

Heb. 6:11 The Ground of Christian Assurance

This text concludes what the author began in 5:11. Last week we saw a great warning. This week we see an encouragement. Look at v. 9. **“Though we speak in this way, yet in your case, beloved, we feel sure of better things.”** In other words, *“I believe you will be saved. I believe you will continue in the faith. I feel sure that you will finish the race.”* And with these words, the author goes further and says, **“I want you to have a full assurance of hope until the end”** (v. 11). And then in v. 12, he believes his hearers will follow the faithful example of all those who have come before, the great cloud of witnesses of cp. 11. In other words, they will heed the warnings of Scripture as God’s means of grace to help them as signs from God pointing them in the right direction to heaven. YES, there is a real danger for those who “drift away,” for those who “fall away.” But, the true Christian will continue to the end.

Many of us have heard the statement, *“Once saved always saved.”* I certainly believe this to be true. But, this term can be misleading. This is common in Baptist Churches. Walk the aisle, make a profession, get baptized, and then live as you like. We know this to be true. We look at folks who call themselves Christians and then look at their lives and what do we find. We find they don’t read the Bible, they don’t gather regularly with God’s people. It certainly appears they love this world more than the things of God. Now, only God knows the heart. But, I am sure such folks have no assurance of their salvation. And when I consider their testimonies, I could not say, *“I feel sure of better things.”*

Now, works do not save us. **“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”** But, as we will see, how we live in this life is tied to our assurance. And we will eventually see this truth as we think about assurance (next week). But for today, I want to go back to the foundations of our assurance, which is grounded in the great promise of God to save his people. This is the context of WHY the author says he “feels sure of better things.” He is SURE because he knows the PROMISE of God. This is the overall truth of this passage! Look at v. 12 again: **“so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.”** I have 3 grounds of assurance that will help us this morning, that we may have *“full assurance of hope until the end.”* And it is ALL about God and his promise. 1) The Promise of God in eternity past to save a people; 2) The Promise of God in the present in the accomplished work of Christ; and 3) The Promise of God in the future to finish what he started. (And if you will notice, truth #1 highlights the work of the Father, truth #2 highlights the work of the Son, and truth #3 highlights the work of the Holy Spirit.) So let’s begin.

1. The Promise of God in eternity past to save a people. Brothers and sisters, this is the beginning of our assurance, the first ground of our assurance! God has promised to save us! And God cannot lie. This is the point of vv. 13-20. Look down at v. 18: **“in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us.”** This truth is motivated by the great love of God in choosing a people before the foundation of the world. 2 Tim. 2:19 says, **“But God’s firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: “The Lord knows those who are his . . .”** How does he know? He knows because He has chosen them before the foundations of the world! Listen to #9 of our own confession: *Of God’s Purpose of Grace. We believe that Election is the eternal purpose of God, according to*

which he graciously regenerates, sanctifies, and saves sinners . . . And then later down in the paragraph it says “*that it is the foundation of Christian assurance . . .*” Consider a few verses.

Eph. 1:4-5: “**Even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will . . .**” I think of Jesus’ words in Matt. 25:34: “**Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.’**” In Rom. 9:11-12, speaking of Jacob, Paul says, “**though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad—in order that God’s purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls . . .**”

Consider the love of a mother for her child. I am reminded of this when I see Emily with Nora, or some of you mothers, particularly with your infants. Can you imagine withholding milk that you have from the child who is hungry? Can you imagine not changing the diaper when it is full? Can you imagine not clothing your infant as they go out into the cold. Of course not! This is small picture of God who loves his children. Listen to these words from Is. 49: “**Thus says the LORD: “In a time of favor I have answered you; in a day of salvation I have helped you; I will keep you and give you as a covenant to the people, to establish the land, to apportion the desolate heritages, saying to the prisoners, ‘Come out,’ to those who are in darkness, ‘Appear.’ They shall feed along the ways; on all bare heights shall be their pasture; they shall not hunger or thirst, neither scorching wind nor sun shall strike them, for he who has pity on them will lead them, and by springs of water will guide them. And I will make all my mountains a road, and my highways shall be raised up. Behold, these shall come from afar, and behold, these from the north and from the west, and these from the land of Syene. Sing for joy, O heavens, and exult, O earth; break forth, O mountains, into singing! For the LORD has comforted his people and will have compassion on his afflicted. But Zion said, “The LORD has forsaken me; my Lord has forgotten me.” And finally, we read these words about God with his chosen people. “Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you” (vv. 8-15). God cannot forget or forsake his people, whom He has chosen from before the foundations of the world.**

The Bible says we are the product of his love. He has chosen us and he has set his love upon us. This is the love of our heavenly father, in whom there is no shadow of turning. He is the fountain of love. And it flows down to us always. The wells and springs of this earth will eventually dry up. But not the love of the Father toward his people, whom He has chosen.

The doctrine of election brings the greatest of comfort. Without it we have no assurance. If you believe God looks through the future, sees that you will choose him, and then “chooses” you on this foreseen merit, then what assurance do you have? NONE! I am a sinner, dead in my trespasses and sins. On my own my righteous acts are as a dirty rags I throw away. From head to toe, I am a sinner. There are none who does what is righteous (Rom. 3). Do you think by some good “chance” I will choose God on my own? Where is my assurance? And, if I can “elect” myself somehow, then who is to say that I cannot “unelect” myself at a later date? Where is the assurance. I remember our Brother Lee who often said, “*Oh, the electing love of God!*” “*How*

beautiful it is for me!" This means that today, YOUR assurance begins with God and his decree to choose you from before the foundations of the world! This is the first ground of our assurance!

