

“A Preacher’s Hope”

Heb. 6:9-12

- INTRO. - Today we are looking at the subject of “the preacher’s hope.” Any time a preacher of God’s Word steps into the pulpit, there is a certain *hope* with which he proclaims his message. There is confidence in the power of God’s Word and God’s Spirit to accomplish all His good will. There is a great hope that the Word will *not* return void, but will accomplish what God desires.
- When an evangelistic appeal is made, there is the hope that unbelievers will hear the message and respond with saving faith. When an exhortation is given, there is the hope that believers will hear and respond with obedience to Christ and submission to God’s will.
- And since I believe the book of Hebrews is a sermon, it makes sense that we would see this same kind of “preacher’s hope” expressed – and (in fact) that is exactly what we see in our text this morning.
- 6:9-12 is the fourth paragraph in this exhortation we have been going through for the last four weeks. But when we get to v. 9 we see a significant change of tone.
- After what is (perhaps) the strongest warning in this book, he comes back with the expression of hope that his hearers will respond with faith and obedience. The target of the warning was to those who were intellectually convinced of the truth of the gospel but had fallen short of committing themselves to it, so (here in this passage) he communicates his hope that they will (in fact) come to full saving faith in Christ (as others in the congregation had already done).
- His hope is that they will *not* apostatize – that they will *not* fall away from the truth of the gospel and go back into Judaism. He even expressed confidence that they will *not* do that.
- And his basic message to them is that they should follow the example of the genuine believers in the congregation. He wants them “to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.” (That’s v. 12)
- Now, I will admit that this passage is difficult to interpret (as this entire exhortation has been) but what I believe he is doing (here) is that he is broadening the target to include the entire congregation instead of just those who have failed to commit.
- If you think about it, it is *not* uncommon at all. Preachers today will often use a term like “beloved” (like we see in v. 9) in communicating to the church as a whole (even though there are unbelievers present).

- He is clearly going to be talking to genuine believers in this passage (because he is going to give some evidence of their genuine faith), but I believe the main focus is still on those who are participating in the *life* of the church, but are *not* really part of the body of Christ through saving faith.
- As we have seen all along, it is possible to participate in the life of the church without being truly born-again. As George Guthrie puts it, "...participation in the Christian community does *not* necessarily equal salvation."
- It is quite possible (and I would even say common) for someone to come into the church and to participate in the life of the church without having experienced spiritual regeneration.
- A person like that could even make a false profession of faith (and be baptized) and become a member of the church. They may learn the language of Zion and look like they are Christians in many ways, but they are really lost and in danger of perishing eternally. This is the main group he is talking to.
- And he is going to point to the genuine believers as an example for them to follow. He is going to say, "Imitate their genuine faith." He is (again) going to point to the danger of spiritual dullness, as he

admonished them *not* to be "sluggish" in their response.

- And you may remember, that word (nothros) is used as an "inclusion," like a book end at the beginning and end of this exhortation. Back in 5:11 he told them *not* to be dull of hearing. Here he tells them *not* to be sluggish in responding with saving faith.
- This entire congregation had come out of the same background (which is Judaism) but the difference is that *some* of them had responded to the gospel with genuine saving faith while *others* had *not*.
- If there was *not* this mixed audience here (of believers and unbelievers) the strong warning passages would *not* make much sense. *Some* of this *has* to be directed at those who have *not* yet put their faith in Christ for salvation.
- In our text this morning, he will be addressing both groups. He will be encouraging the true believers while challenging the unbelievers. So let's walk through this together. We'll have a very simple outline this morning, and the first thing we see is:

I. THE ENCOURAGEMENT (v. 9)

- Look with me at v. 9, "But, beloved, we are convinced of better things concerning you, and

things that accompany salvation, though we are speaking in this way.”

