

WE MUST PERSEVERE TOGETHER

(Hebrews 3:12-14)

The terms essential and non-essential services have been part of the discourse and discussion every time our government and public health officials release statements and directives related to the Coronavirus crisis. Sadly though, from the very start, church and religious services are categorized as non-essential services. This just indicates and exposes the spiritual state of our nation. God and His church are deemed as non-essential. As author Brett McCracken said, *"It's telling that our society has decided we cannot live without "essentials" like liquor stores, marijuana dispensaries and golf courses, but we can live without physical church gatherings."* If we are to realign our minds and hearts to God's Word, we must recognize that **we essentially need the church to grow in Christ and persevere in our faith.** Hebrews 3:12-14 highlights the indispensable value of the church as it reminds us of the three essential requirements of Christian perseverance.

- 1. *Christian perseverance requires* _____.**
Perseverance in the faith is one of the hallmarks of genuine salvation. A genuinely saved believer will never abandon the faith but will continue to follow, love, serve and abide in Christ until the end even amidst the onslaught of trials, troubles, pandemic or persecution (Matthew 24:10-13). This is why the author of Hebrews includes in his exhortation the crucial need for Christian perseverance. One of the requirements of perseverance in the faith is guarding our heart from the sin of unbelief (Hebrews 3:12). This evil sin of unbelief renounces trust in God and ultimately rejects Christ in times of overwhelming suffering and difficult trials (Hebrews 3:7-11,19; Psalm 95:7-11). We can never persevere in our faith without being vigilant in guarding our own heart from outright distrust and unbelief in God.
 - 2. *Christian perseverance requires* _____.**
Sin misleads, deceives and seduces us to trade our love, devotion and trust in God for temporary pleasures which could ruin our souls. Sin deceives us to exchange the truth of God for the lies of Satan. In light of the deceitfulness of sin, Scripture instructs us to value the ministry of mutual exhortation (Hebrews 3:13). To exhort means to come alongside a fellow Christian to encourage him or her with the truths and promises of God's Word. What we urgently need day by day in order to persevere and prevail against the deceitfulness of sin is the faith-sustaining exhortation of God's Word through our fellow believers (Hebrews 10:24-25).
 - 3. *Christian perseverance requires* _____ *in Christ.***
When we embrace Jesus as our Lord and Savior, He gives us full assurance and unshakable confidence that He will save us eternally (Hebrews 3:14). In other words, Jesus Himself is the faithful guarantor of our perseverance in the faith (Hebrews 3:6). Holding our confidence in Christ means boasting in the Lord who promises to defend and protect us and grant us everlasting life and eternal security (1 Samuel 17:45-47; Psalm 44:4-8; John 10:27-28; 1 Corinthians 1:8-9).
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