



Ministry of the Word

Sunday 02nd December 2018

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Scripture: Hebrews 6:9-12

Subject: Part 16 – Better things

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 labour 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.

Warnings are meant to get our attention on account of the consequences resulting from failure to heed them. We have seen clearly and with certainty, in verses 4 to 8, the dire results of having the Gospel truth and not doing anything with it. If the truth of this warning contained in these verses, hurts or disrupts, then it has done its job. For if you remember the previous topics, it concerned intellectual enlightenment about God's word, tasting God's gifts and His Spirit, and so forth, they pointed to revelation and not salvation. The readers or hearers of this warning were all raised in Judaism. They had the same opportunity to know God's revelation and experience the work of His Spirit. They had the same opportunity to hear the gospel and to see and experience Christ's church at work. The only difference, and yet it was a very great difference, some had trusted Christ as Saviour and some had not. That

is also the great difference between the wheat and the tares of Jesus' parable (Matthew 13:24-43). The same sun that hardens the clay melts the wax.

After the 4th severe warning in the Book of Hebrews, comes the most loving of exhortations in our text this morning. So, let us consider first verse 9 -

But, beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you, yes, things that accompany salvation, though we speak in this manner.

TO WHOM THIS EXHORTATION APPLIES TOO

Both, the use of "beloved" and the discussion of salvation conditions, confirms that the focus to whom the text is now addressing has changed, and so too the appeal. The term "Beloved" is never used in Scripture to refer to unbelievers, whereas in the previous part of the chapter it was addressing things only concerning revelation. In the Greek, the word *beloved*, is *agapetos* which stems from the word *agape* which expresses the highest kind of love. It is used sixty times in the New Testament. The first nine times is used by God the Father in speaking of Christ, His beloved Son. Everywhere else, whether referring to Jews or Gentiles, it is used only in referring to believers.

The writer of Hebrews was confident that the believers he was turning His attention to, had traits which were the markings of salvation and of true sainthood in the biblical sense. The implication is that, after investigation, he was persuaded that these beloved brethren possessed all the things that accompany salvation and that they would be superb examples for their yet unbelieving friends to observe and imitate.

At the end of the verse 9 "*Though we are speaking in this way or in this manner*" no doubt is meant to be an encouragement to fellow believers who, after reading the previous very sombre section, may have been wondering, as many Christians do today, if this warning applied to them. Moving the last part of verse 9 to the beginning helps clarify the meaning.

A paraphrased reading would be, "*Beloved fellow Christians, though we have been speaking about these overwhelming and fearful warnings to unbelievers, we know that far better things apply to you. You have the accompaniments of salvation, not of unbelief. These warnings to apostates, and potential apostates, are put in this letter to you because these people are in your midst.*"

Again, the parable of the wheat and tares is helpful. Jesus made a special point that both true believers and mere professed believers would be in the church together until He returns, and that true believers can never be certain who the false ones are.

The characteristics of unbelievers given in Hebrews 5:11 and 6:4 are not meant to be used by the church to try to separate the wheat from the tares. Only the condition of a person's heart determines his standing before God, and only God has this knowledge. Under certain circumstances, for example, teaching false doctrine or living immorally, the church not only may, but should, excommunicate a member. Over time we can determine if someone is saved by their fruits, as we are told 'by their fruits you shall know them', however there are many people that can exhibit false fruit, by that I mean, on the outside they are one thing, but, on the inside, it's another matter.

The verse presents to us a deep conviction in relation to "*better things*" which accompany salvation.

ACCOMPANIMENTS OF SALVATION

Many things accompany salvation. The entire fifth and six chapters of Romans are devoted to these accompaniments. For example, and just a quick run through, in Romans 5 we see-

- Verse 1 – Peace with God
- Verse 2 – Access by faith before God (to worship)
- Verse 3 – Correct Attitude toward God
- Verse 4 – Hope
- Verse 5 – Spirit filled
- Verse 6 – Acknowledgment of Christ as Saviour
- Verse 7 – Assurance of Salvation

Then we see in Romans 6

- Verse 1 – New life
- Verse 5 – Assurance of Resurrection
- Verse 6 – No longer Slaves to Sin
- Verse 7 – Freedom Spiritual to serve and follow Christ
- Verse 8 to 11 – Serving a resurrected and living Saviour

The particular ones mentioned in this section of Hebrews are those that contrast with the accompaniments of unbelief mentioned in Chapter 5 verse 11 to 6 verse 8.

