

Encouragement from Salvation's Certain Outcome

Hebrews 6:9-12

Halifax: 18 December 2022

Introduction:

Today, in our sermon series through the book of Hebrews, we will be looking at Hebrews 6:9-12.

- The context of this passage is very important, so for our scripture reading, I am going to begin with Hebrews 5:9 (the previous chapter) and read to Heb 6:15.
- The passage picks up speaking of Christ who was perfected (became all that was required) to be the high priest who is able to take away His people's sins.

Please give careful attention because this is the word of God. Heb 5:9...

Hebrews 5:9 – 6:15: And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him, ¹⁰ called by God as High Priest “according to the order of Melchizedek,” ¹¹ of whom we have much to say, and hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. ¹² For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need *someone* to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. ¹³ For everyone who partakes *only* of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. ¹⁴ But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, *that is*, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

6:1: Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary *principles* of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, ² of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. ³ And this we will do if God permits. ⁴ For *it is* impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, ⁵ and have tasted the good

word of God and the powers of the age to come, ⁶ if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put *Him* to an open shame. ⁷ For the earth which drinks in the rain that often comes upon it, and bears herbs useful for those by whom it is cultivated, receives blessing from God; ⁸ but if it bears thorns and briars, *it is* rejected and near to being cursed, whose end is to be burned. ⁹ But, beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you, yes, things that accompany salvation, though we speak in this manner. ¹⁰ For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, *in that* you have ministered to the saints, and do minister. ¹¹ And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, ¹² that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises. ¹³ For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, ¹⁴ saying, “Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you.” ¹⁵ And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.

Thanks be to God for His precious word.

I. It is time for a word of encouragement.

- I say this not only because it is true within our passage where the writer and the Lord who inspired him said some hard things and the people needed encouragement,
 - but also, I say this to you as a congregation at this time...

A. We are at a time, in God's Providence, when a word of encouragement is much needed.

1. Many of you have been afflicted with the illnesses that are filling our emergency rooms at the hospital. There is a well-worn path from us to the physicians.
 - We had a hurricane, we have a declining economy, we see our liberties eroding, we struggle with loved ones who are not going on with Christ, we see our nation becoming more and more anti God, we see them promoting suicide and abortion.
 - In the church, we are struggling with a deficit, with a lack of leadership, and with some straying members.
 - Some of you are feeling weary from your studies or your work and are looking forward to a time of rest during the holidays.
 - Some of you have lost your vitality in Christ and find that your appetite for His word has been very weak—you have little motivation to serve or to give.
2. The Lord is very wise and tender toward us.
 - He brings us hard things because He knows that we need them.
 - But He also does not give us more than we can bear.
 - He knows our weakness; He remembers that we are dust.
 - He sends us times of refreshment so that we will not be swallowed up with discouragement and sorrow.

TRANS> Coincident with all of this, today we come in our study of Hebrews to place where after hard things have been said to us, God sends words to lift us up.

B. We see in the inspired text that is before us that the Lord determined that there was need for a word of encouragement at Hebrews 6:9, where today's text begins.

1. It begins with the words, "**But, beloved.**"
 - This has been called one of the wonderful "buts" in the Scripture.
 - Martin Lloyd Jones preached a famous sermon on the two words "But God" in Ephesians 2:4.
 - After telling us in 2:1-3 that we were *dead in our sins, in bondage to Satan and disobedience, and by nature the children of God's wrath,*
 - Eph 2:4 says, "**But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ...**"
 - Compare this with our text. After saying some very hard things, the writer says, "But beloved."
 - With these words, he assures us that though he has said some hard things to us about our spiritual condition, he still loves us—
 - And much more, not only does he love them, but they are called *beloved* because the Lord loves them—the Lord loves them better than anyone.
- These words alert us that the writer is getting ready to encourage us after the hard things that he has said.

