

Hebrews 6:9-12 “The God Who Sees Your Work and Love”\*\*

Main Idea: In Hebrews 6:9-12 the writer of Hebrews motivates his readers to persevere by sharing two kinds of words. The passage shows us that there are two kinds of words we should use to bring vital motivation to the people God has placed in our care.

I. We can motivate others by sharing words of encouragement (9-10).

A. The writer affirmed his confidence in his readers (9).

1. He said he expected better things of them.
2. He said he expected things that accompany salvation.

B. The writer affirmed his confidence in God (10).

1. God is not unjust.
2. God never misses our work and love.
3. God will reward our work and love.
  - a. It must be done for His honor.
  - b. It must be done as an expression of servanthood.

II. We can motivate others by sharing words of exhortation (11-12).

A. The writer calls for perseverance (11).

1. It's what Jesus did.
2. It's what each of us must do.
3. It's what makes our hope sure.

B. The writer calls for participation (12).

1. We must not become passive.
2. We must imitate godly role models.
3. We must live, not for what we can see, but for what has been promised.

A Special Word to Mothers in light of Hebrews 6:

1. Be encouraged today, for God sees what you are doing for Him!
2. Be a source of encouragement today, for God will not forget your work and love!

Deciding what to preach on Mothers Day's isn't an easy decision. I was thinking about it a few weeks ago and calculating where we would be in our current Sunday morning series. I discovered that on May 11 we'd be in Hebrews 6. Hebrews 6? No, that won't do. That was my first thought, as I recall.

But then I looked more carefully at *where* in Hebrews 6 we would be on this date, and noticed we would be at the

paragraph that follows the controversial text we explored last week. That, of course, was Hebrews 6:4-8 which offers perhaps the most sobering warning against falling away that you'll find anywhere in the Bible. As my eyes glanced at the very next verses, particularly Hebrews 6:10, I realized this indeed is a wonderful Mothers Day text for it teaches us something about God that every mother needs to know. What's that? This...

*“God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them.”*

Mothers, do you ever feel that the sacrifices you make go unappreciated and at times down-right *unnoticed*? Perhaps you can relate to the woman being described in the following ditty that appeared in the premiere issue of *Reminisce*:

“Grandma, on a winter's day, milked the cows and fed them hay, hitched the mule, drove kids to school...did a washing, mopped the floors, washed the windows and did some chores...Cooked a dish of home-dried fruit, pressed her husband's Sunday suit...swept the parlor, made the bed, baked a dozen loaves of bread...split some firewood and lugged it in, enough to fill the kitchen bin...Cleaned the lamps and put in oil, stewed some apples before they spoiled...churned the butter, baked a cake, then exclaimed, "For goodness sake!" when the calves ran from the pen, and chased them all back in again...Gathered eggs and locked the stable, back to the house and set the table...cooked a supper that was delicious, then washed and dried all dirty dishes...fed the cat and sprinkled clothes, mended a basketful of hose...then opened the organ and began to play: *When You Come to the End of a Perfect Day.*” [\[1\]](#)

As I think first about my mother, and then as I consider, Sherry, the mother of my children, I would concur that motherhood is full of sacrificial deeds, some of which prompt a response of “Thanks Mom!” from the beneficiaries, but most of which pass into history unnoticed. Or so it seems. And it's that absence of feedback that produces at times feelings ranging from frustration, to discouragement, to even despair.

And if we'll broaden the scope, we'll have to admit that it's not just mothers that wrestle with such thoughts. One of the greatest challenges of living the Christian life is that it is so *daily*. So you had your quiet time yesterday, that's good. What about today? So you stood up for Christ in the lunchroom yesterday, again, that's wonderful. But today's a new day with new opportunities to put Him first.

What keeps you doing what you know to be right when it gets hard, and especially when you don't receive any positive feedback for your actions? My hunch is that most of us know what we ought to do, at least most of the time. But what we often lack is the *motivation* to do it.

I know I should send that card to my hurting friend, make that visit to the care facility, spend extra time praying for my kids, visit my neighbor who lost a parent, make that phone call to a brother I haven't seen in church for a month, and so on. In those situations and in many others like them, let's be honest. I don't struggle to know what to do. What I need is the motivation to put the newspaper down and get to it! Can you relate?

