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THINGS THAT ACCOMPANY SALVATION

Hebrews 6:9-12

By

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Hebrews Lesson 18

Things That Accompany Salvation Hebrews 6:9-12

The football team did poorly in the first half of the game and is getting beaten badly. They come into the locker room and the coach chews them out: "You guys are playing as if this is the first time you've ever played the game! Jones, you missed a key block that allowed them to sack our quarterback. Smith, you didn't see that receiver that was wide open in the end zone. We could have had an easy touchdown there. Williams, you weren't paying attention to the signals and jumped offside, costing us a penalty that we couldn't afford."

But after a few minutes, the coach changes his focus: "I know that you guys can do better! I've seen you play well. I know that you have it in you to go out there in the second half and control the ball. You can win this game! Let's go do it!"

Our text reminds me of that kind of locker room pep talk. In 6:4-8, the author has warned the Hebrew church about the danger of repudiating faith in Christ and returning to Judaism. He is fearful that there may be some in the flock who are in danger of doing that. But he knows that this is not true of the majority. He also knows that some sensitive souls in the church may be discouraged by his strong rebuke. He wants them to know that his words do not come from anger, but from love and concern. So in 6:9, he changes his focus from warning to encouragement. He addresses them as "beloved" (the only time in Hebrews), and tells them, "We are convinced of better things concerning you, that is, things that accompany salvation, though we are speaking in this way."

That statement implies, as I said last week, that the warning pertains to those in the church who may not be genuinely saved. He hopes that the few souls who may be tempted to turn from Christ will take the warning to heart. But now he wants to encourage the majority to press on in endurance to maturity. He doesn't want these genuine believers to doubt their salvation, but rather, to realize "the full assurance of hope until the end" (6:11). So he tells them that he—and even more importantly, God—sees the evi-

dence of genuine salvation in them. And he encourages them to press on diligently in serving Christ, so that they will persevere in spite of any persecution or hardship. The main idea here is that...

Genuine salvation is accompanied by diligent, faithful service to God's saints out of love for Him.

1. Genuine salvation is always accompanied by visible evidence.

In 6:10, he mentions their work and the love which they had shown toward the Lord's name, in having ministered and in still ministering to the saints. "Shown" points to something visible. He could see how their lives had changed from living for themselves to now living to serve others. Their salvation resulted in visible evidence. He refers to this same evidence again in 10:32-34, where he specifies how in former days they had endured public reproach, had showed sympathy to prisoners, and had joyfully accepted the seizure of their property, knowing that they had a better and lasting possession in heaven.

The point is, if you have faith in Christ, it will manifest itself in your life. There will be other evidences than those listed here (1 John lists many evidences of genuine faith), but there are always visible evidences of the new birth just as there are unmistakable signs of life in a newborn baby. As we saw (6:7-8), it may take a while to see whether the ground that drinks in the rain bears thorns and thistles or a good crop. But as Jesus' parable of the sower shows, the good soil will yield a crop, "some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty" (Matt. 13:8). Genuine salvation will result in a life of increasing fruitfulness and holiness. Our text focuses on one such evidence of salvation:

2. A major evidence of genuine salvation is diligent, faithful service to others out of love for Him.

Note three things in this regard:

- A. Love for God stemming from His love for us is the primary motive for all Christian service.

The author refers to "the love which you have shown toward His name, in having ministered and in still ministering to the saints" (6:10). The first and greatest commandment is, "You shall

love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind" (Matt. 22:37). It is the basis for the second greatest commandment, to love your neighbor as yourself. Jesus commanded us to love one another as He has loved us (John 13:34). The basis for loving God is to recognize that He first loved us, even while we were yet sinners (Rom. 5:6-8; 1 John 4:19).

Many Christian psychologists wrongly teach that you must learn to *love yourself before* you can love God and others. But that is to pervert these commandments! The second commandment assumes what we all know to be true, that we all love ourselves quite well! Even the person who goes around dumping on himself loves himself. He is completely self-focused. If he would care about others as much as he focused on himself, he would begin to obey the command. Even the suicidal person loves himself more than he loves others. When he thinks about killing himself, he isn't thinking about the effect on others. He is only thinking of trying to escape his own problems, even if it devastates his family or friends.

The author mentions the love which they had shown toward God's name. His name represents all that God is as revealed in His Word. It refers to His holy attributes and His ways. To love His name is to have a passion for His glory, to see God exalted to His true place of honor over every creature. Loving God and His name is the basis for all that we do in service for Him. John MacArthur (*The MacArthur New Testament Commentary, Hebrews* [Moody Press], p. 155) points out, "When Jesus recommissioned Peter, He did not ask him if he loved men and, if so, then to go out and serve them. He asked Peter three times, 'Do you love *Me*?' After each of Peter's affirmative replies, Jesus commanded him to feed His sheep (John 21:15-17)." MacArthur concludes, "We can never love men, saved or unsaved, lovable or unlovable, until we properly love Christ."