2. What were these hard things? Let's take a moment to review.
- a. They were things that needed to be said.
 - Keep that in mind.
 - Ours is not the sweet sentimental faith that never confronts, that never exposes, that never rebukes, that never warns.
 - We are fallen creatures in a fallen world.
 - If we are in Christ, we are redeemed creatures, but creatures with remaining sins who have to be confronted and tested.
 - Parents, you are not good parents if you never correct your children, never give them the hard words, never rebuke them...
 - but neither are you good parents if you never encourage them and assure them of your great love for them and your hope for them.
 - It is easy to get in a cold hard relationship with them where we are always displeased, but neither bring words of correction nor of encouragement. All there is a hopeless coldness in the relationship.
 - Husbands, parents, siblings, managers, and elders in the church—you all need to learn how to deal graciously with those under your care.
 - b. There were essentially three hard things that needed to be said and were said in the portion that goes before our text.
 - 1) First, in 5:11-13, he said, you ought to be a lot farther along in your walk with Christ by now.
 - You are immature in your walk with the Lord because you have become lazy in your ears.
 - Unless that changes, you will not be able to receive the wonderful things I am getting ready to tell you about your dear Saviour.
 - 2) Then, in 6:1-3, he said, you have an excellent foundation from ancient times which has been greatly enriched now that Christ has come,
 - but it is time to move on and start building your life on that foundation.
 - I am moving on to build, and that building will go on if God permits.
 - 3) In verse 4-8, he gives one of the most severe warnings in the whole Bible.
 - He warns that if you have had God's Spirit work in you so that you have come to be convinced of the truth about Jesus and about the salvation that He has for all who trust in Him,
 - and you nevertheless reject Him and begin to speak lies about Him because you don't want to follow Him, you will put yourself beyond repentance.
 - Surely there are not many who do this, but the horror is set before us to warn us that we dare not mess around with Christ.
 - If we see that He is Lord and Saviour, we need to get on with Him.
 - If we do not yet see who He is, we need to see it—the message is clear and to not see when you have heard comes of not wanting to see—not wanting the responsibility that goes with believing.
 - It is the same spirit that is seen in the apostate—a mindset that should not be tolerated any longer.

- c. The passion of the writer and of our Lord who inspired him is obvious.
 - He wants us to move onward and upward with Christ. He wants us to grow.
 - He is preparing us to hear glorious things about Christ and there is concern that his words will be wasted on us if we are uncommitted.
 - If we go on too long like that, we may end up beyond recovery.
 - These hard things needed to be said to prepare us to receive the glorious things that are going to be said of Christ our Saviour in the pages that follow.

II. The writer encourages us that though he has written these hard things, he has a sure expectation of better things for us.

- **Verse 9: “But beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you, yes, the things that accompany salvation.”**

A. What are the better things?

1. No doubt, it refers to better things than things that were just illustrated by the field in verse 8.
 - It is a field that drinks in the rain like the good field in verse 7, but brings forth only thorns and briars and so is **“rejected and near to being cursed, whose end is to be burned.”**
2. The *better things* that are expected are *fruitfulness* and *blessing*.
 - This is illustrated by the field in verse 7 that drinks in the rain and bears herbs useful for those by whom it is cultivated and receives blessing from God.
 - This is a picture of the one who goes onward and upward with Christ.
 - It is the one who becomes more and more like Christ, transformed by the renewing of the mind and able to live joyfully in God’s precepts, even when there is fierce opposition.
3. How much better it is to be this fruitful field instead of the barren field!
 - On the one hand, you have a person who learns things about the Lord and His saving work and who either considers making a profession of faith or actually makes a profession,
 - but then, instead of ever trusting in Him to receive this salvation, becomes bitter and hard toward the Lord and rejects His promises.
 - This person never grows into the new life that God promises, and he ends up perishing forever under God’s wrath and curse.
 - On the other hand, you have someone who hears the same gospel and learns the same things about the Lord and His saving work, and this person trusts Him.
 - That person begins to bring forth the new life that goes along with salvation.
 - He grows in his love for God and begins to see more of His glory.
 - He sees the love of Christ and begins to grasp the fullness of who He is and what He has done.
 - He begins to trust Him more and more and to rest in His promises with assurance and hope.
 - His conduct changes so that it conforms with the Lord’s commandments.
 - He learns self-control and patience, bitterness is replaced with joy, he grows in genuine love and service for others.
 - Selfishness begins to be replaced with a focus on others so that he esteems others as more important than himself.

- And besides all of that, he ends up in glory with Jesus forever and ever instead of in the lake of fire where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.
- These are truly the better things!

B. These *better things* are said to be *the things that accompany salvation*.

1. This has an important implication.
 - Some believers are troubled when they read about those in verses 4-6 who had so many blessings—who were enlightened and even partook of the Holy Spirit and His gifts and then fell away.
 - They hear about that and they say, “How do I know that that will not happen to me?”
 - “Can someone believe in Christ and then turn away from Him like that?”
 - The answer is clearly *no*.
 - Apostasy, rejecting Christ, is not a thing that accompanies salvation.
 - The things that accompany salvation are better things—much better.
 - That person may have made an impressive profession of faith for a while, but that is not salvation because that person never truly came to Christ.
 - If they had been truly saved, they would have had the better things that accompany salvation.
2. Think about this. If a sinner gives up on himself and turns to Jesus to save him from his sin, what will Jesus do?
 - *He will save that sinner!*
 - That sinner has turned the responsibility over to the Son of God who came to save sinners because that sinner has come to realise that he cannot save himself. Why else did the Son of God come?
 - Is Jesus has not come to take on that responsibility, it would be foolish to try to turn it over to Him.
 - But since He came to do that and since He freely offers to take on that responsibility, is He going to fail in saving that individual who turns to Him?
 - Will it prove to be too difficult for Jesus to save him?
 - Will it again fall upon that sinner to save himself?
3. It is true, of course, that a sinner may come to Jesus for the wrong reason, looking for the wrong kind of salvation.
 - Maybe he comes for worldly peace, or for worldly prosperity or success—or in hopes that Jesus will get him out of difficult unpleasant things.
 - In other words, he never faces what the Lord teaches us in His word—that he is a rebel against God and needs to be pardoned and reconciled to God—saved from his sins.
 - He wants God to save him from everything else, and he says, “Oh good—a Saviour—that is just what I need,” but he doesn’t care about being a sinner and being saved from his sin.
 - Will Jesus, who came to save us from our sins, save that sinner from the things he wants to be saved from?

