

# How Christians Save Christians

by Tim Conway

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*Christians can be instruments of God's sovereignty in saving one another through exhortation and faith-building relationships.*

**Duration:** 1:05:21

**Scripture:** Ephesians 4:15

**Topics:** "Church Community", "Spiritual Warfare"

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## Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of exhorting and encouraging one another in the faith to prevent falling away from God. It highlights the deceitfulness of sin, the need to stay anchored in truth, and the role of the church community in saving and supporting fellow believers. The focus is on magnifying Christ through speaking truth and love to one another, especially during trials and temptations.

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## Transcript

Lord, we pray that in this hour, whatever fog, whatever darkness, whatever obstruction to seeing and feeling and knowing truth and Him that is truth, may You blow it all away. May there be a clarity, may the words of the Scriptures be plain, may they be brilliant, may they be impacting. Please, Lord, visit us with a sense of Your presence.

Come to us and feed us, Lord. We can't live by bread alone. Come feed us.

We pray in Christ's name. Amen. Hebrews 3, verse 6. But Christ is faithful over God's house as a Son.

And we are His house if indeed we hold fast our confidence and are boasting in our hope. Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, today if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion on the day of testing in the wilderness where your fathers put me to the test and saw my works for forty years. Therefore, I was provoked with that generation and said they always go astray in their heart.

They have not known my ways as I swore in my wrath. They shall not enter my rest. Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart leading you to fall away from the living God.

But exhort one another every day as long as it is called today that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. For we share in Christ if indeed we hold fast our original confidence firm to the end. Brethren, some months ago, I know some of you weren't here.

Some of you were. You may remember this, some of you. I preached a message from Ephesians chapter 5 where I was dealing with husbands' responsibilities towards their wives and I called the message, Husbands, Save Your Wives.

And I think some folks were not entirely comfortable with that title. By the way, can you think of any place where the Scripture talks about husbands saving their wives? 1 Corinthians chapter 7 actually talks that way. So I wasn't using language entirely foreign to the Scriptures.

Sometimes we don't talk that way so we get uncomfortable, but we really do need to talk like Scripture talks. But anyways, I know that was somewhat of a risky title and I know that some weren't entirely comfortable with it, but I'll just warn you, if you didn't like that one, chances are that you're not going to like today's title much better. I'm calling it How Christians Save Christians.

Before you get up and walk out and shout heresy or anything like that, I really am striving to be biblical in my terminology when I talk this way. I believe that when I say Christians save Christians, I do believe I'm talking like the Bible talks. Let me just give you a couple examples.

For instance, you don't need to turn there because our text is really here in Hebrews where I want you to focus. But listen to this. In James chapter 5, verse 19, and I know many of you are familiar with this text.

Here's what James says. My brothers, okay, who's he dealing with? Christians. If anyone among you, so you've got Christians, and so who would be among Christians? Christians.

He's dealing with professing Christians and he's dealing with professing Christians among those group of professing Christians. My brothers, if anyone among you, you've got this group of professing Christians and somebody that's among them begins to wander. If anybody there among you wanders from the truth and somebody brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul.

See, we don't like to talk that way. That makes us uncomfortable. But that's how the Bible talks.

Save his soul from death and we'll cover a multitude of sins. Or how about this? You've got to like this text. 1 Timothy 4.16. Paul giving instruction to Timothy.

Timothy is at Ephesus. He's there. Paul is minded that he instructs these Ephesians how the household of God, the church of the living God, how this thing is supposed to be ordered and structured and how things are supposed to operate within it.

And as Timothy teaches, instructs, exhorts, here's what Paul says to Timothy is a reality about that teaching. Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this.

For by doing so, you will save both yourself and your hearers. You see that? So I hope my sermon, How Christians Save Christians, won't unduly agitate any of you. Because that is the way the Bible talks.

Brethren, I love it. I mean, I don't remember much about Obadiah. Do any of you? Can any of you remember anything Obadiah says? But I tend to remember this text.

Obadiah 1.21, Saviors shall go up to Mount Zion to rule Mount Esau and the kingdom shall be the Lord's. Brethren, I believe in a certain sense Christians can be called saviors. And I have a feeling that text is looking forward to this kingdom time when the kingdom has come and these saviors go up.

The kingdom is the Lord's. Brethren, ultimately, we know that He is the One and by His blood and by those merits that sinners find that healing and that salvation. He alone is capital S, Savior.

But brethren, I'll tell you this. We find in Scripture that God uses Christians to save Christians. It's His might, it's His power, it's Christ's efficacy, if you will.

But it's through our instrumentality. And I want to show you that. The text I want us to see this critical Christian saving Christian reality is found Hebrews 3, verses 12-14.

Let's read them again. Look at verse 12. Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart leading you to fall away from the living God.

