

Hebrews 6:9-15

Looking For Things That Accompany Salvation

But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak – v. 9

Two kinds of people are brought to our attention in this chapter in Hebrews:

There are those that are truly saved and (to use the words of v. 1) will go on unto perfection. They'll grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ. They'll have a faith in Christ that will be unshaken, come what may. They are further described as followers of those that through faith and patience inherit the promises (v. 12). You could also say of them that they're not stuck in spiritual infancy – they are ready and able to leave the principles of the doctrine of Christ in order to go on unto perfection. This is the first kind of people described in the chapter.

And there are those that fall away. A vivid description of those that fall away is given to us from v. 4 through v. 6. It's frightening to think of those that in some sense have been enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come. It is frightening to think that there is a category of people that can seemingly come so far and yet in the end be lost.

Verse 9 makes it clear that Paul expected the Hebrews that he was addressing to come into the first of these two kinds of people. In other words – Paul took them to be truly saved. Note what he says in v. 9 *But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak*. Do you see Paul's meaning here? He's saying to them that even though he has gone to some length in describing how far certain people can come and still in the end be lost, he did not expect the ones he was addressing to come into that category even though he had spoken of such a category.

He was persuaded better things of them – i.e. better things than falling away beyond all possibility of being renewed. The word for *persuaded* is a word that can mean *confidence*. Paul was confident, then, that they would prove to be in the category of those that go on with God through Christ.

I think it would be fair to say that the basis of Paul's confidence was not found so much in the Hebrews as it was in Christ. After all, Paul himself was having to endure what many of his brethren were enduring. He knew what it was to be persecuted and flogged and imprisoned. He knew what it was to be stoned and left for dead. He knew what it was to identify with his Savior in being despised and rejected. And yet Paul never harbored the notion that it wasn't worth it. Indeed he tells us in *Php 3:8 Yea doubtless, and I count all things [but] loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them [but] dung, that I may win Christ*.

And so I think it's fair to say that Paul's persuasion of better things regarding the Hebrews he was addressing was based on his confidence in Christ and his confidence in

the power of the gospel. The question we need to contemplate this morning is which category do each one of us fall into? You need to be willing to ask yourself that question. Am I one that goes on unto perfection or am I one that goes so far and then in the end loses out?

And an equally important question becomes – how do you know? Or – how can I tell? Paul gives us the way to determine the matter when he makes mention in v. 9 of the things that accompany salvation. Look at the verse again – *But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak.*

Underscore the phrase *things that accompany salvation*. Because Paul's confidence was based on Christ and was also based on the power of the gospel, Paul knew that where gospel had been wrought there would be things that would accompany salvation. It's interesting, isn't it, to see the emphasis put on *things*. *We are persuaded better things*. And then he makes mention of *things* that accompany salvation.

When we read the word *things* we're reminded that we're dealing with something that is tangible – something that becomes observable to one's self and to others. Paul's persuasion, in other words, was not based on abstract theories it was based, rather, on tangible evidence.

And so the way we should endeavor to persuade ourselves regarding our own spiritual condition is to look for this tangible evidence in our own lives. And that's what I want to focus on this morning – looking for the things that accompany salvation –

We Must Look for the Things that Accompany Salvation

And we must look for these things with a definite aim in view – that aim being that we ourselves may be persuaded better things regarding our own standing and state before God. What things, then, are we looking for when we refer to the things that accompany salvation? Consider with me first of all:

I. Your Work and Labor of Love

Notice what v. 10 says *For God [is] not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.*

This verse is directly connected to the previous one and gives us a key factor as to why Paul was persuaded better things of the Hebrews. You could read it this way: *But beloved, we are persuaded better things of you...for God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love.*

Here, then, is one of the main things that accompanies salvation – work, and labor of love. This ties right in to the chapter we've been studying in the WCF on good works. Good works spring from salvation. And they spring from the right motive in the heart of the believer – hence the word *work* as well as the phrase *labor of love*. Our labor springs

from a consciousness of Christ's love to us and our labor springs from the love we have toward Christ. I dare say that no other religion on earth apart from Bible-based Christianity allows for labor of love. False religions and apostate Christianity could be described by the phrase *labor of guilt*. Only those that understand the meaning of deliverance from guilt by the blood of Christ can begin to have any understanding of the meaning of *labor of love*. We'll see this truth expressed later in this epistle when we come to Heb 9:14 *How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?*

Dead works are works that spring from guilt or they spring from the notion that they can somehow atone for guilt. A believer who understands that his guilt has been atoned for, however, draws from an altogether different principle of motivation. His works are labors of love. Paul is reminding the Hebrews that they had manifested such works and they manifested their works in a very particular fashion that goes on to identify in v. 10 when he says *in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.*

Our Bible reading this morning was taken from Mt. 25 which brings us before the judgment seat of Christ. The thing that comes out most clearly in that passage that relates to judgment is the fact that when Christians minister to one another Christ views it as being done unto Him. That passage shows us most plainly the truth that is expressed in our text - *God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.*

In Mt. 25 we see Christ remembering that very thing. In fact He remembers their labor better than the ones who stand before Him remember their labors. *When saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?* – they ask Him. And then Christ reminds them that it was when they ministered to the saints that were sick and in prison that they showed their labor of love to Christ.

