sort of broaden out this whole aspect of fellowship. So I want to look at how we find here, as the author here speaks of the fellowship that believers enjoy with God.

And, yes, how that fellowship with God impacts our fellowship one with another. Now, I know for the, well, certainly for all the times I've been preaching on Sunday evenings, we've been looking at the subject of love in Paul's letter to the Ephesians.

Remember, we've been looking at the love of God towards man and man's love towards God and to one another. I won't take a little break from Ephesians until after the holidays.

But in many ways we're continuing our thoughts, our thoughts on this whole matter of love.

Particularly when we look again at this whole aspect of fellowship.

The fellowship that believers have with the God of love. The fellowship that God has with his people in love. The fellowship that we must practice one with another in love.

[3 : 21] So really we are continuing our thoughts on this whole matter of love. Love that God blesses his people with. And love that we seek to apply in our Christian lives.

And I pray that, you know, this whole matter of the church's life, this aspect of fellowship, this aspect of love, the love of God towards us and our love towards God.

But, you know, really this has been so much a focus, a pray, in these last past ten years. Because it's so vital, so important in the life and witness of the church that love is at the centre, the love of God at the centre.

The love of God in and through the Lord Jesus Christ. And how we respond to that love towards him and towards one another. And so, it's a subject that we should never grow weary of.

Because, you know, a relationship that we have with God ultimately is in the Lord Jesus Christ. And the relationship that we have with him will impact not only how we relate one to another, but will impact even our witness.

[4 : 34] Even our witness beyond the congregation, beyond the church. Because the relationship that you have with the Lord Jesus will have that impact on your witness as a Christian.

You'll want to tell others of the Lord Jesus and his love for you. And so, we're going to look again at this whole matter of fellowship. Fellowship within the church.

Fellowship within the congregation. And, yes, to do it for very important reasons. I mean, God has placed you as individuals within this community of God's people.

This corporate gathering of God's people. And he's placed you in this place of worship. Yes, to worship him. And to do it together.

And we're here to worship together. To grow together. To witness for him together. And we might say, in what I've maybe called a mini milestone in ministry, you know, I just want you to reflect on what you are as a community.

[5 : 41] As a fellowship of God's people. Because God has been pleased to bring you as a people together. So that he is worshipped.

He is praised. He is glorified. He's proclaimed. Even through this gathering. And so, it is important. It is important to take time to consider what you are.

Who you are. In relation to your great God and Savior. And to one another. Because no congregation, no congregation of the Lord Jesus Christ, is isolated from the Savior.

And we must also say this. That neither must, you know, a congregation, within a congregation, be there any isolation, one from another. And above all, no congregation should be isolated, as we said, from God.

And I pray that's what we'll see here in this passage. Because this passage, I believe, helps us to see the relationship that you have with our great God and Savior.

[6 : 45] And how that relationship impacts relationships that we have one with another. And the fellowship that God has brought us together in.

And that's what I pray we're going to see. This passage really essentially helps you to see that the more that you are in Christ, the more that you are in Him, in fellowship with Him, the more you'll enjoy fellowship one with another.

And the more that you enjoy fellowship one with another, the more your faith in the Lord Jesus and your witness for Him will flourish. You're not a congregation apart from the Lord Jesus.

We're a community of God's people in Christ. As we love Him and love one another. So, let's think a wee bit of the background to this passage before we start looking at the details.

Because, you know, Hebrews is a magnificent book of Scripture. And this particular section of Hebrews, we don't know who the author was.

[7 : 50] It's an unknown author. But he brings home a link. He brings home that crucial link between what Jesus has done for us in His death. His death on the cross. That link between His death and your faith and conduct as a Christian.

What do we believe? What do we proclaim? We proclaim, we believe in the risen, the crucified and risen Christ. And we live out, we live out our faith in the crucified and risen Christ.

We follow Him who came for us, who died for us, rose again, rose for us. So, practical Christianity. Yes. Christianity, Christian conduct is absolutely centred, absolutely rooted in the obedience of Jesus.

What Jesus has done for His people, what Jesus has done for you in His death on the cross. So, you live not for self. You live for the crucified and risen Savior.

And you live then, your conduct has to be a life of thanksgiving. Thanksgiving for what Jesus has done for you on the cross. And how is that seen in practice?

[9 : 03] Well, denying yourself. Taking up your cross. Following Jesus. Following Him who leads you. If you ever, ever take away the cross, then you're taking away the Christian.

So, that's why we read this passage, certainly from verse 19 down to verse 25. Because it's what Jesus has done for us. What He's done in opening up that way to the Father.