That's why our text in Hebrews will serve us well on Mothers Day. Hebrews 6:9-12 is a motivational text. That is, in Hebrews 6:9-12 the writer of Hebrews is seeking to motivate his readers to persevere, to keep doing what they know to be right even though they may not feel like it. The writer motivates his readers, including us, by sharing two kinds of words. As a sidelight, I believe the passage shows us that we ought to use the same two kinds of words to bring motivation to the people God has placed in our care.

### I. We can motivate others by sharing words of encouragement (9-10).

Verses 9-10 “Even though we speak like this, dear friends, we are confident of better things in your case—things that accompany salvation. God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them.”

Notice that the writer encourages his readers by making two affirmations. First...

**A. The writer affirmed his confidence in his readers (9).** “Even though we speak like this, dear friends.” Stop there for a moment. The writer calls himself “we.” We’ve discussed before that we don’t know who wrote Hebrews. Now we learn that there may be more than one person involved, although Leon Morris says the “we” is a “plural of authorship and means ‘I.’”<sup>[2]</sup> He does use the singular elsewhere, as in 13:22.

“Even though we speak *like this*,” he says. Like what? How has he been speaking to them? In 5:11 he told them he had “much more to say about” Christ and His eternal priesthood, but he couldn’t say it because they couldn’t handle it. “You are slow to learn,” he told them in 5:11. And in 5:12, “Though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God’s word all over again. You need milk, not solid food!” That led to this charge in 6:1, “Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity.”

Then came the warning in verses 4-6, “It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age, if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance, because to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace.”

That’s a pretty blunt warning, for sure! Remember, the first readers of the book of Hebrews were Jewish Christians, and apparently, at least some of them were pondering leaving Christ and returning to their previous beliefs and practices in Judaism.

That’s how he’s been speaking, but the tone changes noticeably in verse 9, “Even though we speak like this *dear friends*.” He calls them *agapetoi*, “dear friends,” “beloved” in the KJV. This is the only place in Hebrews that the writer addresses his readers this way. It’s as if he were saying, as Barclay puts it, “If I did not love you so much I would not speak with such severity.”<sup>[3]</sup>

But now he puts the severity aside, and in verse 9 he communicates a couple of positive expectations.

1. *He said he expected better things of them.* “Even though we speak like this, dear friends, we are confident of *better things in your case*.” “Better” is a favorite word for the writer. In 1:4 he says that Christ is “superior” to [“better than” in the KJV] the angels. In 7:19 he says we have a “better hope.” In 7:22 he says that Jesus established a “better covenant.” Here, after warning against falling away, he says he is confident of “better things” of his readers.

Parents, we would do well to take heed to this example. We ought to speak words of encouragement whenever possible, especially *after* we’ve delivered a heavy admonishment.

Suppose you played baseball, and your team just got slaughtered for the fifth game in a row. What kind of coach would you rather play for? Would it be: a) the coach who constantly cuts down his players, “You guys are losers. I can’t believe how badly you play!” or b) the coach who flatters his team, “You guys are excellent! I love coaching you!”? or c) the coach who addresses shoddy performance with firm confrontation, appropriate instruction, and a solid dose of, “Folks, we can do better than this! I know we can!”

Now for the writer of Hebrews, this isn’t simply the power of positive thinking. Just what are these “better things” he is confident of? He tells us in the next phrase, “things that accompany salvation.”

2. *He said he expected things that accompany salvation.* That literally means the things which “hold on to” salvation.<sup>[4]</sup> And that raises the question, “What are the things that accompany salvation”? We’ve seen a few already in Hebrews...

“Paying attention to what we’ve heard” does, according to 2:1. “Fixing our thoughts on Jesus” does, according to 3:1. “Holding on to the faith we profess” also accompanies salvation, according to 4:14. So does “approaching the throne of grace to find grace to help in our time of need,” according to 4:16. As does moving from milk to meat (5:13), training ourselves to distinguish good from evil (5:14), and moving on to maturity (6:1). And that’s just a sampling of the things that accompany salvation.

Allow me to state what may be obvious, but seems to be lost in the contemporary church. Salvation is more than a ticket out of hell. When you've got it, it's accompanied by some things. When those things are missing, it's evidence that salvation is missing. People who truly know Christ will exhibit the fruit of Christ's salvation.

When the writer says he is confident of better things in the case of his readers, his confidence isn't rooted in the inherent ability of his readers. Let me repeat that. His confidence is not *in his readers* per se. Rather, his confidence is rooted in the nature of their salvation. Or to be more specific, his confidence is grounded in the nature of their saving God.

