

Assurance
Hebrews 6:9-12

March 24, 2019

Reading: Hebrews 6:1-12

I was asked recently if preaching is really necessary because, as they said, am I not, preaching to the choir, so to speak. What a great question, to which, I responded absolutely I am preaching to the choir and mostly to saved sinners and hopefully trying to recruit new people to God's choir. I cannot think of a successful business or sports team that does not start with the basics and regularly repeat the basic fundamentals and promote, review and define the organization's goals on a systematic basis. Preaching and teaching the gospel keeps the fundamentals and the end goal of the gospel as primary, fresh in our minds, and in our hearts to help us live each day, week, month, year and the whole of our lives in a way that will honor God and bring Christ glory. This morning we are going to refresh our minds concerning the assurance of our salvation. Brother Ivan read the first 12 verses of chapter 6 of Hebrews and we are going to focus on verses 9 to 12.

For The Beloved

I am acutely aware that we live in a time when people's feelings are the primary determination of how to love and this is because most people love themselves more than they love others. We have to teach our children how to be considerate of others and not be selfish and share. Christ teaches us how to love others and to love others means to take risk. If one's feelings are exposed to others, then there is a risk of being hurt by the actions of another and if that person's actions hurt us, then we say, "This is not the loving thing to do." Which means people are concerned primarily with their feelings and the result is one can easily be held hostage by these feelings and other people's behavior. Good and loving acts may be rejected because for many the bottom line of

love is not truth or principle or even what is best for the person, but how they make that person feel. So, if these actions communicate to others that they will feel bad if one is corrected, then this interaction should be avoided because one wants to protect themselves from feeling bad, but they do not understand they are also protecting themselves from good things. The motivations of both people are important, one may love truth and the other love their emotions.

These were the thoughts I experienced as I studied Hebrews and I thought about the word “beloved” in verse 9. It means simply “loved ones or one whom I love.” It is the only place in the whole book where the writer uses this tender expression - where he calls those he is writing to “loved ones.” The reason this stands out is that the writer has just said several difficult things as you heard as Ivan read and these are some of the hardest things he wrote in the entire book.

He said that some of those he is writing to tend to be dull of hearing, they have not fully embraced the gospel and by this time they ought to be teachers of the gospel of truth in chapter 5 (v.11-12), but some are not. This is followed by his saying that some are like spiritual babes who only stuck on milk in verses 13 and 14 and have not matured to solid spiritual food. The writer indicates that some of them have had great blessings and great religious experiences but remain unsaved and some are like a field that drinks in rain from heaven and yet, never bringing forth fruit in chapter 6 (v. 4-8).

Not For Everyone

The writer of Hebrews says these negative things, and then he says, “beloved”, I do love you. Now I point this out because we need to let the Bible shape our worldview, shape what we believe and our purpose for living. We are, in general, a nation with many victims and whiners and pouters that do not want to take responsibility for their behavior. That is, if someone says something negative - no matter how constructive they are being – people tend to either slump into a fit of self-justifying pity and victim

behavior or they are aggressive and file a harassment law suit. In general, we are a very thin-skinned people here in the USA, we are easily offended and easily provoked and everything is resolved with lawsuits.

This is not good for our country or for individuals and as followers of Jesus Christ we are to live differently. We do not need to be thin-skinned and vulnerable. We are chosen by God, loved by God, forgiven by God, accepted by God, indwelt by God, guided by God, protected by God, strengthened by God and God is more important than anyone else in the universe, he is the most powerful and the only perfect being, so, though God's grace and indwelling we should live without fear, and live with peace and with great determination. We do not have to feel vulnerable or insecure. We do not have to be self-justifying or self-defensive or self-pitying or often provoked. As James instructed, ["Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; ²⁰ for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God."](#) (James 1:19-20) Yes, there are times of righteous anger, but James is saying most people are slow to listen, easily offended, quick to speak and get angry. As believers we are called to live and respond differently, as Paul taught, ["When reviled, we bless; when persecuted, we endure; ¹³ when slandered, we entreat."](#) (1 Corinthians 4:12-13) If, as Christians, we can live in this fallen world and relate to the enemies of God as Paul instructs how much more should we respond with love to those who come to us with hard words for our own good – correction because they love us. The writer of Hebrews says, ["beloved"](#), he is saying I love you and want the best for you and this is why I am telling you these things, some of which are hard. James Dobson wrote books about tough love for parents raising children in this broken world, the first was, "Dare to Discipling" in 1970. It is the same concept that the writer of Hebrews is addressing. We correct our children because we want them to mature and grow into good and productive adults that live for Christ's glory and not live as victims and winners and have a poor work ethic. The writer of Hebrews is saying, ["beloved"](#) I love you and

speak to you for your own good, so you will mature and grow strong in the Lord and his gospel.

