

Sermon Transcript

10.19.2025

Hebrews 6:9-12

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- Good morning. Please open your Bibles to Hebrews 6. We'll be in vs. 9-12 this morning.
- I want to tell you a story from my youth. I've shared it before so if you've heard it, just act like you haven't. Anyway, I went to RSS in Baytown & unless I'm mistaken, we've only won a state championship in one sport. Not a high-profile sport like football or basketball, but water polo. In fact, my alma mater has been a traditional water polo power house.
- In my 4 years of high school, the girls won 2 state championships & were runner up a third time. The boys had won the two years prior to my arriving and were runner up twice in my 4 years.
- Meanwhile, I played soccer & tennis. My senior year, my doubles partner & I were both dating girls on the water polo team so we would occasionally go and watch a game.
- My buddy's girlfriend's dad coached the team so one day we had a brilliant idea. What if we could play in a game? So we asked the coach if he would let us play. He thought for a second and then said that if we could circulate a petition and have 100 signatures from our fellow students, he would let us play in our home game against our crosstown rivals, the Robert. E. Lee Ganders.
- So we got to work. Within a week we had over 200 signatures and true to his word, he told us we could play. Since the game was the next week, there was no real practice or prep.
- Game day arrives and we get there and he tells us to pick out a suit. That's when things began to go downhill. It began to really click for me as I suddenly remember that these guys all wear speedos. And I'm going to have to wear a speedo...and a used borrowed one at that. So now, I'm rethinking this whole endeavor, but I couldn't back out.
- We get dressed in our speedos & little water polo cap & then the referee comes in to look us over. They have to check your fingernails & toenails because kids have been known to clip their nails into a little toe shiv to shank people under the water. Once again, I'm regretting my decision.
- But then its time to walk out into the natatorium. And as we do, we can hear the crowd from the locker room which was unusual. They weren't used to having bleachers at capacity. Why was it so full? Well, because we had circulated a petition that had basically said, come watch us make fools of ourselves. So half the senior class showed up to watch the spectacle.
- So now I have to take the long walk of shame to the other end of the pool wearing my little suit and cap in front of all my friends. Thankfully nobody had camera phones.
- As the game begins my buddy and I are obviously on the bench and even that is embarrassing, but our team jumps out to a pretty sizeable lead so eventually the coach puts us in the game.
- And my goodness, water polo is no joke. After a few sprints down the pool, I'm so winded that I'm going over to the edge to catch my breath. I'm basically just holding on for dear life while a water polo game is being played all around me.
- I feel like I'm dying and I'm contemplating how embarrassing it would be to nearly drown and then think, yeah, but if I actually drown, then at least I won't feel any more humiliation.
- Anyway, we won & I never played another game of water polo & I think the coach used my buddy & I to increase interest in the sport & I felt so used & embarrassed, but mostly I felt unprepared. Certainly unprepared for the shame, but even moreso for the rigors of the game itself.

