

The Danger of Falling Away

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Special Sermons / Apostasy; Union with Christ / Hebrews 10:19–25

In Hebrews 10:19–25, the writer encourages his readers to draw near to Christ and persevere in faith amid the danger of falling away, giving three urgent exhortations binding on all Christians.

Opening Comments

Revelation 1:12–13 LSB

¹² Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands; ¹³ and in the middle of the lampstands I saw one like a son of man, clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across His chest with a golden sash.

1 Peter 5:8 LSB

⁸ Be of sober *spirit*, be watchful. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

Introduction to our Text

I no longer go to church, no longer believe, no longer consider myself a Christian...I simply don't believe that there is a God of any sort. ~ Bart Ehrman

Sermon Text

Hebrews 10:19–25 LSB

¹⁹ Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰ by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, ²¹ and since we have a great priest over the house of God, ²² let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our

hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. ²³ Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. ²⁴ And let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, ²⁵ not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging *one another*, and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

Overview of the Epistle to the Hebrews

Proposition and Outline

In [Hebrews 10:19–25](#), the writer encourages his readers to draw near to Christ and persevere in faith amid the danger of falling away, giving three urgent exhortations binding on all Christians. He exhorts you to:

- Draw Near to Christ By Faith ([Heb 10:19–22](#))
- Hold Fast the Gospel Hope You Confess ([Heb 10:23](#))
- Consider How to Spur One Another to Love and Good Works ([Heb 10:24–25](#))

Discussion Questions

According to the opening comments, how does Scripture describe the gathering of God’s people? What does it mean that Christ “walks among His churches”?

Why does Pastor Brandon emphasize that the church is not merely a social club? What makes the gathering of believers fundamentally different from other organizations?

In [1 Peter 5:8](#), what danger do Christians face, and how does the sermon connect that danger to isolation? Why might spiritual danger increase when believers are disconnected from the church?

What common pattern did Pastor Brandon identify in the stories of those who fell away from the faith? What does “a gradual loss of confidence” look like in real life?

Why does Hebrews emphasize confidence rather than fear when addressing perseverance? How does [Hebrews 10:19–21](#) ground confidence in Christ’s work?

What does the sermon suggest is the difference between struggling with questions and drifting away from Christ? When can doubt become spiritually dangerous?

Why is it significant that Hebrews addresses people who were “not openly rebellious, but slowly sliding away”? How does this challenge common assumptions about apostasy?

How do the warning passages in Hebrews function according to the sermon?

What are some pressures today that can quietly erode confidence in Christ, the gospel, or the church? Which of these pressures feel most real to you personally?

Have you ever experienced a season where your confidence in Christ felt weakened? What contributed to that season? What helped restore your confidence?

How do suffering, unanswered questions, or besetting sin affect a believer’s desire to draw near to Christ? Which of these tends to pull you away most strongly?

According to the sermon, why has God designed the Christian life to be lived in nearness rather than isolation? How does the church function as a means of protection and encouragement?

What practical steps help a believer “draw near to Christ by faith” rather than withdraw during difficulty? What does drawing near look like on an ordinary week?

Why is it important to remember that the exhortations in Hebrews are responses to what Christ has already done, not steps toward earning access to God? How does this protect us from legalism or despair?

Draw Near to Christ By Faith ([Heb 10:19-22](#))

Hebrews 10:19-22 LSB

¹⁹ Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰ by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, ²¹ and since *we have* a great priest over the house of God, ²² let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

We Can Enter the Holy Places by the Blood of Jesus

Hebrews 10:20 LSB

²⁰ by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh,

We have a great priest over the house of God

Hebrews 10:21 LSB

²¹ and since *we have* a great priest over the house of God,

Ephesians 2:6 LSB

⁶ and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus,

Let us Draw Near

Hebrews 10:22 LSB

²² let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

Jeremiah 3:10 LSB

¹⁰ “Yet in spite of all this, her treacherous sister Judah did not return to Me with all her heart, but rather in lying,” declares Yahweh.

Jeremiah 24:7 LSB

⁷ ‘I will give them a heart to know Me, for I am Yahweh; and they will be My people, and I will be their God, for they will return to Me with their whole heart.

Hebrews 10:22 LSB

²² let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

Hebrews 9:14 LSB

¹⁴ how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

Genesis 3:7-8 LSB

⁷ And the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings.

⁸ Then they heard the sound of Yahweh God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of Yahweh God in the midst of the trees of the garden.

Ephesians 2:8-9 LSB

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; ⁹ not of works, so that no one may boast.

What is the main command in [Hebrews 10:22](#), and what does it call believers to do? Why is this the first exhortation in this passage?