A few times over the years I have taken loved ones out to coffee or lunch with the express purpose of asking some hard questions about their spiritual lives. This is very risky and hard to do. You know that your actions could so easily be misinterpreted and your words taken out of context. What you want to express and say may not be what is received and heard. They could accuse you of butting in where you do not belong. They could accuse you of judgmentalism and respond by pointing a finger toward the imperfections in your own life – shifting the issue away from themselves. They could accuse you of distrust, assuming the worst instead of hoping for the best and so on. The possibilities of misunderstanding and false accusation are many. Because of the risks, we do not interact in this way as often as we should. The writer to the Hebrews is calling us by his example to grow up and to take the risks of love. He is also calling us to be less easily offended and less easily hurt. We have a massive foundation for our salvation in the death and resurrection of the Son of God and we have an advocate in heaven more powerful and more compelling than any accuser on earth. We should be the freest of all people to listen to criticism and take correction into account and not be wounded or self-pitying or resentful or victims. A key point in my message is this - *let us learn how to love and be loved when heaven and hell are at stake and hard questions need to be asked.*

Better Things Assured

Another key thing to notice in this text is why the writer, who is part of a team, *is confident that most of his readers will not fear or fall away and prove that they were saved.* For the beloved have assurance of salvation. But for some he just said in verses 4-8 that it is possible to have great blessings and high religious experiences and never have been saved. Prior to verses 9 to 12 are verses 4 to 8, [“For it is impossible, in the](#)

case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, ⁵ and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, ⁶ and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt. ⁷ For land that has drunk the rain that often falls on it, and produces a crop useful to those for whose sake it is cultivated, receives a blessing from God. ⁸ But if it bears thorns and thistles, it is worthless and near to being cursed, and its end is to be burned.” These people, a few in the church, never believed in Jesus as their Lord and Savior. It is a hard warning and he says it in love for eternity is a matter of heaven or hell.

Then in verse 9 he writes, “Though we speak in this way, yet in your case, beloved, we feel sure of better things—things that belong to salvation.” So, he does not think that the “beloved” the ones he loves and the ones that love Jesus will fall away and be lost. He is hopeful and he believes they will hear his warning and instead of resenting it and saying, “You have no right talking that way to people in the church”, he believes they will say, “We know how fragile we are in ourselves. Thank you for keeping us alert to the dangers of the deceitfulness of sin and reminding us to fight the fight of faith each and every day.” He believes that the warnings will not drive them away in offense, but will deepen their observance of the gospel and earnestly drive them to live in assurance of Christ and their salvation. The writer, I believe, is saying in verse 9, “We are convinced of better things concerning you, we believe you will grab hold of the Word of God and not let go and your lives will be lived by the grace of God and faith in Christ and of his promise of your salvation.”

Salvation Assured

But why does the writer of Hebrews have this confidence? What is it that will increase our confidence today so that we too will not fall away but will press on in

better things that come from the faith given us to live for Christ until we draw out last breath? The writer gives the answer in verse 10, saying, “*For or because God is not unjust so as to overlook your work and the love that you have shown for his name in serving the saints, as you still do.*” This is a remarkable statement because the verse speaks of God’s justice, not his mercy. There is something about God’s justice or righteousness that causes this writer to be confident that the readers will persevere in faith and patience and not fall away and live for Christ to the end. He writes, “*we feel sure or as other translations say, convinced, persuaded, without any doubt of better things—things that belong to salvation.* ¹⁰ *For God is not unjust...*” Why does the righteousness or justice of God give the writer this kind of confidence?

We usually think of the justice of God bringing us into *judgment* because of our sins and we deserve judgment and we think of the *mercy* of God is our being rescued from judgment because Christ died in our place - both God’s judgment and mercy are true. But here the justice of God is the reason he is confident that they will be saved and not fall away. Again, I ask, how does the justice of God give him that confidence?

He says in verse 10 that God’s justice will not let God forget their work and the love which they showed for God’s name defines this work and the love they showed for God’s name in the 2nd half of verse 10 says the work is, “*in serving the saints, as you still do.*” As believers they are to minister to other saints and implies, they have done so in the past and they are do so currently and he believes they will continue to do so in the future. So, he is saying that it is God’s memory of their past and ongoing ministry to the saints and their love of his name that gives him the confidence they will be saved and not fall away. In addition, it is God’s justice that causes him not to forget this ministry and this love. This is also true of my belief in God’s justice for each of you – I am confident in your faith because it is founded in God the Father, Christ the Son and the power of the Holy Spirit and God will keep you and not let you fall away.

Perseverance Assured

Now why does God's remembering their ministry and their love for his name assure the writer that they will persevere and be saved? Remember he says, "we feel sure of better things—things that belong to salvation. ¹⁰ For God is not unjust so as to overlook your work and the love." So, it is God's remembering their ministry and love for his name that gives us the confidence they will persevere and be saved. But how? It must mean that when God remembers their ministry and their love for his name, it moves him in some way to do his work to keep them persevering in faith. Their perseverance is dependent on God as we read in verse 3 and God's preserving work is prompted in some way by his remembering the work they did for the saints and the love they showed his name. They are kept by his power and his love and his promise is sure.