- I was a 17 year old athletic kid, but that was a totally unexpected type of fatigue that I experienced. I had a whole new level of respect for the sport.
- My point in this is that had I known what lay ahead, I probably wouldn't have done it. But let's say that I wasn't an insecure kid and I decided to play water polo, how would I approach it differently? Well, I'd practice. I'd train. I'd discipline myself.
- I think about that as we labor towards Hebrews 7. In ch 1-5 we've had an appetizer. Jesus is better than the angels, better than Moses, better than Joshua. We'll continue that theme of the supremacy of Christ in ch 7-10, but first the author digresses. In chapter 6, he says, you aren't ready. You can't handle the truth.
- You need milk, not meat. You need to get rid of your baby teeth if you're going to be able to chew on the truths of Christ's priesthood after the order of Melchizedek. Melchizedek is meaty theology.
- In our next text, we'll begin to transition back into the main body of the letter, but this morning we'll continue this almost parenthetical warning that we've seen over the past couple of weeks.
- So let's pray and then we'll dive in. No water polo pun intended.
- Self, others, me.
- This is sermon 20 of our journey through Hebrews so by now, you should be able to see the broad contours of the letter. This entire book is an apologetic for the supremacy of Jesus Christ. Christ is better is the overarching and undergirding theme of Hebrews.
- And that functions in at least two ways.
- First, it reminds us that Christ is better than our sin. We'll see that in places like chapter 11 where Moses chooses obedience rather than the "fleeting pleasures of sin" and in chapter 12 where we are to lay aside every weight and sin by looking to Jesus.
 - So that's the first function of the supremacy of Christ. As Thomas Chalmers argues in his classic work the Expulsive Power of a New Affection, the way to drive out or displace a desire is by means of a greater desire. In other words, when striving for sanctification, don't just white knuckle it, you mortify sin by vivifying a love for Christ.
 - The way to see the folly and futility of sin is by seeing that Christ is better.
 - So we should remember that Christ is better before we click that link or tell that joke or look at that woman or steal that money or tell that lie or share that secret.
 - The supremacy of Christ is the means of our sanctification.
- The second way that the supremacy of Christ functions, and the primary way that it applies in Hebrews is by showing that Christ is better than the shadows of the Mosaic Covenant.
 - Christ is better than the angels and Moses and Joshua in chapters 1-4. And He is a better priest who has offered a better sacrifice on the basis of a better covenant established on better promises as we'll see in chapters 7-10.
- That's the meat of Hebrews. That's the main point. The main point is that since Christ is better, apostasy is foolish and futile.
- The book was written to Jewish Christians who are facing persecution and thus tempted to compromise...to capitulate to that suffering by renouncing Christ and going back to the synagogue, yoking themselves back to the Mosaic Law.
- So the author systematically shows that Christ is superior to each and every aspect of the Mosaic system. He has a better priesthood than the Aaronic or Levitical priesthood.

He's offered a better sacrifice, a sufficient sacrifice, an efficacious sacrifice. He's established a better covenant, a new covenant, an unbreakable covenant built on better promises offering better rewards.

- That's the main way that the supremacy of Christ functions in Hebrews. To show the folly and futility of going backwards. Why trade the substance of the New for the shadows of the Old?
- And that's what the book is building towards. We'll spend about 4 months walking through chapters 7-10 where that is front and center, but first the author digresses.
- As he wrote in 5:11
 - *About this we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. (Hebrews 5:11)*
- He wants to get there. He has much to say, but not quite yet. Why not? Because the readers weren't ready.
- So he encourages the readers to leave the shallow end of the pool in order to plunge into deeper things.
- As he writes in 5:12-14
 - *For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil. (Hebrews 5:12-14)*
- Then in chapter 6, he gives this command:
 - *Therefore let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity... (Hebrews 6:1)*
- And then last week we saw the reason why. The reason why is because of the very real danger of apostasy. Not that a genuine believer can fall away and lose their salvation, but that it IS possible to have spiritual experiences, even experiences which seem genuine, and not truly embrace Christ. There is a danger to being inoculated to the gospel. To be Christ adjacent without being in Christ.
- The law of entropy suggests that if you aren't advancing toward, then you are drifting away. Things don't naturally move from disorder to order, but the opposite. And if you aren't careful, then you'll eventually drift too far to return. That doesn't mean that you lose your salvation, but it might very well mean that your salvation was a farce, a sham, an insincere hypocrisy.
- Those whom God calls He preserves so if you aren't persevering, that's something to fear. We should fear lest the warning apply to us.
- You might taste, but never consume. Understand, but never believe. Share, but never possess. That's the warning of vs. 4-8 that we talked about last week.
- That's why even the great apostle Paul could write:
 - *But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified. (1 Corinthians 9:27)*
- What's Paul saying? Is Paul struggling with assurance? Is he locked into despair and doubt about being disqualified? No! But neither is he presuming. The fact that he has

been given the mysteries of the gospel doesn't lead him to coast, but to work all the harder. Look at other places where he makes that point:

- *For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me. (Colossians 1:29)*
- *But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. (1 Corinthians 15:10)*
- Notice, Paul works. Paul struggles. But the glory goes to God. Even Paul's work is owing to God's grace. The same is true of you and me. God's grace isn't an excuse to drift, but an empowerment to obey.
- If you recall how we landed the plane last week, the way that you confirm your calling and election is by means of struggle and strain. This is another area of what we call theological tension. God is sovereign over your salvation. God has elected you from before the foundation of the world. But the way in which He preserves you in the faith is by your grace-fueled effort. Your effort isn't independent, it isn't legalistic, it isn't works righteousness, it is instead God's providential means of accomplishing His ends.
- As Philippians 2 says, we work out our salvation in light of the fact that God works in us both the will and the work.
- So the author of Hebrews writes chapter 6 as a warning lest we let go and let God. Lest we presume upon His grace as if its a license to drift. God cautions us against cavalier complacency and presumption.
- With all of that in mind, let's pick it up in vs. 9.

Though we speak in this way, yet in your case, beloved, we feel sure of better things—things that belong to salvation. (Hebrews 6:9)

- So last week we saw the warning. Though there are a number of ways that Christians have read the warnings, I argued that the warning was written to describe those who were Christian-adjacent, almost Christian, those who had spiritual experiences somehow connected to the Church, but weren't actually regenerate or converted.
- And though the author speaks in that way, in the way of warning about judgment, warning about falling away, though he has spoken in that way, nevertheless he is confident that the warning doesn't apply to them. He is confident that they will experience better things. What things?
- Things that belong to salvation.
- In other words, the things that he described in the previous paragraph do not conclusively belong to salvation. As we saw, they were inconclusive. Some who taste receive, some who taste reject. Some who share fully possess, some do not. Some enlightened can see, some cannot.
- As we said last week, if he wanted to talk about believers, he could have used unambiguous words like election and regeneration and justification, but he doesn't. He uses terms that are puzzling and questionable.
- But in the case of his readers, whom he calls beloved. Those who are beloved, beloved by God and the author, those who are beloved, he feels sure of better things for them.

- This doesn't make the warning superfluous or unnecessary. That's one thing to recognize about the Bible. Without exception, every letter of the NT is written for believers. But the fact that it is written for and to believers doesn't mean that no unbeliever will read it.
- The fact that the Church is composed of believers by definition doesn't mean that there can't be unbelievers in our midst.
- So the warning is still important, still necessary. The warnings function to frighten the unbelievers from their unbelief and to keep the believers from growing complacent.
- But then he comes back around to give this optimistic assessment of the audience in order to stir them up as well.
- That's one of the things I love about God's word. How multi-dimensional it is. How much divine wisdom it contains. God speaks through various ways.
- He uses threats and warnings and promises and assurances. With the downtrodden, Christ is gentle and encouraging, with the proud, He's fierce and unbending. He comforts the afflicted and afflicts the comforted.
- That provides a sometimes awkward theological tension. At our weekly Wednesday morning Bible study this past week, we talked about that tension. Sometimes people need to hear about God's love, His mercy, His grace, but other times they need to hear about His wrath, His anger, His holy judgments. There is no one-size fits all approach, no formula.
- As we mentioned last week, if you are diabetic, you need a shot of insulin, but if you aren't diabetic, that same shot will send you into shock.
- So God speaks in both threats and promises, with neither being inherently better than the other. Better for what is the question.
- And here the promise is of better things. Pay attention to that word better. Underline it, circle it. Remember the overarching message of the book, Christ is better.
- We've seen that word throughout the book, though sometimes it is translated as superior. For instance,
 - [Christ has] become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs. (Hebrews 1:4)
- And this same Greek word will guide us through the rest of the book. Its like a beacon orienting us toward the shore. Let's look at a few of these:
 - *...a better hope is introduced, through which we draw near to God.* (Hebrews 7:19)
 - *This makes Jesus the guarantor of a better covenant.* (Hebrews 7:22)
 - *But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises.* (Hebrews 8:6)
 - If we kept going, we would read of better promises, a better sacrifice, a better possession, better country, a better life, a better word.
- So this word better is consistently used to refer to the superiority of the New Covenant. Which implies that when the author uses it in chapter 6, it has a similar meaning. So the better things that He's referring to, are things that belong to salvation. And in the context of Hebrews, the only things that belong to salvation are things to belong to Jesus.
- Let's keep going. Vs. 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. (Hebrews 6:10)