For example, accompanying salvation is not infancy but maturity, not milk but solid food, not inexperience in righteousness but perfect righteousness, not repentance in dead works but repentance toward God unto life. The accompaniments of salvation are primarily positive, not negative. They do not reflect external ceremonial religion but internal regeneration, transformation, new life. Their significance comes not from repeated sacrifices but from the one perfect and complete sacrifice of Jesus Christ. They do not focus on the elementary truths of resurrection and judgment but on the believer's blessed hope, not just on being enlightened but on being made new, not just on tasting salvation but feasting on it, not just partaking of the Holy Spirit but having Him indwell, not just getting a taste of God's good word but of drinking and eating it, not just seeing God's miracles but being one. These are the things that accompany salvation!

I trust we strive to display these traits in our lives, and more than that I trust it is, or will become the desire of all our hearts. I know believers today who would just love to have what we have. They are in countries not considered oppressive but in places where the true word of God is thin on the ground. They are starving for fellowship with the true body of Christ. They long, even crave for fellowship, that we can take for granted. They would just love to be with people of the calliper that I have described. Not mucking or messing about, not ABC'ers, or believers with little or no interest in the Lord or the things of God but to be with men and women who take seriously their faith in Christ. There are too many spiritual plays, circus's, shows, and clowns presently about, and the time is fast approaching when we will all be before the Lord. It is time to review our position and these verses allow us the privilege to do so.

Verse 10 points out another great encouragement -

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

GOD DOES NOT FORGET HIS OWN.

God knows who are really His and who are faithful. He will not forget His own nor their work for Him. Our names are securely in His book of life. Our salvation will not be lost and our rewards will not be forgotten. "Rest easy," the writer says. "Don't worry."

Many Christians today, as throughout history, experience times of doubt and even anguish at the supposed prospect of losing their salvation. What an old trick of the enemy of our souls! When they read or hear a message of judgment, they are shaken and insecure. They do not know what it is to rest in the finished work of Christ and in their positional standing in Him before God.

After Malachi had given his severe warning of judgment, many of the faithful believers apparently were worried that it applied to them. But the Lord calmed their fear.

"A book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the LORD and who esteem His name. 'And they will be Mine,' says the LORD of hosts. I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him" Malachi 3:16-17.

In the next chapter, after still another warning to the wicked, God again reassures His own:

"But for you who fear My name the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings" Malachi 4:2.

God always knows His faithful; He always knows His own. We should not fear the final judgment. If we are in Christ, we can never be condemned. We should not worry about missing the rapture. If we belong to Christ, He will be sure to take us with Him. The sovereignty of God and His faithfulness secure us. Not only does He not forget you, but He also sees your works.

WORKS ARE EVIDENCE OF LOVE

Works, do not save anyone nor do they keep them saved, but works are evidence of a Christian's salvation. As James tells us, faith without works is dead, not alive, not real, not genuine. Our faith is demonstrated by our works - James 2:18

But someone will say, "You have faith, and I have works." Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.

And if you read further down to verse 26 -

For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

God is not so unfair and insensitive that He fails to see the works of love that His beloved children perform. He clearly sees the fruit of our righteousness. Remember that it is not our

works that brings our faith to life, it is faith, saving faith that produces fruit and works to the glory of God. We read in Titus 1:16

They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work.

Paul told the Thessalonian believers that he knew God had chosen them to be His, to be saved, because of their...

"work of faith and labour of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ" 1 Thessalonians 1:3-4.

They had the fruit of good works to go along with their statement of faith. Love is a product of faith. Love for and service to the brethren are evidence of salvation. John 13:34-35 –

³⁴ A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. ³⁵ By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

Another, if not a more significant mark is love shown toward His name. God knows when our service is truly for His glory or not. He knows if it is done out of love for His name. As important as loving fellow Christians is, loving God is immeasurably more important. In fact, without loving God first and foremost, we are not able to love each other as we should. The Jewish Christians being commended here in the verses this morning, ministered to the saints first of all out of their love for God's name. The very reason they could love each other so much and serve each other so well was because they loved God so much. The key to true Christian service is a burning love for the Lord. Unbelievers should be drawn to Christians because of their love and Christ-likeness. Christians should love people, should value them by seeing all people as bearing the image of God. Our responsibility, our calling, is to love and serve fellow Christians, and also unbelievers, first of all because of God, not because of what they can get for themselves or their need to feel good.