To illustrate, think about *The Summit* at Scioto Hills Camp. It's a thirty foot wall that you're supposed to climb. I've heard Aaron and the crew tell person after person who looks fearfully at that wall, "You won't fall. You can make it. I *know* you can." What makes Aaron so sure? Is it the inherent ability of the campers? No way. It's in the fact that those campers are held securely in a harness with a rope that not only prevents their falling, but provides the necessary "oomph" to boost them onward and upward to the top.

Salvation is like that harness. When you're in it, that is, when you're *in Christ*, you are secure and your destiny is secure. You will make it to the top because your Savior will take you there. Might there be bumps along the way? Sure. Might your footing slip and you knock your shin against the wall? Sure. But you will never fall. The one holding the harness won't let that happen.

Beloved, we need that encouraging reminder, don't we? And the biblical writers provided it over and over. For instance, here's what Paul told the believers in Philippi in *Philippians 1:6*, "Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." Here's another. To the Christians in Rome Paul said this in Romans 8:28-29, "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers."

And to the church in Corinth, which certainly had its share of problems, Paul had this to say in *2 Corinthians 7:4*, "I have great confidence in you; I take great pride in you. I am greatly encouraged..." How could Paul say that? What gave him such confidence? I'll say it again. His confidence wasn't rooted in the Corinthians so much as in the God who saved the Corinthians.<sup>[5]</sup>

So to encourage his readers, the writer of Hebrews made an affirmation. He affirmed his confidence in his readers. "We are confident of better things in your case." I've suggested that the writer's confidence in God is *implied* in verse 9. It's stated outright in verse 10 where we notice a second affirmation.

**B. The writer affirmed his confidence in God (10).** "God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them."

Now, moms, there's an encouraging verse! What others miss or take for granted, God doesn't. That's, of course, because God sees everything. Those middle of the night feedings, the tear-filled-prayers you've offered for wayward children, He sees it all.

You say, "Sure He sees everything. He's God! Why then do I still get so discouraged?" There are a lot of potential reasons, but here's the one Hebrews 6 addresses. The truth that God sees everything won't motivate us as it ought until we come to grips with this related question. What is God's assessment of what He sees? More specifically, what does God think of people who work and make sacrifices for His honor out of love for others? Hebrews 6 tells us. The writer points out three motivating truths about God.

1. *God is not unjust.* He's not *adikos*, "unrighteous," says the KJV. God will never and could never do anything that would violate His justice and righteousness.

2. *God never misses our work and love.* The *NLT* of verse 10 reads, "For God is not unfair. He will not forget how hard you have worked for him and how you have shown your love to him by caring for other Christians, as you still do."

In the real world, sure, others might miss your loving deeds. In fact, let's be honest, some might even take credit for them. But be assured, God won't. It would be unjust for Him to do so.

In what sense would such oversight be *unjust*? Just think about it. Suppose you did a project at work, one that you stayed after hours to finish and you didn't even turn it in as overtime. Now suppose at the team meeting the next day, when the boss asked who did the project, your associate gave the impression that *he* was the anonymous worker. You'd be upset, wouldn't you? And you'd be upset because what your associate did wasn't right. And if your boss rewarded him for it, say with an extra vacation day, that reward would be *unjust*.

God doesn't do that because He isn't unjust. He never misses our work and love. Jesus said in Revelation 2:19, "I know your deeds, your love and faith, your service and perseverance, and that you are now doing more than you did at first."

One weekday morning a brother came to the church and cleaned up the weeds and trash around the parking lot. Another day a husband and wife made a hospital visit to encourage a fellow church member. On still another day one of our men spent time in our counseling room helping a person overcome substance abuse. Those are examples of deeds of love that I happened to see it with my own eyes. But even if I hadn't seen them, those deeds of love were seen by the One who never misses anything.

But not only does He *see* it, thirdly...

3. *God will reward our work and love.* The word translated "forget" in verse 10 can mean "to neglect" or "to overlook." For instance, in James 1:24 we're told about a man who looks in a mirror, but immediately "forgets" what he looks like, which means he doesn't do anything with the information. In Philippians 3:13 Paul confessed that he "forgets" what is behind him. He puts it out of His mind. God does not do that when He sees the labors of love of His people. He doesn't *forget* it.

