



Full Assurance

Hebrews 6:9-12

I've always liked magic tricks. There's something about it that confounds me and makes me feel amazed when I watch someone do something I don't understand. Yet, Tracy isn't as impressed. She'll watch a magic trick and maybe think it was a neat trick, but she just knows it's not real; so, why be impressed or get caught up in it? You know, for those of us who like magic tricks, what we really like is to be craftily deceived. Every once in a while, my children like to watch a TV show called *Brain Games*. Each episode explores how our brain works and processes information. In many of the shows, they'll have illusions and even a person on that show with the title of "deception specialist." In reality, the deception specialist is simply an illusionist or magician, but the point is taken when you read the title. He is trying to fool you. The question is whether or not you're going to pick up on it. I don't think I've ever picked up on his tricks at first glance. Someone ends up having to explain what he did and how he did it. Then the cameras have to replay in slow motion. Finally, I see what happened! Without the explanation I'd be deceived. And, actually, while I may say "How did he do that?", I'd also probably walk away from the episode being amazed that someone could deceive so artfully.

Now, let me take this one step further. By raised hands, how many of you want to be deceived spiritually? In Matthew 7, Jesus is recorded to have said that there is going to be a day when people face him at the judgment and Jesus will cast them away from him forever – yet those people are going to say, **“... Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?”**²³ **And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’”**¹ I don't think, in that future day, that those individuals are going to say, “Wow, I was masterfully and artistically deceived. How amazing!” Yet, do you believe that is going to happen in the judgment someday? Do you?

What's to say that this isn't going to happen to you? Maybe you've thought that question (or something similar) in the last couple of weeks – especially as we have been hearing the warnings of Hebrews 5 and 6. I think these passages should cause us to pause. Do you genuinely love the Lord? Do you want his Word? If not, don't let yourself be deceived. Either you're going to repent and turn to him and love the Word *or* you're going to be like me after watching a magic trick: walk away and not try to figure anything out. In other words, you're going to be content not following after God and believing you're fine. Can a Christian – one who lives in the New Testament era and has the Holy Spirit actually live this way?

¹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), Mt 7:22–23.

Well, even as I said last week, I believe the author of Hebrews gives his warnings because he believes his audience is Christian, and as Christians, they will listen to the warnings and heed the warnings. The same is true for us here today. If you're a Christian, you will listen and not be content with deception.

That said, maybe you've drifted. And, maybe you've been confronted in your drifting. Now what? The author of Hebrews doesn't simply want you to *not* be deceived. He wants you to **grow in full assurance of the hope of your salvation**. He doesn't want you to make it into Heaven by the skin of your teeth. But before I say any more, turn in your Bible to Hebrews 6 and I'll read verses 9-12 for us. As I read that, let's pray for our missionary, Sarah Troyer.

⁹ Though we speak in this way, yet in your case, beloved, we feel sure of better things—things that belong to salvation. 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. ¹¹ And we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness to have the full assurance of hope until the end, ¹² so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises. ²

Grow in full assurance of your salvation. I want to make sure that I explain what I mean by “assurance of salvation.” Feeling assured of salvation doesn't mean you are saved. And, feelings of a lack of assurance doesn't mean you're *not* saved. I used to think my *feelings* of a lack of assurance basically guaranteed I wasn't, and then a friend of mine once said, “At 5:30 in the morning, I don't *feel* saved.” And, for some reason, that statement helped me. There are many times our feelings don't line up with reality. Praise the Lord, we're not saved by feelings alone.

That said, I'd love for my feelings to line up with reality, wouldn't you? The statement here that we can have a full assurance, assumes our assurance can be lesser or more at times. But the desire is that our assurance increases. But, in talking about assurance here, I think the author expands our idea of salvation. He talks about the hope. In other words, I think he's talking about the increased assurance we have in what God says in the Word about all the things we will experience in the future day. Heaven becomes more “real,” we increase in our yearning for Jesus, the glory of God is what we long to live for. Do you want the kind of life where your knowledge and your desires are united?