2. The Promise of God now in the accomplished work of Christ. So how do we know that God has chosen us and has set his love upon us from before the foundations of the world? How do you know this? How can you have assurance? Well, your assurance is found in the gospel of Christ! God sent his Son! 1 John 4:10 says: **"In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."** This is NOW brothers and sisters. This is why we take the Lord's Supper, NOW, **"until He comes."** This is what we remember. **"This is my body broken for you, do this in remembrance of me. This is the cup of the new covenant in my blood, as often as you drink it, remember me."** We do this because **"NOW is the favorable time; behold, NOW is the day of salvation"** (2 Cor. 6:2). This work of sending the Son began in eternity past as the Son said to the Father, *"I will go."* And NOW, in the present, we see the promise of God fulfilled in the work of the Son. Look at vv. 19-20: **"We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek."**

These words say Jesus is the anchor of our soul. As a ship without an anchor is carried with the waves and the winds so the soul without Christ has no assurance. But, for those who are in Christ, those who have believed in him, those who have received him, we have an anchor that keeps our souls firm to an unmovable foundation. And where is He? Where is Jesus? He is in the "inner place" behind the curtain. This is a picture of the holy of holies, the throneroom of God. As our high priest, He has **"passed through the heavens"** (Heb. 4:14). After making purification for sins, he **"sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high"** (Heb. 1:3). The Son of God took on flesh. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of a virgin, lived a life just like us, yet without sin. And then at God's appointed time, he laid down his life as a sacrifice for his people. As Isaiah says, **"He was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all . . . he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people . . . Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities."**

Brothers and sisters, this is the great work of the Son for his people. And who are his people? They are the ones who trust in him, who believe in him. And from an eternal perspective, who are they? They are those "chosen before the foundations of the world." Now, you might say, how does this help me with assurance? Let's consider a few verses. Turn with me to John 6:37-40: **"All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day."** Look down at v. 45: **"And they will all be taught by God. Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes me . . ."** Then in vv. 47 ff. : **"Truly, truly, I say to**

you whoever believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.” How fitting for our assurance this morning as we eat this bread, which is a picture of Jesus. If all we have is the bread of this life, we will perish. For one day our bodies will give away. The wages of sin is death. But, if, by faith, we feed upon the ONE who has descended and then ascended back to heaven, we have an anchor for our soul! OUR ASSURANCE IS THIS: WE ARE UNITED TO CHRIST WHO SITS IN HEAVEN! He has completed his task on earth. And now he is our intercessor. HE is our advocate. And his position in heaven is fixed where he reigns now until all of his enemies are made his footstool. Can you move Christ from his heavenly seat? Can anyone remove him from his position? NO!

In John 10 Jesus calls those who follow him his “sheep.” And in v. 26 he tells the religious leaders, **“but you do not believe because you are not among my sheep. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand. I and the Father are one.”**

So, how do you know you have assurance. You say from the heart, *“I know whom I have believed.”* You say with Peter and the disciples, *“Where else can I go. You have the words of eternal life.”* When you hear the warnings of the Book of Hebrews (etc.) you listen to them and you cling to Christ. You know that apart from Him, you can do nothing (John 15). When you consider his great sacrifice on the cross and what He did to accomplish your salvation, as he takes away your sins, as he appeases the wrath of God, your heart delights and you sing with all your being, I believe in Him! He will hold me fast! I am chosen before the foundations of the world and I know this because God has sent his Son FOR ME! Christ died for my sins! Is this your experience as you read such words and as you hear such preaching? This is assurance!

3. The Promise of God to complete what he began in his people. This is none other than the work of the Holy Spirit to work powerfully in his people to complete what He began from the before the foundations of the world in choosing us and sending his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. This looks to the future as God will complete what he began.

I think of Phil. 1. When Paul thinks about those believers in Phillipi, he is confident that God has not only chosen them before the foundations of the world, and that they are now secure in Christ, he also says, **“I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ”** (Phil. 1:3-6). Why is he so sure? Well, he knows that not only has God chosen them before the foundations of the world, and that God has sent his Son to save them, he now knows that God has sent the Holy Spirit to dwell in them. 2 Cor. 5:5 says, **“He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.”** Do you remember Jesus’s words from John 15:26: **“But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me . . .”** And then in 16:1: **“I have said all these**

things to you to keep you from falling away . . .” Brothers and sisters, the reason we don’t fall away is because the Holy Spirit keeps us. We do not profess Christ ultimately because He is a good person to follow. We do not profess Christ merely because He will lead us to heaven. We do not merely profess him because he is the truth. We make this profession by the power of the Holy Spirit. Do you remember Peter’s confession? Jesus asked his disciples, “Who do you say that I am?” Peter said, **“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”** **And Jesus says to him: “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it”** (Matt. 16).

Brothers and sisters, we have assurance today because God has worked powerfully in our hearts by the Holy Spirit as we confess Christ. He is holding us fast! And what began in eternity He will complete. This is his promise! In this way, we can say, Salvation is of God, from start to finish!