And what's implied here but stated overtly elsewhere is that He *rewards* it. When? In this life? No, not necessarily and certainly not fully. The reward is a future reward concerning which the writer will have much to say later in the book. For instance...

Hebrews 9:15 "For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called *may receive the promised eternal inheritance...*"

Hebrews 9:27-28 "Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but *to bring salvation* to those who are waiting for him."

Hebrews 10:35-36 "So do not throw away your confidence; *it will be richly rewarded.* You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised."

Someone might say, "I thought salvation was by grace and not a reward for our works. This sounds like God rewards people on the basis of their merit." Salvation is all of grace. John Calvin offers this helpful explanation, "He looks not so much on our works as on His grace in our works."<sup>61</sup> That's an important distinction. Even the works that we may accomplish are done so because of God's gracious enabling. Salvation from beginning to end is by His grace. By His grace, God sent His Son. By His grace, God's Son died for sinners. By His grace, God accepts sinners who repent and trust in the merit of His Son. Yes, salvation is all of grace. And where true salvation exists there will be subsequent works.

But not all works will be rewarded. Notice a couple of qualifiers in verse 10.

**a. It must be done for His honor.** The writer says that God "will not forget your work and the love *you have shown him,*" literally, "which you have shown *unto His name.*" This is critical. The writer says they did so "for the name." In the eyes of the world, the name of Jesus is scandalous. But in the eyes of those who have received

salvation and pardon from the One who bears that name, it is certainly precious. And the good deeds they do they do *for His name*, that is, for His glory and honor.

**b. It must be done as an expression of servanthood.** "...the love you have shown Him *as you have helped His people and continue to help them.*" The word helped is *diakoneo* which is often translated "serve" or "minister." Commenting on the word *diakoneo*, Kittle says, "For the Greeks service is undignified; we are born to rule, not to serve." But for Christians, service is highly prized. Our Savior came not to be served, but to serve and give His life as a ransom payment (Mark 10:45). And He calls us to follow in His steps.

Let's not glamorize this. Being a servant involves hard work. What kind of work?

John Calvin explains, "We are not to spare ourselves from labour if we want to do our duty to our neighbors. We are not to help them financially only, but with advice, and by our efforts in all kinds of ways. We must show great zeal, and put up with many annoyances, and sometimes undergo many hazards. Whoever wants to engage in the tasks of loving must be prepared for a laborious way of life."<sup>17</sup>

So those are the qualifiers. When work is done for God's honor and as an expression of servanthood, God sees it and will reward it.

Let that sink in. It indicates that two people could do the same activity, but receive different divine assessments. Motive matters, beloved. When a mother feeds her baby at night and does so out of a sense of great appreciation to God for the privilege of serving Him in this way, when she cares for that child for the honor of God, God sees it and He will reward it. And dads, that's true for you, too, when you change the oil in your car. And that's true for you, Sunday School teacher, when you prepare and teach your lesson. Every thing we do is either done *for the Lord* and as an expression of joyful servanthood, or it's done for some other deficient goal.

But there's another kind of motivational word in Hebrews 6. When folks are struggling they probably could benefit greatly from words of encouragement. Yet quite often, words of encouragement lead to a second type of motivational speech.

## II. We can motivate others by sharing words of exhortation (11-12).

In verses 11-12, the writer spells out two, straightforward charges or exhortations...

**A. The writer calls for perseverance (11).** "We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure." The *same diligence*. That is, you've been helping God's people and continue to help them, that's good. But don't stop. Keep serving for the glory of God and the good of His people to the very end.

If someone asked you, "Why should I serve? After all, it's costly. And people take you for granted." Here are three reasons.

1. *It's what Jesus did.* Jesus left the splendor of heaven to enter the world as a servant. He did the work His Father asked Him to do, dying a criminal's death on a cruel Roman cross. And He went to that cross as a substitute for sinners like you and me, dying for our sins. Think of that the next time you hear yourself saying, "I'm tired of serving. Let somebody else do it." Why serve? It's what Jesus did.

2. *It's what each of us must do.* Notice the words "each of you" in verse 11. "We want *each of you* to show the same diligence to the very end." Studies show that on the average 20% of church members do 80% of the church's work. That's unacceptable according to God's Word. The goal is 100% according to Hebrews 6:11. And please note that past service doesn't excuse present inactivity. "We want each of you to show the same diligence *to the very end,*" the writer exhorts. Granted, the type of ministry may change as we get older, but the necessity of it remains the same. And here's one of the reasons why...



