

Hebrews 10:23-25: Holding Fast Together

Let's Pray.

*Heavenly Father, you have caused all Holy Scriptures to be written for our learning – grant us that we may in such a way hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them; that by patience and comfort of your holy Word, we may embrace and **ever hold fast** the blessed hope of everlasting life, which you have given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.*

So, what brings you to church this morning?

I reckon there's probably quite a variety of reasons why each of us has turned up this morning, but whatever the reason is for you, it is awesome that you are here.

In the midst of all the busy-ness of settling into a new year, with new schedules and jobs and plans, I want you to hear the encouragement, that your decision to be *here* is one of the best decisions you've made so far in 2026.

It's awesome that you're here this morning, and I say that because that's what Hebrews 10:23-25 has to say to us.

And as we prepare to look closely at those verses, the verses just before give us a bit of context, to help our understanding.

Verses 19-21 remind us that God has drawn near to us. He has made a way for us to approach him with confidence, through Jesus.

The barrier of sin, that separates us from God, has been torn down, done away with, through Jesus' death in our place and glorious resurrection. Now, anyone who trusts in Jesus can boldly approach God, as our loving heavenly father who has drawn near to us.

In light of this great truth, last Sunday Mark's challenge for you from verse 22 was to make 2026 a year of drawing near to God.

As we continue on to verse 23 now, drawing near is partnered up with **holding fast**.

So as we hear from God's Word this morning, this is my goal: I want you to know that **we can hold fast to the gospel in 2026 because God is faithful, and we must spur one another on while we wait for Jesus' return.**

We can **hold fast** to the gospel because God is faithful, and we must spur one another on while we wait for Jesus' return.

So we'll have two main points this morning. A stance, and a mindset.

Point one is our stance – holding fast, and point two is our mindset – spurring one another on.

Let's start by setting our stance. This is point one. Setting our stance.

Point 1: Setting our stance – Hold fast

It's a bit like we're Olympic weightlifters; planting our feet, taking deep breaths to get the blood pumping. Our muscles are primed, our weight and balance centred.

Focused.

Ready.

Let's get into it! Come with me to verse 23.

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

So here's our stance, it's to hold fast. No spoilers there, right? I'm hoping you've heard that by now.

But let's think more about this. As we set our stance to hold fast, what are we holding to?

We're to hold fast to the confession of our hope.

You know those times when you know a child isn't telling you the truth, but you're trying to get them to cough up what really happened? You know, who stole the cookie from the cookie jar? You tell them to 'fess up! To confess! Admit what happened! I see those cookie crumbs around your mouth!

In the similar way, we're talking about making a confession here, but in this case, our confession, is that we trust in Jesus, our saviour. The source of our hope. It's a confession that you are someone who has rejected God.

Admitting that you've turned away from him.

Admitting that you need God's help.

And so we confess that we trust in Jesus, the one who saves all who turn to him from their sin. It's the best kind of confession, a confession of hope.

That's what we're to hold fast to. To that confession of hope.

And as verse 24 adds, we're to hold fast *without wavering*.

I recently watched a show on Netflix, called *Physical 100*. It's a Korean gameshow where 100 contestants, athletes from all kinds of different sports and disciplines, compete in order to discover the peak physique. To find out who is in the best physical condition.

Now to find that out, of course, one thing you have to test is strength. So there was this one challenge, it was called 'the punishment of Atlas, where four contestants were all required to heave these giant, 50kg boulders up onto their shoulders, to see who could stand there and bear that weight for the longest. The winner held out for just over two hours!

As they all stood there, bearing the weight, you could see each of them beginning to waver, as they tried to focus on maintaining their stance and keeping that 50kg boulder held high. The longer they held out, the more they wavered as their muscles grew tired and their strength faded.

We are being urged here in verse 23 to hold fast *without wavering*. But anyone who does weight training of any kind will tell you that the longer you try to hold fast, the more the wavering will creep in. Strength fades. Fatigue sets in.

I wonder if you have felt that way in your Christian faith. Are you wavering? Has your strength faded? Are you losing sight of what you are trying to hold fast to?

Maybe you're facing the year ahead, and you see only a mountain to climb, a struggle to endure.

Brothers and sisters, I want you to know that in these moments, you are not alone. In fact there is deep assurance for us here in this passage, as we consider the hardest of times, the moments that feel like they might shake our faith to its very core.

The perfect antidote to our wavering, the needed care our heartache, the words of comfort and assurance we need to hear when it seems like holding fast to hope is impossible, are here in these verses.

It's God's faithfulness. Notice again the end of verse 23.

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

When the question on our lips is, "How can I possibly hold fast in the midst of this?" There is only one place to turn, to the one who can and will meet you in your time of need, again and again.

God is faithful.

We have to be able to call it to mind in these moments. The Psalms give us a great example of this – scattered all throughout the book of Psalms, we see song writers calling to mind the faithfulness of God. In the midst of thanksgiving, in lament, in praise, in toil and trial. Through all of life, the Psalmists hold fast to the knowledge that God is faithful. That He is their strength.