- Of course not. That is not the reason He came.
 - Those who come for the wrong reasons aren't even interested in bearing the fruit of conformity to God's commandments and love for Him.
 - They won't obtain the kind of fruit that Jesus gives to those who want the salvation He promises.
 - They may stay around in the church for a while, even to the end, but it is also likely that they will leave and say that they tried Jesus, but it didn't work for them.
 - Indeed they tried Him, but not to save them from their sins and restore them to the living God and a life conformed to His call!

TRANS> But the writer expresses strong confidence that the people he is writing to, these Hebrews, are not like that.

III. What grounds are there for the writer to say that he is confident of better things for these Hebrews?

A. Understand first of all that he is speaking in generalities.

1. In our society, it is not fashionable to speak in generalities.
 - For example, if anyone today ever said something like what Paul said about the people of Crete in Titus 1, objections would be raised!
 - In Titus 1:12-13, he said, under inspiration, **One of them, a prophet of their own, said, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons."** ¹³ **This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith...**
 - Today, that would lead to the objection that they are not all like that!
 - And there might be a couple of examples given of exceptions.
 - Note that it says they are "*always* liars, evil beasts, and lazy gluttons."
2. But we need to understand something.
 - Generalities are true as generalities.
 - We must take them for what they are—*generalisations*.
 - There are people groups that are characterised by certain things and these things can be expressed as true.
 - If you say that pygmies are short, that is true as a generality. Pointing out a tall one does not disprove it because you were stating a characteristic that is generally true—of course there are exceptions.
 - I grew up in the US. When I came to Canada, I heard people say that Americans were proud. That is true. When I pointed this out to Americans, they would sometimes say (not tongue in cheek) that it just seems that way to others because we are the best. It is generally true that Americans are proud.

➤ So I am sure that you see the point.
3. When the writer to the Hebrews tells them that he is confident of better things concerning them, he means that he is confident that they, as Hebrews professing Jesus as Saviour, would have the better things than apostasy.

- Did he mean that he did not think there would be a single apostate among them?
 - Of course not! The dreadful warning was not merely rhetorical.
 - There were some who were on that trajectory.
 - He did not even know them all personally, but even if he did, nobody has infallible knowledge of the genuineness of their neighbour's profession.
- But it was clear that as a group, these Hebrew Christians were the real deal—they truly knew Christ in a saving way and were on the pathway to eternal salvation.

B. The author presents the evidence of his claim in verse 10:

- **For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, *in that* you have ministered to the saints, and do minister.**

1. Let's begin by looking at what they did that showed that they were true believers:

- *They had expended themselves in loving each other.*
 - Loving our brothers and sisters in the church is constantly set forth in Scripture as an evidence of genuine faith.
 - In John 13:35, Jesus Himself said, **“By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”**
 - In 1 John 4:11-13, His Apostle John said, **Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. ¹² No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us. ¹³ By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit.**
- But notice that something is added here in Hebrews that makes their love all the more an evidence that they were true disciples.
 - It says that they had shown this love **“toward His [Jesus'] name!”**
 - It was ministry in particular to the saints and it was ongoing.
 - They were expressing their love in the name of Jesus. Their love for Him caused them to love His people.
 - It was not just family or friends, but it was members of the body of Christ—because they were members of the body of Christ.
 - It was in a time when they were being persecuted for righteousness sake—so many were impoverished or imprisoned—and they reached out to each other because of their love for Jesus.
 - They put themselves at risk by caring for their brothers and sisters because they were committed to Jesus.
 - By helping them, they would be marked out as fellow-believers and risk being fined or imprisoned themselves.

2. Now let's look at what ver. 10 says about God and His response to what they did.

- a. It says that He won't forget what they have done for each other.
 - Jesus taught us in Matthew 25 that on the day of judgment, He will distinguish those who know Him from those who don't based on whether they had ministered to 'the least of these my brethren' when they were in prison or were naked or hungry.