What two reasons does the writer give in [Hebrews 10:19-21](#) for why we can draw near with confidence?

Why is the word “therefore” in verse 19 so important? What does it tell us about the relationship between doctrine and obedience?

How does the blood of Jesus give believers confidence to enter God's presence?
How is this different from access under the Old Testament sacrificial system?

What does it mean that Jesus opened a "new and living way" through His flesh?
Why is Christ's death described as a "living" way?

Why is it significant that Jesus is described as a "great priest over the house of God"? How does Christ's ongoing intercession encourage confidence rather than fear?

How do the promises in [Jeremiah 24:7](#) help explain what it means to draw near "with a sincere heart"?

What are some reasons believers today may struggle to draw near to God, even though access has been secured through Christ?

How does an "evil conscience" affect the way people relate to God? In what ways can guilt still cause Christians to hide, like Adam and Eve?

Have you ever found yourself avoiding prayer, worship, or Scripture because of guilt rather than running to Christ for cleansing? What does this passage say to that experience?

What does it practically look like to draw near to Christ with "full assurance of faith" during an ordinary week?

Why is it important to remember that faith itself is a gift from God and not a work we perform? How does this protect us from pride or despair?

The sermon said, "If Christ has cleansed your conscience, you no longer need to hide from God." What habits or thought patterns might still cause us to live as though we should hide?

How does understanding Christ's finished work change the way we approach God after sin?

Hold Fast the Gospel Hope You Confess ([Heb 10:23](#))

Hebrews 10:23 LSB

²³ Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.

Election and the Perseverance of the Saints

Ephesians 1:4 LSB

⁴ just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him in love,

Romans 10:9 LSB

⁹ that if you confess with your mouth Jesus *as* Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved;

Romans 1:4 LSB

⁴ who was designated as the Son of God in power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord,

1 Corinthians 6:11 LSB

¹¹ And such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.

Philippians 2:12–13 LSB

¹² So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling;

Philippians 2:12–13 LSB

¹³ for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for *His* good pleasure.

Hebrews 10:23 LSB

²³ Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.

John 10:27–30 LSB

²⁷ “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; ²⁸ and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish—ever; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. ²⁹ “My Father, who has given *them* to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch *them* out of the Father’s hand. ³⁰ “I and the Father are one.”

A hopeless believer is a contradiction in terms. ~ John MacArthur

One who lets go has lost hope, and one who still has hope will still hold on. Continuing is a mark of both faith and hope. Holding on does not keep us saved, any more than good works will make us saved. But both are evidence that we are saved. ~ John MacArthur

Discussion Questions

According to [Hebrews 10:23](#), what are believers commanded to do, and why? What does it mean to “hold fast”? What is the “confession of our hope”?

What reason does the writer of Hebrews give for holding fast without wavering? How does God’s faithfulness shape our confidence?

Why is it important that Hebrews uses the word “confession”? What does this suggest about the public nature of Christian faith?

How does the doctrine of election help us understand the command to “hold fast”? Why doesn’t God’s sovereignty cancel human responsibility?

According to the sermon, how are election, faith, and perseverance related? What is the difference between the cause of salvation and the evidence of salvation?

Why is “holding fast” not the same as earning or maintaining salvation? How does this protect us from legalism?

How does [Hebrews 10:23](#) fit with Jesus' promise in [John 10:27-30](#)? How do these passages together encourage assurance?

What does "holding fast" look like in everyday Christian life? How is it lived out during seasons of doubt, suffering, or discouragement?

When pressure increases in your life, what tempts you to loosen your grip on the gospel? Fear of conflict? Desire for comfort? Weariness or unresolved questions?

Have you ever experienced a season where your hope in Christ felt shaken? What helped you continue holding fast during that time?

Why is the idea that "holding fast is evidence, not the cause, of salvation" comforting? How does this shape how you view your struggles with sin?

Why does the sermon emphasize that perseverance is not a private matter? How does God use the church to help believers hold fast?

What are some practical ways our small group can help one another hold fast to the gospel?

How can we recognize when someone in the group is quietly losing confidence in Christ or the gospel? What should our response be when we notice this?

What would it look like for this group to create a culture where honest struggle is met with gospel hope?

Consider How to Spur One Another to Love and Good Works ([Heb 10:24-25](#))

Hebrews 10:24-25 LSB

²⁴ And let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, ²⁵ not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging *one another*, and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

The Assembly of the Saints

Hebrews 10:25 LSB

²⁵ not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging *one another*, and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

Hebrews 10:25 LSB

²⁵ not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging *one another*, and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

Conclusion:

Habit 1: Nearness to Christ([Heb 10:22](#))

Habit 2: Steadfast Confession ([Heb 10:23](#))

Habit 3: Intentional Consideration ([Heb 10:24–25](#))

Discussion Questions

Why do you think human beings are naturally drawn to ritual, ceremony, and outward forms of worship?