But exhort one another every day as long as it is called today that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. For we've come to share in Christ if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end. So do you all see it? Do you see Christian saving Christians in these verses? I see it.

I see it in verse 13. Exhort one another. Here's our interaction between, here's Christian involved, relating, interacting with Christian.

How? Exhort one another every day as long as it's called today. Is today called today? Yep, so it applies right now, right? Nobody's going to argue with that. As long as it's called today, we're to exhort one another.

And it is right there that we save one another. You say, how? Well, let's continue reading verse 13. That none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

What's the big deal over a little sin deception hardening? What does that do? Why is that dangerous? Well, back up one verse. Verse 12, take care brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil unbelieving heart leading you to fall away from the living God. But, do you see the but? That is a conjunction.

Conjunctions connect. But is a conjunction indicating contrast. Not that, but this.

You don't want this, but you want this. Contrasting. In other words, you have two opposite situations being compared here.

God sets two opposite possibilities before us professing Christians. On the one hand, through the instrumentality of the exhortations of other Christians, you and I are prevented from becoming hard, unbelieving, deceived, and we hold fast our first confidence in Christ. Or, but, on the other hand, this doesn't happen and you fall away from the living God.

You see that? We have two contrasting possibilities here and the exhortation of one Christian to another is right there in the mix. It is the instrumentality that God uses to keep Christians from falling away. You know what you can't do here? You can't say exhorting one another doesn't matter.

You have to conclude. Now, what is exhorting? Just look up that word. Encouraging.

It's the idea of cheering, comforting. The actual literal meaning is to come alongside or to call one to yourself. It's really, I believe it's that paraclete terminology.

The Spirit is called the Comforter. We basically come along and we seek to urge and encourage and cheer and comfort and appeal to, entreat, admonish. And as we do, God makes something happen in the chemistry of the church which works to the soul-saving reality of Christians.

I hope you're beginning to get some feeling for the significance of this. And notice, notice what God does not say. Brethren, I am absolutely convinced we have way too much hyper-Calvinism in the church today.

Almost so much that we can't hardly hear things like this. The book of Hebrews is not comprehensible to a lot of Calvinists. Because they've taken the sovereignty of God and they've taken election and they've twisted it into something that just isn't true.

You know what God does not say? He doesn't say that we shouldn't worry about exhorting one another because after all, He's sovereign and almighty and if someone's elect, God will see to it that they persevere to the end. So never mind exhorting one another because it doesn't really matter. This is not what He says.

God does make certain His children remain safe and secure. That's true. But I'll tell you what, God also chooses the safeguards that He has put in place to cause the Christian to persevere to the end and remain safe.

And the crystal clear implication of this text is that relationships in the church, whatever fellowship, see we talk about fellowship all the time. Fellowship. We're going to go have fellowship.

This is Fellowship Sunday. Brethren, I'll tell you this. This text right here ought to convince you of this.

One of the most basic fundamental aspects of true Christian fellowship is found right here. When we interact and relate to one another, it should be in such a capacity to where we are exhorting one another in a faith-building relationship to actually be an instrument in God's hand to keep my brother persevering to the end. That's the kind of reality that we see here.

We're to live in the community life of the church exhorting one another from God's Word in such a manner as to prevent one another from falling away from God. That's what the text says. Away with all these hyper-Calvinistic notions.

Brethren, do you know what this says? I mean sometimes we have to step aside and not come in with our preconceived Calvinistic notions and we have to look at the Scripture and say what does it really say? I mean there's places like that say you have not because you haven't asked. That doesn't mean that God is sovereign and He's going to do whatever He wants no matter whether you ask or not. Yes, God is sovereign, but it doesn't mean that it doesn't matter whether you pray.

And in the same way, this isn't saying your exhortations really don't matter because if God has chosen somebody, then He's sovereign and if He's elected you, He's going to get you to the end. And so whether or not you exhort one another, it really doesn't matter. Brethren, and by saying this, it in no way challenges the sovereignty of God.

Rather, it affirms it. You say how? How? Just this way. 1 Peter 1.5, God keeps the Christian by His power, the power of God through faith.

The very power of God itself keeps the Christian believing. But brethren, there's instrumentality. The means God has sovereignly designed to channel the faith-preserving power into His people is by faith-building exhortations among the brethren.

Brethren, you know this as well as I do. We like to quote this. The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes.

But can I tell you this? Just as real as that, God has made the exhortation of Christians the power of God unto salvation to keep us believing. Someone is going to ask the question, well, if I'm saved, why would I need to be exhorted by my brethren so as to not fall away when I'm already saved and I can't fall away? Right? Would somebody ask that question? Does that seem... And my answer is simply this. If you ask that question, you've probably missed the very point of the writer of Hebrews.