And would you notice something very interesting that pertains to the Christian's labor of love. According to our text in v. 10 it would be an unrighteous act on God's part to forget such labor on the part of His people. What condescending grace is this that the very righteousness of God is tied in to God remembering our labors for Him – our labors, feeble though they may be, and still tainted with the corruption of our sinful natures are nevertheless so highly regarded by our God that it would be unrighteous of God to forget them. And since God is perfectly righteous we can draw assurance that in that righteousness He will remember the labors of His blood-bought followers.

What motivation we have, then, to serve each other! It's tantamount to our service to Christ. I'm sure you're all aware that even as Christians we still possess the ability to get to each other and provoke each other in a wrong way. We become very keen when it comes to noting each others faults and there may be times when it seems a challenging thing to minister to other saints with all their faults.

The knowledge that Christ views such service as being wrought toward Him should be enough to enable us to bear with one another's shortcomings and to minister to each other

in spite of ourselves. This is one of the things that accompanies salvation. Indeed John makes such an issue of this in his first epistle that he concludes that it's impossible to love God without loving the brethren. 1Jn. 4:20 *If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?*

The first thing we must examine, then, when it comes to persuading ourselves of better things is this key thing that accompanies salvation – ministering to other believers. Would you notice with me the next thing we must look for that accompanies salvation:

II. Showing Diligence to the Full Assurance of Hope

I like the comment made by Albert Barnes with regard to hope. He notes: *Hope is a compound emotion, made up of an earnest desire for an object, and a corresponding expectation of obtaining it. The hope of heaven is made up of an earnest wish to reach heaven, and a corresponding expectation of it, or reason to believe that it will be ours.*

This desire and expectation grows stronger as the Christian learns to read his title to heaven clearly. And the way he learns to read his title clearly is to apply himself with diligence to the means of grace. Our shorter catechism asks in Quest. 36. *What are the benefits which in this life do accompany or flow from justification, adoption, and sanctification?*

And the answer given is: *The benefits which in this life do accompany or flow from justification, adoption, and sanctification, are, assurance of God's love, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, increase of grace, and perseverance therein to the end.*

Assurance of God's love is the first thing mentioned that flows from justification, adoption, and sanctification. This was the very thing that was being questioned by the Hebrew Christians. Does God really love me? This isn't such a hard thing to affirm when the circumstances of life are soft but in the case of the Hebrews the circumstances of life were anything but soft.

Following Christ had become costly to them. They were being subjected, you see, to the same treatment that Christ Himself had received. They were being despised and rejected. Indeed, as Acts 8 indicates to us they were being chased from their homes - *scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria* (Acts 8:1). When James addresses his epistle to the Jewish Christians he makes reference to *the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting.*

And the first thing James exhorts to them to is to count it all joy when they fall into divers temptations. That's something that's easier said than done. How do you count it all joy when your faith has cost you much? How do you count it all joy when your faith is what has contributed to you being scattered abroad? And the answer is, of course, that you count it all joy because you know that the bond between you and Christ is not contingent upon the circumstances of life. The love of Christ is unwavering because the love of Christ is grounded in something that transcends all earthly circumstances. The love of Christ is

grounded in Christ's atoning death. This is where you must look to gain the full assurance of hope. By virtue of the cross you see your sins purged away. By virtue of the cross you see Christ seated at the right hand of God. By His once for all sacrifice you see the issue of your sins forever settled and you're able to affirm with Paul that *there is therefore now no condemnation to those that are in Christ Jesus* (Rom. 8:1).

As you apply yourself, with diligence, to gazing by faith at the very dying form of One who gave Himself for you then you come to understand that you're justified and adopted into the family of God. And you learn to view every circumstance of life in the light of those truths.

Would you notice that the diligence of v. 11 in gaining full assurance of the hope is contrasted in v. 12 to being slothful. *And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end:* Paul writes in v. 11 *That ye be not slothful* he then writes in v. 12.

Our enjoyment of the assurance of God's love, peace of conscience, and joy in the Holy Ghost, is contingent, then, upon the degree to which we'll follow after Christ to know Him with greater clarity and fullness. I dare say that those that lack in assurance do so because of a lack of diligence in seeking after Christ through prayer and through the written word of God.