Why does the author begin 6:10 by saying, "For God is not unjust so as to forget your work . . ."? I think that one reason is that these people had suffered early in their Christian lives, and now they're facing the prospect of more suffering. At such times, Satan tries to undermine our love for God by whispering, "You trusted in Christ and look where it got you! You've had nothing but problems. Is that how this loving God takes care of you?" He wants you to start thinking that either God is unjust or else He has forgotten

you. So the author says, "God is not unjust and He has not forgotten you." He goes on to set their focus on the certain hope of inheriting God's promises (6:11-12).

Take a moment to apply this to your heart. Perhaps trials or hardships have caused you to doubt God's love. Maybe the trial is other Christians who have disappointed you. The church has not been all that you thought that it should be. Believers have criticized you when you were simply trying to serve the Lord. The enemy has come in and gotten you to think either that God is unjust or that He has forgotten what you have done for Him. If you buy into that line of thinking, pretty soon you'll be having a pity party, you'll cut yourself off from other believers because of your hurt feelings, and Satan will have you right where he wants you to be! You've got to come back to love for the Lord and His name as the motivation for everything else.

B. To love others is one way to show love for Him.

These Hebrew believers had ministered and were still ministering to the saints, but the author says that this service reflected their love for the Lord's name.

The Russian author, Leo Tolstoy (*Twenty-Three Tales*, online at <http://etext.lib.virginia.edu>) illustrates this in a story titled, "Where Love is, God is." It is about an old Russian cobbler who has lost his wife and all of his children. He is bitter and lonely, wanting to die. A traveling monk stops by to visit him and after hearing his story, tells him that he must not question God's ways. God has a purpose for his life. His despair is the result of living for himself. He must learn to live for God. He tells the old cobbler to read the Gospels to learn how to live for God.

The old man does so and is transformed. He becomes content and at peace. Every night he pores over the gospels. One night, he falls asleep reading in Luke 7 about the Pharisee who did not welcome Jesus to his home. Suddenly, whether in a dream or what the old man doesn't know, he hears a voice calling his name: "Martin, Martin, look out in the street tomorrow for I shall come."

The next day, he keeps watch out of his window as he works. He sees an old man that he knows, invites him in and gives him some tea. He tells the man about Christ's mercy as he had been

reading in the gospels. The old man listened with tears running down his cheeks and left thanking him for his hospitality.

A while later, Martin saw outside a woman dressed in shabby summer clothes, trying to keep her crying baby warm. He invited her in to sit by the fire. She was destitute and had pawned her shawl the day before to get something to eat. He fed her, gave her an old coat to wrap around her baby, and gave her the money to get her shawl out of pawn.

Later, he saw a poor woman with a basket of apples for sale. A boy tried to steal one, but she caught him by the hair and was threatening to take him to the police. Martin went outside, calmed her down, and got the boy to ask forgiveness and the woman to forgive. He told them both Jesus' parable about the master who forgave the servant an incredibly large debt, only to have the servant go out and mistreat a fellow servant who owed him a slight amount. After listening, the woman picked up her heavy load to go, but the boy offered to carry it for her, so they went off together.

It was evening now. Martin went inside, lit his lamp, and opened his Bible. He had intended to read where he had left off, but the Bible fell open to another place. Before he read, he heard a voice call out, "Martin, it is I." He looked up and saw the old man and then he vanished. This was repeated with the woman and her baby, and with the woman selling apples and the boy. Then he read, "I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in..." At the bottom of the page, he read, "To the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me" (Matt. 25:35, 40). Tolstoy concludes, "And Martin understood that his dream had come true; and that the Savior had really come to him that day, and he had welcomed him."

Thus love for God stemming from His love for us is the primary motive for all Christian service. To love others is one way to show love for Him.

- C. Love for others is work that requires diligence, faithfulness, and patience.

Love is not spontaneous and effortless. The author calls it “work,” and exhorts them to continue showing the same diligence. He doesn’t want them to grow sluggish or lazy, but through faith and patience, to become imitators of those who inherit the promises. It’s as Paul writes (Gal. 6:9-10), “Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary. So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.”

The Christian life is not a sprint; it’s a marathon. The reward comes at the end of the race. We need to commit to the long haul and fight the natural laziness that we’re all prone to. Let’s face it, it’s almost always inconvenient to show love to others. But love isn’t an optional character trait for those so inclined! It is the primary Christian virtue.

We hear a lot today about burnout, and I do not mean to be overly simplistic. But a lot of burnout stems from the fact that we have not maintained our devotion to Jesus Christ. If we let other things crowd out time alone with God in His Word and in prayer, and if we do not think often on His great love as shown to us at the cross, the work of loving others will soon drain us. Ministry is having your cup full to the brim of God’s love and then slopping over on others. When you let your cup go dry, you burn out.

We’ve seen that genuine salvation is always accompanied by visible evidence and that a major evidence is diligent, faithful service to others out of love for God.

3. Diligent, faithful service to others out of love for God will strengthen your assurance of salvation.

While there may have been a few apostates in the church, the author is confident that the majority are saved because he has seen the evidence in their lives in their ministry to the saints. Then (6:11) he shares his desire that each of them continue with the same diligence and adds, “so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end.” Full assurance of hope is tied in with diligent service, especially practical deeds of love towards fellow believers. As John states, “We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren” (1 John 3:14; see also 15-20).

