



## Hebrews 6:9-12 Faith and Patience for the Future

Summary: We show our love for God by serving others but that's not easy, so beware the obstacles, learn from examples, and press on – God notices and greater things lie ahead.

Just before Christmas we took a break from our study of Hebrews and we ended on something of a cliff-hanger – we dealt with one of the most difficult passages in the New Testament and had to consider the question – can you lose your salvation? If you missed that sermon, you can go back and pick it up on the website, on our podcast through Apple or Spotify, or in our church app.

If you were here, you remember where we landed – we said spiritual growth is the best evidence of your salvation. Well, this morning we see what spiritual growth looks like – we see that authentic Christian living produces visible fruit because true love for God expresses itself in our relationships with other people.

It reminds me of a time several years ago when Madeleine and I were flying to Kenya – it was actually the trip where we reconnected with the Pottengers who were serving there at the time - and we took our oldest son Ben with us.

We flew overnight from Dulles to London where we had to make a connection to Nairobi. While we were in the airport, we looked for some coffee and found a Starbucks. We placed our order at the counter and the barista looked down at Ben who was wearing a Chelsea jersey – Chelsea is a famous soccer team from London. The barista asked Ben if he liked Chelsea and Ben said yes, he did – they're still his favorite team. So, the barista reached over, grabbed one of the suckers they have by register, handed it to Ben and said "Mark it for Chelsea, lad." Basically, I'm doing this for *you* because we both like *them*.

This barista, we had never met before, did something kind to my son because they both liked the same team. Well, that's almost exactly the same behavior we see commended in our text this morning. As we jump back into Hebrews we find Christians being commended for doing good things *to other Christians* out of love for God. Read with me:

**Hebrews 6:9** But, beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you, yes, things that accompany salvation, though we speak in this manner. **10** For God *is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister.*

We say all the time around here that we are to receive and then reflect. Receive the love of God personally and then reflect it to others. These Hebrew Christians have received the love of God and are now ministering to each other, serving one another, doing good to and

for one another and it's not because of what they think about each other – that would be natural – no, they're doing this for other people because of their relationship with God.

Their actions, attitudes and speech toward others are shaped by their relationship with God just as this barista's actions, attitudes, and words to my son were shaped by his affection for a soccer team. Affection for one improves interactions with the other and *that's the way it's supposed to be.*

Your spiritual life is more than simply collecting theological facts. A God-oriented life is meant to reshape you, remake you, to aim you and guide you – God puts His Spirit in you to affect what comes out of you.

So, if we come at this from another angle we find an incredibly powerful tool for improving your relationships. You can learn all kinds of communication strategies and anger-management skills, you can learn some great tips on negotiation and reconciliation, but the best fuel for applying all of those tactics, techniques, and procedures is a growing love for God and experiential knowledge of His love for you.

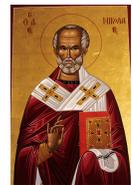
If you want to improve your relationships with people at work, at home, in your family, the best thing you can do is work on your relationship with God. Because, as you know Him, experience Him, and receive from Him, you are enabled to reflect the love, patience, kindness and peace that you experience from Him, toward others.

And when we allow what God is doing in us to affect the way we see, treat, and react to the people around us, God sees, He knows, and He is pleased.

**Hebrews 6:10** For God *is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints (past tense), and do minister (present tense).*

Your relationship with God affects your relationships with others, specifically with the saints.

Now, when we hear the word saints we often think of either a football team from New Orleans or some super holy people with brightly colored pictures – like this guy, St Nicolas, where we get the idea of jolly old Saint Nick, or as the Dutch would say, Sant-der-klaus – Santa Claus is based off of this guy. No joke.



But, according to Scripture, every man, woman, and child, who is born again in Christ is a saint. That means your spouse is a saint – really. Your child is a saint, even your teenager. Your roommate, co-worker, client – if they are a child of God, they're a saint.

So watch this: when you minister to them – that means when you serve them, when you treat them with kindness, dignity, respect – when you seek to give the best *to them* and draw the best *out of them* and your motive for it all is your personal desire to serve God - He sees, and knows and is **not unjust to forget your work and labor of love.**

I want to really emphasize this and make sure you see the flow. When you try to let God direct your life, you let Him shape your actions, attitudes, and reactions; you try to be the brother, sister, son, daughter, boss, coworker, neighbor, coach, spouse, that He is calling you to be; well, when you do that, God sees the things you say and do, and the things you don't do and say, *and He will not forget it.*

They might not see it. They might not appreciate it. They might not understand. But God does. He sees it *and gives you credit for it* – credit you can never lose.

Even small things, done well or with the right motive, have value.

Many years ago, I committed to reading through the Bible in a year. At the time I was using a chronological Bible – it has all the events laid out in Chronological order, so for example, you read about the events of David's life in 1 Samuel and then jump over to read one of the Psalms that he wrote describing that event and then back to 1 Samuel and back to another Psalm and on you go as his life unfolds. It's a highly valuable experience and I recommend it for everyone at some point in your life – sooner rather than later.