Look at verse 14. We have come to share in Christ if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end. You say what? I'm not sure that I see what you're talking about.

Brethren, if you would ask that question, if I'm saved, why do I need the exhortations of God's people to keep me from falling away from God since I'm already saved and I can't fall away? If you're asking that question, you probably have a wrong assumption about the connection between justification and the use of means in the Christian life. You see what he's saying in verse 14? You prove that you have a share in Christ if what? If you don't fall away and you hold fast to the end. And how do you hold fast to the end? By exhortations to one another that prevent us from becoming hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

You see what he's saying? If you live your life and you so interact with one another and we feed our faith off of the exhortations and the encouragements as we minister the Word of God to one another and we hold fast to the end, we prove we have part with Christ. Because those that have part with Christ, that's how they make it to the end. And see, if you say, well, basically justification doesn't have anything to do with that.

Brethren, it does. You can't say the way we live our Christian life, well, we get in one way, but then how we live the Christian life doesn't matter. Brethren, it matters all over the place.

See, if you talk that way, you talk in a way the Bible never talks. Because the Bible never says that the way you live your Christian life doesn't matter. It all over the place says it matters.

I mean, you have God coming along and saying this, make no provision for the flesh. Does that matter? Does that matter to whether I make it to the end or not? You better believe it. He comes along and He says, strive to enter in.

You think those who don't strive enter in? I mean, brethren, you are told to put on the full, the whole armor of God and doing everything to stand fast in that evil day. Do you think if you don't put that armor on, you just stand fast? Jesus said, what I say to you, I say to all, watch. He said, ask and you will receive.

Brethren, there is nothing about the Christian life that would lead us to believe off the pages of Scripture that the way we live our Christian life doesn't matter. You see, brethren, what happens is God uses all these different means. We find back in Jeremiah that God says He puts His fear in our heart.

And you know what happens? He uses all these different things and He as well uses warnings. The warnings of God come at us and we find warnings like this, warnings against falling away. And the way not

to fall away is to make sure that you're plugged in with God's people and you've got this faith building interaction and exhortation going on and you look at that and you don't say, oh well, that doesn't really matter.

God puts His fear within us and we look at that and we fear. Yes, there is a possibility of falling away, so I want to stay plugged in with the brethren. That's the kind of thing that we want to glean from this.

Well, that's just by way of introduction. I want to make four observations about these texts. The first observation I want us to consider as we think about Christians saving Christians comes from verse 12.

Look at it with me. Now think with me. Verse 12, take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart leading you to fall away from the living God.

Brethren, this verse is almost too much for some people to handle. What I mean is this, it seems to indicate that a brother can fall away from the living God, right? Brothers, you need to take care lest you fall away from the living God, so this must mean Christians can lose their salvation. That's where some people go with this.

Like I say, it's just too much. Yes, even though Scripture says very dogmatically nothing can separate us from the love of Christ. Nobody can pluck you out of your Father's hand.

God always finishes every work that He starts. Scripture may say that. It asserts again and again and again that God's salvation is unshakeable.

It is permanent. But many just cannot reconcile how brother can fall away. So they conclude that it must be salvation can be lost.

We had a guy that was visiting the church here and he heard something that I said one day and right after the service was over he met me out in the parking lot and he said, are you saying you can't lose your salvation? I said no, it is absolutely guaranteed when God starts a work, He does not defile you in that work. He does not make shipwreck, ever. This guy never came back again.

He was absolutely convinced and I'll tell you where a lot of people, they're convinced you can lose your salvation from the book of Hebrews. Well, what do we do? What's going on here? Why would a Christian brother be warned against falling away? Is God securely holding him in His hand or isn't He? Well, the answer of course is found in verse 14. Let's look at it.

For we have, for we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end. And so if you don't hold your original confidence firm to the end, what is the proof? You've never had share with Christ. I mean, you see what's going on? The writer of Hebrews is not assuming that salvation can be lost.

He's assuming that if you don't hold your original confidence to the end, you never had it. Well, someone's going to say, wait, but this is God's Word. If Scripture calls them brothers, then they must really be brothers.

Well folks, since I started this sermon, I've probably called you brethren several times. I know I often do. Would you have me say this? You know, in a group this size, is it likely we have some folks here that claim to be Christians who truly aren't? In a group this size? That's reasonable.

Would you have me address you this way? Brethren and false brethren. I mean, no. And what you have to remember here is, yes, this is God's Word, but this is a real, physical, in-the-flesh man writing to real Christians who are struggling.

And his whole purpose is not to cast doubt on their Christianity. Now there may be. I mean, through his warnings, you see, just like with Paul.

Paul would say to the Corinthians, he would address them as saints, but then come right around and say what to them? Don't be deceived. If your life is like this, you don't inherit the kingdom of God. Brethren, that's the way the Scriptures come across again and again.

