

INTRODUCTION

The theme of this section of Hebrews is about moving on to spiritual maturity. The Christian life is like a race. But at the beginning of the race, the Lord says, Get Ready; Get Set, GROW!

If you watched Super Bowl LI a few weeks ago you know the New England Patriots were trailing the Atlanta Falcons 21-3 at the half. Almost everyone in the stands and those watching on TV thought the Falcons were on their way to their first Super Bowl championship.

In the Patriots dressing room, Coach Bill Belichick didn't deliver a rousing half-time speech. In fact, some of the players said he used his usual boring delivery. There was no yelling or screaming, or "Win one for the Gipper." Belichick was calm, because he believed that the Patriots could win, so there was no panic. We don't know exactly what he said because it wasn't recorded, but according to Julian Eddleman he said something like this: "You are a better team than what you showed in the first half. I'm expecting better of you in the second half. Don't think about what the other team is doing. Just do YOUR job. FINISH your job."

And as you all know they came back from a 25-point deficit to tie the game with less than a minute left, and then won it with a touchdown during the first overtime in Super Bowl history. I'm not a huge fan of Bill Belichick, but that was a historic half-time speech. "I'm expecting better from you. Now, let's get out and show that we're better than that."

As I reading this passage this week I saw the resemblance between Coach Belichick's half-time talk and what we read in Hebrews 6. The writer is basically saying, "I'm expecting better things from you."

In the previous passage the writer had just pointed his finger at a group of false Christians who had turned their backs on Christ, and gone back into their religion of Judaism. But like Coach Belichick, the writer doesn't scream or rant about what the others were doing. He just wrote them, "But you aren't like those make-believers. I'm expecting better of you. He calls them his friends, and says that they aren't make-believers. They are the true believers. They have been given salvation and there are some things that accompany salvation.

Hebrews 6:7-12. "Land that drinks in the rain often falling on it and that produces a crop useful to those for whom it is farmed receives the blessing of God. But land that produces thorns and thistles is worthless and is in danger of being cursed. In the end it will be burned. 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. We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure. We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised."

Sometimes you can sit down in an expensive restaurant and you'll notice you have to pay for every different course. The prices are ala Carte, which is French for "very expensive." No, ala

Carte literally means “by the card” meaning, each food item has a separate price. If you order soup, you pay for it. If you order a salad, you’ll pay for it. If you order a steak, you’ll pay for it, and if you get a potato to go with the steak, you’ll pay for that as well.

But in most middle-range restaurants, there are certain items that come when you order a main course. At the top of the menu there may be a line that says, “All dinner selections are served with a soup or salad, and your choice of potato.” So when the server asks you for your order you say, “I’ll have the country-fried steak. And I’ll have a salad and mashed potatoes.” You understand that you don’t have to pay extra for the salad or the mashed potatoes, because those side dishes accompany the main course. They are included in the price.

When you get your bill, if you discover you were charged separately for the salad and the mashed potatoes, you would object. You’d say, “It says right here on the menu that each entrée includes a soup or salad and choice of potato.

I’m using this as an illustration to teach us something about salvation. Salvation is the main dish, but according to our text, there are some good things that accompany salvation. They aren’t add-ons you have to pay extra for; they come with the main course of salvation. After talking about some make-believers who walked away from salvation, the writer of Hebrews encourages his readers by writing, “We are confident of better things in your case—THINGS THAT ACCOMPANY SALVATION.” (Hebrews 6:9)

There are things that precede salvation, the exposure to the Word of God, the conviction of the Holy Spirit, and the Father drawing us to Christ. In the same way there are things that accompany salvation. In many ways these are things that provide irrefutable evidence that a person is a child of God.

There are MANY good things that accompany salvation, so this list is not exhaustive. But in this passage, I want us to notice four things that accompany salvation.