I was reading through and I came to this passage in the book of Malachi – the last book of the Old Testament and I thought it was so cool – I showed it to every Christian I knew for at least a couple of weeks. It's

**Malachi 3:16** Then those who feared the LORD spoke to one another,  
And the LORD listened and heard them;  
So a book of remembrance was written before Him  
For those who fear the LORD  
And who meditate on His name.

17 “They shall be Mine,” says the LORD of hosts,  
“On the day that I make them My jewels.  
And I will spare them  
As a man spares his own son who serves him.”

Here's what's so cool to me – it says God sees and He knows – He listens in when Christians speak to each other. This means God is keeping a transcript of your home group, of your Bible Study group, of your talk with your friends about spiritual things. He has a book of remembrance and *your words are in it.*

Church, I want you to be encouraged by this! It means God sees and knows, records and rewards, *even your smallest attempts to live for Him* and help others and they're never wiped out.

In fact, He remembers things you've already forgotten you did or said, *and that's a very good thing.*

Remember, of all the people you feel judged by, of all the people who are evaluating you, noticing you and critiquing you, God will have the last word – no one will say anything else about you after His final judgment of you, and **He is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister.**

But, I also want you to notice, it's not easy. What's the very next thing we read?

**Hebrews 6:11** And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, 12 that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

There are five very important words here – you might want to underline them: diligence, hope, sluggish, faith and patience.

Has anyone ever told you, your spiritual life will require **diligence**? That it won't be easy? I don't think the message gets out enough. And, I think that is why some people wander away spiritually after a while. They thought that if they just came to Jesus, He would solve all their problems, make everything better.

How many of you have heard the gospel expressed that way? God has a wonderful plan for your life... Well that's true, but there's more to it as well. We are called to live by hope, faith, and patience.

Hard times will come. People won't appreciate you. The world is still full of challenges and trials. The point of Christianity is not to protect you from anything uncomfortable, it's to reunite you with a God who gives you purpose, direction, and destiny, and walks with you through whatever trials and troubles come your way. God doesn't promise you an easy life, He just promises you don't have to go through it alone, and that when it's all done and over, you will **inherit the promises**.

The New Living Translation puts vs 10 this way:

**10 For God is not unjust. He will not forget how hard you have worked for him and how you have shown your love to him by caring for other believers, as you still do.**

**God will not forget how hard you have worked for Him** – showing your allegiance to Him by caring for others. He values your diligence and He warns you of the constant pull towards spiritual sluggishness.

Christian, there will be times in your life when you feel the pull of spiritual **sluggishness**. You will be tempted to take your foot off the gas spiritually. You will feel worn out. You will be discouraged. You will wonder if it's all worth it. You will wonder if anyone sees, if anyone cares, if any of this really makes a difference.

God is telling you, right here in Hebrews 6, it does.

You will go through times when your spiritual life feels dry and arid, when all of your attempts to live for God and serve Him feel pointless and lifeless. Keep going. Be **diligent**, walk by **faith** with **hope** and **patience**. There are things you can learn about God and about yourself during times of dryness and in the fight against **sluggishness** that you cannot learn at other times. You can't develop diligence without resistance, you can't work the muscles of your faith without resistance.

So, what helps when you feel this way? What helps when you feel unnoticed, unmotivated, or pointless? We're told right here in verse 12: stir up hope and **imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises**.

God has given you people to look to as an example – both in Scripture and in daily life. Do you ever wonder why you have some of the stuff in the Bible that you do, some of the people and historical accounts that seem so ancient and far-removed from your modern life? Well, we're told in

**Romans 15:4** For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.

In other words, daily Scripture reading is meant to give us examples and lessons that stir up **hope, patience** and the comfort we need when life is hard and we feel **sluggish**.

James says something similar when he tells us go back to the Old Testament and look at the examples we find there:

**James 5:10** My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience.

Maybe that's another reason for you to read that Chronological Bible this year? You need to discover and remember the **examples** of people who served God in the past.

People like David. Most people know the story of David and Goliath, we remember how the young shepherd boy faced down a giant with a sling and killed him. But do you remember what happened next? The army of Israel - David's people, and the army of the Philistines - Goliath's people, were having a standoff and it had been going on for a long time. No one wanted to advance against the other.

But when David killed the giant, the army of the Philistines fled in retreat and suddenly the whole army of Israel was inspired and motivated and they took off in pursuit of their enemies. *The example of one young man proved sufficient to motivate everyone else.* We all need, and want, examples we can follow in life.

Many years later the apostle Paul would tell Timothy to be this kind of example.