What's interesting is where the author goes to talk about assurance. He calls people to look at their faith and their actions in the past, present and future. We probably understand why he brings up faith as a means of increasing our assurance. But, why should our actions be brought before us as a means of increasing our assurance? Are we saved by actions alone or faith alone? Keep in mind two things: 1) What I said just a moment ago: **1) the teaching on assurance is not the same as being saved**. You may or may not *feel* assured and yet your salvation rests in Jesus himself. But, **2) Actions do matter**. I think we have to admit with the man, Martin Luther, who said, “**It is, therefore, correctly said: Faith without works is dead; in fact, it is not even faith**” (see comment: <https://christianity.stackexchange.com/questions/42366/is-luther-really-the-originator-of-we-are-saved-by-faith-alone-but-the-faith-t>). Works do play a role in pointing out whether our faith is a genuine faith. Therefore, it can be helpful to look to see if God is producing good works in our lives. Because we

² [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), Heb 6:9–12.

believe we're righteous in God's sight and saved *unto good works*, we should see these good works as sign-posts affirming that God has saved us.

So, in these verses, the author is sharing how we can grow in assurance. The author tells us to do three basic things to grow in assurance: 1) Look for faith and love in your past, 2) Look for faith and love in your present, and 3) Grow in faith and love in your future.

But before he does this, notice what he says in verse 9: ⁹Though we speak in this way, yet in your case, beloved, we feel sure of better things—things that belong to salvation.³ What is he saying in these verses? Think of the struggling Hebrew church that is facing greater pain and difficulty. Think of this church that is feeling like giving up on the faith and losing their desire for the Bible. Honestly, that description probably isn't far from some of you here. While you're not facing Neronian persecution, you've had difficulties in the last few months or years and maybe you're upset with God. Maybe you're feeling numb to the Bible. It simply doesn't *touch you* anymore. But then you hear the warnings of chapters 5 and 6 and they jolt you a little. Like a doctor taking paddles to your chest. While you may be feeling you're close to death, you hear a doctor's voice saying, "He's going to make it."

That's kind of like what's taking place here. The warning the author gives helps the Christian see the dire circumstance they're in by ignoring the Bible and drifting. They're on a table in surgical room. Not feasting on the Bible leads to heart failure. Do you see where you're at? Have you seen where you're at, Ventura? Now, embrace the encouragement in verse 9. Though he spoke with firmness, he's confident that falling away will not happen to the struggling church because falling away doesn't belong to salvation. What we have to look forward to are *better things*. And note the word that the author uses to talk to the Hebrews: *beloved*. Dearly loved. God cannot leave his dearly loved on the table and declare them dead again. He brought you to life once and for all, and while you might be close to death, you must be revived.

Now, from this point, the author helps the beloved by encouraging them in their faith and obedience. First he tells them to:

1. Look for faith and love in your past (v. 10).

Verse 10 says, "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. . ."⁴ The word "for" means something here. The author said he's confident the blessings of salvation will increase in their lives. How can he be confident? The word "for" connects us to the reason. He looks at their past, and sees a laboring that reveals salvation.

In Hebrews 10:32-34, the author makes more explicit what their obedience looked like in the past: ³²**But recall the former days when, after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, ³³sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated. ³⁴For 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. ³⁵Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward.**⁵

³ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), Heb 6:9.

⁴ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), Heb 6:10.

⁵ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), Heb 10:32–35.

Some lost their own properties, and they joyfully accepted it! Not only that, they also became partners with people who were unjustly treated. They showed compassion on those in prison. In chapter 6, the author seems to indicate these people were fellow Christians. He uses the term saints – and that means “holy ones.” The word “holy” means “set apart.” And so, these are people set apart by God for God. If you have entrusted yourself to Jesus, you are God’s – and part of his family. And, if you are God’s, you will treat fellow family members with compassion.

But, how could these persecuted Christians live with inward joy and outward compassion? As I think through these scenarios, I’d be exhausted and full of anxiety. There are some days, I worry simply about potential things that *could* happen that probably won’t happen. Yet, here are these Christians who rejoice! Hebrews 10 says they had this joy because they knew they had a better and lasting possession. What do you live for: a bigger savings account, nicer house, more friends, changed circumstances? What if you get all those things but lose your soul? What if you get none of those things, but enter the Kingdom of God? In these verses in chapter 6, the author points this out to encourage the Hebrews that God has been at work in them in the past.

At this point, I need to emphasize the author’s qualifying phrase on the good works. He says that these good works were done *for his name*. To do something in the name of God means that you’re doing it on the basis of and for the glory of God. This is extremely important because many of us could think that God is simply concerned with us doing nice things for people and sacrificing for others. As long as we’re doing these *good things*, then we must be saved. But, I wonder if you’ve thought much about the apostle Paul’s statement in 1 Corinthians 13, when he says, “If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.”⁶ How can we give away everything and suffer yet not be loving? I think Paul is emphasizing a greater love than what this world can offer. You see, without Jesus, we can care about people and we can even have a type of *love*. But if we’re not pointing people to the ultimate and eternal realities, are we really caring about them? Think of child with cancer and a doctor comes to that child, knowing the danger, and yet the doctor says nothing about the treatable cancer. But the doctor buys a lot of gifts and food for the child. Is the doctor nice? Well, in one sense. But in another, the doctor is very mean.