When He died on the cross. When He opened up the way for you, for me, for all who are in Him to come to God by faith. And in opening up that way to the Father.

Jesus has made it possible for you to have a right relationship with God and with one another.

Because when Jesus died on the cross, that wonder of wonders happened.

What do you read in verse 20? The curtain. The curtain. Well, you know of course from the Gospels that the curtain in Jerusalem. The Jerusalem temple when Jesus died.

[10 : 06] The Jerusalem temple was torn. Torn in half from top to bottom. Read that in Matthew 27. And when that curtain was torn from top to bottom. That was God's way of announcing.

That the way. The way into the presence of God. Is now possible. Because Jesus had made that way possible through His death.

What Jesus did for you in His death. What He did on that cross. He made it possible for you to enter into the presence of our holy God. And you know where we see reference here to high priests.

Of course Jesus is that great high priest. Jesus offered Himself on the cross. He not only did that. But He entered into the presence of God the Father.

And did so on our behalf. Offering Himself on the cross. Taking our place. As the object of God's punishment. He bore the wrath of God.

[11 : 08] He was the once for all sacrifice for sin. And as the author says here. Therefore no more need of sacrifices. And this is the amazing truth.

Jesus took our sin. And in that great transfer. We who in Christ. Clothed with His righteousness. So that when God looks in you who are in Christ.

He sees the righteousness of His Son. That's what we were singing earlier. God delights in righteousness. And so there's no more need of a barrier between God and man. Jesus opened up that way.

For man and God to be reconciled. You put your trust in the Lord Jesus. You approach Him. You approach Him in confidence. Approach with that confidence of faith.

And an assurance that God's not going to condemn you. When you come before Him in boldness. And that means that it impacts the way that you worship God.

[12 : 07] It impacts the way that you come before Him in prayer. It impacts your relationship with Him and with others. And that really takes us on to our first point. Doesn't it? That fellowship with God.

As we're told here. Verse 22. Since we now have that access to God the Father. That access made possible by the Lord Jesus Christ.

Well there are consequences. Consequences for your faith. Consequences for your practice. Your conduct as a Christian. And as we said. Three things. Three things that really are transformed by this fact.

That the way to the Father has now opened up for us. As we said as we were reading. Three things identified with these two little English words. Let us. Two little words in English.

That really bring out this whole sense of encouragement. You know. This urging you to do something important. To join with this author. Whoever he was.

[13 : 07] This author. To do something important. In relation to your faith and conduct. Behavior as a Christian. You know. We use this kind of language in everyday speech.

You know. Let us. We usually shorten it to let. You know. Let's go to such and such a place. And of course in worship. When we come before God and worship. We always.

Always. Must. You know. Have this call to worship. Let us. Worship God. The call. That the preacher gives to the congregation. To join with them. To come before God and worship.

And. You know. That's what we find here in verse 22. And let's look at this first. Let us. Let us draw near. With a true heart. And full assurance of faith.

So here's. Here are these words of encouragement. From one believer. To other believers. This word of urging. This word of encouragement. To approach God. By faith.

[14 : 02] Faith. In the Lord Jesus. Or through the Lord Jesus. And yes. This letter. This book. Was written. What some. Two thousand years ago. Written.

Under God's inspiration. To Hebrew Christians. But of course. These words have traversed the centuries. They're with us today. And will be. Until the Lord Jesus returns. And these are words. That encourage God's people. These are words. That are to encourage you. Not to hold back. But to come before God. And come before him with confidence.

Why? Because of what Jesus has done for you. And opening up that way to God. By his death on the cross. So it's Jesus who's made that possible. So every time we have a service.

Every time prayer is engaged in a church. Or a church building for example. We're doing this. Because and only because.

[14 : 58] Jesus did what he did on the cross. And dying for sinners. Opening up that way to God the Father. What we're doing here this evening. Being called to worship God.

And that's only been possible. We're only here. Because of what Jesus has done for us. And that has present consequences. For your salvation. And for your worship of God.

And your following him. So what are the implications then? What are the implications of this great privilege. Of drawing near to God? Well. As the author tells us here.

Don't be hesitant. Don't pull back or hold back from coming to God. In worship. In praise. In communion. In fellowship with him. You know.

Just like the high priest. That you read of in the Old Testament. The high priest. Who drew near to God. When he went through the curtain. In the temple. We approach God.

[15:57] We approach God through Jesus. Who's opened up that way to God. As we see in verse 22. We approach God. And you approach God. In full assurance of faith.

You have faith. You have given your life to him. Through Jesus. Your faith is saving faith. And you have that faith.