The only other time this word *slothful* is found in the New Testament is also in Hebrews. It's back in Heb 5:11 where we read *Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing.* The word *dull* is the same word as *slothful* in our text. And so we can make the connection between being slothful and being dull. I think it would be fair to say that the one leads to the other – i.e. as we become slothful in our spiritual habits we also become dull in our hearing.

The glorious truths of the gospel no longer fill and thrill our hearts. They become something instead that we grossly take for granted and our attention becomes more focused on the things of this world. I know I've said it many times that the thing I dread for my own heart and the thing I dread for an upcoming generation of Christians that have had every advantage is that they'll become dull of heart and then hard of heart.

Being given over to hard hearts was a mark of judgment on the Christ rejecters of Christ's day. Having eyes, they saw not, and having ears they heard not which is tantamount to saying that they were not effected by the truth of Christ. Even though He had vindicated His identity many times over still they were unaffected by His person and work.

We face the same challenge in our day. How many professing Christians hear the truths of the gospel only to yawn their way through the proclamation of those wonderful truths. There are other things to be taken up with – all the entertaining things that the world provides. Small wonder that when circumstances take a turn for the worse they find themselves wondering why their religion is of little or no value to them. The reason is that they've been slothful toward the means of grace rather than diligent.

Oh that we would adopt Paul's desire and make it our own. *We desire* he writes in v. 11 *that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end:*

The same diligence he writes, which indicates that the diligence he has in mind is a common diligence among true believers. This common diligence leads to my next and final point. We have seen that the things that accompany salvation include our labor of love and now this common diligence in striving for the assurance of hope. Would you consider finally that in seeking the things that accompany salvation we must note:

III. Being a Follower of Those That Inherit the Promises

The phrase *be not slothful* in v. 12 is sandwiched between the diligence of v. 11 and the phrase *followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises*. The implication is that those that inherited the promises through faith and patience were diligent in their pursuit of the assurance of hope.

Show the same diligence, Paul is saying in effect, as those who through faith and patience inherited the promises. This statement about those that inherited the promises seems to foreshadow what we'll meet up with when we get to chp. 11 – that great chapter on faith that includes the catalog of the faithful.

In vv. 13-15, however, Paul draws from the singular example of Abraham. Abraham received the promise from God. And as v. 15 tells us *so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise*. It's interesting to note the example of Abraham as one that patiently endured.

He was promised that the number of his children would outnumber the stars of the sky and yet he had to endure beyond his and Sarah's child-bearing years before he ever saw the first child of such a promise. We're told in 11:8,9 that *By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as [in] a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise*.

What remarkable endurance! What steadfastness in the faith! Here was a man that humanly speaking should have found it easy to give up and to have returned to where he came. He had received a glorious promise that in this world all that promise meant was that he would live the life of a pilgrim.

I've wondered at times about the present benefit to Abraham of the promise during his lifetime. It seems that so much that was promised to him pertained to a later period in the history of redemption. What was the benefit to Abraham during his time in this world? Or was there any present benefit to him? Gen. 15:1 provides a clear answer to that question: *After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I [am] thy shield, [and] thy exceeding great reward*.

The present day benefit to Abraham was God Himself. The same thing applies to you and me. God is our shield and God is our exceeding great reward. It doesn't really matter all that much how much of the world's good I possess or how much I lack as long as I have the assurance that I belong to God and God belongs to me through Christ.

And this has always been the reward of those who through faith and endurance obtain the promise. The promise pertains to that city to come whose builder and maker is God but the promise also pertains to having God now. *Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world* Christ promises in Mt. 28:20 shortly before He ascended into heaven.

It's no wonder, then, that Paul had the desire for the Hebrews to be followers of those who through faith and patience obtained the promise. They had the prospect of heaven before them and the presence of God with them. What could be better than that? And it's the same for you and me. We have the sure prospect of heaven before us. That prospect is sure because it's based on the merits of Christ. Were it based on our own merit we could have no assurance of it. Quite the contrary, we could have pretty strong assurance that we could never reach heaven's gates.

But with Christ being with us and Christ being for us we every assurance that heaven will be our home and everlasting life will be our portion. Should these truths not spur us on, then, to go on with God and with Christ? Do we not find valuable incentive to follow in the train of those who through faith and endurance obtained the promise?

These are the things, then, that accompany salvation. Our labors of love which manifest themselves in ministering to the saints – our diligence in pursuing the assurance of the hope – and our following the examples of those who have gone before in the exercise of faith and patience.

May Christ Himself, then, be our portion and may we apply ourselves to such diligent seeking of Him that His presence will fill and thrill our hearts and instill in our hearts the incentive to go on in our walk with Him in the sure anticipation that we will one day soon be openly acknowledged and acquitted in the day of judgment and be made perfectly blessed in the full enjoying of God for ever.