- The phrase “better things” refers back to v. 8 and those who end up being “burned up” in judgment for their lack of saving faith. The author of Hebrews says that he is convinced his hearers will *not* end up in this tragic condition.
- Some think that the use of the word “beloved” (there) implies he is speaking only to believers here, but I think it is being used to refer to all those who were participating in that congregation – both the saved and the lost.
- This is the only use of that word “beloved” in this book, so it is difficult to know exactly how he is using it. It is true that it is often used in other places in the NT to refer to genuine believers, but the word itself simply means “those who are very dear.” That could include (I believe) those who had become a part of this congregation but were still *not* yet saved.
- *Here* (in v. 9) I believe he is still addressing those on the edge of salvation but had *not* yet committed their lives to Christ. In v. 10 he will definitely be talking about the genuine believers, but *here* he is saying that he has confidence that those who are hesitating will come to true saving faith.

- He speaks of “things that accompany salvation” and then he uses the example of the true believers in the congregation (and their love and service) as evidence of genuine regeneration.
- There are (of course) many things that “accompany” salvation. Getting saved does *not* mean *merely* that a person will go to heaven instead of hell when he dies. There is much more to our salvation than that. You might call these “fringe benefits.” Jesus said, “I came that they might have life, and might have *it* abundantly.” (John 10:10)
- There is much more to salvation than just an insurance policy against hell. There are all kinds of spiritual benefits – and we saw, when we went through Romans, that chapters 5 and 6 of that book are spent on that abundant life that accompanies salvation.
- But the particular things that “accompany salvation” in the author’s mind here, seem to be those that contrast with that which accompanies unbelief (as he has outlined in 5:11-6:5).
- MacArthur writes, “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.”

- Another way to say this, is to say that the things that accompany true salvation are *not* those things that are connected to external rituals but to internal regeneration and spiritual transformation. *That* only comes by responding to the gospel with genuine saving faith.
- This involves (as we have seen) things like *not* just “tasting” Gods’ salvation, but fully receiving it. *Not* just being around the *work* of the HS, but actually having the HS to come and dwell in you permanently, etc. These are the things that “accompany salvation.”
- Now, in v. 10 he goes on to give some additional things that “accompany salvation” – so we move secondly to:

II. THE EVIDENCE (v. 10)

- Look with me at v. 10, “For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward His name, in having ministered and in still ministering to the saints.”
- He’s talking to the congregation as a whole (which is made up of primarily believers) and here he is pointing to some evidence for genuine spiritual regeneration.
- Those who are truly born again will serve the Lord faithfully and will demonstrate a love for the Lord

which desires to glorify His name and to minister to His saints.

- *Not only* are there *benefits* that “accompany salvation,” but there are also *evidences*. As I have taught many times, these are *not* works that *earn* salvation, but are evidences that true salvation has been experienced.
- A Christian’s works are *not* what saved him or keep him saved. They are evidences that his salvation is real. As James tells us, faith without works is dead. It is *not* genuine. True saving faith is always accompanied by works.
- Jesus said in Matt. 7:16, “You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn *bushes*, nor figs from thistles, are they?” There is always fruit that gives evidence of true spiritual life.
- The Apostle Paul told the Thessalonian believers that this is how he knew they were truly born again. In 1 Thess. 1:3-4 he wrote that their salvation was evidenced by their “work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.”
- This is how you know if someone is truly born again. You can see the fruit of spiritual regeneration in their lives. If you see faith, hope

and love, you can have pretty good confidence in their genuine conversion.

- Here (in Heb. 6:10) he points to the Hebrews' work and love they had shown toward His name. He points to their faithful ministry to His saints. And (first of all) this is intended (I believe) to be an encouragement (and assurance) to the genuine believers in this congregation.
- He wants to assure them that God is fully aware of their service and work, and that He will never forget anything they do for His name. *Not only* can our salvation never be lost, but our rewards can never be lost either.
- "God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward His name..." What a tremendous encouragement this is! My friend, if you are a Christian, there is absolutely *nothing* you do for Christ that the Lord does *not* take note of!
- He sees it all and He remembers it all. Even that which no one else sees, He sees it. He knows when you have done something for His name's sake. In fact, Jesus said a lot about doing those things in secret, *not* to be seen of men, but to trust your heavenly Father to reward those things you do for Him that no one else sees.