In the introduction of his letter to the Romans, Paul wrote of his gratitude for their faithfulness and of his longing to visit them (Romans 1:8-10). He told them that the driving force behind his ministry to them was for the sake of God's name and He served God first and fore-most (Romans 1:5,9). God's name stands for all that He is. To love His name is to have a passionate desire for the glory of all that God is.

Speaking of some traveling ministers, John said of them,

"For they went out for the sake of the Name" (3 John 7).

They ministered because of their overwhelming love for the Lord. When Jesus recommissioned Peter, He did not ask him if he loved men and, if so, then to go out and serve them. He asked Peter three times, *"Do you love Me?"*. After each of Peter's affirmative replies, Jesus commanded him to feed His sheep (John 21:15-17). Our service to Jesus Christ must be based on an overriding love for Him. We can never properly love men, saved or unsaved, lovable or unlovable, until we properly love Christ.

These faithful believers to whom these verses in Hebrews were primarily addressed, loved the name of the Lord and ministered to each other. This was positive proof that their faith was the real thing. We hear a great deal about loving and ministering to the Body of Christ, about serving each other in the life of the Body. The genuineness and the effectiveness of the ministry we have to one another as saints is directly related to the love we have for Christ. The more we love God, the more we will want to do His will. Our concern should not be for trying to whip up love for people, but for loving God more and more. When our love for Him is right, our love for others will be also right.

Keeping God as our focus and first love not only gives us the desire and power to love others and to serve them, but it also sustains us in our service. Only God's love has such staying power. The faithful, loving Hebrews had ministered and were still ministering. Their love issued was evident by an unbroken ministry to the saints. They just kept loving and serving. They could always speak of their fellowship with the Lord and of their Christian service in the present tense.

Sadly, today many Christians speak of their services in the past tense, rather than the present tense. It's not that the Lord has finished with them or their spiritual gifts or abilities, but rather they have the idea that it's someone else's turn to do things. God hasn't given up on them. The truth is that they have given up faith in God to use them. Caleb, for me is an inspiration in Joshua 14:6-15. At 85 he was still going for God and as bright in the Lord as ever. Your right, he was not a superman but a spiritual man who served the Lord from his heart and God knows, we need more spiritual men in this day and age. Let me challenge you brothers and also sisters, that it's time for you to step up!

This bring us to the next point we need to consider

HOW SHOULD WE SERVE?

First of all, we serve by ministering our spiritual gifts. Let's take a moment to read Romans 12:3-8

For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. ⁴ For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, ⁵ so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. ⁶ Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; ⁷ or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; ⁸ he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

As you read these verses, you will at once notice, at least it is striking to me, that it is not age conscious, or gender focus, church affiliation, education level, culture, or class preferred. What is crystal clear, is that it is to all believers in Christ. 1 Corinthians 12:9-11 and 1 Peter 4:10-11 make this an issue of importance again and one that should be given consideration by all who are believers in Christ. Our frontline of service is through our spiritual gifts.

Our spiritual gifts are not given for us to take and use by ourselves, for our own benefit. They are to be used for God's glory, in His power and for His name's sake. Whether our gift is counselling, showing mercy, helping, teaching, preaching, administration, or whatever, it is to be ministered because we love the One who gave it to us. These gifts can be given and taken away because they don't belong to us. This can happen, and in most cases does happen, when we don't use them. The Lord can also add to that which is already given in fact does not the apostle Paul encourages us in this regard see 1 Corinthians 14:1.

Serving one another, of course, has nothing to do with our spiritual gifts but it is simply part of every Christian's responsibility. Every believer's ministry, for example, involves praying for other believers. We are to

"pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints" (Ephesians 6:18).

Our ministry to one another also involves rebuking sin in a brother, seeking to restore him in love, confessing to one another, forgiving, bearing one another's burdens, caring for the weaker brother, giving to the needs of the saints, and many other responsibilities. All these things are part of our ministry to one another, and none of them can be generated on its own. All must be generated by the right kind of love for Jesus Christ.

The Christian life boils down to one thing: the measure of our love for the Lord. How preoccupied are we with the God Himself? People use God, and the name of God for all kind of 'spiritually' toned sentimental comfort, or vainly repeating it in our conversation when we don't know what else to say, or to deflect light shining on our own lives. In Matthew's gospel chapter 15, verse 8 and 9 –

'These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honour Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me. ⁹ And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.'

Are we really doing His will for the sake of His glory? How lofty and exalted is our view of God and how overwhelming is our concern and genuine love for Him? When we love Him with all our "*heart and soul and mind and strength*," we will then be able, and only then be able, to love our neighbour as ourselves.