You see, true love points people to what is ultimately most loving. Good works in and of themselves do not matter for eternity if they’re not done on the basis of and for the glory of God. So, question. Do you love God and revel in the privilege of doing everything (including eating and drinking) for his glory? Do you serve people with the expectation that they’re nice in return or to show them the love of Jesus? Are you loving only to the people who love you back? I’ve even thought about this with showing mercy to others. I remember years ago when I thought about *why* I extend grace to others at times. Someone might cut me off or maybe it was a worker at a store who was rude, and in order to calm myself down, I’ll say something like, “Maybe they’re having a bad day.” Only if there’s a valid reason to show kindness will I give kindness. But what if that person is just mean? Will I still love them? You see, basing my kindness on what another person has gone through is a limited, worldly kindness. But if I see that someone’s sinful nature is being more exposed and, apart from God’s mercy, mine would be like that or worse, and Jesus loved me – then I can love them based on and for Jesus’ glory.

So, here in Hebrews, the author brings together faith and works. You depended on God as the source of all hope and life – and then you live that way. Look at the past. And, if God began a good work in the past, what is he going to do in the future? He’s going to complete it! But, not only that, he’s going to

⁶ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), 1 Co 13:3.

reward the good works. This is the greater emphasis of the author here in this verse. Right after the word “for,” he writes, “God is not unjust. . . .” Yes, the good works are emphasized in these verses, but the greater emphasis is on the justice of God. What will God do with works he produced in a person? The author says that it would be unjust of God to not reward works done in faith. Why? Because God always highlights what is good. And, works that are done in faith are considered truly and eternally good. Remember when Jesus spoke to his disciples about how in the judgment he will say to his followers that they fed him and gave him drink and clothed him? Then the disciples said, “When did we do that?” Jesus’ response is, “. . . as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.”⁷ As you did it to fellow needy Christians, you did to Christ. God delights in a compassionate lifestyle done in faith. He will not let that go unseen in the judgment.

Look at your life. Do you exercise compassionate living towards fellow believers? Can you look back and see faith in Jesus, working through love? Do you have signs of God’s work in your life in the past? Let that bolster your confidence that God is going to continue his saving work in and through you.

But, don’t only look to the past. Look at the present.

2. Look for faith and love in your present (v. 10b).

Four simple words at the end of verse 10: “. . . as you still do.” They’re still living and walking by faith – sacrificing and serving. But here’s my question: Didn’t the author just confront them for drifting? I mean, they’ve become lazy with the Bible – not listening to it – and they’re contemplating going back to Judaism to avert persecution. How can the author say “as you still do?”

Oh, don’t these four words communicate so much with how we can feel at seasons in our journey in this life? Someone asks you, “Do you love God,” and your response is “Yes,” but you also feel like “no.” It’s like the friend who sent me a text a few days ago saying, “Why am I singing surrender all? Don’t mean it. Nice idea.” It’s not that this friend doesn’t want to surrender all, but they know areas in their life that are still battlegrounds of ungodliness. This is like Paul in Galatians 5 saying that the flesh lusts against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh. And so, here in Hebrews 6:10, we see that we can drift and still have desires for God.

Praise God that he gives us those desires. They won’t be fully extinguished. Like embers in a dying fire is the desire for God in the Christian. We can drift, but God will put more wood on those coals so that your heart burns for him again.

Now, you could say, “But how does the ‘as you still do’ help to instill confidence in the salvation God has given?” Naturally, we’re more prone to look at the negative in our lives and say that the negative, the drifting, outweighs any apparent good. But that shouldn’t be our outlook. Honestly, if there’s true, genuine godliness in our lives – a desire within for God’s glory – that is a miracle. Look at the faith and love in the past. Look at faith and love today. Even if you recognize that you’ve been drifting, do you still have remnants of faith and love?

But don’t stop here. The author, I believe, wants to focus on what the church needs to do. You can’t change the past – and even the present quickly becomes past. So, we must think of how we’re going to strengthen ourselves in the present for the future. So, the author calls us to

⁷ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), Mt 25:40.

