

The Experience Of Assurance

Pray

Confidence In Better Things (v.9)

There is no way to overestimate what you may achieve by the grace of God if you live in the full assurance of your hope in Christ. There is no way to exaggerate how deeply you may enjoy the blessings of being a child of God if you live in the full assurance of your hope in Christ. Let me turn that around and say the same thing from a different direction. ***God wants you to know that you belong to Him. His desire is for every one of His blood-bought children to be riveted and awestruck by the certainty of the hope we have in Jesus.*** God wants you to rest in the full assurance of that hope, He wants you to live out of the overflow of His love, grace and mercy. Like an artesian well the love of God is to flow from your being and water those around you with the love of Christ. He wants you to rejoice in the assurance of hope so you will be both holy and experience peace in Christ.

Nothing cripples Christian passion and joy quite like fear, anxiety, and uncertainty regarding one's relationship to God. When one gets up each day wondering whether or not God really loves them it robs them of peace. If one feels this way it is hard to find the passion and strength to resist temptation and to live wholeheartedly for Jesus. When one's mind is filled with doubts about whether or not God even likes them or when their heart is riddled with fear; doubt creeps in and one may begin to possibly think there is no God or - if God exists, how could He love me? One

may wonder if God will continue to put up with them because of their sins. These doubts may lead one to obsess over whether or not the promises they read in Scripture are really theirs and will actually come to fruition, these worries and doubts make the Christian life burdensome.

On the other hand, when your heart is filled to overflowing with the rock-solid assurance of Christ, your hope will not disappoint and your relationship with God is unshakably certain; then there is no limit to the joy and satisfaction and spiritual success you can experience. This is what the author of this letter to the Hebrews is saying to these converted Jews and to us, here in chapter 6, verses 9 to 12. Now, all that may sound strange to those who were here last week and paid attention to what was said in the preceding verses of 4 to 8. There we read a very sobering assessment of a certain sort of people who have tasted and seen and experienced Christianity but reject God and are lost. The author spoke of men and women who eventually walked away from Jesus Christ and put themselves beyond the hope of repentance. For those who did not know Christ the warning was to repent and be saved. For those who knew Christ but had not grown spiritually the warning was to get serious about their faith. These warnings the writer issued to these people was serious and sobering.

However, the author does not want this warning to undermine the assurance of salvation for those who truly know Christ. Similarly, if I thought that my message last week on Hebrews chapter 6, verses 1 to 8 had contributed to making someone who is saved fear that they are not, that is not what I intended. If you felt your hope slipping away and the assurance of your salvation being undermined, that also was not the intention. If you have doubt seek God with new purpose and He will give you peace and joy. The aim of Hebrews 6, verses 1 to 8 and the goal of my message, was not to cause those who are truly saved to be fearful. Its aim was to cause those who are *not* truly saved, but *think they are* - to repent. It also called for those who are saved not to turn back to the world for this may bring destruction. There are people

who are truly and eternally saved who live in fear and God wants them to have assurance in Christ. There are people who are not truly and eternally saved who live in the false belief that they are saved and this brings judgment. So again, Hebrews 6, verses 1 to 8 is not designed to undermine the confident hope and assurance of salvation in those who have truly been born again. It is rather designed to warn and sound an alarm to those who have not been born again but arrogantly think they have been. It is also a warning to not take one's salvation for granted.

The author of Hebrews knows the sort of language he used and the warning he issued about such people might create undue anxiety in the hearts of those who believe in Christ. So, he continues, open your Bible to Hebrews chapter 6 beginning at verse 9, “*Though we speak in this way, (that is the way he spoke in verses 4 to 8) yet in your case, beloved, we feel sure of better things—things that belong to salvation.*” Clearly, the writer believed most to whom he is writing were born again. “*In your case ... we feel sure,*” continuing, “*things that belong to salvation*” or “that you are truly saved”.

He writes to reinforce their confidence in Christ and he refers to them as “*beloved*” the only place in the entire letter where this term appears. In other words, they are “*beloved*” not only by God but also by this writer. The world may think using the term “*beloved*” is overly sentimental and like many things associated with Christianity, they ridicule it. Let me just say, Christians ought not to be thin-skinned. We, dear brothers and sisters, are the “*beloved*” of God: chosen by God before the foundation of the world, redeemed by the Son of God, reconciled to God, adopted into the family of God and indwelt by the Spirit of God. There is absolutely no reason why we should feel threatened or vulnerable or insecure. No matter what anyone says to you, about you, or does in an attempt to

destroy you, you are beloved of God! Christians should be the least self-defensive people in the world. I say to the world – “say what you will about me but God loves me! Criticize me if you wish, God still loves me! I will not take offense at anything because God loves me!”

