



GRACE

Reformed Baptist Church

Soli ◇ Deo ◇ Gloria

THE BOOK OF HEBREWS

Sermon Notes

Full Assurance of Hope Until the End

Hebrews 6:9-12

May 24, 2009

⁹Though we speak in this way, yet in your case, beloved, we feel sure of better things—things that belong to salvation. ¹⁰For 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. ¹¹And we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness to have the full assurance of hope until the end, ¹²so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

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- On February 21, 2001, Robert Hanssen, a 25-year veteran with the FBI, was arrested and charged with selling American secrets to Russia for more than \$1.4 million in cash and diamonds over a 22-year period. On July 6, 2001, he pleaded guilty to 15 counts of espionage in federal court. He was subsequently sentenced to life in prison without parole. He is now serving a life sentence in solitary confinement for 23 hours a day in a Maximum Security Federal Penitentiary in Florence, Colorado.
- According to a document from the U.S. Department of Justice, the traitorous work of Hanssen constitutes “possibly the worst intelligence disaster in U.S. history.”
- The story of Robert Hanssen was also the basis of the 2007 film *Breach*, starring Chris Cooper and Ryan Phillippe.
- Yet, Robert Hanssen was not just *any* spy. He had been – so it seemed – a highly valued member of the FBI since 1976. He was highly intelligent, highly

educated, and as one superior described him “brilliant.” He was considered an expert in counter-intelligence.

- Furthermore, he appeared to be a committed husband, father, and faithful member of the Opus Dei, a conservative sect within the Roman Catholic Church. He even attended Roman Catholic Mass as many as six times a week.
- Yet, even though, on the outside, Robert Hanssen was a committed husband, father, and American, the truth was far different.
- Many within his circle of friends were shocked when they first heard of his arrest. In fact, just weeks after his arrest, a close family friend told *USA Today*, “They're a wonderful family. They've been so concerned about raising their children well. The more I think about it, the more I think he's being framed.”
- However, as devoted, committed, and faithful Hanssen *appeared to be*, the truth was that he was a traitor. He beautifully went through the motions in life, yet, he remained committed to serving his personal desires.

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- The author of Hebrews, in **Hebrews 6:4-8** is greatly concerned about such people within the local church. In fact, he describes them as follows:
 - Those who have once been enlightened;
 - Have tasted the heavenly gift;
 - Have shared in the Holy Spirit;
 - Have tasted the goodness of the word of God;
 - Have tasted the powers of the age to come.
 - Yet, as much as these individuals have “shared” and participated in the outward blessings of the local church, they are not true believers.
 - The Lord Jesus Christ also describes these types of people in His parables in Matthew 13:1-9 and Matthew 13:24-43.
 - Consider the Parable of the Sower: There are individuals who are like the seeds that “fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them.” Others are like the seeds that “fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil, but when the sun rose they were scorched. And since they had no root, they withered away.” Other individuals are like the seeds that “fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them.” Yet, a few individuals are like the seeds that fell on good soil and produced grain.”

- So it is today in the local church. John Owen writes, “In the visible professing church, all things outwardly seemed to be equal. There are the same ordinances administered unto all, the same profession of faith is made by all, the same outward duties are attended unto, and scandalous offenses are by all avoided. But yet things are not internally equal. In a great house, there are vessels of wood and stone, as well as of gold and silver. All that eat outwardly of the bread of life, do not feed on the hidden manna. All that have their names enrolled in the church’s book, may yet not have them written in the Lamb’s book. There are yet better things than gifts, profession, participation of ordinances and whatever is of the like nature. And the use hereof in one word is to warn *all* sorts of persons, that they rest not in, that they take not up with an interest in, or participation of the privileges of the church, with a common profession, which may give them a name to live; seeing they may be dead or in a perishing condition in the meantime.”
- In **Hebrews 6:4-8**, the author issues a stern warning against such apostates. However, beginning in **Verse 9**, he shifts his tone from *warning* to *encouragement*.

I. The Author Encourages His Readers

- Now that the author has sternly warned his readers of the danger of apostasy, his message takes a fundamental shift. **Verse 9** states, “Though we speak in this way, yet in your case, beloved, we feel sure of better things – things that belong to salvation.”
 - Here, the author refers to his readers as “beloved.” This is the only place in all of the epistle where the author uses this description. Yet, it clearly means that he sees his readers as genuine believers.
 - Beloved is used sixty times in the New Testament. It is used by God the Father in speaking of His Son, Jesus Christ. It is also used of believers; however, it is never used when referring to non-believers. Arthur Pink writes, “I cannot really love a brother with the Gospel love which is required of me, unless I have a well-grounded persuasion that he is a brother.”
 - Then the author states that he is sure of *better things* with respect to his readers. Then, he writes, *things that belong to salvation*.
 - The word here for “belong”, in “belong to salvation” in **Verse 9** literally means “conjoined with”, “connected with” or “inseparable from.”
 - This phrase draws a contrast between the *things* NOT [necessarily] connected to salvation, and the things that ARE connected with salvation.