- Why is he confident in better things? Because of the nature and character of God...in context, the faithfulness of God, the justice of God. In the next section in vss. 13-20, He'll come back around to this and ground his confidence in the immutability of God, His unchangeableness, and the truthfulness of God.
- I love that. I love that the author's assurance flows from the character of God. Especially here in this context. Notice how practically speaking, he could have written that he was confident because they had born fruit. But that is grounding his confidence in them. Instead, he says that he is confident for God is not unjust so as to overlook that fruit. That seems to be a minor change, but it makes all the difference in the world in terms of what is the object of your faith. Is it something subjective, something that ebbs and flow like our works and love? Or is it something objective, something steady, something immutable and constant like God's character?
- Is your ultimate confidence to be found in who you are or who God is? That's the difference.
- Now, bear in mind the imagery that the author used in vss. 7-8. Ground that drinks the rain responds in two ways: either a fruitful harvest or thorns and thistles.
- So in speaking of the Hebrews work and love, he seems to be implying that they have already born some fruit.
- As we talked about last week, the image isn't that land which was once fruitful has ceased to bear fruit. That's what we would expect if the author was saying that we could lose our salvation. But instead the land responds in two distinct ways. It either bears fruit or weeds. And since these Hebrews have borne fruit, he's confident that they aren't the kind of land to bear thorns and thistles.
- What fruit is he talking about? Well, their good works and the love that they have shown for his name in serving the saints.
- We see him circle back to that in chapter 10 where he writes:
 - *But recall the former days when, after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated. For you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one. (Hebrews 10:32-34)*
- So these are some examples of the way that they have done good works and served the saints. And what is the motivation? Love.
- Love for the saints of course. But more than that. Love for God's name.
- Those can't be divorced. The two great commandments are to love God and love others, but those aren't really two divisible commandments. They can't be divorced. In fact, one of the primary ways that we love God is by loving others.
- Jesus makes that clear when He says:
 - *...Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me. (Matthew 25:40)*

- Or as 1 John 4 says
 - *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. (1 John 4:7-8)*
- This is important to recognize because it helps us to see the importance of motivations. What makes a work good or bad isn't just the inherent activity itself, but the underlying reason for doing it. In other words, it isn't merely what you do, but why.
- As Charles Spurgeon said:
 - "The true test of any action lies in its motive. Many a deed, which seems to be glorious, is really mean and ignoble because it is done with a base intention; while other actions, which appear to be poor and paltry, if we truly understood them, would be seen to be full of the glory and beauty of a noble purpose." (Charles Spurgeon)
- I think this concept is obvious, but let me give some illustrations to drive it home.
 - If I were to give you a gift simply because I care about you, that would be good. If I were to give you a gift as a form of a bribe, that would be bad.
 - If I helped you with something in order to care for you, that's good. If I helped you to put you in my debt, that's bad.
 - As Christ says, if you give or pray or fast for secret rewards, that's good, for public rewards, that's bad.
- So here we see the proper motivation is for Christ's name. They are doing works of love and serving the saints for the sake of Christ.
- As Matthew 10:42 says:
 - *And whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward. (Matthew 10:42)*
- You won't lose your reward. Notice how that overlaps with what Hebrews is saying, God won't ignore or overlook your works.
- Now, as good Protestants, we tend to get uncomfortable talking about works. The Reformation was birthed out of a number of convictions, chief among them being the idea of sola fides, faith alone. We are justified by grace alone through faith alone.
- And yet, as we are reminded in James, the faith that justifies is never alone. True faith, justifying faith is a working faith.
- As we find in Galatians, perhaps one of the books most dealing with the contrast between justification by faith and justification by works, we find this in 5:6
 - *For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love. (Galatians 5:6)*
- Faith working through love. In other words, faith, work, and love aren't three separable virtues, as if you can have one without the other, they are instead bound together by their very nature.
- Works are the outward evidence of the type of faith that loves God and therefore loves others.
- As James says, faith without works is dead, useless. Even the demons believe and shudder.
- So the obvious question is whether or not your faith, your love, is evidenced by works. Do you see your faith in the way that you relate to your spouse and kids? The way you