The Worth of God’s Name (v. 10)

How does the writer know they are beloved and saved? Where does the writer’s confidence come from? How can he be so sure? The answer is found in verse 10, one of the important texts in Hebrews, “**For 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 an important text, so we need to slow down and unpack it. Let me direct your attention to several crucial truths here.

First, our author has confidence in their spiritual condition because of “**the love that you have shown for his name**”. For most of his audience, the writer is saying, God is supreme and central in their affections. Their first and foundational passion is God would be glorified. To love God’s name is to love it when He is affirmed and He is extolled and by His beauty and when His honor is seen by all. To love God’s name is to rejoice when all the attention turns to Him and all the credit for everything good goes to Him. This is our author’s way of saying that these people are God-enthralled, God-obsessed, and God-focused. They are determined that God be preeminent in all things with no exceptions allowed.

Second, it would be “**unjust**” of God to overlook this devotion to the glory and supremacy of His name. Do not get confused by this word “**unjust**”. God does not mean it would be “**unjust**” in the sense that we do Him a favor by serving His people and thus putting God in our debt, so He is, in some sense, obligated, to pay us back by remembering and making much of what we do and have done. The key

thought is; **it is not the worth of our work but our worth of God's name that moves Him to never forget His children.**

When our primary motivation in all we do is to honor God's name, it becomes for Him a matter of justice or righteousness to take note of it. Why, you might ask? From a human perspective one thinks of an over inflated ego, but it would not be a display of unimaginable egotism and self-centeredness for God to be concerned about His own name for He is the Creator of everything that exists. If you and I were obsessed with the fame of our name we would justifiably be charged with arrogance and pride and egotism.

The essence of righteousness and goodness is that a person be devoted to whatever is the best and purest and most beautiful and most worthy thing in the universe. What is the purest of all things? God, of course! God is Himself the best and purest and most glorious and most worthy being in all the universe, let alone this small planet. Therefore, if God is Himself going to be righteous, He must, of necessity, be committed above all else to the glory and praise of His own name. For God **not** to love and honor His own name above all else would be for Him to commit idolatry. **God must love God preeminently** and it is only just and right that He do so, because He is God. It would be unjust and wrong for us to love and honor our own names above all else because we are **not** God. That is why it is a matter of "justice" or "righteousness" for God to take note of those who love His name.

Third, precisely how did their love for God's name manifest itself? How might we know whether or not we really love God and glorify His name and we are committed to His glory? The answer is given in verse 10, "[The love that you have shown for his name in serving the saints, as you still do.](#)" Serving the saints

shows our love for God's name. I want to take the time to examine several aspects of this remarkable statement.

- The evil one wants believers to think that we have an either/or situation here. Either we love God and are wholly devoted to Him, or we love people and are devoted to them. Sadly, there are churches and Christians that see it this way. But verse 10 is clear, **“The love that you have shown for his name in serving the saints, as you still do.”**

Some churches are so utterly vertical in their orientation, so entirely God-centered, that they ignore the needs of hurting people. They justify their casual oversight of hurting souls by saying: “Well, our sole and exclusive calling in life is to magnify God and to love him. We are so enthralled with God that we do not have time to bother with other people. They need to seek God on their own.” Other churches tend to the opposite extreme. Their focus is entirely horizontal. As far as they are concerned, serving the needs of people is the only thing that matters. For them, loving God is loving other people. The primary call of the church, so they say, is humanitarian in its focus and one's spiritual life in relationship with God is secondary.

This approach feeds and clothes the poor and finds housing for the homeless and assumes that this is identical to loving God. The other extreme worships God and extols God and prays and preaches the Word but they feel being concerned for people would distract them from what is of greatest importance. Both groups are wrong. When Jesus was asked which was the greatest commandment in the law, he responded by saying, ³⁰ **“you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.”** But Jesus did not stop there. He continued with the 2nd greatest commandment, ³¹ **“You shall**

love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.” (Mark 12:30-31) The point is, do not allow your devotion to God to collapse into serving people and do not allow your love for people to supersede your devotion to God.