3. Grow in faith and love in your future (vv. 11-12).

Verses 11-12 are the meat and potatoes of this section. Oops, sorry. I've reminded you of lunch. Well, feast on this first. Look at 11 and 12 again with me: ¹¹"And we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness to have the full assurance of hope until the end, ¹²so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises."⁸

Past godliness and faith was good in the past, but it is not present or future godliness. Imagine you're driving in a vehicle with your family for a longer trip and as you're going down the road, your car shuts down. You're going downhill, so the car is still moving (and might for a little while). Your wife is wondering what's going on. Your kids are even a little nervous as they see the incline that is coming up. But you're calm. Then your wife says, "Why are you not concerned?" And you say, "The car was moving 10 minutes ago. The car's moving now! It's going to be fine. We don't need to do anything about it.

NO! You don't think that. You know that past movement doesn't guarantee future movement. You also know that the car needs to be fixed or tweaked to get it to keep moving. This is similar for the Christian. If you're a Christian, you can't keep coasting. Yes, you may coast at times, but there's a point at which God lovingly grabs a hold of you and says, "You need to fixing. You need to repent!" If you don't turn and if you don't exercise yourself, you'll never get better.

Remember, people can coast into ungodliness, but no one coasts into godliness. Godliness takes work. And this is what we see in verses 11-12. If you've been drifting, your confidence in your salvation has probably been diminishing. You can see past obedience and even present desires for God, but it is waning and you're concerned. How should you respond? In these two verses we discover three ways we are to respond right now (and in the future) to insure confidence and grow in the full assurance of your faith.

Show the same earnestness. When he says the "same earnestness," he's saying that you must be diligent. While our growth is dependent on the Lord; God also says we are to work out the salvation he has given to us. Think of it like having muscles in our body. Salvation is the muscle, but the question is "Are you going to work out?" Well, what's the benefit of spiritual exercise? The verse here says that the benefit of spiritual exercise is "full assurance of hope until the end." This goes back to what I said at the beginning of the sermon: do you want your desires and your life and your beliefs to match up? Do you want your salvation to be experienced and the assurance of all the things you hope for to increase? Or, do you want to go about every day doubting God's promises? Every Christians should say they want it to increase. After all, 1 John 3 tells us that those of us who grow in our hope of the future day when God's promises will be fulfilled at Jesus' return, will purify ourselves today even as Jesus is pure.

As we live out our identity in Jesus – people set apart for his glory – we embrace more and more of God's glory and we grow in assurance of the glory to come! For your own eternal benefit, be zealous in godliness. Oh, and by the way, the only way you can have this earnestness is if you have faith. In 2 Corinthians 7, we read that godly sorrow works earnestness. Godly sorrow is recognizing that something is sinful precisely because you are not giving God the glory he deserves. Therefore, when you recognize that sin is against God (and not only against others around you), that's the beginning of a zeal for

⁸ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), Heb 6:11–12.

godliness: living life on the basis of and for his glory. Will you live for things around you or for God's glory? Jesus grants you the freedom to live for eternal glory! Do you want this?

This is what the author wants for them: and we desire, he says. The word desire is the same word for "yearn." May we *yearn* to live for God's glory. If we *yearn* for him, we will be earnest for his glory in all we do, say and think. So, Ventura, if you've been drifting or if you're feeling weary, don't give up on being earnest. As Galatians 6:9 says, "9 And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up."⁹

But you might be saying, "But I am weary, and I want to give up." The next part of the exhortation is for you (which is actually for all of us):

Don't be lazy. That counsel might anger you. You could be thinking, "I've been trying and I just need a break." Unfortunately, you've been taking a break for far too long. In verse 12, the author says, "so that you may not be sluggish. . ."¹⁰ The earnestness and hope is to counter being sluggish. If you're earnest, you won't be.

But this word for "sluggish" is actually the same word in Hebrews 5, that is translated "dull." Remember that the church had become dull of hearing. They're lazy in listening to the Bible. They're uninterested in hearing what God has to say to them in the Scriptures. That's spiritual sluggishness. That's drifting right there. And, that's what precipitated the warning to the Hebrews. If you're a Christian, you can't be content in this phase.

Right here, though, Christians have their responses. But the Bible's hard to understand. Or, you don't understand what I'm going through. Or, life isn't easy. Or, nobody's perfect. All of these answers deflect from personal responsibility. And the author of Hebrews says it all boils down to the fact that you're lazy. Listen, if you don't work out the muscles of your salvation, no wonder you are anemic. Don't get angry at God that you don't have joy and perseverance if you're not exerting the grace-gifts he's given to you. And, by the way, I know your response. You say, "But I've tried it and it doesn't work." What the person is probably saying by "it didn't work," is, "It's still hard" or "I didn't get the result / thought was best.

