

Hebrews 6:9-20

“An Anchor Of The Soul”

As we approach Vs 9 we recall to mind that the writer has been rebuking his “hard of hearing” “in danger of drifting & even *departing*” readers. But I think it’s important to realize why they were in this position, what it was that led them to such a potentially dangerous place to be. It wasn’t that they were making a very cold hearted, yet very calculated effort to rebel against or abandon Christ. They didn’t wake up one morning & as they were putting together their “to do” list somewhere in the midst of it they put “depart from Jesus” so that they were simply fulfilling their punch list, it doesn’t work like that. But rather they were going through some very real times of *depression*, times of *discouragement*. & Let me just tell you that depressing, & discouraging times in life are very *dangerous* to our commitment to Christ. It’s so easy in those times of discouragement to begin to just *drift*. & It’s not that we don’t all come to that place of sadness, or the inability to really see what’s going on or why it’s happening. But when we let those things begin to pressure us, & push us & weigh down on us, we begin to get discouraged & depressed, be careful. & Sometimes when we’re in that place we just need that cold reality check, that proverbial bucket of water splashed in our face that we might get back to the real world. But I don’t think it stops there; when we’re depressed, when we’re *discouraged*, the warning alone doesn’t seem to suffice. What do we need? Well, if we’re *discouraged* we need *encouraged* don’t we?

& That’s the section of scripture we’re dealing w/today. The writer has warned them concerning the need to guard against retreating into “the grey.” Those common ground areas of “religious spirituality” that don’t really carry any distinctive sense of commitment to Christ. Now, almost like a coach dealing w/a worn down & in the dumps team in the locker room at ½ time he seeks to spur them on to better things. To be confident concerning the work of Christ & assurance of salvation we have in Him. Let’s look back at Vs 7 & sorta fall into the flow from that point.

Vs7-8

Hey if you’re abiding in Christ there’s going to be fruit budding forth from your life right? & He uses the illustration of the farmer’s field to help bring home his point. The rain comes & waters the earth & should that plot of ground bring forth fruit, herbs useful for those by whom it is cultivated, that’s a blessing, that’s evidence of life & usefulness. But should that same rain come upon a field but that field bears no fruit, no herbs or anything useful, well, that bears witness against the field that there’s no real life there... & The point is that as believers we need to be bearing fruit, abiding *in Christ*. He is our “life source” remember John 15? Jesus said, “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned.” John 15:5-6 It’s sorta like a shocking reality check isn’t it? How critical it is to be careful to maintain that position of abiding in Christ, having His word abide in us, & that’s the basic warning we’re reading of here. Don’t drift; don’t be dull, lest you depart.

Vs9

He says, “We’ve been speaking in a manner of things that accompany *condemnation*, but we’re confident of better things concerning you, yes, of things that accompany *salvation*.” It’s like he’s saying, “We’ve rattled your cage so that you might see the severity of this situation, but we’re confident that you *aren’t* there, nor are you going to go there.”

“You’re going to continue to grow & live for Christ, I just know it, you’re going to press on & persevere in your relationship w/the Lord.” & When he speaks of better things, things that accompany salvation, it’s a simple reference to the fruit of the Spirit in a person’s life. That the fingerprints of Christ are going to be upon your life, your life will carry w/it the aroma of Christ. You’ll have those fingerprints of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, & self control upon your life. You’ll be one who looks for the opportunity to serve rather than be served; you’ll be busy about ministering to the body of Christ. How do I know that? Because when God saved you the bible teaches that, that wasn’t the end, it was only the beginning. He has a purpose, an objective for your life. Eph 2:10, “*For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.*” & As we always like to emphasize it’s not that works save us, it’s that saving faith will work both into & out through our lives. & That’s what he’s talking about here, that they’ve been careful to maintain good works & that is indicative of Christ in their lives.

Vs10

Believe me when I tell you that we could absorb the entirety of our time together today in this Vs right here. & I think that because we’re so afraid of mis-communicating the idea of legalism we often times over compensate & down play the critical nature of good works in our lives as believer. But it’s like this; prior to Christ our good works mean nothing as far as counting for eternity is concerned. As a matter of fact we’re only fooling ourselves if we think that somehow by them we’re commending ourselves to God. God doesn’t see our good works outside of Christ as even a hint of righteousness; He sees them as filthy rags. Because there is no measure of righteousness outside of Christ. You’re either a sinner & covered by the filth of sin in His sight, or you’ve been cleansed by Christ, but there’s no in between. But once our lives belong to Christ good works become a critical & integral part of our life in Christ. & They serve as a certain evidence (w/in the proper context that we’ll develop in a minute) of the life of Christ flowing through us. & Time would fail us to point out all the Vs in the NT that speak of or pertain to good works in the life of the believer. Here’s just a few, Gal 5:6 “*For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love.*” Gal 6:10, “*Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.*” Paul told Titus, “*This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men.*” Titus 3:8 & Again “*And let our people also learn to maintain good works, to meet urgent needs, that they may not be unfruitful.*” Titus 3:14 That’s what he’s encouraging them w/here, the fact that they’re still serving, still ministering, good works are still an active part of their lives, now continue to press on in Christ.

