



Sermon-Based Study Guide
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Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church - August 7, 2011

Sermon Title: Keep Up the Good Work

Sermon Text: Hebrews 6.9-12
Related Texts: Philippians 2.1-13

I. Start It – Connecting With One Another

Did you ever have a teacher who effectively motivated and encouraged you to do your very best? How did you respond to such encouragement?

II. Introduction

Before attempting to lead his readers to a deeper theological understanding of Jesus, the Messiah and High Priest, the Preacher/Author of Hebrews pauses. The pause becomes a rebuke (5.11-14) that is designed to spur the Hebrew Christians on to the solid food of a deeper knowledge of scripture and to living out the implications of the gospel. Following this rebuke the author issues a stern warning against apostasy or turning away from Jesus (6.1-8). In the passage before us, the Preacher becomes an encouraging, motivating teacher – praising the students and urging them onward.

III. Study the Text – Hebrews 6.9-12

- 1) Verse 9 begins “even though we speak like this...” which is a reference to the rebuke of 5.11-14 and the warning of 6.1-8. The author then addresses the Hebrews as “dear friends.” This phrase comes from the Greek word “agapetoι” and suggests “ones who are deeply loved.” Do you think that rebukes and warnings are part of what it means to love others deeply? Why or why not? How have you experienced this kind of deep love?
- 2) The author is, according to verse 9, “confident of better things in your case...” What does this suggest about the way the author sees these Hebrew Christians? In what way do they fit the description found in 6.7? What do you think the writer means by “better things” and “things that accompany salvation?”

Note: The Preacher has a deep confidence both in the Hebrew Christians’ ability to go deep or figuratively to eat solid food, and that they will not fall away from faith in and following Jesus. They are like the land that drinks in the rain, bears abundant fruit, blesses others and is blessed by God. They are journeying on the path that leads to the fullness of (the things of) their salvation – knowing God’s promises and experiencing God’s presence, entering into God’s rest, dwelling forever in the new Heaven-Earth where they will reign with Christ forever.

- 3) Look at verse 10. How have the Hebrew Christians demonstrated their love for God? Take a quick look at Hebrews 10.32-34 to see the ways they continued to help God’s people. What motivated their bold stance of helping and such deep caring?
- 4) In verse 11 the Preacher/Author encourages the Hebrew Christians to press on and to maintain the deep love for and bold help of others (out of love for God) “...to the very end.”

How will showing this same diligence "...make your (their) hope secure" or to translate another way, "...to give you certainty of that hope?" How have you experienced certainty of your hope as you have been diligent in helping others out of love for God?

- 5) In verse 12 the writer returns to a term – "lazy" – used earlier in 5.11 where it is translated "slow to learn." Here he warns against such laziness and in its place to imitate those who have been faithful and patient (or persevering). Those may include figures like Abraham, Moses, Jacob and the Hebrew Christians who have been strong in their faith and steadfast in their loving care. Who has been a model of patient faithfulness in your life? How well have you imitated (followed their words and pattern of life) them?
- 6) Read through Philippians 2.1-13. The passage begins with a reference to encouragement that comes from being united with the Christian community. It continues with a plea to be united and like-minded. According to verses 3 through 8 what leads to deep love and care? To unity and like-mindedness?

IV. Theological Reflection

These verses raise the issue of the relationship between God's grace, that is, loving-kindness that freely extends love, mercy, forgiveness, and atonement (made at one with God) through Jesus Christ, and our response to that grace of embracing it by faith alone. There is nothing one can do to earn or deserve God's favor (grace). It is given freely. On the other hand, in response to God's love we obey God's command to love our neighbor. Acts of loving-kindness on our part demonstrate the reality of God's love for us. God's love and promises are the motivation for our faithfulness and diligence in serving others.

V. Apply It – Reflect and Respond

- 1) Reflect on the author's use of the greeting "dearly beloved ones" or "dear friends." God refers to you and me as "my dearly beloved." How does this 1) refresh you, 2) encourage you, 3) help you feel your worth as God's child, and 4) assure you of God's love?
- 2) How does your love for God motivate you to care for and love others? Do you care about those who are suffering injustices and exploitation? Would you consider becoming more directly involved with our Local Missions partners such as We Care, Covenant Presbyterian's Rising Tide ministry, Precious Lamb Preschool, or others? If you want to find out more, contact Rob Saunders at gspc.localmissions@gmail.com.
- 3) Please pray for yourself and for the GSPC family to experience certainty of our hope as we are diligent in helping others out of love for God.

In all times and places God's promise is this: "Follow the path of obedience and faith, and I will bring you to a place of rest and joy." Many have followed that path, none more excellently than Jesus. Now the readers of Hebrews... those who belong to Christ, are being urged to put one foot in front of the other along the pilgrim way... to trust the promise of rest and triumph and to be patient.

Thomas G. Long