1. FRUITFULNESS THAT PRODUCES ASSURANCE

The writer uses an illustration from farming. “Land that drinks in the rain often falling on it and that produces a crop...receives the blessing of God.” During Bible times, fruitful fields could mean the difference between survival and starvation. Fruit trees, vineyards, and crops were planted so families could survive. Like many of you, we have a small vegetable garden in our backyard, but if we had to depend on that for our sole means of food, we’d be in trouble. In Bible times, families whose fields were not fruitful couldn’t run down to the local Kosher Brookshire’s to stock up. On the other hand, when they had abundant crops, it gave them confidence and assurance to know that they could make it through the winter season. A bountiful harvest always produced assurance.

The same is true in the spiritual realm. When there is spiritual fruit displayed in your life, it always produces assurance of salvation. Jesus Christ wants to reproduce His personality in you. The personality of Jesus is described by nine character qualities that are called the Fruit of the

Spirit. There is ONE fruit of the Spirit, but there are nine flavors. We learned these when we walked through Galatians a few years ago. For the fruit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. In John 15 He said He is the vine, and we are just the branches. Branches don't produce fruit; only the life-giving nutrients that flow out from the roots into the vine, and out through the branches produce fruit.

It was a great, liberating experience for me to discover that God didn't expect me to be full of love, joy, peace, patience and kindness on my own. If I tried to act that way I would fail. Our job is the job of any branch. We are to stay firmly attached to the vine, Jesus, and He produces this kind of fruit in our lives. And that's how we demonstrate that we are Christians.

Jesus said, "This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples." (John 15:8) Now, you don't have to demonstrate all nine flavors of this fruit every waking moment. We all fall and stumble at times. But if you have ever found yourself loving a person who is unlovely, that came from Jesus, and it ought to give you assurance that you really are a child of God. Have you ever experienced a supernatural peace that passes all understanding? I mean, you are in a situation where your life should be falling apart, but instead you found that you had peace like a river in your soul? That came from Jesus. Fruitfulness produces assurance. The fact that you have a DESIRE for Jesus to live His life through you is a great testimony for the assurance of your salvation.

As I said last week, it's a blessing to be saved. But it is a double blessing to be saved and to KNOW that you are saved. I had dozens of people contact me over the past week telling me that they had come to an absolute assurance of their salvation, and they would never doubt again. Satan wants to keep you doubting, but God wants to know that you know that you know that you're saved!

One of the emails was so powerful I asked permission to share it without divulging the writer's name. This person wrote: "My true spiritual journey began the day you baptized us and my walk through your teachings has been profound...but there was always a lingering doubt about salvation. At that final hour, would I really be worthy of grace? I heard, sang, and read the Word and believed it...but for me? Really? But today, February 12, 2017, I sat in that pew and FINALLY believed with all my heart that "I am saved and I KNOW it!" Even me! Thank you for continuing to proclaim "true believers are the champions who never quit." Nothing in heaven or hell can snatch us from our Father's hand. It took me many years to get there but I, too, can finally proclaim AMEN!"

Back in the early 1970s I was part of the Jesus Movement. I was a longhaired Jesus freak. My hair wasn't down my back, but I don't think Cindy ever saw my ears until after we were married.

We had lots of great songs and choruses we used to sing. One of them was about assurance of salvation and I haven't heard it in decades. We would sing, "I'm saved and I know that I am; I'm saved and I know that I am; I'm saved and I know that I am. I'm so glad I know that I am." The next verse, "Born again and I know that I am; Born again; and I know that I am; Born again and

I know that I am; I'm so glad I know that I am." It's a blessing to be saved, but it's a double blessing to be saved and have assurance of your salvation.

2. LOVE THAT PRODUCES SERVICE

The Bible says, "He will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people."

Jesus was once asked, "What is the greatest commandment?" Jesus answered that question and went on to give the second greatest commandment as well. He said, "[The greatest commandment is to] Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself." (Matthew 22:37-39)

There are three levels of love mentioned by Jesus. First you have to love yourself correctly; then you love your neighbor compassionately; and then you can love God completely. If you don't love yourself, you'll never love others or God. It's one thing to love yourself, which means having a healthy self-image, and it's another thing to be IN LOVE with your self. A person who is IN LOVE with himself looks in the mirror and sings, "How Great Thou Art."