For example Psalm 77 is a Psalm of great struggle. Of heartache and lament. In it we hear from a person who has been pushed right to the brink, wondering if God will meet them in their despair.

But the Psalmist answers their own question. By recalling how the Lord has been faithful to his people. By looking back through history, to see how again and again, God has been faithful to Israel, and saved them in their time of need. Here's Psalm 77 from verse 10:

*Then I said, "I will appeal to this, to the years of the right hand of the Most High."
11 I will remember the deeds of the LORD; yes, I will remember your wonders of old. 12 I will ponder all your work, and meditate on your mighty deeds. 13 Your way, O God, is holy. What god is great like our God? 14 You are the God who works wonders; you have made known your might among the peoples.*

God HAS been faithful! For us, on this side of the cross, we can see how God has fulfilled *all* his promises in the Lord Jesus. If we appeal to the right hand of God, as the Psalmist did, we see our King and Saviour sitting at the right hand of God, ruling and reigning. He has secured eternal salvation for those who believe in him.

Our confession of hope, is absolutely rock solid. Unmovable.

Athletes are reliant on their own physical strength and ability to compete. That's the only way to either stand fast, or fall away.

But that's not our reality, as followers of Jesus. The strength by which we hold fast is God's strength. The strength of our confession is not based on us, but on the gospel which we confess. God has done everything for our life and salvation. He has drawn near to us and provided the way for us to return to him. I am saved not by my own power, but by God, in his power.

Therefore my hope in the gospel is unwavering,

because the gospel itself is unshakeable. There's nothing more to achieve. Nothing more to add. No chance of the gospel falling short.

So take heart, in times of trial and hardship this year. Hold fast to the confession of hope, that surpasses it all.

What brings you to church this morning? Is it because you believe in the gospel? If so, then hold fast to it! And know that you can hold fast, because God is faithful, he will surely do it.

If you have come to church this morning, but you haven't put your trust in Jesus, well, just as I said at the beginning of the sermon to everyone, it is awesome that you are here. I hope you will see as you speak too and meet with everyone who is part of this church, that they have an unshakeable hope. I want you to know that God, who created you and loves you, is wonderfully faithful. You can utterly depend on him.

If you're exploring the Christian faith, let me encourage you to keep coming back here, keep asking your questions. See how trusting in Jesus changes everything. And know that trusting in Jesus will give you unshakeable hope that you can hold fast to through every season of life.

So then, we've set our stance: We can hold fast to the gospel in 2026, because God is faithful.

So then let's move on to our second point, our mindset, which is key to maintaining our stance.

Point 2: Our Mindset

Most athletes will tell you that ultimately, competing for the win isn't about physical ability, it's all about the mind. Have you got the mental discipline, to keep pushing, to train harder, to go all the way?

So have you got the right mindset, for holding fast to the gospel in 2026?

Our passage shows us three things to have in our minds, as we hold fast to the gospel. And these three things, are all outward looking. Other person centred. Our *minds* must be set on holding fast, together.

Continue with me from verse 24:

²⁴ And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, ²⁵ not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

1. A mind set on stirring up others:

So the first thing to have in mind as we hold fast together, is to consider one another.

Consider one another how? Consider how to stir up one another to love and good works.

That sounded a bit like a knock knock joke.

“Consider. Consider who? Consider one another. Consider one another how? Consider how to stir up one another to love and good works.”

Did you catch the punch line?

We have to stir one another up.

As some of you know, I have two sisters. One is two years older than me, one is two years younger. Now, I consider myself blessed to have grown up with two sisters, but it wasn't without it's challenges. Because, you see, my two sisters, they had a brother to deal with.

See I was very good at stirring the pot. VERY good. I knew exactly what buttons to push to annoy my sisters. To drive them really mad. For example I would stand at the door to my older sister's room, and flicking the light switch on and off just to be annoying. Then she would demand that I get out of her room, and I would ingeniously reply that I wasn't IN her room, I was just outside of it. Then I'd step inside, then I'd get yelled out, but I'd just step back outside again.

Taunting. Cruel. Boy could I be annoying.

I really knew how to get a reaction out of my sisters. And you know what? That's what we're being called to do here. The description of stirring one another up in verse 24, it really has this idea of irritating someone, you know, like you're poking them just hard enough with a bony finger to get a response, to draw out a reaction. It's intentional. Needling. Persistent.

Don't hear me wrong, though. The goal isn't to start arguments, or to upset people. There is one major major difference between irritating a sibling, and how we are to stir up a brother or sister in Christ at church.

It's this: The reaction that we're trying to provoke, the result of our stirring, is love and good works.

Our mindset, as we consider one another, is to think about how we can keep pushing each other, to live out our faith in Jesus. Following his ways, showing his love, serving one another, holding fast together.

What brings you to church this morning?

Did you think about who else would be here as you were getting ready, and driving here?