Yes. Even to approach God with confidence. Knowing he's there. And he sees you. He knows you. He sees in your very heart. And you're calling on him.

You're drawing near to him. And you're drawing near to the one. Who calls you to him. So even in this Lord's Day. What? The 23rd of June. But we've come together.

For worship. Never ever forget the privilege. That we have here. Even in this building. Of coming before God. In worship. This is a blessing. That I think we take. Far too much for granted.

[16:55] That we've been called. To draw near. To God. And to do it. With absolute confidence. He's made it possible. For you to come. And yes. Come boldly towards him.

And we're told. And drawing near. Let us draw near. We've been told. God isn't a distant God. He's near. He's approachable. He wants you to come before him.

In praise. In worship. In adoration. In confession. In fellowship. You know the Lord Jesus. As Savior. Your relationship in Jesus.

Surely should. Give you that confidence. That. When you come before. When you draw near to him. When you worship him. He hears your prayers.

He hears your prayers. He hears. You're drawing near to him. And he receives that worship. That's given. From the heart. So there's no.

[17:52] No. Fear in worship. No. No holding back from. From yes. Even a guilty conscience. You know. Because you know that you're accepted in Jesus. You know.

As we see in the passage here. We know that. You're. That the blood of the Lord Jesus. Has sprinkled your heart. That he's cleansed you. So that you are found. Right. With God.

So have that confidence. To approach God through your faith. In the Lord Jesus Christ. And therefore we have to ask ourselves. Each one. One of us has to ask ourselves.

You know. Am I holding back? Am I holding back? In. In worship of God. Is there some kind of lack of faith. That's. Preventing me from drawing near to God. With full assurance of faith.

Are you hesitant to come to God. Perhaps. Maybe through some. Some guilt. Of sin. Well if that's the case. Listen again to these words. Let us draw near to God.

[18:48] With a true heart. In full assurance of faith. Jesus has died for you. He's taken your sins on the cross. Been clothed with his righteousness.

You've been found right with God. So approach God. Not in terror. But in the confidence. That you've been given and blessed with. Because of what Jesus has done for you.

And you know this. That when you do draw near. When you draw near to God. You will know. And you do know. That joy. That bliss. That comfort.

When you're near. So near the one who. Who calls you to himself. There's no greater joy. There's no greater blessing. Than being near. God.

Near the one. Who's near. To you. So fellowship. Fellowship. With God. Fellowship. In God. But secondly. As we see in verse 23.

[19:43] Fellowship. In hope. Let us hold fast. The confession. Of our hope. Without wavering. For he who promised. Is faithful. And the more that you draw near to God.

The more that you draw near to God. Through the Lord Jesus. The more. You're with him. The more you're. Yes. Yes. You're meditating on the Lord Jesus. And dwelling on what he's done for you.

By his death. And when that. That. That happens. Then the more you're going to remain. Steadfast. And firm. In the hope. That you have in Jesus. But this expression.

The confession of hope. I mean. What's this author. Saying here. What's he encouraging you to do. To hold firm to. Hold fast. Let's hold fast. Let us hold fast.

The confession of our hope. Without wavering. But what is that confession of hope. Surely. It's the faith. That you profess. That faith. That gives you that sure hope.

[20 : 39] Of salvation in Jesus. So here's this author. He's. He's encouraging his readers. He's encouraging you. You who confess. And profess. The name of Jesus. He said.

Don't. Don't waver. Don't. Don't falter. Yes. Even in the face of opposition. You know. You know why this letter was written. This letter was written.

To encourage. First century Christians. Not to give up. I mean. These Hebrew Christians. They were facing persecution. Many of them had been.

Assaulted. Physically assaulted. Verbally assaulted. Some had even been imprisoned. For their faith. Certainly. They'd been ridiculed in public. For their profession of faith.

And confession of the Lord Jesus. And the danger then. To these first century Christians. The danger was compromise. You know. Somehow. You know. Loosening their anchor.

[21 : 32] Their anchor hold. On their faith in the Lord Jesus. And so. This author here. As I say. That his name won't be revealed. Certainly. This side of eternity. But this.

This author. He's a real encourager. And he's exhorting. These. These Jewish converts. Not to give up. Don't fall back. But to remain steadfast.

In hope. In hope. In hope. That they have. In the Lord Jesus. Because. As the verse tells us. For he who's promised is faithful. And. Jesus has promised.

He's promised his people. Eternal security in him. Because he is faithful. His words are faithful. His words are true. Because he's faithful and true. And.

This is an encouragement to first century Christians. Surely. It's got to be an encouragement to twenty first century Christians. I have no idea. You know.