We serve God’s people for the sake of God’s name, not the other way around. God’s name is to be first in our hearts and one of the primary ways in which people will know we love God and in turn honor and praise Him, is when they see us show compassion towards others in need. **“The love that you have shown for his name in serving the saints, as you still do.”** Our desire is for Canyon Bible to be a church where all of our people serve all of our people. We want to be a church of compassion and love for one another. We want to be a God-centered church, a church where the name of God as revealed in Jesus is exalted and extolled above all else. Exalting God’s name and serving each other go hand-in-hand, you cannot have one of these without the other!

Every time we serve each other, every time we show love to those who are in need, God remembers. When we come along side of each other and offer a word of encouragement to someone who is discouraged, God remembers. Every time someone provides a meal to another or fixes something at someone’s house or comes alongside another to help with a chore, God remembers. God sees all that each person does for the glory of His name and remembers. This includes your prayers for each other, acts of sacrificial giving and encouraging each other.

- The next observation I have about verse 10 is what it tells us about how we are to have confidence we know God in a saving way. **“The love that you have shown for his name in serving the saints, as you still do.”** The writer’s audience did not work hard and love other Christians in the past, they **“still do.”** Their love

for God's people was not a one-time or when it was convenient act, it was not momentary commitment. They had served and continued to serve, they persevered in this loving of God's name and in sacrificial service. Being Christian is adopting a lifestyle of service, it is how we live day-in and day-out. This confirms what we have read repeatedly in Hebrews; the evidence of genuine saving faith in Christ is perseverance and endurance in holiness of life and in bearing by God's grace the fruit of the Spirit.

- My final observation on verse 10 is the motive in which we serve. If we serve others for reasons other than our devotion to God's name and His glory and other than love, grace and mercy - then it may be a good work, but it is not right. Our devotion to the welfare of other people must flow out of devotion to God. If this is not our motivation we will burn out or we will seek our own glory. Isaiah said if one's heart is not fully in love with God, then **"We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment."** (Isaiah 64:6) The angel instructed John that the world would continue to be broken until Jesus' returned, **"Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy."** (Revelation 22:11) Service to others must, must, come out of the abundant love and outflow of our satisfaction with God as we live for His glory – the glory of His name.

So, how does the justice of God give us confidence that we are truly saved? Evidently, one way is God's promise never to overlook our ministry to others and our love for them and it moves Him to work in our hearts all the more to preserve us and protect us and keep us safe in faith.

Diligent Pursuit Of Assurance (v. 11-12)

We began this morning with the statement that I now add 5 words to; **God wants you to know that you belong to Him. His desire is for every one of His blood-bought children to be riveted and awestruck by the certainty of the hope we have in Jesus *and to rejoice in hope.*** I believe this is true, in part, by what we read in verse 11, “**And we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness to have the full assurance of hope until the end...**” It is as if our author says, “You showed great zeal and commitment in your devotion to God’s name by serving his people. Now show the same zeal and earnestness in pursuit of the full assurance of hope.” I want to expand on 3 thoughts from verse 11.

First, growing in the assurance that your hope is sure and solid, but it does not come automatically. You must be “earnest” or “zealous” in the pursuit of it. The hope the writer speaks of typically comes in clear ways. It comes from reflecting and meditating on the glorious truths already set forth in all of Scripture and specifically what Hebrews says about Jesus; His sinless life faced all the temptations we face, His atoning death was for us, He was sacrificed in our place, and His role as our great High Priest.

Second, it comes from being diligent by God’s grace to believe His promises and trust His Word and to work and serve the saints by loving them. In other words, assurance is grounded primarily in the objective achievement of Jesus himself and secondarily in our transformed lives as we seek to live for His glory and the good of His people.

Let me help us be certain we know what “hope” is, and also what it is not. The psalmist preaches to himself, declaring, ⁵“**Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God;** for I shall again praise him,

my salvation ⁶ and my God. My soul is cast down within me; therefore I remember you...” (42:5-6a) Here in verse 5, the Psalmist declares his hope and repeats these words again in verse 11, in between these verses there is lamenting. His point is that hope is not natural or instinctive to the human heart. We must preach it to ourselves and constantly reminding ourselves that God is trustworthy and will fulfill His promises. Like the Psalmist we preach to ourselves, saying things like, “Come on soul! Get with it! Believe God! Know that He will never fail to come through for you.”

