

Heb 6:9-20 (part 2) Christian Assurance and Good Works

This week we continue the topic of Christian Assurance. In our context, the author has just spoken of the great danger of apostasy. But then in v. 9, he says, **“though we speak in this way, yet in your case, beloved, we feel sure of better things—things that belong to salvation.”** In other words, he believes they will continue, they will persevere. And, it is his desire that they have assurance. Look at v. 11: **“And we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness to have the full assurance of hope until the end.”** And then, in vv. 13-19 he grounds assurance in the promise of God. And this we saw last week. Our assurance is grounded in the promise of God in eternity as he has chosen a people for himself. And this promise is displayed in the sending 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, 20 where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.”**

Now, Look 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, as you still do.”** Here we see the ongoing display of good works in the life of the Christian. There is a connection between assurance and good works. And we will get to this next. But for today, I want to spend the entire time dealing with how God can be pleased with our works, seeing that we are sinners. I have 3 truths as we answer the question **“How can God be pleased with our works, seeing that we are sinners?”**

- 1) God will always do what is right, 2) As sinners our works are unacceptable to God, 3) In Christ our good works are acceptable.

1. God will always do what is right. God is just. This word is also translated as “righteous.” In other words, God always does what is right. He is always equitable, as our culture likes to use this word (though not properly, I would argue.) He always gives exactly what we deserve. I get this from v. 10. **“For God is not unjust . . . to overlook your work.”** Now, there are some who say, *“this text is proof that our salvation is based upon works.”* In other words, God does not forget your work. He sees how you have served God’s people. Therefore, your works contribute to your salvation. In this way, they believe God is just. And in principle, this is a good argument. After all doesn’t the Bible say, **“a worker is worthy of his wages”** (Luke 10:7). And this is exactly what the world believes about religion. Muslims, Jews, Hindus, Buddhists, animists, etc. . . . All of them believe that if your good works outweigh your bad works, God will be just to save you. And again, the principle is correct.

Have you seen the AT & T commercials with the famous “Lily.” Well, their point through all of them is that everyone gets the same deal. In other words, they don’t show favoritism. The same goes for “Jake” at State Farm. Everyone gets the same deal. This is fair. And we get this! We understand this principle. I believe we get this because God has written such truths on our hearts. I remember even from a child, I would always pray, *“Lord, help me do what is right!”*

For all of us, from the beginning, God says, *“Obey me and you will live. Do what is right. If you do, you will live.”* This is equity, brothers and sisters. God tells Israel over and over, *“Obey my commandments and you will be blessed.”* We see this throughout the OT. Deut. 6:18 says: **“And**

you shall do what is right and good in the sight of the LORD, that it may go well with you, and that you may go in and take possession of the good land that the LORD swore to give to your fathers.” In 1 Kings 11:38: **“And if you will listen to all that I command you, and will walk in my ways, and do what is right in my eyes by keeping my statutes and my commandments, as David my servant did, I will be with you and will build you a sure house, as I built for David, and I will give Israel to you.”**

Now, let me ask, what happens if we do not obey his commandments? Well, think about example in Hebrews with the Israelites. In the dessert they can do what is right and choose to obey God in taking the land. But, they do not! They find great punishment and the displeasure of God. Even worse, Look at 3:11: **“As I swore in my wrath, they shall not enter my rest.”** They spent 40 more years in the desert until that generation died off. God is just. His scales are right, they measure to perfection. And if our works are “good” and “right” God will accept them. So let me ask, *“What if you were to do right always? Would God accept you?”* What do you think? . . . Well, in principle he would accept you. But, this not the case, which brings us to truth #2.

2. As Sinners our works are unacceptable to God. The problem is our sin. When we think about our example from the world, it is not that the world doesn’t think about the bad things they do. Most folks I’ve spoken with know they have done bad, or unjust things. Which of us have not told a lie in our lifetime? Which of us have always been content with what we have? Which of us have never stolen anything in our life, even if it is our sister’s toy? The world sees these things. But, the problem with the world is that they do not see that these things are sinful. Yes, they do good works. But, then they bad works. They are mixed together. But from the core, from our nature, we are sinners. This means that God cannot look just at our good works. He is sees us as we are. We are “wholly” sinners. This is why even our good works are not acceptable. Even Israel in Paul’s day did not see their sin as being as bad as the Gentiles.

But turn with me to the Book of Romans. In cps. 1-3 Paul speaks about the “righteousness” or the “justice” of God. And in 1:18 he says, **“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against ALL ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.”** And he declares that both Jews and Gentiles alike are sinners and fall short of God’s commands. In 3:23: **“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”** Back in vv. 10-12 we read: **“None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.”** The problem with the “good works” of the world is that they flow from a heart of sin. This is why Isaiah can say: **“We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment”** (Is. 64:6). This is why our own good works will never outweigh our bad. Our sin is so great against the glory of God, we could heap mounds and mounds and mounds, and even if we could place the entire universe of good works on one side of the scale, the holy, glory of God on the other side of the scale is insurmountable! And this is what the Bible teaches. This is why we cannot teach that God would ever save anyone by his own works. His justice requires it. But at the same time how can the writer of Hebrews say, **“God is not unjust so as to overlook your work?”** The answer is found in the Gospel of Christ, which brings us to truth #3.