- By the way, Heb. 6:10 also deals with the proper motive for Christian service. It is to be motivated by a love for His name – which is another way of saying a love for Him.
- In the Bible, God's name represents all that He is. To love His name is to love Him – and to have a desire to bring glory to Him. This kind of love for Him is a clear evidence of true spiritual regeneration.
- And listen, when you serve or perform some sort of ministry, God knows if that is done from a heart of love for Him, or if that is done to attain some kind of benefit for yourself.
- He knows if it is being done for the honor of His name or for the honor of your own name. You see, it is possible to do good things with wrong motives.
- In fact, I would say it is common in religion for people to do good things with wrong motives. Only God knows the heart, but the point is, we should always examine our motives (when we serve the Lord) and make sure our service is being done from a heart of love for Him and a desire to glorify His name.
- As important as it is to minister to the saints, it is even more important for us to glorify the name of

the Lord. In fact, the key to Christian service is a genuine loving devotion to God.

- We can never properly love men (saved or unsaved) until we first love Christ. It is our love for the Lord that determines if our service will be pleasing in His sight.
- The good news (here in Hebrews) is that the believers (there) had a genuine love “toward His name.” Their service and their ministry was motivated (properly) by that love.
- And *not only* that, but they had an unbroken pattern of service and work for the Lord. Notice the last phrase of v. 10, “in having ministered and in still ministering to the saints.”
- This means they ministered and kept on ministering. They had ministered in the past, and they were currently ministering in the present – so there was every reason to believe they would continue to minister in the future.
- This was evidence of their genuine spiritual regeneration. What a joy that is, to see that in the church. There are some people that you can always count on because they have an unbroken pattern of service for the Lord.
- You don’t ever have to wonder if they are truly born again because they have a deep love for Christ

and they want to honor God through their continuous service to Him.

- And listen, there is an important point of application here. You have to take the “long look” when it comes to assessing if someone is truly born again or *not*.
- Genuine believers are faithful over a long period of time. They are *not* flash in the pans. They are *not* those who pop in every once in a while (and act like they are all excited about Christ). They are *not* those who serve God every once in a while when it is convenient.
- They are those who are consistently faithful over a long period of time. They are those who exhibit a genuine love for Christ and a genuine love for His people.
- This is the evidence the author of Hebrews is giving for these Jewish believers. The key evidence of genuine salvation is a sincere love for God that shows up in service to His people.
- The NT is absolutely clear on this. As 1 John 5:1 says, “Whoever loves the Father loves the *child* born of Him.” In 4:8 it says, “The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.”
- Love for God always shows up in love for His people – and that is always expressed through

service and ministry to the saints. Loving the saints and serving them is *not* an option. It is *not* something *extra* some Christians do who are really zealous for the Lord.

- No, this is the normal Christian life, and it is something that should be exhibited by every born again believer in Christ. This is the bedrock of Christian living.
- And (again) Heb. 6:10 emphasizes the fact that our labor is never in vain when we serve Him with loving hearts. God always sees and always takes note of every act of service.
- He remembers every last act of service for His name's sake. He is "not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward His name." This should be a tremendous encouragement to us!
- Sometimes (when we serve the Lord) we get frustrated that no one seems to notice. My friend, you do it "as unto the Lord" because I promise you, He notices.
- Sometimes when we serve we are misunderstood. We try to help someone but our ministry is misinterpreted. Don't fret over that because God knows your heart. He knows you are doing that out of genuine love for Him and His people.

- Sometimes when we serve Him, it seems as if it is all for naught. It seems as if there are no results, and it looks like it is all for nothing. I promise you, that is *not* the case. God sees it all and He is using it all to accomplish His purposes.
- We know that God is perfectly righteous – He is perfectly just. He would never be unjust to forget any of those acts of service for His name's sake. That means it is impossible for God to let even one thing slip by without His notice.
- Don't worry about whether anyone else notices your service. You're *not* doing it for them, you are doing it for the Lord. Don't worry about whether someone misunderstands your motives. God knows your heart and He knows if you are doing it for the right reason.
- And the truth is, the only thing that matters is what God thinks. We are *not* serving for the sake of being seen of men but of pleasing God. If our hearts are right, God always takes notice (and always remembers every act of service) and that is what counts.
- But the promise in this verse should be a tremendous encouragement to every true believer. We should go back here often and remind ourselves that our labor is never in vain in the Lord. He sees and remembers every single act of service (whether anyone *else* notices it or *not*).

