

DAY 7: THE CERTAINTY OF GOD'S PROMISES

Hebrews 6:9-20

After issuing the severe warnings of Hebrews 6:4-8, the writer states that he believes “*better things*” concerning his readers. Only here in this epistle is the Greek word *agapetos*—translated “*beloved*,” or “*dear friends*”(NIV)—used. The tenderness of the term offers reassurance.

TRUE BELIEVERS ENCOURAGED The adjective *better* is used often for comparison in this book. “*Better things ... that belong to salvation*” (6:9) suggests a fruitful, spiritual life in contrast to a life that “*bears thorns and thistles*.”

The author’s confidence rests on the foundation of God’s righteousness and the past and present deeds of faith performed by the readers. God cannot “*overlook*” what they have done out of love for Him. Such love springs from true faith and expresses itself through practical love and deeds of kindness, which God considers as done for Him. He will reward and care for His people.

THINK ABOUT the times when God seems distant. Spiritual maturity is not based on constant good feelings, but on a willingness to be faithful. We can give up when feeling weak, or, relying on our knowledge of God, we can choose to trust and serve Him. He knows our hearts. When you find yourself spiritually dry, commit your will to God and be obedient. Read Psalm 73:21-26 for the testimony of someone who found help when discouraged.

In Hebrews 6:10-12, the author establishes three principles on which the Christian life is founded: *love*, *hope*, and *faith*. Christians are to “*love one another earnestly*” (1 Peter 1:22). They are to pursue the knowledge of God to establish their hope in Him. Hope is the answer to spiritual laziness; it will energize, encourage, excite, and motivate. Christian hope is sure, for it is grounded in God.

God has faithfully provided His Son and all Jesus Christ has done as a basis for hope. Now it is the believer’s responsibility to hold to that knowledge until the end. This hope refers to assurance of salvation and includes a steadfast confidence in God’s promises, including the coming glory promised by Christ. The author now examines other principles needed to secure this hope.

God’s people are warned to “*not be sluggish*” (6:12). Those who endure and receive what God has promised possess two qualities: *faith* and *patience*. Faith is confidence in God. Faith believes God, while hope energizes endurance. When applied to people, patience, or *longsuffering*, describes the willingness needed to endure when the promise is a long time coming to fulfillment. The Hebrew Christians are encouraged to imitate people who are examples of faith and patience. The reference in verse 12 applies to people of all ages, living or dead, who, by faith and patience, are sure of their coming inheritance, and even possess it by faith before life’s close.

THINK ABOUT how, in the Bible, *hope* is a confident expectation based on God’s promises, and His character and reliability. With hope we can trust Him for each day’s needs and be encouraged as we patiently await the glorious future He has planned for us. This hope enables us to believe the best about one another. When someone fails or sins, we should not condemn. We must remember that our hope is in God, who can redeem and restore. By supporting and praying for one another, we strengthen the Christian community. Such hope is an important part of Christian love and ought to be true of every one of us. The writer of Hebrews demonstrates that degree of love and hope for his “*beloved*” friends (6:9), despite his severe words.

Using Abraham as an example of those who inherit the promises, verse 13 refers to the time when Abraham was willing to offer his promised son, Isaac, as a sacrifice to God. Because of his faith, Abraham received a great promise from God, partially quoted in verse 14. God not only promised Abraham numerous descendants, but also added that all nations would be blessed because of his obedience. Those hoping in the promise of Messianic salvation had to wait in patience for centuries for the coming of the Savior. God rewarded that faith with the coming of the promised Messiah. Reminding ourselves of the trustworthiness of God’s promises can strengthen



our hope when faith is faltering.

Genesis 22 is the first mention in Scripture of God binding Himself by an oath to keep His word. God could not, as men do, swear by one who is greater, for there is none greater than God. A promise of God unconfirmed by an oath is not less reliable, for the Word of God cannot be broken.

GOD'S PLEDGE God's oath leaves no room for doubt regarding His purpose. "*The heirs of the promise*" are followers of God who walk by faith, including all those who received the promise—patriarchs, pre-Christian Jews, and Christians. God encourages faith by giving assurance so strong that even the weak in faith have reason for confidence. God, in taking an oath, did something similar to His taking on the limitations of human flesh. He stoops from majesty to the low estate of man. In taking an oath, He accommodates humanity's doubt instead of insisting that His character be trusted without any other assistance.

God's people now have two unchangeable possessions: God's promise and God's oath. Deception and lying are divine impossibilities because God is truth. How beautifully the author expresses God's kindness when he explains why God bothered with such detail: so that we "*might have strong encouragement*" (6:18). "*We who have fled for refuge*" evokes the memory of Old Testament cities of refuge where those who accidentally killed someone could flee for safety. In the book of Psalms, God is described as *a refuge, a tower, and a hiding place*. As Christians, we are ever exposed to the world's corruption and the devil's frontal assaults and therefore need to "*hold fast to the hope set before us.*"

Jesus Christ is the basis of that hope. All hope of salvation and eternal life is based on the efficacy of Christ's work. Trusting Him is not a departure from traditional Jewish worship, but, rather, its fulfillment!

OUR HOPE These Hebrew believers have been warned of possibly "*drifting*" (Hebrews 2:1), and nothing serves better to halt that tendency than an anchor. An anchor grips the ocean floor and holds a ship fast. Instability may be apparent, but drifting is limited. From the strong, immovable anchor the author moves to another image. Hope penetrates "*the inner place behind the curtain*" (6:19). The writer is referring of the Most Holy Place in heaven into which Jesus has entered before us, implying that believers will follow Him there. He went "*to prepare a place for [us]*" (John 14:2).

This passage emphasizes our hope and its source—the absolute reliability of God. An anchored ship may be buffeted back and forth but is never abandoned to the wind and the waves. The anchor limits what the storm can do. Like a ship, we will encounter storms, but we are never completely at their mercy. That is what Jesus meant when He said, "*In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world*" (John 16:33).

PERSONALIZE this lesson. The storms of life are unavoidable realities through which faith and hope can develop. During "rough weather," we can be drawn closer to God, the source of our hope. How is life tossing you around right now? What specific promises of God offer you hope in your storm? Take some time to talk with God about the difficult circumstances you are in. Share both your thoughts and your feelings—then ask Him to increase your faith and hope so that when you come through this ordeal, you are even stronger.

REVIEW: THE CERTAINTY OF GOD'S PROMISES

11. Use three words to describe how this lesson had an impact on you. Explain why you chose these words.