- In Matt 25:40, He said, ‘**Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.**’
 - He shows that even on the day of judgment, it will be a distinguishing mark between those who are His and those who are hypocrites.
 - He won’t forget them.
- b. In fact, verse 10 in our text says that God won’t be unjust to forget what they have done.
- It would be unjust if He did because He has promised that if we have loved one another, we will not lose our reward.
 - Does this mean that our love earns our salvation?
 - Of course not!
 - Jesus is the only one who can save us.
 - His blood was shed to atone for our sins.
 - But what it means is that when He has saved us, we bring forth fruit that He delights in.
 - That fruit is an evidence of our salvation.
 - It is because of His work in us that we love each other.
 - As I have told you before, He is ravished with our love—even just a little true love that is the result of saving work is lovely in His sight.
 - It is something was completely absent from us until He saved us, and it thrills Him to see it now because it will grow to fullness.
 - You see, until we are reconciled to God, whatever love we may think we have is not beautiful in His eyes at all because it is not done for His glory and honour.
 - It can’t be, because we are committed enemies to Him who have still not been reconciled to Him.
 - It makes all of our love extremely ugly and unacceptable.
 - We are made to worship God and everything we do is fundamentally flawed if we hate Him when we do it.
 - But once we have been brought to the LORD and are reconciled to Him by His saving work, then we do what we do for Him as our God.
 - And He delights in everything that we do for His name!
 - He considers Himself to be unjust if He does not express His delight to us on the day of judgment.
- C. Having seen the love of these Hebrew believers, the author encourages them each one to live zestfully for Him—and so we are likewise encouraged!
- Verse 11-12: **And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, ¹² that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.**
1. The overall idea here is that if we are zealous about living for the Lord, loving each other, bringing forth fruit for His name,
- we will know that we know Him in a saving way.
 - It will give us **full assurance of our hope of His salvation** in us.

- Peter called this making our calling and election sure in 2 Peter 1:10.
 - He said we do this, vv. 5-7, by: **giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love.** ⁸ **For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.**
2. Notice how he says, **“we desire that each one of you show the same diligence.”**
- Remember what I told you before—he was speaking in generalities.
 - As a whole, these Hebrews had been living this way, but there were some individuals, no doubt, who were sluggish—perhaps some of them were not even converted yet—in their hearts, they were still on the fence of indecision.
 - If that is you, the Lord is telling you to stop being sluggish because you are making your relationship with God unclear and uncertain.
 - Don’t you want to have the assurance of hope?
 - Then see that you imitate those who though faith and patience inherit the promises—people like Abraham—and like some of your brothers and sisters in the church.
 - Otherwise you will be doomed to go in the same poor doubting way that you are going on now—and it will always be unclear where you really stand with the Lord—your hope will be weak and uncertain.
 - And will never get on to maturity—you won’t be able to take in the glorious things that the author of Hebrews is going to say about Jesus.
 - You need to go on with faith and patience!
3. But what does it mean to go on with faith and patience?
- You need to know what that means so you can do it.
 - a. It means to go on with Jesus Christ your Saviour.
 - You can’t go on without His saving power and grace.
 - You can’t save yourself. You can’t bear fruit for God. You just can’t!
 - b. If we peek ahead at verses 13-20—which I will preach on next time...
 - It talks about how it was that Abraham was so diligent to go on with the Lord.
 - It was because God had sworn to him that He would bless him and Abraham believed that.
 - We read the promise in Gen 22 and it is quoted here in Hebrew 6:14: **“Surely blessing I will bless you...”**
 - By swearing to do it, God was making it absolutely certain that He would bless Abraham, who was a sinner just like we are.
 - Abraham’s hope of blessing was not in himself, but in God who promised—so he clung to the promise and went forward in faith with God.
 - c. Now look down at verse 20. There you see that Jesus is called our *forerunner*.
 - This gives us even more reason for confidence than Abraham had.
 - Jesus is the one God sent to bless all the nations.
 - He blesses us by bringing us out of our sin and misery to God.
 - He brings us to God.

- He does this as our forerunner.
 - Unlike the priests of the Old Covenant who only approached God in the holy place once per year to offer ritual sacrifices in a ritual temple,
 - Jesus, after He had purged our sins, went to God and stayed with Him!
 - He is our forerunner, which means He will bring us with Him to God.
- We have tremendous encouragement to go onward and upward in our walk with the Lord because we have Jesus to take us onward and upward.
 - He has gone ahead for us and He is committed to bring us with Him all the way into the holy presence of God.
 - God has promised to bless us, ruined sinners though we are, and this is how He goes about it...
 - He sent His Son to be our priest, to atone for our sin, and to bring us from sin to glory.

Conclusion: If you go on with Jesus, with faith in Him, leaning on Him, you will not fail.

- You will be one of those who through faith and patience inherits the promises.
 - In weeks to come, we are going to look at what a glorious forerunner He is and how certain it is that He cannot fail to bring us to God.