do your job? The way that you think about politics and the political implications of the gospel? The way that you speak? The way you steward your money? What you prioritize?

- God has created you and saved you for good works according to Ephesians 2. Not saved by works, but saved for works. If your faith doesn't work, then something is wrong with that faith, as sure as something is wrong with a car that won't drive or a water polo player who doesn't know how to play water polo.
- Let's keep going. Vs. 11.

And we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness to have the full assurance of hope until the end... (Hebrews 6:11)

- We didn't really highlight it in vs. 10, but the verse ended with the phrase, "as you still do." The work and love and service wasn't merely in the past, but was an ongoing reality.
- And the author says in effect, keep going. Don't give up now. Don't stop believin...and thus don't stop working, don't stop serving.
- Each one of you. Whomever you are. Whether you are reading or hearing this, keep moving forward. Don't drift. Don't fall.
- Show the same earnestness. That word earnestness has an interesting semantic range. We see it translated as zeal in Romans 12:11
 - *Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord.* (Romans 12:11)
- And its translated as effort in the passage we closed with last week. 2 Peter 1:5
 - *For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge...* (2 Peter 1:5)
- So earnestness isn't merely an attitude, but an action. Not merely a desire, but a duty and deed. Be zealous. Be diligent. Be devoted.
- As we talked about last week, one of the ways that the sincerity of our faith is proven or evidenced is by means of our obedience.
- I read this quote last week by Jonathan Edwards:
 - "Although self-examination be a duty of great use and importance, and by no means to be neglected; yet it is not the principal means, by which the saints do get satisfaction of their good estate. Assurance is not to be obtained so much by self-examination as by action." (Jonathan Edwards)
- In other words, if you want to increase in confidence, increase your obedience. God's hardwired us such that we grow in assurance of His grace as we practice and pursue faithfulness.
- As 1 John says
 - *Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth. By this we shall know that we are of the truth and reassure our heart before him...* (1 John 3:18-19)
- Notice how our assurance is tethered to love and that love is demonstrated by deeds...works.
- Consider the context of Hebrews 6. In the midst of this warning passage that we walked through last week, the context says to train yourself, to leave what is elementary and press on to maturity.