The bedrock of Christian assurance is that God has promised eternal life to those that believe in Jesus Christ, and you know that you have trusted in Him. But, how do you know if your faith is genuine, saving faith? Since the apostates had what seemed to be many evidences of salvation (6:4-5), and yet were not truly saved, how can you know that your faith is the real thing?

The biblical answer is, your life should reflect the reality of what God has done in your heart. As John also states (1 John 2:3), "By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments." The more that you see God's working through you, the greater will be your assurance that "He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus" (Phil. 1:6).

In Hebrews 6:7, the author uses the analogy of ground that drinks in the rain. If it brings forth vegetation useful to those who tilled it, it receives a blessing from God. In other words, fruitfulness is the result of salvation. But when you are fruitful, God adds further blessing, a fuller salvation (Alexander Maclaren develops this point in *Expositions of Holy Scripture* [Baker], Hebrews, pp. 364-366). As 6:10 implies, God will reward your service for Him, and one reward is "the full assurance of hope until the end." Persevering in good deeds is *not the cause* of why God keeps you, but it is the *evidence* of it. That evidence strengthens your assurance.

But diligence is hard to maintain and laziness is easy to fall into. So how do we keep running the race when we feel like dropping out?

4. One key to diligent, faithful service to God is to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

The author is referring to the Old Testament saints. He goes on to use Abraham as an illustration of a man who patiently waited in faith and obtained God's promise (6:15). He will expand this list in chapter 11. All of these heroes of the faith, plus those in the New Testament, are there so that we can learn from them and imitate their faith. Both Jesus and Paul told their followers to learn from and imitate them (Matt. 10:29; John 13:15; 1 Cor. 4:16; 11:1; Phil 4:9; 1 Thess. 1:6; 2:14; 2 Tim. 3:10-11). I've often said, only

half-joking, that child-rearing is easy, because kids follow your example. So all you have to do is live a godly life before them!

We are to imitate those who by faith and patience *inherit the promises*. As Hebrews 11 makes clear, most of the Old Testament saints died in faith without realizing the promises in their lifetimes (11:39). This means, as Paul puts it, that if “we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied” (1 Cor. 15:19). God’s promises are fulfilled in eternity. That’s where faith comes into play. Will we trust God to keep His promises, even if in this life we are despised, rejected, and destitute? Will we endure hardship as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, knowing that He will reward us far beyond any sacrifices that we make here below?

Two applications: First, read and study the biographies in the Bible. There are also some biographical novels of biblical characters. Last summer as we drove on our vacation, Marla and I read aloud through Francine Rivers’ account of Bathsheba, which had some interesting insights. But before you read books like that, study the biblical account, so that you know when the author is speculating and when he or she is relating fact. Learn both the positive and negative lessons from the saints in the Bible.

Second, read Christian biographies. I’ve benefited greatly from reading dozens of biographies of pastors and missionaries. I am always reading a biography, along with other types of books. Currently, I’m reading *The Journals of Jim Elliot*. When that’s done, a biography of Augustine is waiting. Good biographies do not just extol all the amazing things that these spiritual giants accomplished. They also tell you their struggles and failures, so that you can learn from their mistakes. You see how they responded to situations that often are not much different than what you face. Sometimes the differences in time period or culture will help you think about issues in our culture that you may have been blind to. I have a bibliography of Christian biographies available.

Conclusion

Note that our text contains the three cardinal Christian virtues, faith (6:12), hope (6:11), and love (6:10). Those who are genuinely saved will be growing in these three areas, and so they are good yardsticks to measure your life by.

Are you living by *faith* in God's promises in your daily life? If you are, you will know God's promises (through Scripture memory), and you will be praying those promises back to God, claiming by faith what He has promised in His Word.

Are you growing in *hope*? Biblical hope is not uncertain, as when we say, "I hope it doesn't rain tomorrow." Biblical hope is certain, but not yet realized. It is an attitude that is the opposite of discouragement and depression. The person who hopes in God is buoyed up by the promise of Jesus' coming, and that the future will be glorious for all of those who love God and are called according to His purpose. As Paul prays (Rom. 15:13), "Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."

Are you growing in *love*? Do you love God more and more, cherishing His Word? Do you love His people, difficult as they may be at times? Plug in the marks of love from 1 Corinthians 13 and ask, "Do I love my immediate family members in this way?" Do you love the lost enough to give your money and time so that they can hear the good news, that Christ came into this world to save sinners? None of these graces are automatic. You must cultivate them daily through the spiritual disciplines. These are the things that accompany genuine salvation.

Discussion Questions

1. Some say that if you make assurance depend in any way on works, you undermine all assurance. What does the Bible say?
2. Why is the motive (love for God) *vital* in Christian service? What can happen if you have other motives?
3. Some would say that if love requires effort and is not spontaneous, it is not genuine. Why is this false?
4. Why is "learning to love yourself" a fundamentally anti-biblical concept? What does the Bible say we should think about ourselves (Rom. 12:3, 10, 16; Phil. 2:3-4; Prov. 3:7).

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