The saints that are ministered to are fellow Christians. All true Christians are hagios, "holy ones," or saints ([cross reference - 1 Corinthians 1:2](#)). It goes without saying that we often do not think or act like saints, in the popular sense. Yet the writer is speaking of our identity in Christ. We are holy ones in our Lord, even when we are unfaithful and act unsaintly. Being a saint has nothing at all to do with one's degree of spiritual maturity or rank. It refers to any person who is saved, who is set apart by God for Himself in His Son Jesus Christ because God sees us as He sees His Son, we are all "holy in His sight."

The proof that these verses 9 and 10 were to true believers was on account of their loving, faithful, and continuing ministry to fellow believers, fellow saints. The greatest gift our love can give God is to love and faithful service each other, His children. If we love Him, we will serve one another. To say we love God while we have no use for our brothers in Christ is to tell a lie. John, often called the apostle of love, goes into this truth in depth in his first letter.

"The one who says he is in the light and yet hates his brother is in the darkness until now."

A few chapters later, he puts the same truth even more strongly: *"The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love."* In the last chapter he summarizes the truth: *"Whoever loves the Father loves the child born of Him"* (1 John 2:9; 4:8; 5:1).

Loving one another is not an option or an extra add on; it is the bedrock of Christian living. Having made this statement, the verse goes onto say:

FOLLOW THEIR EXAMPLE

For the immature believer, he points them towards mature Christians in their midst and encourages them to be imitators, who through faith and patience inherit the promises. It begs the question in relation to ourselves, could others use us as example to follow? Before you answer, let me tell you that someone, somewhere, is seeking to imitate you! It is amazing when you read through accounts in the Old Testament in relation to those who ascended to the throne as kings of Israel and Judah, how the majority followed in the immoral decadents of their predecessors; despite the historical fact that such was against God and brought only troubles to the nation. It was only a minority that followed in the path of righteousness. To them the blessings flowed, and it has not changed, for the Scriptures says,

"righteousness exalted a nation but sin is a reproach to any people" Proverbs 14:34.

Examples are like patterns, that people use to get a particular result. If it is a good pattern it will be used continually. Our life example is far more important because it can set the tone for good or bad. By taken stock of our ways, all of our ways and correcting were necessary, we can be used to help others. Paul, I believe, used the illustration of our lives being like a book that is read by all men. Remember it's what we put in and hold on to in our lives which reflects the kind of people we are. So here we are being challenged to live the life that God calls us to live, for His will. Not to just prove the gospel but demonstrate its power. If the Lord was to use your manner of life to inspire others, what would they become? If we want to have a positive influence then we need to know God's will, God's standards and obey them. We need live in light of God's word. That calls for the reality of the gospel to be real in our lives.

We now come to verses 11-12



And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

We have a decision to make as children of the King. Will we or won't we follow through? It's not a 'give to get' situation before us. It's about being a true disciple of Christ, living in the purpose and fulfilment of God's word. It's about movement not stagnation and serving the Lord, not our creature comforts. Diligence as we see here in verse 11 carries the idea of careful and persistent work or effort. Therefore, it saying here, be persistent and careful to work out your own Salvation with fear and trembling as Paul instructed the believers in Philippians 2 verses 12 and 13 state -

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.

Only when we are focused in this way do we have confidence of the hope that is set before us. The assurance of reaching the 'finishing line' of the Christian race. So many get distracted before they start, while others begin to question its worth and even get distracted along the way. The Scriptures teaches us that there is only one way to go. Note again the term 'sluggish'. It was not only true of the intellectually unsaved but also used in relation to the saved. Is it possible? Of course it is! The world and the devil along with the flesh, if allowed, set the agenda for your precious life, trying to steal your joy, hope, peace and blessings along the way.

Pilgrim's Progress is a must read not just once but it's a great book to remind us of God's goals for our lives. Christian's journey (the main character of the book) to the heavenly city reflects in many ways our own journey to heaven. Christian, the Pilgrim in the book meets Mr Worldly Wiseman on his journey along with many others. Their purpose was to distract him from reaching his goal by presenting another path while often giving seemingly logical advice, it was of course none-the-less, wrong advice. It might seem the simpler way or the shortest way, one that doesn't have so many burdens but it is not the surest way. Only the way of the cross leads home. These witnesses, the mature believers, are not just an example to follow but an encouragement for us to become. *Amen.*