



HICKORY GROVE

BAPTIST CHURCH

Christian Joy

April 24, 2022

Hebrews 6:9-12

Clint Pressley

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.

(Pastor prays)

If you have a small child, as a parent you work hard to protect that child from harm because you love her and want her to be healthy and flourish. If she reaches for the top of the stove when the burner is hot you might yell “No!” and even pop her hand as a warning. A warning that might be seen as harsh and she may not understand. You might then immediately hug her and say “baby, I do that because I love you and the stove will burn you.” And that seems to be what the preacher is doing with his congregation in Chapter 6. In verses 1-8 there was the sternest warning in the entire Bible. It was immediately followed by one of the greatest encouragements in the whole letter as he lays out in beautiful form how good it is to be a Christian. I want you to be encouraged and strengthened and fed. And by the grace of God and the beauty of what Christ has done for us on the cross, I want you to see...

It Is Good To Be a Christian

It is good to be loved

In that first phrase in verse 9 is the word “beloved.” It means “dear friends.” It is the only time it is used in this letter. It means that this congregation is loved generally by God, that is common grace. They were loved specifically, or in your case, in Christ. And they were loved practically and tangibly through the church.

Now when I say “what God has done through Christ for us”, I mean that God is the holy creator who created all of us in His image. You have dignity because you are created in the image of God. The image of God in us is disfigured because of our own sin. That sin is so bad that it separates us from God. God is holy, we are sinners, therefore, we cannot approach God. But God so loved the world that He gave His only son. Jesus Christ, being fully God and fully man, lived perfectly to fulfill all of God’s law in a way that we can’t. Jesus goes to the cross and at the cross God judges all sin, but that judgment goes on Jesus.

And here’s how you become a Christian. Any person who turns from your sin and believes what Jesus has done on the cross, He takes your sin and He gives you His righteousness, will be saved. Jesus died on the cross and God raised Him from the dead. It is the shout of victory that reminds us that Jesus has been accepted by the judge and you now are a child of God. You are loved not just generally that the sun shines on you. God loves you in Christ. It is a very specific, coveted, exclusive love. When we say God loves all people, yes He does. But when I say God loves you as His child, that love only comes to you because of what Christ has done on the cross. It is good to be loved by God in Christ.

We are loved generally. We are loved specifically. We are loved practically or tangibly. What do I mean by that? This is the kind of love that you get by being part of the church. This is more than just a gathering. This is a gathering of *family* that loves each other. The love of God brought to us through creation and specifically in Christ must be expressed to one another. So when you come into this big church, you are not just a number, you are coming as a

child of God and you are part of a family. The church is given to you to take care of one another. You spend all week working and your soul is beaten up and tired. You come to church here on Sunday and gather with the family by God's grace and in Christ and have your wounds healed, to have your life centered so that you might be ready to go out that door. We are gathered here together to love one another.

Do you feel loved? Does that bring you joy?

It is good to be growing

Let's read the whole verse and pay a special attention to the end. ⁹ *Though we speak in this way, yet in your case, beloved, we feel sure of better things—things that belong to salvation.* There are better things. Things that belong to salvation. Things that give evidence. It is faith that saves us. What Jesus did on the cross, saves us. It's not *things* that save you, *works* do not save you, but they show you that you are *actually* saved. There are things that show you that the seed of saving grace has been planted in your heart. There are better things, the preacher says. It's things like your love for God, your love for His people, your hatred of your own sin and your humility. It's things like the peace of God, your quick repentance. You are growing when you have joy in the Lord and the love of worship. It is evangelism, your desire for holiness, your being quick to forgive, and your love of the Bible. It's the depth of your prayer, the fruits of the spirit, your contentment and your lack of complaining. It's your trust in providence when you believe Romans 8:28, that God is working all things for good. You know you are growing when you are dedicated to your family, you rejoice in the sovereignty of God and you're clinging to His lordship. It is grace and it is the Gospel. All of these accompany salvation. Are they in your life? Are you growing? It's good to be loved. It's good to be growing.