- John MacArthur writes, “The previous topics – intellectual enlightenment about God’s word, tasting God’s gifts and His Spirit, and so forth – accompany revelation, not salvation. They are meant, of course, to help lead to salvation, but they do not do so apart from faith in Jesus Christ.”
- Yet, in the next few verses, he will describe the things pertaining to salvation; primarily, good works. For the Apostle Paul writes, “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Galatians 5:22).
- Furthermore, as A.W. Pink comments, “The principal things that ‘accompany salvation’ are sorrow for and hatred of sin, humility or self-abnegation, the peace of God comforting the conscience, godly fear or the principle of obedience, a diligent perseverance in using the appointed means of grace and pressing forward in the race set before us, the spirit of prayer, and a joyous expectation of being conformed to the image of Christ and spending eternity with Him.”

In short the things pertaining to salvation are **good works**. **Yet, he is in no way stating that we are saved by good works; rather, we are saved by grace through faith which leads us into good works. Another was of stating it is that we are not saved by good works; rather, we are saved *unto* good works.**

- John Calvin writes, “The apostle is not referring expressly here to the cause of our salvation, and therefore no conclusion should be drawn from this passage about the merits of works...It is clear everywhere in Scriptures that there is no other fount of salvation but the free mercy of God.”

II. The Author Explains the Basis of His Encouragement

- Here, in **Verses 10-11**, the Hebrews author explains **why** he is confident of better things with respect to his readers.
- His basis is three-fold: **(1) The Justice of God; (2) The work of his readers; and (3) Their love for one another.**

a. The Justice of God

- The first point of appeal that the author makes, concerning his confidence in the genuine salvation of his hearers is the very Justice of God.
- For, he writes, in **Verse 10**, “For God is not so unjust as to overlook your work and the love that you showed for his sake in serving the saints, as you still do.”

- First of all, the absolute justice of God was the basis of the Father sending His Son into the world in the first place.
 - In fact, sense the author refers to his readers as the *beloved*, it is clear that He sees them as believers, as the **elect of God**.
 - Consequently, they are part of those that the Father gave to the Son.
 - They are those whose sins were placed upon Christ on the Cross.
 - They were those whose sins were fully paid for. In other words, Christ fully exhausted the wrath of God the Father, with respect to the sins of the readers of the Book of Hebrews.
 - Therefore, there is no more wrath...there is no condemnation for those for whom Christ died, for Christ suffered fully, completely, and finally.

Psalm 103:12: “As far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.”

- Consequently, if they could lose their salvation, then this would make God *unjust*, for requiring not only the sacrifice and suffering of Jesus Christ, but also the condemnation of those for whom Christ has already died. Yet, God is not unjust, and the beloved can live lives of assurance and confidence in this truth.
- Secondly, though, since God is not unjust, and since His Son, Jesus Christ, satisfied His justice on the Cross, His readers, and all true believers will exercise good works. That is, **the Father chose the beloved before the foundation of the world, and sent His Son into the world to redeem His people. Yet, it did not stop there, for the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, baptizes all true believers into the Holy Spirit at the point of their conversion, giving them God Himself to indwell within them.**
 - Therefore, because of the personal indwelling of God within all believers, they will produce good work, and God is not so unjust as to not recognize this Spirit-wrought good work.
 - Richard Phillips writes, “The point of Hebrews 6:10 is that God does regard our condition and treasures every petition of prayer, every deed of love, and every act of fidelity. With regard to the idea of rewards, the Scriptures teach that God will reward us for what we do in this life. Have been saved by grace alone, apart

from works, we are now called to works. God, like any loving father, will reward the works we do for him.”

- Thirdly, God is not unjust so as to break His promise that “He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ” (Philippians 1:6).

b. The Good Works of His Readers

- In **6:10**, the author of Hebrews specifically states that God takes not of the good works of His people. Yet, again, these works are not the *cause*, but, rather, the *result* of salvation.
- However, God will reward those good works.
 - A.W. Pink explains it this way, “What God rewards is only what He Himself has wrought in us: it is the Father’s recognition of the Spirit’s fruit...It may look now as though God places little value on sincere obedience to Him, that in this world the man who lives for self gains more than he who lives for Christ; yet, in a soon-coming day it shall appear far otherwise.”
 - Yet, if God is only rewarding what “He Himself has wrought in us,” then, some may ask the question, “What then is the responsibility of man?”
 - I say the answer is simply that our responsibility is **obedient submission...a denying of one’s self and a yielding** to the power and working of the Spirit within us.
 - As John the Baptist states, we are to decrease that He may increase. Or, as the Apostle Paul – “I am crucified with Christ and I no longer live...” Galatians 2:20 or “...I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me...For when I am weak, then I am strong.” 2 Corinthians 12:9-10
 - Or as Christ Himself states, “Pick up our cross and follow Me.”
 - It is only then that we are the poor in Spirit who will inherit the kingdom of God (Matthew 5:3).
 - So, I submit that God is not as much rewarding *our doing*, but rather, *our yielding* and the *Holy Spirit’s doing within us*.

