

A Persevering Faith

I am so glad that you were able to make it," said Kiara to her friend Samara.

Kiara had run into her old friend at a mutual friend's wedding a few weeks ago. Both women were still living for Christ, though each was facing challenges. For the 34-year-old Kiara, it was still being single.

Then there was Samara, her divorced friend and mother of two. Samara was longing for a good, full-time job.

"Why is it that going to weddings can be like going to class reunions?" Kiara asked after the waitress had left their table.

"I know!" said Samara. "Where are you working now, Kiara? Are you still going to church all the time?"

"When are you ever going to get married, Kiara?" chimed in Samara. "Do you want to get married? Why don't you ask God for a husband?"

The two women started to laugh together. Throughout the lunch, Kiara and Samara broke bread, but shared the most important thing between them—Christ. The two women encouraged one another in the things of the Lord.

"This lunch has been such a blessing," said Samara.

"Yes. It was like deep calling to deep, and iron sharpening iron," added Kiara. "We don't know what tomorrow holds for us, sister. But we know Christ. He has control of our tomorrows, and we can trust Him."

"Amen," said Samara.

- 1.** *How does discouragement affect our faith and relationship with God?*
- 2.** *How can encouragement from fellow believers support and help us persevere in our faith?*
- 3.** *What have you observed or contributed in a meeting of Christians in which group members were encouraged and supported in their faith?*

LESSON FOCUS: Encourage each other in your shared faith and remain unwavering.

Unwavering Faith

Hebrews 10:23-25, KJV

23 Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;)

24 And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:

25 Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

Hebrews 10:23-25, NIV

²³Let us hold unwaveringly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.

²⁴And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, ²⁵not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

God's people can hold unwaveringly to our faith because we know that our God is faithful to His promises. Consider the resurrection hope that God's children have, a compelling reason to cling tenaciously to our faith in Him. Because Jesus lives, we can have unwavering faith that God will one day raise us from the grave as well.

The second reason for keeping a firm grip on our faith is that there is a day of reckoning coming sometime in the future. Even now, we can see the approaching "Day" (vs. 25), a reference to the day of Christ's return. We still look forward to His return, holding firmly to our faith in Him.

Our preparation for this "Day" must include God-honoring living, but we need God's strength to live in a manner that glorifies Him. He has given us our brothers and sisters in Christ to exhort and encourage us to do so. This is why we must meet with fellow believers and "spur" (vs. 24) one another to love and to do good deeds.

4. *How are God's people to hold fast to their faith in Him?*

5. *What two compelling reasons do we have to*

persevere in our faith in God?

6. *Why should God's people meet together?*

Uncompromising Faith

Hebrews 10:26-31, KJV

26 For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins,

27 But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.

28 He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses:

29 Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?

30 For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people.

31 It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Hebrews 10:26-31, NIV

²⁶If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left,²⁷but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God. ²⁸Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. ²⁹How much more severely do you think someone deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified them, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace?

³⁰For we know him who said, "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," and again, "The Lord will judge his people."³¹ It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

The importance of God's people meeting and encouraging one another to righteous living is now underscored in these verses. Bible scholars have various understandings of what these verses mean for Christ's followers, but all agree

that willful, continual sin against God is worthy of His righteous judgment. From God's perspective, those who willfully continue in their sin, shaking their spiritual fists in His face, are in fact trampling underfoot His dear Son. In so doing, they treat the precious blood that He shed for their sins as something unclean and unholy.

Furthermore, this willful sinning tramples underfoot the Son of God, vilifies His precious blood, and treats the Holy Spirit despitely. Considering all this, it is small wonder that such behavior is absolutely condemned by God. Vengeance is the Lord's, and He will repay.

Knowing the seriousness of such sin, we can see why it is so important to persevere in faith, no matter what trials or temptations we have. Because perseverance in our faith is so important, so too is gathering to encourage and admonish one another to persevere.