What the writer is doing here is he's seeking to be charitable. There's a manner of expression that is meant to encourage faith, right? That's what the book of Hebrews is all about. Encouraging faith, not doubt.

So he uses the most hopeful terminology. I mean, you just look back at verse 1 of chapter 3. Therefore, holy brothers. Not just brothers.

Holy brothers. You who share in a heavenly calling. I mean, this is a tremendous example for all of us to use gracious, endearing, encouraging language to describe one another.

Assuming the best. Now, look, that doesn't mean that the writer here is calling any guy that comes walking in off the street brother. We see when we get over to chapter 10, he recounts, hey, you had made sacrifices for Christ.

You had suffered. I mean, he's saying there's some reality. I mean, Paul was not hesitant to say in some places, you may remember in 2nd Corinthians, he talks about the false brethren.

He was in danger of all these different things. One of the things he was in danger of was false brethren. And to the Galatians, he said false brethren crapped in or snuck in.

So he wasn't, you know, there's a place by people's words and actions to say they're a false brother. That doesn't mean that in our attempts to be gracious, we're just blind and foolish and indiscriminate about the way we use that terminology. But brethren, as a rule, those who are among us, those who claim to trust Christ, yes, they may be struggling.

They may be struggling with sin, but they're here among us. They're holding on. They desire to identify with the people of God.

As a rule, we should likewise be charitable and kind. Brethren, the Lord Jesus is our example. I mean, doesn't this just floor you? Somebody gave him a kiss one day.

And he looked at Judas and he said, friend. What charitable language. You know, I think it was in a theology class I told this story, but more broad assembly here, I'll repeat it again.

Maybe it was at Bentley somewhere. I met one of these guys from the church in Sedalia. And he told me that he was lost.

And he came over to Bob Jennings' house and he had lunch with him with a friend of his who had recently been converted who wanted to get him over there to meet Bob. And he comes over and Bob did not go

after him. He was very gracious.

He said, and right as they were finishing up and I think they stood up, Bob said to him something about whether he rested in Christ. And he said, well, yeah. Yeah, I do.

And he said that after that, Bob began to call him brother. He said when Bob would pray for him, Bob would pray for him as a brother. He said in the church meetings, he would ask him to pray as a brother.

He said that just cut him to the heart. Because he knew he wasn't. He knew his life didn't measure up to the Christianity around him that he saw.

And I went to, I asked Bob about that after I heard the story. I said, Bob, did you think the guy was a Christian? He said, I don't remember if he said 80 or 90, but he said one of the two. He said, you know, I was 80% or 90% positive he was not a Christian.

But you know what? Because of that slight possibility he was, Bob was led to speak in the most gracious manner. And I look at that and I think that that's the same kind of feel that you get from the writer of Hebrews. Just gracious.

Not blind, but gracious. So, I don't think we have to get all bent out of shape when the writer of Hebrews calls somebody brothers. Being charitable in the way that he deals with that.

The second thing, a second observation. If someone falls away from the living God, according to verse 14, they prove they never had any share with Christ, right? You prove you have a share with Christ if you endure, you are steadfast, confident, to the end. But if you fall away, you prove you never had any share with Christ, right? So how can someone who never had a share with Christ fall away from the living God when he never belonged to the living God in the first place? Does that create a problem with any of you? I think the truth is it doesn't need to.

What do I mean? Do you remember one day when a certain scribe came to Jesus and said to Him, Lord, what is the greatest commandment? And he went and he said, loving God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength, loving your neighbor as yourself. And remember how the scribe answered? He said, that's right. Those commandments are the chief.

They're higher and better and to do that than all burnt offering and sacrifice. And you remember what Jesus said to Him? You are not far from the kingdom. Now brethren, last summer, I mean a year ago summer, my family went out to the Colorado Rockies.

Joshua and I climbed a mountain. Copper or something. Brethren, the truth is you can come close to a mountain without climbing it, right? A man can come close to marrying a young lady, buy her a ring, plan a wedding, tell her that he loves her without ever marrying her and falling away from that.

I mean I can go up to a mountain, not climb it and turn and stray away from it. A young man can come close to a woman, close to marrying and not do it and then let his affections go away to another woman, right? I mean the truth is that when we come close to something, we can stray from and fall away to whatever extent we were close, right? I mean the guy that was close to the kingdom through hardness of heart, he could have fallen away from being close. And so we don't have to get really bent out of shape with that kind of thing.

Brethren, this is real life. This is no mystery to us. We do see those who start well.

They sincerely want heaven. They hear about Jesus. They hear about the blood.

They hear about redemption. They hear about the cross. They hear that their sins can be taken away.

