

Text: Heb 6.10-12

Last week our message was, “Convinced of Better Things.” The verses immediately following the stern warning of Hebrews 6 are meant to begin reassuring the readers: the author is convinced they are not of those who fall away from the path.

The reassurance continues in the verses that form our text today.

I want to again mention that some think Hebrews is essentially sermonical in style, adapted for a reading audience after it was preached.

I pointed out how the weight of the warning would fall in a listening audience. The audience would be hushed, sober, worried, perhaps even fearful. Where would they be if such a disaster came on them.

Now, the author is picking them up again, leading them away from the fearful disaster to the assured hope.

In verse 9, he said he was convinced of better things of them. Now he gives the reason... **“For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward his name...”**

The succeeding phrases continue this theme.

I gave our message this title:

The Path to Full Assurance

There is a danger to Christian experience, embodied in the warning of this chapter. That danger is the wilderness life, bitter, blasted, fruitless, useless, no good to God or anyone. May God preserve Christians from wasting years in bitter fruitlessness from God.

In our passage, the author urges the readers to turn from the danger and energize their spiritual lives to take full advantage of all God offers.

Read Heb 6.9-12, text 10-12

Proposition: The stumbling believer can yet be sure of a fervent, full end.

I. The true beginning (10)

A. When we talk about assurance, we often think of works: things we have done that look like a Christian

1. Our verse mentions “your work”

2. It also mentions “your ... love shown toward his name”

These are general terms, not specific

3. Later in the epistle, he will talk about their works (10.32-34)

Heb 10.32-34 ¶ But remember the former days, when, after being enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings, ³³ partly by being made a public spectacle through reproaches and tribulations, and partly by becoming sharers with those who were so treated. ³⁴ For you showed sympathy to the prisoners and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one.

- a. Public tribulations at the beginning of testimony
- b. Sharing with those so treated
- c. Showed sympathy to prisoners
- d. Accepted seizure of property
- e. Looking toward a better possession

The description of Heb 10 displays the fruit of a genuine faith.

4. Heb 6.10 says this work and love was shown “toward His name”
 - a. Name often used as a stand in for God in the Bible
 - b. But there is more: if you love his name, you are glad to take his name on you: Christian, “little Christ”
 - c. This love is demonstrated: “shown”
5. The way love for his name is shown:
 - a. “having deaconed and still deaconing to the saints”
 - b. Gk word is the verb form of the noun that gives us “deacon”

“The thought is of service to Christians as Christians, ... and not to Christians as men.”¹

¹ Brooke Foss Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 3rd ed. (London: Macmillan, 1903), 157.

- c. Even in their current condition, they continue to serve each other “for the sake of the name”

So, again, when we think of assurance, we often think of our works: how I look like a Christian. But that is not how the text sees it

B. Confidence rests in God’s righteousness, not the believer’s works

1. God’s righteousness stated by a dramatic double negative
 - a. Extraordinarily strong statement, double negative οὐ ... ἄδικος “not ... unjust” or “not ... unrighteous”
 - b. This “comprises an emphatic positive, ‘he is very righteous’ [NIGTC]”²
2. This suggest that in God’s eyes, their beginning is a true beginning
 - a. No one is saved by works

Ep 2.8-9 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God;⁹ not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

- b. No one loves God and the saints apart from the work of the Spirit

Gal 5.22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

Rm 5.3-5 And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance;⁴ and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope;⁵ and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

2 Tim 1.7 For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline.

² J. Harold Greenlee, *An Exegetical Summary of Hebrews*, 2nd ed (Dallas, Tex.: SIL International, 2008), 197.

3. God's righteousness is seen in his remembering: "God is not unjust so as to forget..."
 - a. Their assurance rests in God
 - b. But note this:

"But even God cannot remember what they did not do."³
 - c. This reassures us again about the warning of 6.4-8
 - 1) They clearly have had a true beginning [*i.e.*, it cannot be said they are not believers]
 - 2) Their future depends on God's justice to remember

Now there is a consequent decision to make...