In these moments, I'm reminded of my children. How many times I tell them to do something and they say, "But dad, it's hard." Or they say, "But I don't want to." And you know what I've said to them? I don't care. I didn't say do it if you think it's easy nor did I say do it only if you feel like you want to. I said do it. This might not sound spiritual, but this is where the author is in this book. Under the inspiration of God, he says, "Do this." And your "yeah but" excuses get this response: I don't care about those excuses. God cares about your good and eternal glory! Listen, as one commentator wrote, "**Humanly speaking, apart from the mysteries of God's sovereign workings, more souls perish from sloth than from outright disbelief**" (R.K. Hughes, p. 170).

God doesn't promise to take away the hard. But he does promise to give strength. Don't look at the Bible and say, "It's just too hard. It's easier to drift." Shipwrecking your faith isn't worth it! But growing in joy and hope and assurance is worth it! Do you believe Jesus is a superior Savior? Then, on the basis

⁹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), Ga 6:9.

¹⁰ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), Heb 6:12.

of him, don't be lazy. By faith, stand up and take the steps forward. This is what the author emphasizes next:

Imitate the faith and patience of saints. Verse 12 shares the author's hope: that you might be "imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises."¹¹

As you hear all of this, you could be thinking, "Ok, I get the point, but how do I live this out? How do I apply it?" God has given us fellow Christians to help us know what walking by faith with endurance looks like. We have examples in the Scriptures on this. This is actually where the author of Hebrews is going to go first. He's going to talk about Abraham as the first example. But you could say, "But Abraham wasn't perfect. Am I supposed to imitate everything about him?" Absolutely not. The emphasis here is on faith and patience. When we read in the Bible, we're not to elevate the individuals like Abraham, Moses, David or Isaiah. Instead, we should be asking ourselves in our Bible reading, "Where do I see faith and endurance?" In emphasizing these two things, we see God's strength, not the individual's strength. When we read the story of Abraham, we get his failings – and God clearly reveals to us that we're not to follow that example. But those failings also drive Abraham to his need for God. And when Abraham depends on the Lord, we see God's strength in a weak man. When we look at the story of Joseph, we see endurance. Twenty years, Ventura! Twenty years enslaved and away from his family. How could he endure? Only by faith in God's promises. These stories point us as well, in our daily lives to our need to depend on and trust the Lord.

But even greater, we have Jesus who trusted the Father and depended on the Spirit. Jesus himself who endured a ministry of rejection and a death of enduring the Father's wrath – wrath that we deserved – so that anyone who trusts in Jesus will be forgiven and set free to worship God. There are many other people in the Bible, but you will only know them when you read about them. As David said to me last week, "you can't be imitators of those you don't know. You will only imitate their faith and patience of the people in the past if you read about them. So, start reading, Ventura. Get to know these people.

But not only them, get to know believers throughout the ages. Christian biographies have been very formative for me. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, John Newton, John Calvin, Hudson Taylor, Martin Luther, John Knox, Martyn Lloyd-Jones. The reason why they're so valuable to me is because I see faith in Jesus lived out – and I'm both helped and challenged. When I read these stories, I am amazed and I want to imitate. I get to know them and in some ways become a disciple of them.

But I don't think this statement is restricted to the saints in the past. In the argument of Hebrews, both the saints gone before us and the believers of today are included. Not only should you want to know about Abraham or John Newton. But you should want to know the person a couple rows in front of you. How can you imitate their faith and patience if you don't get together with them? This is why we have testimonies shared on Sunday nights. This is some of the reasons why we have Mid-Week Fellowships, men's groups and women's Bible studies – even SQUAD is intended for this: for older to reach out to younger. In one Mid-Week Fellowship, the group talked about ways they needed to grow – and now they can help to encourage follow-through.

You can't imitate people you don't know. Do you want to get to the judgment and know you were deceived or do you want to make it with eyes wide open with full assurance of hope? If you want the full

¹¹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), Heb 6:12.

assurance, then run with greater earnestness. **If you want to grow in the full assurance of hope all the way until your dying breath, make a commitment daily, on the basis of Jesus and for God's glory**

**to not be lazy,
to be earnest in godliness, and
to be an imitator of saints throughout the ages.**

Find your joy and confidence soar in Jesus, in the Word and in the eternal glories of the kingdom to come. Through faith in him, every Christian has God's promise to live this way.

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