They don't like the sound of hell. They say, I like that. I'm going to believe that.

I'm going to receive that. I want that. We know of people like that.

They take that. They come close. They come so close your eye and my eye can't see exactly where they're at.

They're that close. It looks good. They endure for a while.

But then you know how it is. We've seen this. I mean sometimes it's not but a week.

And sometimes it's twenty years. But you know what happens? That trial comes. You say, what trial? The water's bitter.

Moses, weren't there enough graves in Egypt that brought us out of here? You see the trial comes not where you say, Lord, if you can bring ten plagues on Egypt and you can divide the Red Sea, what is it to you to make water not bitter? See, that's what the Christian does. He bows in submission. Lord, you've brought me here to a waterless land and I'm going to trust you.

You said you'd never leave me or forsake me. You said that everything's going to work out for my good. I trust you.

But this person, they come to that trial. It's the trial. And you know what that trial does to them? Their nose points back to Egypt.

Back to the world. That trial. Brethren, we see it happen.

It's reality. Utterly, utterly terrifying place to be. It's that trial where it's just, it's too hard, Lord! It's too much! I've endured so many things and this is just too much! You're asking more than I can give.

You want me to go into that land and I look in there and I see giants and I'm a grasshopper. Nope, this is too much. I've walked the Christian life thus far.

It was better back there. The onion and the leeks and the garlic, the fish, I like it better. I want to go back to the old thing.

You see, you can see stalwart, gray-bearded Abraham. The writer of Hebrews says, oh, if he had wanted to, he could have gone back to the country he came from, but he didn't turn his nose back. We find by faith, by faith he pressed forward.

But it sandstorms. You go ahead. You've got promise.

God is with you. But this person, God has called them to something hard and they're bitter. They're unbelieving.

They don't want to do it. They don't want God to help them. They want their own way.

This is not the script that they thought they were going to be given. And so they turn their nose back towards Egypt. And brethren, it is a terrifying place to be.

And this is exactly what we're leading up to in Hebrews 6 where it says, to have once been enlightened, to have once tasted the heavenly gift, shared in the Holy Spirit, have tasted the goodness of the Word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then fall away. This isn't just theory here. Real people come so close, so close your eye and my eye can't discern.

But when the trial comes, you know what happens? When the trial comes, Egypt is more desirable than Christ. Rather than having Christ and humbling themselves to trust Him and do what's right, Egypt is where they rebel. And they may not so much talk about getting a leader to take them back to Egypt, but by their actions, they show it.

Suddenly you see them, by their choices, their desire for soul winning, for intimate reading of the Scriptures and prayer, fasting, missions, Egypt's more desirable. That blessed sweetness in Christ gives way to the attractions of Egypt. Brethren, just fearful, fearful.

That's how somebody never really saved can fall away. They came so close to all this light, like Matt said, to all this light. Matt was talking about in the Sunday school.

So close. And in the end, that trial came. Because remember, this is all being compared to those Hebrews in the wilderness.

That trial comes. No water. Brethren, what we find here, it isn't just faith in the beginning.

Listen, I went back and I studied those Hebrews in the wilderness. I looked at every place they complained. I looked at their journey from Egypt all the way out and their wanderings for forty years.

And you know what I find? I find that when they saw the miracle, they believed. In the beginning they were happy to come out of Egypt. It's great.

They got all the silver and the gold and the riches of Egypt and they're heading out. We're free. No more bondage.

The Red Sea parts. It's glorious. They get to the other side.

They're singing. Miriam's dancing. They've got this song.

And they know more than go a little ways into the wilderness and the water is bitter. And a little further and there's no water. And a little further and there's no food.

Immediately, they don't. Oh, it's great in the beginning. But now God calls them to live by faith.

And time and again, they're complaining. After all they've seen in God. You see how they throw away their confidence? It's in the trial.

They don't look and say, oh Lord, we're not going to complain because there's no water here? Not when we've got a God like You. I mean, can you imagine complaining and thinking about going back to Egypt when there's a pillar of fire and smoke? You say, wow, what a hard unbelief. Brethren, it's no different than what happens right in our own generation.

People will sit and watch and they'll see God be so faithful to God's people, faithful to this church, saving and radically changing people. And then some hard thing comes in their life and they say, Lord, I just don't want to trust You to take me through it. I'd rather go back to Egypt.

And I'm going to complain and be bitter and mumble. So brethren, people can fall away even though they never genuinely would. They can come close.

How about a third observation? Another observation from these verses. Brethren, look at verse 13. Exhort one another every day as long as it is called today that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

You know what I see here? I see the Christian walking through life and I see sin waging an all-out raging battle against the Christian. That's what I see. Brethren, do you know what this text tells us? You can just read across it so easily.