According to Hebrews, why are even God-given rituals (under the Old Covenant) ultimately insufficient to save?

How can good things—like liturgy, tradition, or church structure—quietly replace Christ Himself as the object of our trust?

Where do you see the subtle mindset of “If I do these things, then God will bless me” creeping into modern Christianity?

Hebrews says we must “consider how to stimulate one another.” What does the word consider imply about intentionality and effort?

Why is stirring others toward love and good deeds something that does not happen accidentally?

In what ways can Christians be very active—yet fail to provoke love and good works in others?

What is the difference between provoking others sinfully (stirring the pot) and provoking others spiritually?

Who has most effectively stirred you toward Christlikeness, and how did they do it?

Why does the writer of Hebrews connect mutual encouragement directly to not forsaking the assembly?

What are some common reasons people today replace the gathered church with smaller, more comfortable alternatives?

Why is accountability often weaker in purely “intimate” or hobby-based Christian relationships?

How does interaction with believers who are different from us contribute to spiritual growth?

What kinds of spiritual growth are nearly impossible apart from the regular gathering of the whole church?

Why does Scripture consistently portray isolation as spiritually dangerous?

How does withdrawing from the church weaken discernment and dull conviction?

Why are Christians often slow to recognize isolation as a serious spiritual threat?

How does the image of predators targeting isolated animals help us understand Satan’s strategy?

In what ways have you seen isolation—personal or observed—lead to spiritual drift?

Hebrews emphasizes encouragement “all the more as you see the day drawing near.” Why does increasing darkness require increasing encouragement?

How can encouragement be both truthful and loving—especially when correction is needed?

What practical barriers keep believers from actively encouraging others?

What would change in our church if every member took encouragement seriously as a calling?

What does drawing near to Christ look like in daily life—not just in theory?

How do prayer, confession, and Scripture guard against isolation from Christ?

What does it look like to “stop hiding” from Christ?

Why is holding fast to our confession essential in a confused and hostile culture?

Where are you most tempted to soften or hide your confession of Christ?

What is the difference between attending church and actively participating in the body?

How can someone attend regularly yet still function as a passive consumer?

What is one specific way you could intentionally stimulate love or good deeds in someone this month?

Which of the three aims—Nearness, Steadfastness, or Intentionality—do you most need to grow in right now?

How can we move from discussion to deliberate action in light of [Hebrews 10](#)?

The Gospel

God

Created and owns everything

[Gen 1:1](#)—*In the beginning God created the Heavens and the Earth*

[Psalm 24:1](#)—*The earth is the Lord’s, and all it contains, the world and those who dwell in it.*

Is Perfectly Holy

[1 John 1:5](#)—*This is the message we heard from Him and announce to you that God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all.*

[Matt 5:48](#)—*Therefore you are to be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.*

Requires perfect obedience to His Law

[James 2:10](#)—*for whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all.*

Man

Has broken God's law

[Rom 3:10,23](#)—*there is none righteous, not even one...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*

Will pay the eternal penalty for his sin

[Rom. 6:23](#)—*For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord*

Cannot save himself by his good works

[Titus 3:5](#)—*He saved us not based on works which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit.*

Christ

Came to earth both as God and sinless man

[Col 2:9](#)—*For in Him the fullness of deity dwells in bodily form*

Demonstrated God's love by dying on the cross to pay sin's penalty

[Rom 5:8](#)—*But God demonstrated His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us*

[2 Cor 5:21](#)—He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Rose from the grave and is alive today

[1 Cor 15:4](#)—And that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures

Sinners

Must repent of all that dishonors God

[Isa 55:7](#)—Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return to the Lord, and He will have compassion on him and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.

[Luke 9:23](#)—if anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me.

Must believe in Christ as Lord and Savior

[Rom 10:9](#)—that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved.

Will you repent and believe in Christ?

[Acts 17:30](#)—therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance God is declaring to men that all everywhere should repent.

Don't hesitate to contact Pastor Brandon or Pastor Keith if you have any questions about this sermon or if you would like to know how to follow Christ.

