

Hebrews 6:9-12

“Confident of better things”

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I. Introduction

This morning we finish up the third warning in this letter “*the danger of rejecting spiritual maturity*”. It is by far the sternest of the warnings so far as we saw last week the warning made to the professing believer who were *only intellectually convinced* but *not yet spiritually committed*. There the warning was, “*For it is impossible if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance.*” The writer already identified his readers: Four groups that made up the church of Hebrews speakers in Rome. Two of which were negative; the prolonged immature and the still born of last week. And two of them were positive, those growing in maturity (chapter 6 verses 1-3) and the group that we shall examine today in verse 9-12.

II. Vs. 9-10 Beloved

Vs. 9 First for sake of understanding the context of the writer we need to recognize who he is addressing in verses 9-12. A carefully examination reveals two groups:

- a. First in verse 9-10 we have the group described to us as the “beloved”. The writer must have spent considerable time evaluating them as he declares that he was “*confident of better things concerning them, things that accompanied salvation*”. The writer goes on to generally describe these “*things*” in glowing terms as they not only were engaged in “*work*” their motive in the way in which they were doing their work was a “labor of love” done in the “name of Jesus” as if they were exercising the work towards Him. This was not only a “past observation” but “a present day reality” as they were still demonstrating this “*labor of love*”.
- b. Second in verses 11-12 we have a second group only described as “each one of you” who were to take motivation from the “*beloved*” that the writer had just

addressed. This group was to “*show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end*” as the “*beloved*”. They were not to remain “*sluggish*” but instead “*imitate those who through FAITH and PATIENCE inherit the promises.*”

The differences in these two groups go beyond the demonstration of what they were doing and the way in which they did or didn’t accomplish the “work”. It becomes clearer in the Greek that *these two groups describe believers and unbelievers* both of which made up the church of Hebrew speakers in Rome. I say this because of several identifying marks in the text:

- a. The first group is called by the writer “beloved” in the Greek which is a descriptive term from the word agape. It is used 60 times in the New Testament the first 9 of which it is used of God the Father to describe God the Son. Every other time whether addressing Jews or Gentiles, it is used only to describe “believers”.
- b. The second group is NO where identified as “*beloved*” and are instead characterized by the writer as those who DO NOT “*show*” the same “*diligence to the full assurance*” and those who have “*become sluggish*” and need to imitate the “*beloved*” who had “*faith and patience*” which indicated that this group didn’t have those qualities.

The remarkable thing to realize is that both of these two groups had received the same five advantages of:

- Once enlightened
- Tasted the heavenly gift
- Become partakers of the Holy Spirit
- Tasted the good word of God
- (Tasted) the powers of the age to come

The conclusion we can make from this observation is that *while these five advantages of God are HELPFUL for salvation they do not indicate that a person HAS salvation!*

This observation ought to clear up the mass confusion in the church as to why we see people who have benefitted from these five advantages but are no longer living out what they profess to believe! The apostle John aptly describes them in 1 John 2:19 saying that “*They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none*

of them were of us.’

The phrase “*we are confident of better things concerning you..*” in regard to the “*beloved*” centers around the word “confident” and is translated else where as “*persuaded*” the word suggests *a conviction that was the result of proof*. The phrase is in the perfect tense which means that it is fixed. As this was a general letter that didn’t mention specific names of who he regarded in these four groups the writer wants to settle the hearts of those who were living out their faith and weren’t mere pretenders. Coming from such an absolute statement as “*For it is impossible if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance*”; we can see why the writer would want to reassure some, without removing the danger others were facing. The writer only mentions one of the “better things” in this section but before he does he goes back to what he had previously mentioned “*things that accompany salvation*”. Things that “*accompany salvation*” is a contrast between:

- Not remaining as an immature Christian but moving on into maturity
- Not preferring milk but moving on into the meat of the word
- Not remaining unskilled in the word of righteousness but mature in righteousness
- Letting go the elementary principles of Christ and moving to maturity

The “*things that accompany salvation*” are positive, not negative, they don’t reflect external ceremonial religion, but relational transformation and new life. There reality doesn’t come from repeated sacrifices but from trusting in the complete sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

Then the writer interjects the phrase “*though we speak in this manner*” was meant to be a comfort to those believers who after reading the last section with absolute warning may have been wondering if the warning applied to them. Paraphrasing this the writer is

saying, “*Beloved fellow Christians, though we have been speaking about these fearful warnings to unbelievers in your midst, we know that far better things apply to you. You have already shown and continue to show the things that accompany salvation.*” It is important that the church understand that we must not use the characteristics of the intellectually convinced but not spiritually committed of verses 5:11-6:4 to separate the wheat from the tares as that is Jesus’ responsibility when He returns, as He alone weighs the thought and intents of the heart.

Vs. 10 The writer at once lets his readers know of the faithfulness of God as He doesn’t forget their work done in His behalf. Saints, ***our names will not be lost in His book of life, our salvation will not slip His mind and our rewards will be forgotten!*** What a comfort this is as many a believer throughout history has experience times of doubt at the times of discipline and judgment. The prophet Malachi gave stern warnings of judgment to befall the nation but the Lord also had him write in Malachi 3:16-17 “*So a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the LORD and who meditate on His name. “They shall be Mine,” says the LORD of hosts, “On the day that I make them My jewels. And I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him.*” God always knows His own and because of this we have no fear of final judgment, missing the rapture or loss of rewards. It is also clear by the writer’s words that a believer’s works are not what saves him or keeps him saved, they are only an evidence of his salvation. It is also interesting to see that the motive behind the work is what God sees as it is a “***labor of love which you have shown towards His name***”. The significance of the service is not in the work alone but that ***it is an expression of love and devotion to Jesus exercised towards others.*** The way to have unity in the body of Christ is to have believers continue

to grow in the Love of God! Unity of faith will never be accomplished apart from devotion to God! The fact is none of us are lovable all the time in our own personalities and merits but Christ is, so our actions towards each other are not to be done with view to each other but with a view towards Jesus! Further more the writer's observation wasn't past tense but present day reality as they "*have ministered to the saints, **and do minister!***"

What I find interesting is to note that the praise towards these believers is in the midst of warnings to those of the Hebrew speaking church that were both prolonged immature as well as those who were only intellectually convinced but not spiritually committed. This suggests to me that part of "ministry" includes correction in which the aim is restoration and encouraging others to come to faith in Christ. Such ministry is to be regularly exercised towards the "saints" and being a saint has nothing to do with the level of a believer's spiritual maturity, miracles done in their name it only speaks of their salvation who the Lord declares them to be holy in His sight because they have trusted in His son's Holy work.

III. Vs. 11-12 Showing diligence

Vs. 11-12 This section was written for the as yet unbelievers who were a part of the Hebrew speaking church. They had a profession of faith but were in imminent danger of falling away and trusting in the Levitical sacrifices for their salvation. The writers earnest desire is that they take a look at the true believers among them and they would "***show the same diligence to full assurance of hope until the end.***" The word "diligence" in the Greek means to show eagerness with haste, they need to come to Christ and they needed to do so NOW! They had exhibited sluggishness and procrastination in hearing and believing but their time was running out. They had not verbally outright rejected the

gospel but to not accept it was rejecting it. So they needed to “*imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.*”