- In other words, one of the ways in which we are assured that we won't fall away is by continuing to move forward, by straining and striving toward maturity.
- Notice what the author writes, we show the same earnestness. What earnestness? The earnestness of serving the saints. The earnestness of your work and love. Show the same earnestness to have the full assurance.
- Again, assurance comes as a result of obedience.
- And what is the nature of assurance? The assurance of hope.
- We've talked about this before, but remember the nature of biblical hope isn't just wishful thinking. It isn't the way that we hope that the Cowboys' defense can stop a drive or we hope that we get a year-end bonus or we hope that the government solves some crisis. Biblical hope is assured, certain, guaranteed. As J.I. Packer said, contrasting hope with mere optimism which he defined as a wish without a warrant.
 - "Christian hope is a certainty, guaranteed by God himself." (J.I. Packer)
- So hope is assurance.
- And not just assurance, but full assurance which is a Greek word formed from two words that emphasize just how full it actually is. Full fulfillment is the idea.
- That's the nature of biblical hope. Not wishful thinking, but confident expectation.
- This idea will come up again in chapter 11 where faith is defined as follows
 - *Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.* (Hebrews 11:1)
 - Notice faith is assurance and how that is connected to hope and conviction.
- As Piper says,
 - "Hope is faith in the future tense." (John Piper)
- God has not wired you for passivity or laxity. He has not wired you to be lazy. He has created you to act. To live out the implications of your confidence in Christ in every sphere of life. And he has wired you such that your confidence is strengthened as a result of that action. There is an inherently cyclicality to this. Because of your confidence, you obey and that obedience increases your confidence.
- In fact, I've met very few people who are genuinely walking in faithfulness, imperfect, but sincere faithfulness, and yet struggling with doubt. Almost every time I counsel someone who is doubting their salvation, there is some major compromise in their life.
- What you need to understand is that your doubt is actually a gift in that circumstance. Its a gift to drive you to repent. How cruel would it be for the Lord to grant you assurance while you are walking in habitual unrepentant sin? That would be like a doctor looking at an MRI of your cancer and giving you a clean bill of health. That distressing news of the cancer is the thing that drives you to the potential cure. Likewise, that sense of doubt is God's gift to drive you to faith and repentance.
- We see this all the time in the nature of deconstruction. Someone starts to have doubts and so they stop reading the Bible, stop praying, stop attending church, stop taking communion, stop participating in Christian community. In other words, they realize that they're sick and so they stop taking their medicine, the very worst solution to the problem.
- God desires for you to have assurance of salvation. That's another of the positive attributes of Protestant theology. According to Roman Catholicism, assurance is presumption, but the Reformation was in part a renewed appreciation of the role of

confidence and assurance. According to Scripture, we can have confidence. God desires that we walk in confidence. But not presumption. God wants you to abide in assurance, but that won't come if you are abiding in unrepentant compromise.

- So we see in Hebrews and in the rest of the Bible, two sides to assurance. There is an objective and subjective.
- The objective ground of assurance is the finished work of Christ, the sufficiency of Christ, the supremacy of Christ. That is the structural backbone of the book of Hebrews. Christ is better. He has redeemed us from all our sins, even the lingering sin of unbelief. As the father cries out in the gospel, it is the cry of a believer to proclaim, I believe, help my unbelief. So that's the objective side of assurance. Our confidence is grounded in the fact that Christ's blood was poured out and the tomb is empty and He sits upon the throne at the right hand of the Father.
- But there is also a subjective side of assurance. There are things we can do to increase our subjective awareness of assurance. As we grow in obedience, so we grow in confidence.
- As the Canons of Dort, a 17th century Reformed confession states regarding assurance,
 - "this certainty is not from any special revelation made beside or without the word, but from faith in God's promises, which he hath most plentifully revealed in his word for our comfort; from the testimony of the Holy Spirit bearing witness with our spirit, that we are the sons of God, and heirs; lastly, from a serious and holy care of keeping a good conscience, and endeavour of good works." (Canons of Dort, article 5.10)
- Let's keep going. Vs. 12.

