

Text: Heb 6.9

We've been wrestling through the most difficult passage in Hebrews. I am sure we will talk more about it, especially when we get to chapter 10 and the second most difficult passage, but that is months away.

Today we emerge into the sunshine.

The author warned the readers strongly, but he thinks they are better than his warning. We can use the same language in sermons today.

Be very careful for your soul if you even think about stepping away from the faith! (Warning)

But we are sure of your soul because you already show you are better than the warning.

That's a paraphrase of where we are and our text today.

As a pastor looks out on a congregation, he is reasonably assured that most of those who come and listen regularly have a sincere faith in Christ.

- Sometimes people come, and attend frequently, because they have an interest in religion or religious feeling.
- Sometimes people have a Christian tradition, raised in a Christian home, but have never seriously contemplated the need of their own soul.

But generally, those who attend want to attend because they indeed do love Christ. That's where the assurance comes in, and that is who it applies to.

Read Heb 6.4-9, text 9

My very literal translation of v. 9, following closely the Gk word order:

We have been persuaded (and) concerning you, beloved ones, [by] the better and having salvation (type) things, if even thus we are speaking.

That sounds a bit incomprehensible in English, but as we lay the smooth translation and my literal translation side by side in our message, this will make more sense.

I hope that it brings great conviction to your own souls, as well.

Proposition: Concrete evidence of personal salvation persuades others of the work of God in you.

I. Complete confidence in the beloved

A. The emphasis of word order:

1. In Gk, word order isn't so important for meaning (word endings)
2. Word order affects emphasis
3. Here: *convinced concerning you beloved*

a. The verb: convinced

- 1) The usual word for persuasion
- 2) Used here in perfect tense
 - a) Suggests a time when the author was unpersuaded
 - b) Affirms a present reality where the author is now persuaded

“a state resulting from having become persuaded”¹

b. Concerning you: words pointing to the readers, again pushed forward in the verse

c. Beloved:

- 1) Only used here in the whole book
- 2) A term of affection, *agapetoi*
 - a) You probably recall the Gk word, “agape,” love
 - b) This word means “loved ones”
- 3) Similar to the French words for friend
 - a) French “love” = *amour*
 - b) French “friend” = *ami* [male] *amie* [female]

Same roots for both words

- 4) Beloved is also pushed forward, before the “building blocks” of the rest of the sentence

The author wants them to know he is talking directly to them and that he holds them in high regard.

¹ J. Harold Greenlee, *An Exegetical Summary of Hebrews*, 2nd ed (Dallas, Tex.: SIL International, 2008), 195.

B. The connecting word, “but” NAU

1. Not the “strong adversative” but the softer one
2. Sometimes translated “and”
3. In other words, he is not strongly contrasting, but connecting to it softly

“It softens the effect of the preceding warning and indicates that the author has good hope for his readers”² — so Bloomfield, Morris, and Meyer

C. The concept of persuasion

1. “to move by argument, entreaty, or expostulation to a belief, position, or course of action”³
2. It is not merely to have an opinion, to think well of
3. Rather, evidence, argument, etc., have persuaded
4. And note again, perfect tense, he was and continues to be persuaded

II. Source of confidence for the observer

the better and having salvation (type) things

A. The generic word “the better things”

1. The word “better” is really an adjective
 - a. You can have a better car, a better house, a better life, a better “thing”
 - b. But here it is used like a noun, “the things that are better”
2. The previous verses talked about better things and worse (!) things
 - a. Verse 7 – the good things produced by a “faithful” field
 - b. Verse 8 – the useless things produced by a “stumbling, falling away” field

² Greenlee, 196.

³ Frederick C. Mish, ed., *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed. (Springfield, Mass.: Merriam-Webster, Inc., 2003).

3. The faithful Christian displays the fruitfulness of Christ in his life — in some way or other, and the more faithful, the more fruitful

As we have ministered, we see some come to faith, and they seem very weak — yet in their life you'll see at least some little green shoot, a patch of better things, maybe not as fruitful as one could wish, but something.

B. The salvation word “the having salvation (type) things”

1. The second expression adds to the picture

- a. A little odd, the verb “to have” as a participle, salvation as an adjective
- b. So we understand that there are “things” in the life that *have* salvation like characteristics: thus, my “salvation (type) things”

2. The “better things” have the “whiff of salvation” about them

- a. Our translators give it to us this way:

things that accompany salvation

- b. The apostles use other language to describe it

- 1) “fruit of the Spirit” (Paul)
- 2) “wisdom from above” (James)

- c. We will see this in attitudes and affections and actions

- 1) Someone shows that they love to hear the word of God, respond to it preached, seek it out
- 2) Someone loves to read the Bible (may not be consistent, but find in it “the words of life”)
- 3) Someone loves other Christians, even the weird ones
- 4) Someone wants to be at church as much as possible
- 5) Someone wants to glorify God and will stick with it even if it causes pain or loss

P^s 15.4 ... He swears to his own hurt and does not change;

C. A caution on “better and accompanying salvation things”

1. These “things” don’t produce salvation
 - a. You can’t become a Christian by reading your Bible, listening to sermons
 - b. You can’t become a Christian by loving Christians and going to church
 - c. You can’t become a Christian by living a Christian lifestyle (“glorifying God”)
2. You become a Christian by repentant faith
 - a. Repenting of trying to save yourself, repenting of sin
 - b. Relying on Jesus alone to save you from your sin
3. When you have come to God in repentant faith, you will begin to exhibit in your life the “better and accompanying salvation things”
 - a. Faith produces fruit
 - b. Fruit follows faith

This evidence *persuades* – and has persuaded our author about his beloved Hebrews.

III. Continuing confidence while warning

A. The manner of speaking in Heb 6

1. It is impossible to renew to repentance
 - a. Someone who exhibits the marks of salvation
 - b. And has fallen away (fallen into the ditch)

Specifically, the threat to the Hebrews was to revert to Judaism to escape the persecution that came because of Christ.

For us, there is pressure to keep quiet about Christ (don’t bring it up in the public square) — but it isn’t so intense that we are pressured to “be something else” other than a Christian.

What if it got that hard, though? That's when the warning applies.

2. The only use someone who has had the marks of salvation but is producing weeds is to be purged by fire (6.8)

By any stretch, these words are serious and worrying. No believer would want this fate.

B. The last phrase of v. 9 is a concession

1. We are persuaded of you (by you)
2. Despite the way we are talking

Conclusion:

Proposition: Concrete evidence of personal salvation persuades others of the work of God in you.

Jesus said,

Mt 5.6 "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

What do you hunger and thirst for?

If you are a Christian, you should love God's word, God's people, and God himself.

- Cultivate these loves!
- Stretch out towards Christ!
- Delight yourself in the things of God.

Ps 37.4 Delight yourself in the LORD; And He will give you the desires of your heart.