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Additional Quotes

The essence of apostasy is changing sides from that of the crucified to that of the crucifier. ~ **John Robert Walmsley Stott (English Preacher)**

Apostasy must be called what it is—spiritual adultery. ~ **Francis August Schaeffer (Evangelical Missionary)**

In Hebrews corporate fellowship is the primary deterrent to apostasy. ~ **Grant R. Osborne**

Fear is the root of apostasy. ~ **Thomas Watson**

This would be the first step in apostasy; men first forget the true, and then adore the false. ~ **Charles Spurgeon**

Nearly everything about the book is debated; the one area of general agreement is that the danger addressed in the book is apostasy. ~ **Grant R. Osborne**

Unbelief is the root of apostasy. ~ **Thomas Watson**

Scripture does not need to be denied for apostasy to begin: all that is needed is that Scripture takes second place in our calculations. ~ **Iain H. Murray**

In Hebrews, in fact, there are two antidotes to apostasy: the vertical side, the confession of our hope before God; and the horizontal side, the involvement of the community in the life of the individual believer. ~ **Grant R. Osborne**

The apostate must perish, not because the sacrifice of Christ is not of efficacy enough to expiate even his guilt, but because, continuing in his apostasy, he will have nothing to do with that sacrifice which is the only available sacrifice for sin. ~ **John Brown**

Apostasy is an intentional falling away or withdrawal, a defection. ~ **John F. MacArthur**

He shows that this spiritual growth is the surest way to prevent that dreadful sin of apostasy from the faith. ~ **Matthew Henry (Nonconformist Biblical Exegete)**

Arminians teach that apostasy can reverse the results of conversion; historic Calvinists teach that people who fail to persevere were never converted to begin with. ~ **Craig Keener**

The universal witness of the NT is that apostasy if persisted in not only damns but shows that salvation was never real in the first place. ~ **D. A. Carson**

What began as toleration became apostasy. What seemed so reasonable proved lethal. Living with Canaanites led to worshiping with Canaanites. Tolerate Baal's people and sooner or later you bow at Baal's altar. ~ **Dale Ralph Davis**

We must never be surprised if the church is to be found in a state of apostasy ... If the nation of Israel could be apostate, then it is possible for anybody to be apostate. The fact that the church is the church does not prove that she is always right. The visible people of God can go all wrong ... The church must always put herself under the judgement of the word of God. ~ **David Martyn Lloyd-Jones (Welsh Preacher and Writer)**

Apostasy always moves the religious focus from the inward to the outward, from humble obedience to empty formality. ~ **John F. MacArthur**

Christ will deny those who commit apostasy, but there is sin and faithlessness that is not apostasy. All believers sin, but not all sin is the same thing as apostasy. ~ **Thomas Schreiner**

Apostasy always begins with the conduct. ~ **A. W. Tozer**

Their apostasy would be like stepping back over the line again and once more expressing solidarity with their compatriots who wanted Jesus put on the cross. ~ **Zane C. Hodges**

Apostasy is a turning away from the gospel, having once known it. ~ **John F. MacArthur**

Apostasy, as we will see, is the sin of rejecting the gospel for which there is no forgiveness. ~ **John F. MacArthur**

The closest thing to a definition of apostasy in Hebrews is found in “we willfully keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth” ~ **Grant R. Osborne**

Those who fall away have never been thoroughly imbued with the knowledge of Christ but only had a slight and passing taste of it. ~ **John Calvin (French Reformer)**

When secular interests, wealth, houses, lands and possessions are endangered, then many fall away from Christ. ~ **John Calvin (French Reformer)**

It is not falling into the water, but lying in the water, that drowns. It is not falling into sin, but lying in sin, that damns. ~ **Thomas Brooks**

The more anyone excels in grace, the more he ought to be afraid of falling. ~ **John Calvin (French Reformer)**

He who can keep the saint from stumbling can bring the sinner into the right way. The same grace that can preserve the child of God from falling into sin can bring you out of sin. And as we have to look wholly to Christ, certainly you must do so. ~ **Charles Spurgeon**

If one justified person may fall away from Christ, all may; and so Christ would be a head without a body. ~ **Thomas Watson**

Yet the readers were in danger of doing this very thing by shrinking from persecution and thus being inclined to think less and less of Christ and again falling in love with their former Judaism. ~ **Richard Charles Henry Lenski (American Lutheran Pastor)**

That doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints is, I believe, as thoroughly bound up with the standing or falling of the gospel as is the article of justification by faith. Give that up, and I see no gospel left. ~ **Charles Spurgeon**

I venture to assert that even falling into sin, or backsliding, because of our relationship to God can work for our ultimate good, and help to produce our final glorification. ~ **David Martyn Lloyd-Jones (Welsh Preacher and Writer)**

God is powerful enough to prevent you from stumbling into sin and falling away from Him, no matter how intense Satan's attacks might be. ~ **John F. MacArthur**