But there are a few things we need to note here in Vs 10 before we move on because often times it seems that we can have this tendency to glamorize or sorta romanticize the ministry. & We think it needs to be one enlightening & spiritual experience after another. & It’s true that there are times that God will just bless, & we’re blown away; we’re pumped up & primed to press on, on cloud 9 & all of that. But by & large ministry (or service) to/for the body of Christ is (notice it, he uses 2 words to describe it) work & labor. Now it doesn’t say that it’s a *burden* but believe me when I tell you that it’s certainly work. Sometimes is physical work, sometimes we labor in spiritual matters, laboring in the word or in prayer. Paul spoke to the Corinthians & said, “*And we labor, working with our own hands. Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we endure; being defamed, we entreat. We have been made as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things until now.*” 1 Cor 4:12-13 Serving in ministry (be it vocationally or voluntarily) is work, it’s labor.

But don't be misled what you labor *for* is by far better than what so many labor for in this life. Some are laboring to try & retire by the time their 40, some are laboring for bigger better toys, bigger homes, nicer stuff. **Other's laboring simply to try & pay the bills.** Jesus said we're to labor *not* for the bread that perishes, the things of this life. But rather we're to labor for the food that endures to eternal life. The bread of life which comes through Christ. & So we do well to invest our efforts, our energies, our work & labor into those things that are going to make for an eternal impact & an eternal reward.

Good works, they're a vital part of the Christian life, but there is a specific context, an arena in which our works are to be done, did you see that there? It's a work, it's a labor...of love. That is the agape, all giving, never self seeking love of God. It's the love of God in us & spilling out of us that qualifies the work through us as an eternal endeavor. Remember 1st Cor 13? "*Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.*" ^{1 Cor 13:1-3} **Anything not done w/in the context of the love of God is worthless as far as eternity is concerned. But make no mistake, love will labor, love is a verb, it's not an emotion it's an action.** John said, "*By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.*" ^{1 John 3:16} He went on to say, "*My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.*" ^{1 John 3:18} **You see it's love that sanctifies active efforts for the glory of God & the good of man.**

& I want you to notice that though we serve others, the labor of love that we show is toward *His* name; it's to be out of the overflow of our love for God that we do what we do, for we serve the Lord Christ. & We serve Him through serving others but make no mistake our ultimate aim isn't to serve man, it's to serve the Lord, our labor of love is shown toward *His* name. **The body; our brothers & sisters (as well as others at times) simply receive the byproduct, the blessing that spills over out of a life led in love w/the Lord. A love for God just spills over in goodness; good gestures, goodwill toward others. Remember earlier when we quoted the Vs that Paul shared w/Titus how that as we're careful to maintain good works that it spills over in ways that are good & profitable to others. & We just become little reflections of the love of God to people & are lessons in how God desires to love *on* & be a blessing *to* people's lives.**

& See something else before we move on. There's a reference to both a past tense & a present tense aspect of what's going on here. He's speaking of their good works in that they have ministered (past tense) to the saints (the body of Christ), & do minister (present tense). They didn't just "used to serve God" they were *still* serving God through serving others. We *can not* rest on our laurels, successes, or service of the past, what you did once a # of yrs ago is great, but the question is what are you doing *today*? **How are you serving the Lord right now? Maybe you were an elder once, or served in the children's ministry way back when, or you hosted a home fellowship, served in an inner city type outreach or whatever. But how are you serving the saints today? & If you're not, than why not? & What's it going to take for you to sense the urgency, the importance by which the scriptures exhort us as believers to be apart of blessing the body of Christ through serving the body of Christ?** Jesus has called us to serve. & He said, "*If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.*" ^{John 13:14} The idea there being that if He found no task too low to be apart of if it would bless His brother or sister, then even so there should be nothing that we're not willing to do if it will bless the body of Christ somehow & in some way.

One final note before we fly, because a lot of times ministry can be quite a thankless task. You pour your heart out, blood sweat & tears go into something & then not only do people at times not acknowledge it, or help w/it, they complain about it. & It can be discouraging, (remember he's writing to a discouraged people) & you can start to wonder if God is even paying attention anymore, if you've sorta slipped off God's list of things to take note of, maybe He's forgotten about you & all the work you do, no one else seems to appreciate it, maybe He doesn't either.

