

Heb. 6:9-12 Full Assurance and Good Works (part 3)

Today, we come to part 3 on the topic of assurance. In v. 11 we see the author's desire: **"We desire each one of you to show the same earnestness to have the full assurance of hope until the end . . ."** After the verses on apostasy, as we consider this great warning to us, we may think about our own salvation. And we should! In 2 Pet. 1:10 we read, **"Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall."** And Paul says to the Corinthians: **"Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you fail to meet the test!"** (2 Cor. 13:5). Brothers and sisters, these verses were written in the context of good works. Even here in Heb. 6, the author is encouraged because of their works. Look at vv. 9-10. **"Though we speak in this way, yet in your case, beloved, we feel sure of better things—things that blog to salvation. For God is not unjust so as to overlook your work and the love that you have shown for his name in serving the saints, as you still do."** Jesus says, **"You will know a tree by its fruits"** (Matt. 12:33). Therefore, we need this text today as WE consider our own lives and our obedience to the commands of Christ. With this in mind, I have 3 truths from this text that will help us today to "examine ourselves" as we take the Lord's Supper. Here they are: 1) Full Assurance is displayed in works of love directed to the people of God; 2) Full assurance is displayed in works of love for God; and 3) Full assurance is displayed in works that continue.

1. Full Assurance is displayed in works of love directed to the people of God. Look at v. 10: **"God is no unjust so as to overlook your work and the love that you have shown for his name in serving the saints, as you still do."** Here, the author takes notice of their good works in the ways they "serve on another." And this is in the context of ASSURANCA. As he considered those who fall away (vv. 4-6), he says in v. 9: **"Though we speak in this way, yet in your case, beloved, we feel sure of better things—things that accompany salvation."** Let's recall for a moment the warnings so far, from this letter, not to fall away. In 2:1: **"Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we've heard, lest we drift away from it."** In 2:3: **"How shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?"** In cp. 3:8: **"Do not harden your hearts . . ."** And in v. 12: **"Take care brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God."** In 4:1: **"Let us fear lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it . . ."** (speaking of God's rest in Christ) In 4:11 **"Let us strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience."** And in 6:4-6, we see perhaps the greatest warning and consequence: **"For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the ages to come, and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt."** These are the most serious warnings to these Christians. And as I've stated, they are gracious warnings to God's people, NOT to fall away. I believe they are means to help us along the way to heaven!

But one of the reasons the author believes they are not of those who fall away is because he sees their WORKS, particularly how they serve one another in love. And, one of the reasons he has confidence is because he sees the work of God through the power of the Holy Spirit in their lives. How? . . . In the way they serve one another in good works. I think of Paul's words to the

Thessalonians: “We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers, remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction” (1 Thess. 1:2-5). Here also he has confidence in their salvation. Why? First, as we’ve seen in a previous sermon. God has chosen them. The Holy Spirit has come in power. And they have a “steadfast” hope in Christ. And, he remembers their works of faith love to one another. This means that WE can also have confidence as we consider our works one to another.

Now, before we apply this truth, I want us to notice clearly the MOTIVE behind the works. What kind of works are they? . . . They are works of love (v. 10). This is so important for us! Here we see a clear motive of love behind the works. There is such a thing as works without love. Let me give an example. What if I were to bring Kristen roses every month for a year. And, all the while, thinking of myself, “*what a good husband I am.*” “*I’ll bet other husbands aren’t like me.*” “*I hope she takes notice of such a wonderful, thoughtful work.*” And I may even tell her I love her. But, all the while, who I really love is myself. On the outside, I look pretty good to those who do not bring their wives roses every month.