- So we have the encouragement and the evidence, but thirdly we see:

III. THE EMULATION (vv. 11-12)

- Look with me at v. 11, “And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end, that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.”
- Now, *here* is where (I believe) he brings back in those who are on the edge of salvation but have *not* made a firm commitment to Christ. He has encouraged the congregation as a whole, but here he comes back to making an appeal to some individuals.
- These are the ones he has targeted most in this exhortation, and he is making another appeal to them, that they would come to the full assurance of Christian hope.
- He wants them to imitate the true believers – those who through genuine saving faith have inherited the promises of salvation. Earlier he gave the example of what they should NOT do.
- He had said, “Don’t be like the unbelieving Jews in the wilderness who ended up dying there because of their unbelief.”
- In essence, he is saying (here), “Take a close look at these genuine believers in Christ. My sincere desire is that each and every one of you follows their example and emulates their faith. I don’t want you to be ‘sluggish’ (or dull of hearing and responding). I don’t want you to fall away from the truth of the gospel and return to Judaism. I want you to come to the full assurance of salvation in Christ.”
- He wants them to come to the place where they can say, (as he says in v. 19) “This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a *hope* both sure and steadfast...”
- The phrase “faith and patience” (in v. 12) is probably a hendiadys, so it can be rendered “faithful perseverance” or “steadfast faith.”
- And notice a contrast between two key terms in these two verses. He contrasts the word “diligence” with the word “sluggish.” He says, “Don’t be sluggish but be diligent.”
- The word for “diligence” (there) is the Greek word “spoude.” It means “eagerness or haste.” It communicates the urgency with which these Jews should make their commitment to Christ.
- Listen, coming to faith in Christ is *not* some long drawn-out process. All it takes is a moment of

repentance and saving faith. Spiritual regeneration is an instantaneous experience. It is like opening the door and going through it.

- So he is saying to them, “You are right at the door, and my hope is that each and every one of you will open that door and come in to eternal life.”
- In the Bible, the appeal to make that commitment to Christ is always spoken of as something urgent. It is never communicated as something you can put off or spend time contemplating.
- As Paul wrote in 2 Cor. 6:2, “behold, now is ‘the acceptable time,’ behold, now is ‘the day of salvation’.” The time for receiving Christ is always now – it is never later. It is never right to be “sluggish” when it comes to salvation.
- We have already seen that word “sluggish.” It is the Greek word “nothros” and it is the same word that is translated “dull” in 5:11. It is the back end of that “inclusio” – the book ends of this exhortation.
- Back in 5:11 he said they were being “dull of hearing.” Here he says they are being “sluggish in believing.””
- Of course, they had *not* consciously rejected the gospel. They had *not* shaken their fists at God and rejected Him (as some angry pagans do today).

- But their failure to repent and believe the gospel put them in the same category as their who hate God. By *not* accepting the gospel they were rejecting it.
- And by hesitating to commit their lives to Christ they were falling into greater and greater danger of hardening their hearts, to the point where they might be tempted to fall away and return to the empty rituals of Judaism.
- CONCL. – So what about today? What are we to do with this message this morning? What is the application for us?
- First of all, if you are like those Jews who were on the edge of salvation but had *not* opened the door and entered – Go through the door! Put your faith in Jesus Christ and repent of your sins and receive His eternal salvation.
- Don’t put it off. Don’t go home and think about it. In fact, don’t leave this building this morning without coming to that full assurance of faith.
- And then, if you have already done that, look at your Christian life and ask, “Am I genuinely loving Christ and faithfully serving Him and His people? Can I always be counted on as one who *has* (and *continues* faithfully) to serve Him?”

- Is this evidence of genuine spiritual regeneration obvious in your life? Could the author of Hebrews point to you and say, “Imitate this guy”? Are you serving faithfully “as unto the Lord”? Are you more concerned about pleasing God, and demonstrating your love for Him and your desire to glorify His name more than worrying about what men think?
- There is much we can (and should) respond to this morning. How will you respond today?
- EXPLAIN HOW TO RESPOND
- PRAYER