Perish the thought, "God is not *unjust* to forget your work & your labor of love which you have shown toward His name." Other's may not notice, or still worse they might complain, but you do what you do as unto J.C. & God is not unjust to overlook you, or somehow forget about you or the work that you do as unto Him. & If you're serving for the applause of men you're setting yourself up for a downfall & plenty of discouragement when it doesn't come. But be encouraged because God sees it, He won't forget it, & your reward is sure.

Vs11-12

Or as Paul wrote to the Galatians, "*And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.*" Gal 6:9 & Notice that the writer doesn't say, "Those of you who are serving keep it up." He says, "We desire that *each one of you* show the same diligence, (notice) to the *full assurance* of hope to the end." We spoke last week about "*moving on* into maturity" pressing forward, there is an eminent/important need to move forward, to keep pressing on in our walk w/the Lord, serving the Lord. How we need to be seeking to lay hold of that for which Christ has laid hold of us. One of the greatest enemies of diligence, of perseverance is slothfulness, or sluggishness. As Martin Luther once said, "If I rest, I rust."

& What is it that so often becomes instrumental in my slowing down, my slothfulness, my sluggishness, when I'm working away, seeking to serve the Lord, & I have a certain expectation, or perhaps God has given me a word of what He's going to do but then some time goes by & I don't see it happen. There seems to be no results to all my work, it's like God's just not showing up, so I start to lose heart. The author says here, "Hey show that same sense of diligence to the end, don't become sluggish (it's that same word for *dull* back in Ch 5:11) but rather imitate those who through faith & patience inherit the promises." Who *what* the promises? Who *earn* the promises? No! Who *inherit* the promises, God *gives* us promises in His word, they're His gifts to us, we don't earn them we simply inherit them. But there are 2 key elements that I need working together in my life if I'm to maintain that sense of hope, that sense of diligence firm to the end in sticking *to* & staying w/that which God has called me to do, ministering to & serving others. Because often times between God's *promises* & His *performing* of the promise there can be a significant period of time (at least seemingly to us). So what do I need churning in my heart & in my life if I'm to stay diligent in that interim period, did you see them there? #1 Faith, & #2 Patience. If I'm to inherit the promises of God (as opposed to giving up & giving in) then there is going to have to be a real work of faith & patience at work in my life.

& So often it's in that interim period of time that God does His best work, perhaps not *for* us as we might think, but certainly *in* us. It's through that exercise of faith & patience that He's producing endurance in us, preparing us for what He has *for* us. Placing things in order so that they work out for our best eternal good & His best eternal glory. So don't grow sluggish, encourage yourself in the Lord to press on, it's through faith & patience that you'll inherit the promises.

& In case you were wondering whether or not anyone else but you has ever had to inherit the promises through faith & patience, the answer is yes. The quintessential example that he draws out for us here being *Abraham*; remember him?

Vs13-15

God made Ab a promise didn't He? But was the promise fulfilled immediately? No, it was *after* he'd patiently endured that he obtained the promise. "Well, how long did he have to endure, like a couple weeks?" 25 yrs, Now I don't like to wait 25 days, or really even 25 minutes, much less 25 yrs. But there's something to be gleaned here, Ab is credited w/waiting patiently for 25 yrs in faith. Let me ask you a question? Was his faith w/out fault? Hardly, you recall that after about 10 yrs of waiting, he was about 85, Sarah around 75 she decided that perhaps they should help God along in fulfilling His promise. & So there was that whole little "Hagar" incident. God has promised Ab a son through Sarah, but they thought maybe God had forgotten about all that so since they were old Sarah said, "Why don't you take my handmaiden Hagar & should she conceive we'll count the son as my own?" Now did Ab go, "No, you're the only woman for me, God has promised a son through you so we're going to wait patiently in faith." No, he went, "Alright." & So Ishmael the father of the entire Arab nation came along, that one decision which is still reaping ramifications to this day (which is another point for another time all to itself). Now I bring that up to say this, it's encouraging to realize that if Ab can share in struggles like mine, then I can share in faith like his. He didn't have faultless faith, yet he still inherited the promise, so to w/you so to w/me. God kept His Word to Ab, & He's going to keep His Word to you & me, God hasn't forgotten you, you just be patient & trust in the Lord.

Vs16-18

So we've been encouraged to realize that God hasn't forgotten us, God hasn't forgotten you. Another point to be encouraged in here, God's word is true, you can count on it. He's reinforced his confidence in them, now he's encouraging them to reinforce *their* confidence in the Lord.