But, what if week after week, I ask her, “*How are you doing? What’s going on in your life? How can I help you? How can I pray for you? How can I serve you better?*” And in my heart, I think, “*these roses are a drop in the bucket for my love for you.*” And there are a million things that no one sees as I help her around the house, as I take care of unseen issues, as I care for the raising of the kids, as you love in your service in the home? . . . Wives, which husband do you want? How do you know his love for you? How confident are you that his love goes deeper than himself? Husbands, I promise you that your wife would rather have a sinful man, with all his faults, but one who loves her deeply than a husband who looks good on the outside when he comes to church and appears before the world. And this will cause great confidence and assurance to her.

In the same kind of way, works of love one to another is one of the ways we find assurance of our salvation. Brothers and sisters, these words are for us . . . as a test . . . as we examine ourselves. This great truth is merely an extension of the command to love your neighbor as you love yourself. Of course we love sinners in this world! We do good works toward our neighbors. But, we are not just good ole boys. We are Christians, who have the Spirit of God, and we begin with our family, which is the church of God. Do you sacrifice things you want for the people of God? Do you desire to be with God’s people? Are you regularly looking for ways to do good within this body? These are questions we must ask ourselves. This is one way we examine ourselves this morning as we take the Lord’s Supper.

Application: Doing good to one another is also a means to evangelism. I get this from the statement: “***They will know you are Christians by your love.***” Who are “they”? Those on the outside, the world. When we love one another, and then the world sees how we love one another, we must tell them WHY. This is an opportunity to be a witness. We say to them, “***I love these people because Christ loved me first.***” And this is love! For God so loved the world . . .

2. Full Assurance is displayed in works of love for God. Look again at v. 10: **“For God is not unjust so as to overlook your work and the love that you have shown for his name in serving the saints.”** Here, the author is saying, *“I see your love for God.”* And this is WHY you serve the saints. Here, he goes right to the heart. Love for God is the fountain from which all good works flow.

Luke records the story when a lawyer comes to Jesus to test him, asking, *“What must I do to inherit eternal life?”* And Jesus replies: *“What is written in the law? How do you understand it?”* And he answers: *“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength . . . and you shall love your neighbor as yourself.”* And Jesus answered, *“Go and do this and you will live”* (Luke 10).

Application: If you want to love your neighbor properly, if you want to love one another in the body of Christ, you must love God first. This is the motive of why we do good things to other people. And when this reality takes place in our lives, we can have full assurance. So let me ask, *“How do you know you love God?”* I will mention two ways we know we love God (though there are more). 1) He is your FIRST desire. King David said, **“One thing have I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to inquire in his temple”** (Ps. 27:4). 2) You love the body of Christ.

These two truths are vital to our assurance of salvation. Do you love God? Is this your motive for all you do? And further, do you love your neighbor, starting with your brothers and sisters at Grace. If so, you can have great assurance.

At this time, I would like for us to read our covenant together.

Let me mention one more thing before moving on. We must always bring to mind the truth that we love God because He loved us first. We’ve already spoke about this in part 1 on assurance. God loved us, He chose us, from before the foundations of the world. And we know He loved us because He fulfilled his promise to send his Son to save sinners out of this rebellious, sinful, world. **“For God so loved the world . . .”** Now, turn with me to 1 John 4:19: **“We love because he first loved us.”** Now go back to vv. 7-12, which teach exactly what we are learning today. John writes: **“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. 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. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us”** (1 John 4:7–12).

If we love God and we love one another we can have great assurance. Before moving on to #3, look at 4:17: **“By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so also are we in this world.”**

3. Full Assurance is displayed in works that continue. Look again at v. 10: **“For God is not unjust so as to overlook your work and the love that you have shown for his name in**

servicing the saints, AS YOU STILL DO.” There is a connection between assurance and works that continue, and this to the very end.

Think back to my example of bringing flowers to Kristen. What if, over time, I stop bringing her flowers. Well, this may not indicate that I don’t love her. But, what if I stop serving her as I did before? What if I become more distant, and start spending more time away from her? What if I stop asking here, “*How you? How can I help you? What can I do to serve you?*” And what if I were to start looking at other women on the internet Or, see my affections moving other things besides her? Or, even have an affair? If this happens, what assurance can anyone have (Kristen or I) that I love her? What confidence would there be in my marriage? The opposite would be true. My works would, in the end, reveal my heart. **“For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. Out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander”** (Matt. 15:10-19). The Bible says, **“He who endures to the end will be saved”** (Matt. 24:13).