Before cell phones, a self-centered narcissist had to find a mirror to see the person they loved the most. But today, they just take endless selfies of themselves. They are like the guy who wrote to Dear Abby. He wrote: Dear Abby: "I'm a guy who has everything. I'm smart and handsome. Women are always flocking around me and telling me how good-looking I am and what a marvelous personality I have I'm beginning to find this boring. How can I discourage these hopeful females?" C.W. Abby wrote back: Dear C.W., "Just keep talking."

Loving your neighbor as you love yourself simply means you see yourself as God sees you. You are fearfully and wonderfully made, but we are all made with flaws. But God loves us in spite of our imperfections. You and I are trophies of His grace. When you see yourself as a sinner saved by grace, but deeply loved by God, you are free to love others.

And the best way you show that you love God is by showing love to your neighbor. God is invisible, so the best way to love Him is by loving the people He created. The Apostle John wrote, "Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us." (1 John 4:11-12)

After Jesus came back from the dead, He met His disciples one morning on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. Peter was still feeling guilty because he had denied knowing Jesus three times. So Jesus said, "Peter, do you love me?" Peter said, "You know I do, Lord." The Jesus said, "Feed my sheep." Jesus asked Peter the same question three times. Some scholars have suggested Jesus did that to match how many times Peter had denied Him. But notice something important in that conversation. Jesus didn't say, "Peter, do you love my sheep? Then feed them." He kept asking, "Peter, so you love ME?" Then He said, "Feed my sheep." People can be fickle. They can

be strange, and we often struggle to love them. But the key is to love Jesus, and then you'll find yourself loving those difficult people as well.

3. DILIGENCE THAT PRODUCES ENDURANCE

The writer says, "We want you to show this same diligence to the very end." The writer commended the true Hebrew believers because they were hard workers. Diligence is a great virtue, but the kind of diligence that God rewards doesn't give up. It endures to the end.

A few months ago a seminary student was interviewing me and he asked me a question I couldn't immediately answer. He asked what was the greatest bit of wisdom that my parents imparted to me before they died. They both died over thirty years ago, so I had to think for a minute before I answered.

The greatest wisdom my mother left with me had to do with relationships. She said, "If you can't say something good about somebody, don't say anything at all." That's still good advice. My dad was a rough and tough outdoorsman. He was a hard worker. His dad died when he was only twelve years old, and he had four older sisters. He quit school in the sixth grade to work to help support his mother and four sisters. After serving in the Navy in World War II he graduated from Louisiana Tech with a degree in forestry. Of all the wisdom, he imparted to me, I think the most valuable was this: "Son, if a job's worth doing. It's worth doing well." So whether it was raking the leaves in the yard, washing the dishes with my sister, or working in my first job at the feed and seed store, I was taught the value of diligence.

The Bible speaks often about the importance of serving the Lord with enthusiasm. Paul wrote, "So, my dear brothers and sisters, be strong and immovable. Always work enthusiastically for the Lord, for you know that nothing you do for the Lord is ever useless." (1 Corinthians 15:58 NLT)

Our English word "enthusiasm" comes from two Greek words *en theos*, which literally means to be "in God." The more "In God" you are, the more enthusiastic you will be. The opposite of enthusiasm is apathy. Apathy says, "I don't care."

Christians should be characterized by working with excellence and enthusiasm. In Colossians 3:23 the Bible says, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men." So, whatever your job is, you should always work with diligence. Imagine you are working for the Lord, not for your company or business.