Now he brings up this whole subject of swearing in order to underscore their confidence. & He says that men will swear from the lesser to the greater to end a dispute. "You did this," "I didn't do it," "Yes you did," "No I didn't" "Yes you did" "I swear on a stack of bibles I didn't" "Ok." It ends the dispute, you go to a court of law, "Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, & nothing but the truth so help you God?" & The swear is made from the lesser to the greater to end the dispute.

& We find throughout the scriptures in multiple places God swearing something to man. However Jesus told *us* that we really shouldn't be a person who needs to confirm everything by swearing by something. But rather just let our "Yes" be yes & our "No" be no, you bind yourself by an oath & don't do it, now you've sinned, you've broken your word. Now God won't ever break His word, you & me, well that's a different story. Oh we may not intentionally, but it's awfully hard to guarantee something not knowing what tomorrow may bring. So Jesus said, "*But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth, for it is His footstool;*" Matt 5:34-35 He said, "*But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.' For whatever is more than these is from the evil one.*" Matt 5:37 Now God on the other hand, His word will never fail, heaven & earth will pass away His word will by no means ever pass away. & When He swears there's nothing higher for Him to swear by so He swears by Himself.

Now this is the amazing part, God doesn't need to swear at all. His word alone is unbreakable, more than sufficient, it'll *never* fail. I love the phrase in Vs 17, "...the *immutability* of His counsel." His word is unchanging, unalterable, it's immutable. Yet knowing the skepticism of man He condescends to underscore His word again w/an oath. "That by 2 immutable, unbreakable things (His Word, & His oath) in which it is *impossible* for God to lie, (is there anything God can't do, yeah, He can't lie, He's by His very nature 'the truth') we might have *strong consolation*, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us." Now I don't know about you but the words "strong consolation" seem "weak" to me. Those words of encouragement don't even do what's being communicated here justice in any form. "Strong consolation" just doesn't seem to go the distance when you're talking about 2 immutable things (God's word & God's oath) as being unbreakable & completely reliable.

& When he speaks of fleeing for refuge we're reminded of the cities of refuge established under the law. Whereby if a man killed another man by accident (farming accident or whatever) he could flee to one of these cities & he would be safe there for as long as he stayed in that city. & He could only be released from that city when the high priest died, then he was free to go w/no penalty. Christ is our city of refuge to whom we flee. The difference is that Jesus receives the guilty, forgives the guilty, & He being our High Priest has already died on our behalf thereby setting us free in Him. We're able now to go "outside the city" & proclaim His goodness, His grace, His mercy & His forgiveness.

Vs19

Now what is Christian hope? It's not an optimistic wish, it's an assured expectation, a guaranteed certainty & a concrete reality. & This hope we have as an anchor of the soul. What is an anchor? It's an instrument that attaches you to something firm, but unseen right? We're anchored to the Presence *behind* the veil, that is the very Holy of Holies of Heaven, we're speaking here about J.C. You're anchored to something both *sure & steadfast* or as we might say today, "Safe & secure" but you're not anchored downward, but rather upward heavenward. You're anchored (as it were) to heaven through Christ. Christ serves as an anchor to your soul.

Vs19-20

"Oh yeah" he says, "We were talking about Melchizedek, let me get back to that." & We're going to get to that (Lord willing) next time. What I want you to see before we close is this descriptive word regarding Christ here. The writer holds Him up as a *forerunner*. What is a forerunner? He is one who comes in advance to a place where the others are to follow. Jesus has blazed the trail, has become "the way" & has made the way to heaven, He's gone before us, & we'll follow after Him, the forerunner, the anchor of our soul.

Listen if Jesus isn't serving as the "Anchor" of your soul, you're out there adrift on the sea of desperation, or emptiness, confusion & worldliness. Why not anchor deep in Christ today, this world is tempest tossed. You don't need an anchor in calm seas, but in rough waters. It's in Christ we receive rest, it's in Christ our thirst is quenched, where our load is made light. Forgiveness of sin is waiting for you. Jesus was crucified, buried, & 3 days later rose from the dead so that we might have life everlasting, give your heart to Christ & He'll meet the deepest need of your heart & you'll be made right in the sight of God.

Prayer points

Lord thank You for being just that, the anchor of our soul, increase our confidence in You. Help us to follow after & to serve You w/all that we are. May we be refreshed & not grow weary but be like those who by faith & patience inherited the promises. Help us to be diligent (each one of us) to the full assurance of hope until the end. Thank You Lord that we can look to You when we're down or discouraged & be *encouraged* that you don't lose sight of us, you don't forget *about* us, but you remember our work & our labor of love which we show toward Your name, & be there anyone here today Lord who knows You but just isn't serving You, may today be the day that, that all changes. Thank You that in You our reward is sure.