c. Their Love Towards the Saints

- Finally, the author rests on the basis of the readers’ “love that [they have shown] for his sake in serving the saints...”
- The author makes a very important point here that should not be missed: the love that the readers exercise towards one another is done *for His [God’s] sake*.
- Therefore, the *reason why* and the *basis of* our love and service for one another springs from our love of God Himself. Therefore, the reason why we serve our fellow brother is not because we are seeking rewards, but rather because we love God.
- Consider the words of the Apostle John, “We love because he first loved us. If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother” (1 John 4:19-21).
- As we see throughout the New Testament, it is our love for our fellow Christians that we be the reason why people know we are of Christ. Yet, tragically, today, the church does not exercise this commandment.

III. The Author Calls His Readers to Perseverance

- Finally, the author writes, 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, so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.”
- There is a clear contrast, here, between practicing *earnestness* versus *sluggishness*.
 - But, the authors desire here is that his readers have **full assurance of hope until the end**.
 - The verb in the phrase “to have the full assurance of hope” literally means to “fill up.”
 - Consequently, the author desire that the assurance of hope that his readers possess be “**filled to the rim**”, so to speak.
 - Yet, the manner in which they are going to have such assurance is through earnestness.

That is, the author of Hebrews is stating that his readers will have assurance as they earnestly practice godliness (through Bible study, prayer, corporate worship, etc.), imitating “those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.”

- J.C. Ryle, the nineteenth century Anglican theologian wrote, “I bless God that our salvation in no way depends on our own works...But I never would have any believer for a moment forget that our *sense of salvation* depends much on the manner of our living.”
- Richard Phillips comments: “This is what diligence in the faith provides: an increasing awareness and possession of the riches that are ours in Jesus Christ, with ever-increasing joy in the Lord.”
- This sort of earnestness stands in contrast to *sluggishness*. The word, here, translated “sluggish” is the same word translated “dull” in **Hebrews 5:11**.
- That is, along with spiritual sluggishness and laziness comes a dullness of heart.

Therefore, spiritual earnestness produces assurance and hope; whereas, sluggishness produces doubt.

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- Yet, the final statement the author makes here is that his readers should be “imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.”
 - May we never forget that we possess an ancient and historical faith.
 - Given the context of this passage and book, “those who through faith and patience inherit the promises” is certainly a reference to the Old Testament saints.
 - Certainly, this is laying the foundation for Hebrews 11: the “Hall of Faith” Chapter.
 - Yet, our author’s point is clear: his readers are not the first to embark on a journey of faith rooted in the promises of Yahweh.
 - In fact, the Old Testament is filled with countless examples of men and women who have journeyed along this path.
 - So, the author is saying, find strength in their example, and imitate them. Consider men such as:
 - Abraham
 - Moses
 - Caleb and Joshua

- David
 - Isaiah
 - Jeremiah
 - Daniel
- Each one of these men battled sin. Consider Abraham and the maidservant Hagar...Or Moses and his disobedience and impatience, both in Egypt (killing the Egyptian) and in the wilderness (striking the rock in anger). David fell into sin with Bathsheba. Yet, all of them persevered in the faith, leaving us an example.
 - Not only this, we are at a tremendous advantage compared to them – Christ – the fulfillment of the promise – has come!
 - May we consider Jesus – who is Himself the greatest example for us to follow. Recall Hebrews 4:14-15: “Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.”
 - In today’s context, we can also look to the New Testament apostles, and the saints of the Church over the past two thousand years.
 - Each one of these has left us a living example of how to live in the most difficult of circumstances. May we follow their example.

Richard Phillips states, “What a glorious thing it is to realize that we are not the first to take on the challenge of the godly life. What wonderful communion we have with other saints to realize that we share with them our deepest spiritual longings as well as our trials and satisfaction.”

- So, brothers, and sisters, may we earnestly persevere in the faith, taking hope in the justice and promises of God, and drawing strength from those saints who have gone before us and travel the road with us.
- May our heart’s cry be like the Apostle Paul: “I [want to] know him and the power of his resurrection, and [to] share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead” (Philippians 3:10-10).