**1 Tim 4:12** Let no one despise your youth, but [be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity.](#)

He told Titus something similar:

**Titus 2:6** Likewise, exhort the young men to be sober-minded, [7 in all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works...](#) [8 that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of you.](#)

What all of this means is two things. First, you should be able to find godly examples to follow in both Scripture and daily life. As you read your Bible you will see men and women you can learn from. You can read Christian Biographies – if you want some names let me know. But also you can look around yourself today. One of the great values of being committed and connected to a local church, is that, ideally, you will find examples you can follow there.

This happens in a very concentrated form in small groups where you can get to know people better, learn about their daily lives, you can hear people's stories and struggles and learn from each other's scars.

If you are a young single person hoping for marriage, you need to be around newly married people as well as people who have been married for decades and learn from them. If you are parenting young children, you need to be around people who are caring for their aging parents. If you are in college or just getting started in your career you need to be around people who have been in the workplace for years and have learned some lessons about integrating their faith with their profession and balancing a personal life in the process.

Ideally you want a mix of some people who are like you so you can watch and learn from one another in real time as you face the same challenges – to be spurred on by your peers. But you also need to hear from older people who have already been where you are, they are dealing with the things that will come your way one day – they're setting an example now that you will need then.

And, you should hear from people who are not like you, who have walked different paths, have different lived experiences and can expand your appreciation for the gospel and God as you see how He has worked in situations you can barely imagine.

Participating, actively, in a local church allows you to see into the lives of other Christians so that you can learn to [imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.](#)

But don't forget, examples flow both ways. Which means, you have the privilege - and it is a real, holy, privilege - of setting an example for others to follow as they try to figure out how to live persistently for Christ. You *need* an example, but also you *are* an example – no matter who you are, you're an example to someone. Someone is looking to you trying to figure out how to live, how to respond, what to do next.

Now, most of don't want that. We feel we're not ready for that. We're not worthy of that. We're good looking at others, but we don't want others looking at us. I totally understand that impulse, but according to our passage, the best things we can learn from an example is [faith and patience](#). We need *to see* and we need *to be* people who are learning to lean on God and keep doing it even when we fall short, even when we fail. We're learning and living the grace of a merciful, loving, persistent God.

Which brings us back to the fact that sometimes life is hard and *that's when people need an example most*. We need to know we're not the only one. We need to know others have faced things like this too – but met them with [faith and patience](#).

If you need [faith](#) for something, it's because it hasn't arrived yet. If you need [patience](#) for something, the same thing is true – you're waiting for what will be, you're still working through it all. So how do you make it? What keeps you going? Well, like we said, the example of others in Scripture and daily life, the knowledge that God sees and will not forget the good you do, and the hope of the promise of what comes next.

Take a peek ahead with me and look at

**Hebrews 12:1** Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, <sup>2</sup> looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who [for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.](#)

Life is full of weights, cares, concerns, trials, and temptations, but we have an example to follow and a promise to receive from our God who sits on the throne over all creation, a God who calls us, comes to us, forgives us when we ask, strengthens us, abides with us, gives us spiritual gifts and cultivates our character. A God who is [not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister.](#)

Christian, my hope is that you are encouraged this morning. That you are pumped up and prepared to face a new year. That you understand that life is hard at times, it requires [faith, patience, diligence, and hope](#), but God sees every little good thing you do, every single attempt you make, and He is planning a reward for you. Keep going. Don't grow [sluggish](#). Look for examples you can follow – in Scripture and everyday life. Be an example worthy for others to follow. And keep your head and heart filled with all the promises of Christ [who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.](#)

Let's pray.

*Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.*

- Rom 15:13



## Sermon Application and Discussion Questions

### Hebrews 6:9-12 Faith and Patience for the Future

Summary: We show our love for God by serving others but that's not easy, so beware the obstacles, learn from examples, and press on – God notices and greater things lie ahead.

- Where have you experienced ministry from others who were serving God?
- Have you ever felt like God didn't notice (or didn't care about) the good things you were trying to do?
  - What does it mean to you to know that God is not unjust and will not forget?
- Have you ever felt like people didn't notice (or didn't care about) the good things you were trying to do?
  - Why does it feel different to be unnoticed or unappreciated by God vs people?
- Where and how do you try to serve the saints? What is the difference between the attempts you make in your relationships (i.e. with your family/friends) and the attempts you make through roles (i.e. serving at church, at work, coaching a team, serving on a committee, etc.)?
- What have you learned about the need for diligence and the pull of sluggishness as you try to love God by serving others?
  - Look up the following verses. What do you discover about the value of diligence?
    - Proverbs 13:4
    - Proverbs 22:29
    - Proverbs 24:30-34
    - Romans 12:6-8
    - 1 Corinthians 15:58
    - Hebrews 12:1
    - 1 Peter 1:13
    - Revelation 2:4-5
  - What things have you discovered that are effective in the fight for diligence?
- How do the following verses encourage you?
  - Romans 2:6-7 (mentioned in the context of judgment for unbelievers)
  - Galatians 6:9-10