Third point is biblical “hope” is far different from wishing for the best. It is different than when you hope to shoot a buck on your hunting trip or when you hope your team wins in the playoffs. Biblical “hope” is devoid of doubt and uncertainty because God is perfect and forever faithful to fulfill His promises. Biblical hope is the confident expectation what God wants for us will come to pass. There is a spiritual and moral certainty in biblical hope because we expect to see and experience and enjoy in the future things God himself has promised and He will bring to pass. Hope is rock-solid and unshakable because it is rooted and grounded in the faithfulness of God. If God has not promised something, all the hope in the world may not make it come to pass. Likewise, our failure to hope for something does not undermine or destroy its certainty when God has ordained it. Our failure simply undermines our capacity to enjoy what God has said He will do.

How, then, does “hope” differ from “faith”? Hope is a subset of faith. Hope is that expression of faith that focuses on the future. Faith typically looks to the past and the present and says, “I believe what God has already done and has already said and is doing.” Hope typically looks to the future and says, “I trust what God has promised, based on what He has done in the past and I believe He will in fact bring about every promise.” Hope is faith in the future because of God.

Now, I want you to observe the relationship of full assurance of hope to counteract sluggishness. Hope in God creates passion for God, knowing through faith and patience we will inherit these promises. I hope you see the cause-and-effect here in verses 11 to 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.”

Being fully assured God is for you and you belong to Him is what will energize your heart so you will not be sluggish and spiritually lazy and just coast through the Christian life. The joy that comes from the rock-solid assurance that God has destined you for an eternity with Him will guard you from becoming presumptuous and arrogant and slothful. Being fully assured that God is your God and that His promises are for you, enables one to trust and trust will sustain faith and patience in your heart as you wait for the promises of God to come to pass.

Do not miss the connection between being fully assured of the certainty of your hope, on the one hand, and your determination not to be sluggish or slothful on the other. Christ was our model and there are many, many heroes of the faith; they were not sluggish in their faith. We are to energetically imitate the faith and patience of believers who have gone before us and imitate our Lord and Savior. Faith and hope are intertwined and are the foundation to serve others for the love and glory of God’s name.

Do not ever think the Christian life does not require effort. It must always be God-empowered effort. God is to be beneath and behind all we strive to do, but strive we must. We must be “earnest” in the cultivation of confidence in our hope,

so that, we will not be sluggish, lazy and neglectful when it comes to living lives “through faith and patience inheriting the promises” of God through hope in Christ.

We talk so much about the importance of “faith” in the Christian life that I fear we may tune it out when it comes up in biblical texts like this. We dial down the volume of God’s Word when the subject of “faith” comes up because we have heard it so many times before. It seems so basic and foundational and natural to the Christian that we simply do not give it much time or thought and when that happens, it is a tragic mistake!

The greatest battle that you face every day, the most dangerous threat that comes your way from Satan, the most alluring temptation of your flesh, is to stop believing God, stop trusting God, stop hoping in God and think less of God. Or worse still, just start taking God for granted thinking you can coast into your inheritance of the promises. May this never be said of the people of our community. We will be determined to inherit all that God has promised, not independent of faith, but precisely through it and by means of it.

My beloved, this is one of the primary things that Jesus does for us as our great High Priest. He stands ever present and always powerful to sustain within us a heart that treasures God and trusts God and grows in the assurance that our hope in God will never fail.

It is my prayer for each of you, that we would reject the cynical and destructive counsel of the world that serves the evil one and embrace the perspective of the psalmist, who declared, ¹⁸ “Behold, the eye of the LORD is on those who fear him, on those who hope in his steadfast love, ¹⁹ that he may deliver their soul from death and keep them alive in famine. ²⁰ Our soul waits for the LORD; he is our help and our shield. ²¹ For our heart is glad in him, because we

trust in his holy name. ²² Let your steadfast love, O LORD, be upon us, even as we hope in you.” (Psalm 33:18-22) ... ⁵“**For you, O Lord, are my hope, my trust, O LORD, from my youth.** ⁶Upon you I have leaned from before my birth; you are he who took me from my mother’s womb. **My praise is continually of you.**” (Psalm 71:5-6)
Amen!

So, let me close by reminding us all one more time how crucial it is to preach this truth to our own hearts. Do not merely rely upon me to preach it to you on Sunday morning. Preach it to yourself, consistently preach to your heart and soul and mind, ⁵“**Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God;** for I shall again praise him, my salvation ⁶and my God...” (42:5-6a) Again and amen!