3. In Christ our good works are acceptable to him. The justice of God finds its satisfaction in the person and work of Jesus Christ. God sees our works. And yes, he doesn't overlook them. And He approves of them. Why? Because they are grounded in Christ. And in our passage, God DOES see their work. And He does not overlook how they love and serve one another. And they are acceptable to Him? Why? It is because their works are "works of faith." What kind of faith? Faith that trusts the promise of God to save. And what is God's promise? It is Christ! We must see that ALL God's promises in the OT find their fulfillment in Christ. ALL OF THEM! This is the author's truth in the Book of Hebrews. In this Book, the author gives numerous examples of the "works of OT" believers. And he shows the reason they are acceptable to Him is because of their faith? Again, what kind of faith? Faith that looks forward to the fulfillment of God's promise to save them in Christ.

In order to show this, let's look over at Heb. 11 for some examples. Right from the beginning, we see the definition of faith. V. 1: "**Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.**" And then in v. 2: "**For by it the people of old received their commendation.**" In other words, they trusted God's promise to save them, as by faith they looked forward to God's promise. And how do we know they have faith? Because of their works. V. 4 "**By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous.**" Here we see God accepts his works as righteous. Why? Because of his faith? Again what kind of faith? Faith that looks forward to God's promise.

Let's keep going. V. 7: "**By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household.**" And notice what he says next: "**By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.**" NOAH BUILT AN ARK! Why? He trusted the promise of God to save. Look at v. 8: "**By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. 9 By faith he went to live in the land of promise . . .**" And then in v. 10: "**For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.**" V. 11: "**By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered him faithful who had promised.**" V. 17: "**By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son . . .**" And in v. 23: "**By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents because they saw that the child was beautiful, and they were not afraid of the king's edict. 24 By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, 25 choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin.**" Now notice particularly v. 26: "**He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward.**" Here, the author is showing that Moses trusted God's promise as he looked forward to Christ.

Finally the author comes to v. 32 and says, "**And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets— who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the**

mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. Women received back their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life. Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated—of whom the world was not worthy—wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth” (vv. 32-38).

Brothers and sisters, do you see all their works? Again, what kind of works? Works of faith? Let me ask, “*Does God approve their faith?*” Or “*does God approve their works?*” YES! He does approve their works. But, ONLY because they are works of faith . . . faith that trusts God’s promise to save. And in their day, they were looking FORWARD. . . . Forward to what? Look at vv. 39-40: “**And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.**” They look forward to the “BETTER,” or the “FULFILLMENT” of God’s promise. What is the fulfillment? It is CHRIST! Look at 12:1-2: “**Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.**”

At the end of the day, I believe this text teaches that God will not forsake . . . God will not overlook what He Himself has given. Think about it: faith is a gift. And, works flow from this gift of faith. I think of Eph. 2:8-10. “**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. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.**” These verses encompass the great work of God in fulfilling his promise to his people. We are saved by faith. And faith is a gift. And our good works stem from this faith (which is a gift). And then, he says that “**we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.**” This text teaches exactly what we saw last week on assurance. We are chosen before the foundation of the world. The Father gives a people to the Son. And He sends the Holy Spirit to work in our lives. This means that, even our works (from this perspective) are given by the grace of God in Christ. How could he not accept them?

Look over to Rom. 3 for our answer. The Apostle Paul says in Rom. 3:21-23: “**But NOW the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law . . . the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus . . . And then in v. 25 “**whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith.**” Here we saw how God can accept our works. He accepts them because of the cross of Christ. This is the sacrifice of Christ where we**

see the great exchange. He takes our sins. We take his righteousness. And now, our good works are no longer “filthy rags.” They are righteous! They are righteous because they are in Christ! Now, God accepts them. And we are united to him how? By faith.

Non-Christians can have the best of works. They can help the poor. They can feed the hungry. They can heal the sick. They can visit those who are in prison. The world can be a good neighbor. They can build hospitals and schools in the poorest places on earth. So many good things the world can do. And in many ways, their efforts to be good, on the surface, can look better than those of Christians. But, as sinners, those who have fallen short of the glory of God, their works are as filthy rags. They are covered with sin. But, if you are in Christ, if you have believed on Him. This is faith. God does not see one ounce of your sins. He sees the righteousness of His Son. This is the fulfillment of his promise to Adam, to Noah, to Abraham, to Moses, to ALL in the OT and now in the NT, for those who trust God’s promise to save. And what is God’s promise? Look at v. 18: “***We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain . . .***”

And, because of this, we can have full assurance to the end.