...so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises. (Hebrews 6:12)

- Back in chapter 5:11 we began this little parenthetical digression when the author wrote:
 - *About this we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing.* (Hebrews 5:11)
- As we said then, the word translated as dull also means lazy or sluggish. Its nothroi. That's significant because 6:12 starts out "so that you may not be nothroi." Same Greek word.
- It forms a little inclusio to bookend the section. So, what we see in this little section of Hebrews is both the consequence and the cure for sluggishness.
- The consequence is seen in the warning. Beware lest sluggishness leads to drifting which leads to actually falling away. That's the consequence of unrestrained lethargy.
- And so the cure is obviously to hold fast, to press on, to show earnestness.
- And as an example of that, consider those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.
- This won't be only time that the author will commend imitation of others. In chapter 13 we'll read:
 - *Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith.* (Hebrews 13:7)

- But perhaps the best example of who the author means by those who through faith and patience inherit the promises is the famous hall of faith in chapter 11, people like Abraham and Jacob and Moses and David and so forth. But given that the author will immediately highlight Abraham in next week's passage, it stands to reason that he is the primary sort of pattern or paradigm of what patiently waiting for promises entails.
- Here he doesn't specify just Abraham, but any and all who have evidenced this.
- Imitate their faith. Imitate their patience.
- This is a theme we see throughout the NT.
 - *I urge you, then, be imitators of me.* (1 Corinthians 4:16)
 - *Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.* (1 Corinthians 11:1)
- So imitate those who have been earnest and diligent for the sake of an inheritance. What do they inherit? The promises. What promises? We'll get into that next time as in vs. 13-20 we'll see a number of these same themes come up again. We'll see not only the language of promise, but also patience, inheritance, and hope which all played a big part of our passage today.
- But first, what do we do with this?
- Well, you might ask, why does the author warn them if he has such confidence in them? Why does he call them sluggish if he wants them to not be sluggish?
- Why does the author switch back and forth from warning to assurance, from frightening with God's wrath to comforting with His love?
- To answer that, let's go back to my short-lived water polo career. In order to persuade me to give it a shot, there were multiple motivations at play.
- First, was the coach's challenge to get 100 signatures. Many of you know that I'm a pretty competitive guy. If you tell me I can't do something, there is a pretty good chance, I'll try it just to prove you wrong. I took the challenge to get 100 signatures so seriously that we doubled it. And that's one way to motivate people. To say, I don't think you can do this. That's what the author does in calling the readers sluggish and giving the warning.
- But in addition to the coach's challenge, I had a number of people who said, you can do it. What's the worst that can happen? Give it a shot. That's another motivation.
- That's what the author does in giving confidence that they're not sluggish. He says, in effect, you CAN do it.
- Depending on the circumstance and context, sometimes the way to motivate is by means of threats, sometimes by promises. Sometimes by saying you can't do it, others time by saying you can.
- That's the wisdom of God.
- As we read last week, our method needs to be adjusted depending on the audience. As 1 Thessalonians 5:14 says:
 - *And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all.* (1 Thessalonians 5:14)
- In other words, if you are idle. If you are lethargic. If you are disinterested, sluggish, lazy, immature, apathetic. You need to be admonished, rebuked, corrected, cautioned, warned. If you are comforted, you might need to be afflicted.
- But if you are fainthearted, you need encouragement, comfort, reassurance, and support. If you are afflicted, you might need comfort.

- And regardless of where you are, your response should be the same. Faith working through love, faith seeking understanding, faith growing and maturing into faithfulness.
- God desires that you have assurance. God wants you to have confidence. He is calling you to rest in His promises. But, paradoxically, perhaps ironically, that rest only comes as we labor in love for the glory of His name.
- Let's pray.

Communion

- Fence table
- Before we move on to the meatier sections of Hebrews, I just want to take one more week and really press home the call for introspection.
- As 1 Corinthians 11 says, we are to examine ourselves, test ourselves.
- So let's do that one more time this week as we prepare for the meal.
- Take a second and just be honest about where you are with the Lord. If you are walking in faithfulness, if you are walking in the light, if you are walking in love, praise the Lord. Thank Him and pray for future grace to keep going.
- But if you are complacent, if you are apathetic, if you are walking in the darkness, or despair or disobedience, then repent. Take this opportunity to repent and ask the Lord to help awaken a renewed passion in your heart.
- Take a second and then we'll partake together.
- On the night...
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