[22 : 27] The level of. Suffering that you have. As a Christian. Now I know that. Some are. Maybe all of you. But certainly. Many of you have been ridiculed for your faith.

Whether it's been a ridiculing face to face. Or. Maybe a ridiculing. I know some have here. Even through. Through various media. But we've all seen it happen. We've all seen it.

Whether it's happened. To you personally. Or. Certainly. Seen. Happen to others. Maybe on a national scale. Even an international scale.

The last few days. I think we've seen very clearly. The media mocking Christians for their faith. News channels gloating over. What's been perceived as.

You know. Simple. Simplistic Christians. Opposing blasphemy on the screen. Now if you're a true. You're a believer in the Lord Jesus. You're going to grieve. At that kind of mockery and ridicule.

[23 : 25] But you don't waver. You don't falter in your hope. Your hope. The hymn goes. Your hope. Is built on nothing less than Jesus Christ. My righteousness. What are we commanded to do?

We're told to remain steadfast. We're to remain sure. In that knowledge. That nothing but nothing. Can dislodge your eternal security. And therefore it's for you and for me.

To remain in hope. In Christ's faithfulness. And that hope is going to impact your life. It's going to impact you personally. But I think also it's going to impact.

You in fellowship. One with another. Because that's exactly what we see here. As the author expresses. In verses 24 to 25. Where he speaks of that fellowship in love.

Let us consider how to stir up one another to love. And to good works. Not neglecting to meet together. It's a habit of some. But encouraging one another.

[24 : 22] And all the more. As you see the day drawing near. If you're in fellowship with the Lord Jesus. If your hope is secure in him.

If you're in fellowship with Christ by faith. You're going to express the reality of that fellowship. You're going to show it. In the way that you interact with others. There can be no such thing.

Generally speaking. I think we can't maybe. If they say generally speaking. There's no such thing as a lone believer. You know. A sort of isolated solitary Christian. To use a colloquial phrase.

We're in it together. And therefore it's for believers. To have that active fellowship. Life together. That's absolutely vital for any congregation.

And so. Whatever congregation you're from. Whether it's from this congregation. Or another congregation. That's represented here this evening. Then. May it be that. We have.

[25 : 23] And you have. A fellowshiping. If there's such a word. But certainly a church. That practices that fellowship. In the Lord. One with another. And how do we show that? Well as the author tells us here.

Loving one another. Coming alongside one another. Sharing with one another. Practising hospitality. One for another. And that. And that. And that.

These things in themselves. Are truly. Product of a Christian heart. That truly delights in the Lord Jesus. But there's more. There's more. As you see in verse 24.

Because not only. Are you to be in fellowship. One with another. But. Actually. There's this. This encouragement. To stimulate. Fellowship.

To stimulate. A mature. And. An active fellowship. A. A mature fellowship. That. That. You might say. Expresses. That love dynamic.

[26:18] Good works. The good works. That point. To a. A vibrant. Fellowship. In the Lord. You see. See what's written here. Let's consider. How to stir up.

One another. To love. And good work. The author's saying here. Isn't he. Giving that encouragement. To. You know. That we. We join together. To. Yes.

Consider. How we. We can. The more. Encourage one another. You know. Think how you can. Encourage. Each other. One another. As. As Christian believers. You know.

Just dwell in that. That thought. How can you. Show Christ's love. To someone. Even within this congregation. Well. As the author tells us here. You know. Spur one another on.

Stir one another up. Well. Surely. The work of encouragement. Has to be such a priority. In. In. Any congregation. And if that's the case.

[27:14] Then that encouragement. Has to. Involve energy. And. And commitment. And that. Stirring up one another. In love.

Well. There has to be that. If you like. That provoking of love. Within the congregation. And you'll. You see that. In the various ways. That. That God gives to us.

To. To. To show that love. One to another. And. That certainly doesn't happen. If we're at a distance. From. From each other. You know.

Just acknowledging each other. On a Sunday. Maybe Sunday morning. Sunday evening. And then that's it. Away for the rest of the week. Then back again. On another Sunday. No. We're. Called here to work at love.

And that's not an option. If you want to build a fellowship. That. Stirring up one another. To love and good works. Is not an option. It's a necessity.

[28:10] The fellowship. We have here. This community. Keep together. Stick together. As the Lord's people. Don't be isolated. One from another. You see.

Regular fellowship. Is such. A crucial constant. In encouraging one another. What we see here in verse 25. You might say verse 25.

Tells us that. The best antidote to isolation. Is fellowship. Not neglecting to meet together. As is the habit of some. I think the way that the author writes this.