This truth serves as a warning for us. Let me end with some applications.

Application: If you are living in habitual sin, you will have little, if no assurance of your salvation. On the contrary, the Puritan Anthony Burgess says this: “*A man who lives in the habit of serious sins should be assured that he is presently in a damnable condition and will be so as long as she lives that way.*” If you know you are regularly involved in sexual sin and you name the name of Christ, these words are a warning. Husbands and wives, are you in constant neglect of your spouse in your love and care for them? Children, is your normal behavior to disobey your parents? All of us: Do we love the things of this world more than we love the things of God?

Application: We can also apply this truth as a church. If this church, this body, here at grace is not a place of good works as we serve one another in love, as we serve one another from a motive of love to God, and our works continue, what assurance do we have that the Spirit of God is among us?

With these things in mind, let me end by mentioning that today’s sermon was very “subjective.” In other words, assurance of our salvation is connected to our works . . . AND the motive for our works. And though examining our works is HELPFUL (and we MUST constantly look at what we are DOING as we name the name of Christ), this can be very subjective. It can be hard or difficult to gauge because only God (and the person) knows the heart. But, as we’ve seen in the previous two sermons on assurance, there is also an OBJECTIVE ground for our assurance. This is the gospel of Christ. This is what we remember this morning in the Lord’s supper. We have assurance this morning first and foremost because God sent his Son. The Son of God took on flesh as a man. He LIVED and he DIED, and He ROSE AGAIN. And NOW, after making purification for our sins, he sits at the right hand of God. This is very objective. The Christian says, **“I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that day what has been entrusted to me”** (2 Tim. 1:12). In this way our faith, your faith, is not “subjective,” it is based in the historical truth of the Gospel.

Do you see these two aspects of our assurance? They go together. We have made the good confession! At the same time, you will a tree by its fruit (as we’ve seen today). These two grounds must go together as we consider our assurance. Let me ask, **“As a Christian, do you**

ever look at your works and or lack of them and doubt your salvation?" As you wrestle with sin in your own life, do you wonder if you can hang on? Or, maybe you are in a time of back-sliding, you've drifted from the faith a bit? You see your "works" and doubt. Well, if you are truly a Christian, what you need is to consider the objective truth of the gospel. (Perhaps this is you this morning.) This is what we have in the picture of the Lord's Supper. And what a beautiful means of grace to know that when we sin, we have an advocate, one who has made propitiation for our sins!

But, what if you've drifted much farther and you don't think much about Christ? What if you find yourself normally cheating on your income taxes, or you've had an affair, or you find yourself involved in great sexual sins, etc. And what if you have heard the sermon today on good works and you find very little of them and your motive is not love for God's people of God? Well, I would still say to you, "Trust Christ! Look unto Him! He has not changed! BUT, at the same time I would tell you that you do not have the right to assurance without works. And I would say "REPENT."

As a pastor, I must be careful at the same time to just say to you, "**Christ died for your sins. You have an advocate in heaven. Don't worry about it.**" I am afraid, this is what WE do more often in our church culture. We preach JUSTIFICATION! You are "safe in Christ" without SANCTIFICATION, where God says, "**Be holy as I am holy.**" I am fearful that I/we are good at the "objective" ground in our preaching, but horrible at the "subjective" ground in our preaching. Brothers and sisters, we need both! This is why we must "test ourselves." At the end of the day, a Christian will never subjectively be where he/she wants. But, there will be a spirit of repentance that flows deep from the heart as you look unto Christ by faith. So, in closing, if you are not a Christian, repent! Look unto Christ! If you are a Christian who finds yourself doubting. Repent! Look unto Christ!