Did you think much about who you would poke while you're here this morning? And I don't mean physically poking each other.

Gathering together week by week is a wonderful opportunity to stir one another up. To stir up the best kind of trouble: love and service. So I wonder, what might our conversations before and after the service sound like, if we have that mindset?

What an awesome mindset to come into church with each week with. You can stir the pot of Christian love a little bit while the coffee pot is brewing. Stir the pot of living lives that point to Jesus in your workplaces and communities, while the water is boiling for your tea.

Ask someone if they've had any good conversations about Jesus at work during the week. Check in to see if you'll see each other during the week at home group. Ask how

you can be praying for each other's kids and grandkids, share together the desire to see the next generation trusting in Jesus and growing in him.

So as you arrive at church each Sunday, **pray**.

Ask that God would give you opportunities to spur others on in their faith, and ask that God would use you to build up others to live for Jesus as they leave church that day. Pray the same thing for bible study, for ladies fellowship, prayer meetings, and everything you do together.

If each of you have this mindset, you will all be mutually encouraging each other every time you gather. How good is that.

Have your minds set on stirring up one another.

2. A mind set on showing up:

Now the second part of our mindset, as we hold fast together. It's a commitment. You have to be here to make it happen. Just as verse 24 goes on to say:

don't neglect to meet together, as is the habit of some.

You have to be in the room to stir one another up. Committed to showing up.

Maybe this is a moment for you to stop and reflect. There's a direct exhortation in God's Word here. Consider yourself: Are you in a habit of *neglecting* to meet with other Christians?

Ask yourself: What brings you to church this morning?

A sense of obligation? A box that needs to be ticked? Maybe it's been a few weeks, so it felt like time to make sure you came along again. Does it feel like something that's tacked on the end of your week, if you've got the time and energy? Even now, in just the second week of the year, it's easy to see how the busy-ness of life can squeeze out church and regular fellowship.

To hold fast to the gospel in 2026, set your mind on gathering together. Not as an afterthought, but instead see it as the absolutely necessary, and wonderful jump start that gets you going for the week ahead! It's the kick start, the caffeine hit, the spark that lights the fire under us.

It's the best part of the week!

It's a wonderful blessing to gather together, and to serve one another. Yes it does take energy and time. But hearing God's Word, and digging into it with God's people, is the soul refreshment that we each need as the lifeblood of our daily lives.

So here's a good mindset for 2026: make gathering with God's people around God's word your weekly priority, and work outwards from there to see where you have time and energy for everything else.

Some weeks it'll be hard to show up. Lean on each other in those times. Some weeks you won't get here for various reasons. Check in with one another when that happens. Don't let absence go unnoticed, but use it as a chance to encourage each other even while separated for a time.

Keep each other accountable, show one another love and concern. These are the things that help us all to keep turning up, for each other.

Holding fast alone gets harder and harder. Holding fast together, is why God has given us the church. So have your mind set on showing up.

Come back to verse 24 with me once more.

A mind set on the Day that is drawing near

*²⁴ And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, ²⁵ not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and **all the more as you see the Day drawing near.***

What brings you to church this morning?

You are here, to hold fast together.

Why?

Because Jesus is going to return. That Day is approaching. The day when every tear will be wiped away, every wrong made right, and every knee will bow and tongue confess that Jesus is Lord. Where all God's people will be together, singing praises, worshipping the Lord, meeting our saviour, face to face.

What a day that will be. What a glorious, and satisfying, and awe-striking day that will be. That's the final key to our mindset for holding fast together.

Have your mind set on the day that is drawing near.

That's the goal that every follower of Jesus is holding fast for. That's the hope that will one day be fulfilled. So here at St John's, have your minds set on holding fast together as you see that day approaching.

For roughly 20 years I was part of this church, and I came here with my family once or twice a week throughout those years, to meet with Christians and grow together in faith. I, like all of you, am a living testimony to how this church stirs up one another in love, and has held fast to the gospel together.

Now from a distance, Trinity and I are still spurred on as many of you continue to partner with us as we train for ministry. And we have been so encouraged to hear how St John's has been growing in the past year. Not just in number, but in depth of relationship, in new ministries, and in joyful service.

What an awesome gift it is, that God has given you this church, this fellowship.

So will you keep going? Will you make 2026 another year of growth? Each of you has a part to play in that; to be willing to turn up, to take personal ownership of one another, and see each other hold fast to the gospel.

On the St John's website there's this page about the year ahead. It's really great to read if you haven't seen it yet! I've look through it, and there's so many opportunities for each of you to join in holding fast together and spurring each other on in 2026. Read it,

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pray from it, and show up for it this year. Be part of how God continues to grow his kingdom here.

So, what will bring you to church next Sunday?

Since God is faithful, 2026 can be a year of holding fast to the gospel together, so keep gathering together, keep spurring **one another on to live for Jesus**. And keep doing these things next week, next month, next year, and all the more until the Day when Jesus returns.

Come, Lord Jesus, Come.