Would suggest that there were those. Even at that time. These Hebrew Christians. Who had that tendency. To neglect meeting one with another. You know. Neglecting what we call. The means of grace.

But you know. As a church. Any congregation. Provides opportunities. For fellowship. And why do we have that? Because. The ways to enable God's people. To grow. To grow in grace. To grow in the knowledge of God.

[29:10] Our saviour. And so. Fostering. Fellowship. In a congregation. Binds. Us. Together. In love. These times of fellowship.

Are so important. For building up faith. Building up hope. And yes. Building up your love. For God. And for one another. And so. Surely it's for.

You know. A church. A congregation. To enjoy. Being together. Even in being. With one another. It is an encouragement. In itself. You encourage me.

When. When you attain. The various means of grace. I pray that you encourage. One another. By your presence. Even at worship services. So.

Don't ever be. Be tempted. To think. You know. That somehow. You can manage fine. On your own. Without any kind of. You know. Support. One with another. A Christian.

[30:10] Who isolates. Himself. From. From the fellowship. Actually. Is opening up. Himself. Opening up. Up herself. I think. That's often. The times. When Satan. Attacks most.

In these times. When you're on your own. In isolation. Don't be a Christian. Loner. Yes. Come together. Encourage one another. Bear one another's burdens.

Watch over one another. In love. Remember. What we were thinking of. This morning. We were thinking of. Of the importance. Of the family. Certainly. Both. At home. And in the church. So think of the context. Of the family. Within the context. Of church. How important it is. To encourage love. Within the family. Yes. Through. Through spiritual fathers. And godly mothers. Think of the blessings. That you receive. Yes. In the family of God. And those relationships. That God blesses. Even within. His family. As we were mentioning. This morning.

[31 : 06] In Psalm 68. The Lord. That settles. The lonely. The solitary. And families. You and that family. To encourage one another. Yes.

Come the more regularly. In meeting together. And we will do this. Lord's people. Will do this. As we're told here. At the end of this section. As we await the return.

That day. When the Lord Jesus returns. Because in that day. Your hope will be realized. You'll know that joy. Of eternal life. In the new heaven.

And the new earth. And in that new heaven. And new earth. You'll know that fellowship. That eternal fellowship. With God. And. And his children forever. Yes.

We await that day of days. But we do so. Now. In the present. And in this. This present life. There's. I think there's something. We all need to focus on. In that life.

[32 : 01] And that's something. I think we can just. Generalize. In these verses. And that's closeness. Because if we look again. At these verses. 22 to 25. You see the common theme.

Of closeness. Whether it's closeness. That you have with God. By faith. Whether it's closeness. To. To the biblical truth.

That we. We confess. As the ground. Of our eternal hope. Whether it's the closeness. That we. Were to practice. And encourage. In one another. In the true bond.

Of fellowship. Closeness is there. Throughout this passage. And it's my deep hope. My hope for you. As a fellowship. As a fellowship. With God's people.

That you walk closely. With God. By faith. And that you have. That sure hope. Of eternal life. Within your heart. That it's close to your heart. That sure hope. And that having that close walk.

[32 : 57] With God. And that sure hope. Of eternal life. Close to your heart. That you walk close. And closely. One with another. In a fellowship.

In a closeness. That only. Brothers and sisters. In Christ. Can enjoy. But what if you haven't drawn. Close. To God. By faith. What if you.

Have nothing to confess. Except your own righteousness. What if you don't know. That fellowship. With the Lord Jesus. With one another. Then think again.

Where are you without God? Where are you without Christ? Where are you without one another? Where are you? You're lost. So my plea is.

Come to the Saviour. And give your life to him. And you'll know that fellowship. And love. That will be yours. Through the gift of God. And you'll know that love.

[33 : 52] That can never let you go. And you'll know that love. Of God and Christ. That will never leave you. Nor forsake you. And so I pray that God will bless you.

In your walk with him. And in your walk. With each other. Amen. Let us pray. Amen. For Lord our God.

We have to confess. Our sins before you even now. Our sins of. Hesitating to come before you. Our sins of keeping. At a distance from you.

And even a distance. One from another. Forgive us Lord. For the many times. When we have preferred. Our own isolation. Rather than the fellowship. Of believers. So help us we pray.

To grow in grace. And in the knowledge of God. And Christ. Help us Lord. In that knowledge. To know you. And the more that we. As we know you. That we love you.

[34 : 48] And love one another. So bless Lord. We pray. All that has been. Proclaimed. During this service. And forgive. Anything and all. That has been said amiss.

Accept our worship. We pray. And forgive us our sins. In Jesus name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.