3. *It's what makes our hope sure.* "...show this same diligence to the very end," notice the purpose clause, "*in order to make your hope sure.*"

You say, "I don't feel right with God." The first thing to check is to make sure you're truly saved. But the next thing to check, according to Hebrews 6, is to make sure your life is exhibiting "the things that accompany salvation" (verse 9). Are you in the Word? Are you praying? Are you serving in His church? Our obedience has nothing to do with obtaining our salvation, but it has a lot to do with experiencing the hope of it.

The writer here addresses his readers, as Chrysostom observed, "not with the authority of a teacher but with the affection of a father."<sup>[8]</sup> Philip Hughes elaborates, "It is natural for parents to desire earnestly that their children should advance in strength of mind and body; so also the Christian pastor longs that those committed to his charge should go on to maturity... Arrested growth, whether physical or spiritual, is a tragedy."<sup>[9]</sup>

**B. The writer calls for participation (12).** "We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised."

Here we discover three very practical lessons pertaining to finishing well.

1. *We must not become passive.* "Lazy" is the word in the NIV. Back in 5:11, the author says he had much more to say to his readers but they couldn't handle it because they were "slow to learn," or literally "lazy hearers." That's the same word here.

Philip Hughes remarks, "The invitation to faith is not an invitation to inactivity, but to the perseverance of pilgrimage, for Christ is not only the source but also the goal of our salvation, the end as well as the beginning."<sup>[10]</sup>

That phrase says it well. *The perseverance of pilgrimage.* That's what we're called to, a pilgrimage that requires perseverance. One cannot be lazy and persevere. Passivity must go. Those who call themselves "Christian" must take steps if they want to move ahead.

2. *We must imitate godly role models.* The Greek word translated "imitate," *mimetai*, provides the root for our English word "mimic." We're not the first to have walked this path. Other followers of Christ have traveled the road before us. We'll meet some of them in Hebrews 11. We're sitting in church right now with others. We need godly role models to imitate, and it's supposed to begin in the home.<sup>[11]</sup>

Parents, I know you use the principle of imitation to teach your kids lots of things. "Watch daddy, and do what I do." And so you teach them how to use a fork and make a bed and throw a ball and brush their teeth and comb their hair. That's good. But you're teaching them other things, too. Like what to do with their Bible, and what to do with Sunday, and what to do with the money they make, and how to respond when adversity hits (or when they experience success). They're watching us because they, like all of us, need godly role models we can imitate.

3. *We must live, not for what we can see, but for what has been promised.* A farmer knows that. That's why he puts perfectly good seed in the ground instead of eating it. He's looking ahead to a harvest. And that's what it takes to be a Christian, too, to live not for what you can see but for what has been *promised*.

### A Special Word to Mothers in light of Hebrews 6:

1. *Be encouraged today, for God sees what you are doing for Him!* He is not unjust, and He will not forget your work and the love you have shown Him as you have helped and are helping those entrusted to your care! In light of this, moms and all of us...

2. *Be a source of encouragement today, for God will not forget your work and love!*

Let me say a word about this evening's service. If God does not forget the work and love His people show Him as

they serve others, we ought not forget either! We ought to take note of those who faithfully serve others for the honor of God. With that in mind, in our evening service on this Mother's Day we'll be sharing testimonies on the theme, "Remembering the sacrifices of mothers, for the glory of God." So come and engage in the ministry of encouragement for the glory of God!

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**\*\*Note:** This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church . It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

[1] *Reminisce*, premiere issue, 1991, pp. 46-7.

[2] Leon Morris, p. 57.

[3] Barclay, p. 60/

[4] Observation by Donald Guthrie, p. 147.

[5] Paul made that point at the beginning of the same letter, in 2 Corinthians 1:10, "He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us."

[6] John Calvin, p. 79.

[7] John Calvin, p. 79-80.

[8] Quote taken from Philip Hughes, p. 228.

[9] Philip Hughes, p. 228.

[10] Philip Hughes, p. 228.

[11] Eph 5:1 says to imitate God. In Paul's letters he repeatedly called on people to imitate *him* because he knew his life would point people towards God. See 1 Thes 1:6; 1 Cor. 4:16 & 11:1.