Here are 5 thoughts that gives us assurance from this passage; First, the readers 2000 years ago and we as readers of Hebrews today have a focus on ministering to the saints and we are to continue for it will strengthen our faith. Second, our life's motivation is to serve out of love for the name of God. Third, God's justice sees our love for his name and he takes note of this and he does not forget it. Fourth, God's remembrance prompts God to do a work for believer's perseverance. Fifth, because of these first four things the writer and we can have strong confidence that we will persevere and experience better things that belong to salvation.

Here is a prime thought for us as believers who love the mercy of God. We are sinners and do not deserve to be saved and we are unable to deserve to be kept in salvation by our merit in the second place. ***We do not become Christian by our merit and do not stay Christian by our merit; it is by God's grace.*** The question remains; how does God's justice prompt him to work perseverance in us when he sees our ministry and our love for his name?

This could very easily sound like we are meriting God's work in our lives. It could easily be taken to mean that God looks at our ministry and our love for his name and says. "They do not need mercy. They simply need justice and so I will now deal with them in terms of justice alone. I will give them what they deserve and what they earn. I got them started in the Christian life with the mercy of forgiveness, but they will finish the Christian life with justice. If they minister and love, then justice demands that I give them salvation because they have earned it. I am not unjust so as to forget their work and love. I will give them their due and their due is salvation earned."

This thought process, I fear, is the way many professing Christians see the Christian life – earning God's love and doing good works to please God. Some think God may give us a jumpstart with mercy as fallen sinners, but we are the ones who keep the battery charged and prove by our efforts that we deserve to get to heaven after that. The problem is this thought process is an immense contradiction of salvation by grace through faith. It would also be a substantial contradiction of living by faith in future grace - which is what Hebrews is all about. For example, look at verses 11-12, "And we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness to have the full assurance of hope until the end,¹² so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises." We are to have "full assurance" because we are "who through faith ... inherit the promises" of God and our faith and assurance are preserved by God's power, justice and grace.

Promises Assured

So, what is clear in this verse is – "through faith and patience inherit the promises." We inherit God's promises through faith, through trust and through hope in Christ. The battle at the time the Book of Hebrews was written and today is the Christian life is not produced by merit and by our merit God pays us our desired salvation. The battle that goes against the currents found within many churches is to live

the Christian life by our trusting God day in and day out patiently until his return or upon our mortal death we enter into presence and eternal inheritance. The writer of Hebrews is NOT saying, “My beloved, work hard to earn the just wages of eternal life.” What he is saying, “My beloved, be diligent to put your hope in God alone and not in the ‘things’ of this world which are temporary, cherish your relationship with God through Christ and do not hold tightly to this dying world, trust God and not your own abilities to do good works. Our assurance of salvation and our hope is found in God alone who by the act of Christ; his birth, death and resurrection has perfected believers for all time. This is made clear in chapter 10, “[For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.](#)” (Hebrews 10:14)

Justice Assured

Again, this brings us back to the question, “How does the justice of God give us assurance of salvation?”

Here is what I believe is the answer. The justice of God or the righteousness of God, is not simply his giving people what they deserve. It is his standing by the glory of his name. God would be unjust and unrighteous if he ever acted in a way that belittled the greatness of his name. The name of God or the glory of God, has the greatest value in the universe, God’s name is of greater value than all material value in the world and greater than all human value in the universe. So, the greatest injustice in the universe is neglecting and dishonoring the name and the glory of God. Does this make you sit back and think about when people take God’s name in vain and do not give him glory?

When verse 10 says that “[God is not unjust so as to overlook your work and the love that you have shown for or towards his name](#)” you can hear what is at stake. His name is at stake and the work he remembers is specifically the ministry to the “saints” the holy and beloved ones, the ones God has set apart.

To put this thought into my words, the ministry the writer speaks about concerning believers serving the saints and doing all for their love of God's name means this; It is **not** human performance that makes God our debtor and he owes people repayment for their efforts by giving them salvation. It is **not** people saying look at my good works and see what I am doing for God. It is **not** people saying they are due salvation by their works. But, but what I see the writer saying is, here are needy people that look away from themselves and depend on the all-powerful, all-glorious God and their Creator for every breath they take and this is what it means to love God's name.

This teaches us the justice of God is his unwavering allegiance to the glory of his name. God's justice says, "I will stand by those who look away from self and merit and earning salvation, and instead look to God alone for acceptance through his Son and for the satisfaction of their hearts." The justice of God gives assurance because the justice of God upholds those who cherish the mercy of God found in the love of his name above all things. The justice of God gives assurance not because it repays merit, which we do not possess, but because it vindicates those whose faith glorifies God as more trustworthy than anything in the universe.

Love Assured

Finally, add to this that our ministry to the saints and our love for the name of God is itself the very work of God within us. It is not our work or even some of our work, as we are taught in chapter 13, "Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant,²¹ equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen." (Hebrews 13:20-21) Let us embrace God's love and glory with grateful hearts as servants of the King of the universe. This is why we can say not only because of the *mercy* of God but also because of the *justice* of God, therefore, "I am

sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.” (Philippians 1:6) Love God and live your faith! Amen and Amen!