II. The urgent pursuit (11)

A. Renew the old diligence

1. This is the author's strong desire for them
 - a. "intense longing"
 - b. "no exact parallel"⁴
2. The manifestation of diligence is a constant lifestyle (present tense)
 - a. "to be showing..."
 - b. The old diligence needs renewal and constant persistence
 - 1) It is possible to "grow weary in well doing"

We are men, we get tired, we get discouraged — this is just when we face the normal ups and downs of life.
 - 2) It is even more challenging to face active persecution

And here ... we don't know where to turn
- c. The solution is to keep going for the Lord

³ A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1933), Heb 6.9.

⁴ Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 158.

3. The thing to pursue is the same diligence

- a. “The same” looks back to the beginning works in v. 10
- b. Diligence: “earnestness in accomplishing, promoting, or striving after anything”⁵

Their love for the name, their “deaconing” to the saints

B. The result: full assurance of hope

1. The idea behind “full assurance” is “a fullness”

When a recipe calls for a “packed” cup of brown sugar, you press more and more sugar into it until it can’t hold any more. (And then I add a little bit more, just because.)

“it seems better to understand it here of the full development of hope than of the full assurance of hope (1 Thess. 1:5).”⁶

2. Your certainty of hope grows in proportion to your diligence

- a. Here “hope” is “the hope” — that is the Christian’s hope of final salvation
- b. As we press on to “the end” our diligence packs our lives full of joy in the service of God

III. The exhortation’s goal (12)

A. Negatively: that you not be sluggish

1. We’ve seen this word before: Heb 5.11

Heb 5.11 ¶ Concerning him we have much to say, and *it is hard to explain*, since you have become **dull** of hearing.

- a. First, this little marker shows us we’ve come to the end of the section
 - 1) Broke off talking about the priesthood of Christ

⁵ Joseph Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (International Bible Translators (IBT), Inc., 1889).

⁶ Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 158.

2) Will return to the priesthood of Christ soon

b. The difference between 5.11 and 6.12

1) In 5.11 they were sluggish in *hearing*

2) Now in 6.12 he urges them not to be sluggish in *doing*

The word can be translated “lazy” — if we are lazy, dull, sluggish to listen to the word, we will inevitably become lazy, dull, sluggish in doing the word.

2. The word contrasts with “diligence” in v. 11

a. If you show the same diligence, you won’t be sluggish (“duh” moment)

b. The purpose of the exhortation is to eliminate sluggishness, and its consequent weakness

B. Positively: that you be imitators of the faithful

1. Who are the faithful?

those who through faith and patience inherit the promises

a. Commentators say this is a hint of chapter 11: the hall of the faithful

b. The next verse will turn to Abraham as an example

c. The faithful are those who received the promises of God and continued to serve him without their faith in sight

2. This is how he says it: “through faith and patience”

a. They believed what God said

b. They lived their lives in light of that: patiently

1) Two words for patience

a) *Endurance*: bearing up under the burden, carrying the load

b) *Longsuffering*: taking the next step, despite the burden

One refers to standing up, the other refers to keeping on walking.

This word is *longsuffering* – the patience that keeps on in faith despite every discouragement.

- c. The promises came to the patriarchs with very little or *no* Bible revelation: they heard and did, believed and practiced

Their hope was filled by their diligent, dogged, unwavering faith.

Conclusion:

Proposition: The stumbling believer can yet be sure of a fervent, full end.

The Hebrew believers were in danger of stumbling into the wilderness. They needed to remember and continue their early zeal, their first diligence.

I want to remind you about this quote I gave earlier:

“But even God cannot remember what they did not do.”⁷

These hearers were Christians. What would God say to someone who isn't a Christian? If God did not remember such a person, would he be unjust?

What would there be to remember?

We all must open the door of faith and step into God's family so God will remember us. It isn't just “an escape hatch” from God's judgement.

Rather, it is seeing in the Lord Jesus as your only hope for forgiveness of sin and turning in faith to him, diligently following him with the rest of your life.

⁷ Robertson, *Word Pictures*, Heb 6.9.