It's good to work

There are a couple of things that are really good for us that are based on the character of God. Let's look at verse 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. In His justice and righteousness, what does God see? This is something we don't think about very much. *Ergon.* Work, task, employment, deeds. Think about your job or what you fill your day with. God is just and is pleased with your approach and diligence. He is pleased with your joyfulness and your good example. He is pleased with your longsuffering. He is pleased with the patience that you show people who don't deserve it. When no one else seems to notice how much you throw yourself into your labor, God sees it. Because God is righteous, He sees it and He blesses it. From creation we are designed to work and take dominion. In Ecclesiastes 9:10 it says, *Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might, for there is no work or thought or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol, to which you are going.* Paul puts a finer point on it in Colossians 3:23-24. *Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men,²⁴ knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.* What is it in you that needs to change to find contentment in where the Lord has you? It is good to be loved. It is good to be growing. It is good to work.

It is good to worship

Let's take a look at the second thing mentioned in verse 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.* God sees the love that you have shown for His name, for His reputation, and for His honor. The idea is that God sees the care you take to live in such a way that God is honored in your life. You are an ambassador. This will increasingly be our lot. Your life needs to adorn the Gospel. You represent the King.

What is the Gospel? It is that God is the holy creator who made all of us in His image. You have dignity because of that. But that dignity in our hearts has been messed up because of our sin. That sin is an offense to God and God must punish that sin. The way He punishes it is on Jesus. Jesus died in the place of sinners. God raised Him from the dead and the Gospel promise is that if you will put your faith in that and believe that, the Bible teaches that you

will be saved. That's the Gospel. Then, after you are saved, you live your life honoring Christ.

Surely that's what Paul meant in Romans 12:1 when he wrote, *I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.* That even to your own hurt, you think more of God's reputation than your own. And the preacher commends them for it. I think that begins with worship. We center our lives on Christ each Sunday. That's why every worship service here pushes our eyes up to Jesus. We are realigning each week. The week knocks us off-center. What is more important? What people think of you? Or what people think of God? It's good to be loved. It's good to be growing. It's good to work. It's good to worship.

It's good to serve

There is one last thing in verse 10 that God sees. *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.* Serving. *Diakinos.* Deacon. This is serving in the church and for the church. So many of you here do thankless jobs for the church to make sure it functions. You are parts of community groups, parts of volunteering, parts of the parking lot committee. You are parts of the greeting committee and the ushers. You may work in the kitchen or at camps; singing in the choir or are in the music ministry. You might work security or in the nursery. Or you are a mentor to someone. God sees that you serve, He sees that you honor Him with your service. Where can you serve? Will you? It's good to serve.

It's good to get serious about the Lord

Let's read verse 11. *And we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness to have the full assurance of hope until the end,* Earnestness. That means with haste, speed and intentionality. It means to put forth with effort and discipline. It shows up every day. And it is reflected in daily devotion. It is opening up the Bible every day and it is having weekly worship.

You take your relationship with the Lord very seriously. It is the genuine tenor of your life. One of the joys I have is seeing this. Its good to get serious about the Lord.

It's good to live in hope

Let's see three things in verse 11. *11And we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness to have the full assurance of hope until the end, With full assurance of hope till the end.* There are three things we can see here. Full assurance is a deep trust and a conviction with confidence. There is hope, a joyful belief in the future in spite of a dreadful present reality. It is good to have hope. Where does our hope come from? It comes from Jesus dying on the cross in place of sinners. God raised Him from the dead and, since that time, we live with great hope for the future. It is seeing the resurrection in the face of death. It is seeing martyrs and saints dying with joy. Until the end. This is a sustaining mindset, that we will serve Him until we breathe our last. Are you hopeful in Christ?

It's good to follow the right people

Let's read verse 12. *so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.* To keep you from being sluggish or dull of hearing or spiritually lazy. Be imitators or mimickers. Look to those who through faith and patience inherit the promises. Choose your heroes wisely. Paul would say, follow me as I follow Christ. In John 13, on Maundy Thursday, Jesus washed the disciples' feet. John 13:15, *For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you.* Our savior should be our example.

By grace it is good to be a Christian, a child of God. Today you either rejoice in that truth or need to yield to the beautiful truth of the Gospel, turning from sin and turning to Christ. What attitude needs to change? What confession needs to be made? What repentance needs to be offered? What praise needs to be sung?

(Pastor prays)