What I see in this is the Christian is in constant danger of falling away from the living God by sin that is coming along with its deceptions, deceptions, deceptions. This so much reminds me of Ephesians 4 where we are told to stay steadfastly in this unity of faith and the knowledge of the Son of God so that we're no longer like these children just being tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, what do we do? We speak the truth in love.

You see, we speak truth. Why? Because we walk through a world where we are literally bombarded by deception. You know what hardness is? Hardness is when I don't respond to truth.

That's what it is. You see, they're hard. What does that mean? That means when you confront them with truth, they're not responsive to it.

And this is the danger we have. We walk through a world where radio and TV and newspaper and colleges and so much of what professes to be religion, it just bombs us, bombs us with error, error, error, and that's why Scripture says we need to be speaking the truth in love. Speak truth, speak truth, speak truth.

I'm really concerned about this. Look, I know that there are a lot of young people in this church and you guys run out and you love to listen to all the popular preachers today, but I'll tell you this, you test everything. Don't say it just because somebody you like said it.

I was just telling somebody the other day, look, when it comes to marriage and courting and dating and all that, just don't go out and look at what the popular guys that you like out there and are so popular on the internet and everywhere else, don't listen to them and go around and spread it like it's dogmatic God-spoken truth. Test it by the Scriptures. If the Scriptures don't say it, be very careful about being dogmatic.

We need truth. It's truth that matters and Thy Word is truth. Christ is truth.

Brethren, we are assaulted. Assaulted. I mean, brethren, when somebody becomes hard, what does this look like? Well, they become deceived.

They become hardened by sin. It's just that. It's deceived, which means what? It means that what they do and say reveal a drift away from truth.

It means, have you ever seen somebody that starts to drift? What do they start saying? What do they start doing? How do they start thinking? You know what they begin to do? They begin to justify their sin. Is it justifiable? No, but that's what they do. Why? Because they're moving away from truth.

You watch somebody move away from truth. They begin to blame shift. Their sin is somebody else's fault.

Adam is moving away from truth. It's her. Lord, that's the kind of thing you see.

They justify their sin. They see themselves in the right. They see themselves as the victim.

Well, we wouldn't even be in this place if God hadn't brought us out here in the wilderness and brought us into a place with no water. We wouldn't even be here. Lord, it's the woman You gave me.

Blame shifting. We blame other people. We blame God.

God, this is Your fault. I wouldn't be in this place if You hadn't given that wife to me or if You hadn't brought me out here in the wilderness or if You hadn't brought us up to the very land of Canaan. Lord, it was You, by the way, who put those giants in the land.

We wouldn't even be afraid right now if You put little Chinese people in there or something. Instead, they're the offspring of...who are they the offspring of? They were the Nephilim, right? Giants. We wouldn't even be like grasshoppers if You wouldn't have done that.

But that's what happens when somebody's moving away, unresponsive to truth. They begin to blame others, blame God. Brethren, they start to talk like they're the victims.

I've seen this as people are drifting away. Suddenly, all of a sudden, I mean, Charles Leiter told me this one time. He said it's amazing.

Anytime people are like on their way out of the church, suddenly they're blaming the elders. I mean, that's what he's seeing. That is not foreign.

It's Your fault. You didn't pastor me right. It's somebody else's fault.

Brethren, you know what happens to people as they begin to drift this way? They lose their reason. You talk to them with truth and it's like they can't hear you. They don't want to hear you.

They want their own way. And you know what, they actually on one hand they'll blame God, but then on the other hand they think that God actually is understanding of their sin. They think God understands.

God basically is smiling on their situation. They begin to think their sin is no big deal. Have you ever seen this one? They begin to redefine right and wrong.

They begin to redefine true Christianity. Have you ever seen that one? I have. Going hard after God doesn't seem to really matter anymore.

They kind of justify that a light, leisurely approach to Christianity is very acceptable. I don't have to take up arms and battle through this life and doing all to stand. I can kind of relax.

I can kind of coast. It's not a big deal. What's going on? They're just sliding away from truth.

What verse 13 tells us, we face a fierce battle in this life. Brethren, we've got to stay anchored to truth. I had a woman email me not too long ago and she told me that she was dialoguing with an atheist and now it had her all shaken up.

I wrote her and she said, and he led me to this video. And she said, would you please watch it and give me your comment. I said, no I'm not going to watch it.

And I said, you shouldn't be watching it either and you shouldn't be dialoguing with this guy. I said, you need to be spending your time in the truth. Brethren, we need to stay anchored to truth.

We're in a battle that is leading us constantly. You know what? It's like walking in an absolute gale force wind of error. And we are supposed to make our way through this.

Brethren, remember what believing is. Believing isn't the fact that you don't believe anything. Believing is believing truth.