Howard Hendricks was a great author and teacher at Dallas Theological Seminary for many years before he went to be with the Lord. His nickname was "The Prof." Howard Hendricks tells the story about sitting on a jet at DFW when it was delayed for takeoff. After a long wait, the passengers became more and more irritated. Hendricks noticed how kind and gracious one of the flight attendants was as she spoke with them. After the plane finally took off, he told the flight attendant how much he appreciated her poise and patience and asked if he could write a letter to the airline complimenting her work. The flight attendant smiled and replied she didn't

work for the airline company, but for Jesus Christ. She said that just before going to work she and her husband prayed together that she would be a good representative of Christ.

Ongoing diligence produces endurance. That means you never quit. American humorist, Josh Billings, used to say we can all learn a lesson from a postage stamp: "The value of a postage stamp is found in its ability to stick to one thing until it gets to its destination. Endurance is failing 19 times and still getting up and trying the 20th time."

4. FAITH THAT PRODUCES PATIENCE

We read, "Imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised." In the pages of the Bible, we read the real stories of real people who demonstrated faith that produced patience. And we are to imitate them. I call Hebrews 11 the Roll Call of Faith. There are sixteen different men and women who are mentioned for their lives of faith. Then a reference is made to thousands of other unnamed heroes of faith. This list could also be called the Roll Call of Failures, because each of these heroes of faith faced times of difficulty and challenge. Their faith was tested. When their faith was tested, it produced faith. Faith and patience are usually mentioned together, because they are like Siamese twins.

James encourages us with these words: "My brothers, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing." (James 1:2-4 NKJV)

Be careful when you ask God for patience. It often comes disguised as trouble. Tribulation and trials produce patience.

One of the greatest stories of faith and patience is seen in the life of Jacob. Jacob went to find a wife and ended up at the camp of Laban, his uncle on his mother's side. Jacob saw Laban's daughter Rachel and it was love at first sight. He asked Laban if he could marry Rachel. Laban said, "If you work for me for seven years, you can marry Rachel." And in one of the greatest verses on faith and patience the Bible says in Genesis 29:20, "So Jacob served seven years to get Rachel, but they seemed like only a few days because of his love for her." That's faith—and patience. Seven years zipped by as he anticipated his marriage to Rachel. But that's not the end of the story.

On the wedding night, Laban slipped Rachel's older sister, Leah, into the darkened wedding tent and the next morning, Jacob was surprised to wake up with Leah instead of Rachel. Of course, Jacob was upset with the bait and switch. Laban said, "That's our custom. I can't marry the younger daughter off first. But you can have Rachel too, but it will cost you another seven years of work." So Jacob ended up working fourteen years for Rachel. That's faith—and patience.

CONCLUSION

God loves you so much that He has given you these four blessings added to your salvation:

fruitfulness that produces assurance; love that produces service; diligence that produces endurance; and faith that produces patience. They are yours to enjoy; they come with the main selection, salvation.

You can know for certain that you are saved. Someone once asked me, "Pastor, can you be saved and not really know it?" My answer was, "That would be like saying that you got married and didn't really know it." If I ask you whether or not you've ever been married you wouldn't go, "I don't know." You'd have a specific answer.

And the Bible compares salvation to a marriage relationship. Before you are married there is a gradual process leading up to the wedding. But there is a wedding ceremony that is on a certain day and time when your marriage becomes official. You walk down the aisle as a single man or woman and you walk out as a married couple.

Almost every couple I've ever married was very nervous before the ceremony. I remember one particular groom was so nervous he was sweating during the entire ceremony. After the ceremony we were taking a few more pictures of the wedding party and I noticed the groom was smiling. He seemed to be relieved. He shook my hand and said, "Man, I'm glad that's over with!" I held his hand a little longer and said, "Son, it isn't over. It's just beginning!"

When a couple is married they don't receive the institution of marriage, they receive a relationship with each other. But that relationship has to be nurtured and growth must occur for the marriage to remain healthy.

And the same is true for us. When we are saved, we don't receive the Christian religion. We receive a personal relationship with Jesus. And for us, the moment we pass from death to life and become a child of God is just the beginning. Once you are saved, God says, "Get ready; get set; now GROW!"

OUTLINE

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Hebrews 6:9



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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes



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