7. *What does willful, deliberate persistent sin do to the Son of God, as well as to the Spirit of grace?*

8. *Considering the seriousness of such sin, what do these sinners deserve?*

9. *Considering the seriousness of such sin, what should God's people do?*

Unrelenting Faith

Hebrews 10:32-36, KJV

32 But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions;

33 Partly, whilst ye were made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used.

34 For ye had compassion of

Hebrews 10:32-36, NIV

³²Remember those earlier days after you had received the light, when you endured in a great conflict full of suffering. ³³Sometimes you were publicly exposed to insult and persecution; at other times you stood side by side with those who were so treated. ³⁴You suffered along

me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance.

35 Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward.

36 For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.

with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions.

³⁵So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded.

³⁶You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised.

Our lesson closes with more hope to persevere unswervingly in our faith. When we recall past trials, tribulations, even persecutions, and how God faithfully saw us through them, we are encouraged to persevere in current or future tests of our faith. This is why these believers were to recall earlier days when they faithfully walked in God's light through the dark times of persecution and humiliation for their faith in Christ. They not only faithfully stood for the Lord during those dark days, but they also stood unswervingly with others who suffered like afflictions. Because they stood with fellow imprisoned believers, the persecuting authorities confiscated the property of these believers.

Even so, they joyfully stood in faith as they endured the loss of their earthly possessions, knowing that in heaven they had better, eternal possessions. Jesus Himself promised "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven" (Matt. 5:11-12).

10. *What are God's people to remember that will help them stand in unswerving faith?*

11. *Where should God's people place their confidence?*

12. *How can we gain greater assurance of future reward?*

Standing Firm in Our Faith

We are not called to hold fast to our faith without good reason. Our Scripture passage reminds us that God faithfully keeps His promises—in the past as well as in the future. We are encouraged to hold steadfastly to our faith in Him because a day of reckoning will come; Jesus lives and will return for His faithful followers. While we wait in faith for our future resurrection with Jesus, our goal is to live holy lives before the Lord. We cannot do this in our own strength without meeting together with fellow believers.

It is possible for those who are part of a Christian community to commit horrible, continual sin even “after [they] have received the knowledge of the truth” (Heb. 10:26). Those who live this way in essence trample the Son of God under foot, living as if His sacrifice was unnecessary. God will punish those who insult the Spirit of grace in this way. When we are tempted to fall into willful disobedience, it is important to meet with fellow believers to stand strong in our faith. Their encouragement can help us withstand trials and temptations so our faith will not be compromised.

God’s past faithfulness encourages us to persevere in our own faith. We have the examples of biblical saints who walked steadfastly through persecution, meeting together with others to stand firm in their faith. They endured earthly loss because they trusted and believed God for their eternal future. In the same way, God will reward our steadfast faith and confidence in Him. Our hope in an eternal future with God helps us walk closely with Him now and strengthens our faith to persevere.

13. *What have you done this week to hold fast to your faith in God?*

14. *How can you guard and protect your faith when you face trials or temptations?*

15. *How does fellowship and encouragement from fellow believers help you remain firm in your faith?*

Encouraging One Another in Steadfast Faith

One important way to develop an unswerving faith is to meet with fellow believers for encouragement and support as we seek to live in a way that glorifies God.

Imagine how you might encourage fellow Christians who are older or younger to keep going and not withdraw from fellowship from the Lord and fellow believers.

► *How could older adults encourage younger adults to keep going in the faith? In what areas could younger adults support older adults to keep going in their faith?*

KEY VERSE

Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; for he is faithful that promised. —Hebrews 10:23, KJV

Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. —Hebrews 10:23, NIV

DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

Week of August 16 through August 22

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

- Mon.** Deuteronomy 13:1-4—Testing Our Love for God.
- Tues.** John 14:15-24—Love God by Keeping His Commandments.
- Wed.** 1 John 4:1, 4-6—Discerning the Spirit of Truth and Error.
- Thurs.** 1 John 4:7-12—Knowing God, We Can Love Others.
- Fri.** 1 John 5:1-3—Faith Is the Victory.
- Sat.** 1 John 5:6-12—Believers in Jesus Have Life.
- Sun.** 1 John 4:2-3, 13-17; 5:4-5—Faith that Loves Overcomes Obstacles.