It's believing everything that is real about Christ and trusting Him. It's believing the promises of God and trusting them, putting your weight on them. Faith is staying anchored to what is true.

Well, here's a fourth observation. Let me just say this on that third one. We are in this realm where we are attacked by error.

But it just seems to me and in the light of the context we have here, do you know when you are most susceptible to error? I think when you're in trial. Right? I mean, can you see how we would come to that conclusion? Because when you're in trial, that's right where the devil comes in with all of his lies and he says, you serve a hard task master. Egypt was better than this.

All you've got is manna. Stinking manna. You can't live on that.

That's Christ. You can't live on that. The things the world has to offer are far better.

You go sit down with your Bible and that's just stale. You come over here and enjoy all these things, it's better. It's better.

You're in that difficult situation. Come on. If you just bend the rules a little bit, you can get out of it.

God won't care. God will certainly understand. God doesn't want you to suffer.

You see, error, error, error. When we're hurting, suffering, under pressure, that's when our ears are more in tune to hear the lies. Brethren, that's when we especially have to watch out.

When you are suffering, when things are hard, when you're hurting, that's when you need to really pay attention. Am I believing truth here? That's why it is so absolutely essential. Brethren, we've got to be in the Word of God all the time.

All the time. You listen to preachers, listen to the best ones. Don't listen to error.

Don't mess around. Don't go out and read books you know are garbage. Especially young Christians.

It is not for you to figure out how to be these apologists, to learn how to answer all these arguments and all this error. Immerse yourself in truth, truth, truth. Christ, He is the way, the truth.

Immerse yourself in Christ, Christ, Christ, Christ. And the fourth observation is this. If God has designed, you see what happens? We come along and we exhort and what do we do? We speak the truth in love.

And if we do that, in the church, we should especially be looking for those who are suffering. Because we need to realize when you suffer, that's according to chapter 2, that's when the temptation comes. The temptation to buy into a lie.

Jesus never fell into sin. Because He never was deceived. Brethren, you see, deceitfulness of sin.

Every sin we commit, there is deception behind it. We've fallen for a lie. We've said, oh, that's better than Christ.

Every one of them. But Christ never did that. Christ never chose sin over complete obedience to His Father.

Not ever. He walked according to truth. Well, here's the thing.

If our exhortations and speaking the truth in love and coming alongside our brothers and our sisters and saying, especially in time of trial in their life, helping them, speaking truth to them, exhorting and encouraging and urging them on. Press on, brother. Press on, sister.

This momentary light affliction is not worth comparing to that eternal weight of glory. Press on. Press on.

If that's true, where does sin want to get you to take full advantage of you? Isolation. Guaranteed. Right? Sin likes to be alone.

That's why one of the big indicators when somebody's not doing well is suddenly being around Christians. You know, there was a time when they loved to be around Christians. All of a sudden, those who are most zealous, most likely to ask them hard questions, they tend to start wanting to avoid.

Coming to services becomes less important because sin likes to get you away from that. Remove you. Put you there by yourself.

Brothers and sisters, listen to this. If it's true our exhortations are used by God for the saving, the preventing of our brothers and sisters from falling away from the living God, if that's what those exhortations are designed to do, brethren, do it strategically. Do it with purpose.

In other words, there are ways for dealing with people who are struggling against the errors of this world in a false religion. I mean, you find it all through the Scriptures. In fact, right here in the book of Hebrews, how do we deal with people? I mean, if you come along and you find somebody that's in danger of slipping away, how do we exhort them? How do we encourage them? Just the way the writer of Hebrews has been doing.

What's he been doing? He says, okay, here's angels, here's Christ. Christ is better. He is superior.

Here's Moses. Here's Christ. He's better.

He's superior. Over the house. And he keeps doing this, comparing, comparing, comparing.

That's one of the ways. And brethren, do you see the glory in this? Do you see why God would do this? You say, God didn't have to do that. God could have just chosen us and taken us straight to heaven.

Why all this life? Why all this exhorting? Why would God even design it that way? You see, He does it because it brings tremendous glory to Jesus Christ. You say, how? Because the very way we're preserved and kept from falling is by our exhorting one another. And if we're going to confront deceitfulness of sin, then we're going to speak the truth in love and build ourselves up into this very image of Christ.

We're going to be talking about Christ. You want to encourage somebody who's not giving, like the Corinthians. What does Paul do? He comes over.

Corinthians. Behold Christ. He was rich and He became poor.

For you, that you might become rich. You see how truth, truth, truth. We always, brethren, and we're people that need to be reminded of the same truths over and over and over again.

Why? Because we're under such a barrage of error all the time. We are so prone to being led away from that. And God has designed it so that as we speak to one another about Christ and all of His glories and all of that truth that pours forth from the Word of God, you see then the very chemistry, the dynamic within the life of the church.

We have Christians saving Christians, but they don't do it so that the Christian gets the glory. They do it in such a way that they're speaking of Christ all the time. Christ and truth and Christ and truth.

And so what happens as the church builds itself up in love, Christ is absolutely magnified in the very life and community of a healthy church. And brethren, if that's the case, then I can tell you this. The church is essential to your salvation.

Community life is not optional for the Christian. I mean, this same writer later on is going to say, do not forsake the assembling together of yourselves. And why not? You need to be together encouraging one another.

And all the more as you see that day approaching. By the way, that word encouraging is our same one exhortation right here in 3.13. It's the same thing. You don't want to forsake.

Why? Because when you come together, you stir one another up to love and good works. It's not only that you keep them from falling away, you keep them in a way of zealously being involved in all these good works. Serving Christ.

Running for Christ. Brethren, this is how we fight the good fight of faith. It is by surrounding... Brethren, this is the picture of a healthy church where you have people that are not intimidated and they're not afraid.

And they speak the truth to one another. Especially those that they see are in the time of testing. They're in a day of trial.

Pressing them onward, onward. Brother, sister, press on. Press on.

I mean, you come up to somebody, brother, I know, I know God is calling you to a real difficult time right now. But you think about Christ hanging and bleeding. You think about His cry of utter desperation.

My God, my God, why have you forsaken Me? Brother, God has not called you. Sister, God has not called you to suffer anything near or like what Christ has suffered. Look at Him.

He resisted sin to the shedding of blood. My brother, my sister, you have not yet resisted sin to the shedding of your blood. There's a prize at the end.

We will behold Christ face to face. You don't want to come so close for so long and harden your heart and lose it all. You don't want to lose it all.

And this is no right matter. And I'll tell you, the people that are closest to the edge least think they are. Why? Because of that deception of sin and that hardness that comes in.

But we need to warn them. Brother, sister, you're close to that edge. You go over, there may be no coming back.

And as Matt said, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, more tolerable than Sodom and Gomorrah. You have this much exposure to light. I mean, not only is there a danger, but look at all that you forfeit.

Are you going to forfeit Christ? For what? Something you can't hold on to very long. The pleasures of Egypt are but for a season. Are you going to sacrifice? Are you going to give up Christ for that? Are you going to give up being held and wrapped in His arms and hear, well done, good and faithful servant? For what? Are you going to turn back? Is He not worth it? Whatever He's called you to endure, is He not worth it? Do you count eternal life such a cheap and trivial thing? All the ages forever and ever to have Him and He is yours and you are His? Whatever loves, whatever beauties that we have in this world are but a shadow.

They're a glimpse. Will you trade that? For what? That which is here today and gone tomorrow? That which no matter how hard you try, you can't hold on to. And what's He calling you to do? What does He always call us to do? Not throw away your confidence.

What does that mean? That means, okay Lord, that's Wendy saying, Lord, I don't know if I'm going to lose my daughter. I don't want to lose her. But I'm going to hold to Christ.

And I know this, if there's any way through this, You're going to carry me through. Not throwing away the confidence. I'm confident, Lord, You designed this.

You know what's going on. This is in Your strength and Your power. I'm not throwing my confidence away.

You're my only hope. And I want You more than ease in this life. I want You more than even the salvation of my children.

But Lord, if my children will be saved, it's going to be You that do it. And I saw You weep over a city. And if You're the Savior that wept over a city, I just believe You might have a heart to weep over my daughter.

And I'm not going anywhere else. You're the God that divided the Red Sea. You're the God that took the Hebrews of old into the land of Canaan.

And You're the God that put down Pharaoh. And You're stronger than the devil. And You're stronger than sin.

And I'm putting my trust there. And I'm not turning back. I want You.

And brethren, that is how we need to be exhorting one another. We need to save one another in that capacity. Carry one another.

Bear one another. Hold one another. Brethren, that is going to be the picture of a healthy church.

We've got to make it together. Not isolated. Not alone.

It's a community project, our getting to the end. You see it there. You can't miss it.

Brethren, this kind of exhorting doesn't exalt us. We can't say, well, you know, I've saved my brother. This kind of exhorting just exalts Christ.

And you can see exactly why God would do it that way. Because He designs for His people as they go through the wilderness of this life to just fuel the confidence. That confidence all the time.

Christ is supreme. He is the radiance. He is more excellent.

Constant. You all see that? Can you see it from that text? Being involved in a local church is how God designed Christians to make it through this wilderness without becoming hardened by the deceitfulness of sin and falling away. Will God help us see it, believe it, and press on and exhort one another? Be exhorters, brethren.

You can see this takes communication, takes talk, takes sometimes coming out of our comfort zone. Will God help us? Amen.

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