

Hebrews Chapter Six (vv.9-20)

Hebrews 6.9-20: Encouragement for the Spiritual (Wise)

9 ¶ *But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak.*

Although once in doubt, the writer had now come to a 'settled conviction' that his readers were genuine believers and not part of the wicked generation that continued to reject Christ (6.4-8). Verse 9 therefore marks a change in language from 'they' and 'them' (6.6) to 'beloved' and 'you' (6.9). Although the readers had shown a lack of spiritual progress and understanding of divine truth (6.1) there had been other **practical evidences** in their lives that 'accompanied' their profession of salvation (vv.10-12).

10 *For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and ~~labour~~ of (the) love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.*

They were marked by good works and love which was, and continued to be, expressed in service towards the saints. They had a consistent concern for fellow believers. To 'minister' <diakoneo> has the thought of waiting on others, attending to the needs of others, relieving the distresses of others and serving another's interests. This is true **deacon** work! These actions were prompted by their love for, and desire to serve and glorify God Himself. In return, they could be encouraged that God would remember and reward every act they had performed on behalf of others (1 Corinthians 4.5). What a contrast to that which God does **not** remember (Hebrews 10.17)! Note. Christians are not saved *by* good works, but *unto* good works (Ephesians 2.10). A living faith is a working faith (James 2.17-18).

11 *And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end:*

It was the 'strong inner desire' of the apostle that **all** the believers might show the same earnest and whole hearted zeal for the things of God 'unto the end' of their earthly pilgrim journey. Continuing in love towards God and one another would develop their faith and lead to a full enjoyment of the hope they had in Christ (cf. Hebrews 3.6). True believers are therefore marked by diligence and perseverance (John 8.31, Acts 14.22, Colossians 1.23, 4.2, 1 Timothy 2.15, 4.16).

12 *That ye ~~be~~ (become) not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.*

Not only had the Hebrews been 'lazy' or 'sluggish' in **hearing** (5.11) but they were at risk of becoming lazy in **doing**. This could be avoided if they made a definite choice to imitate the examples of great men and women of faith (Hebrews 11-12). The example to be used in these verses is Abraham who through a life of 'faith' and 'endurance' demonstrated he was fully persuaded of future promised blessing. *Hebrews 11.13: These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.* Abraham's faith was more than a general faith in God and His word. It was a practical faith which caused him to separate from the world and take the place of a stranger and pilgrim (Hebrews 11.8-9, 13). He was also marked by patient endurance, denying the temptation to be enriched by the King of Sodom (Genesis 14.21). This 'patience' gives the thought of one whom: **is not** wearied or exasperated with opposition or trial, and **refuses** to be daunted by the difficulties of the way. They are marked by a quiet waiting on God. Abraham lived a life of total commitment to God which ultimately resulted in his present possession of God's promises and great blessing.

13 *For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself, **14** Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. **15** And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. **16** For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife.*

The particular promise of God to Abraham considered here (v.14) is found in Genesis 22.16-18. This was a twofold promise involving **blessing** (to confer favour) and **multiplying**. Abraham would be blessed (Genesis 22.17) and all the nations of the earth through his 'seed', i.e. Christ (Genesis 22.18, Galatians 3.16). Abraham would also have many descendants and therefore be 'multiplied'. He had a **natural** seed (through Ishmael), **covenant** seed (through Isaac) and **spiritual** seed (through faith). Abraham's seed is both *heavenly* (the stars) and *earthly* (the sand of the seashore). *Galatians 3.7: You may be certain, then, that all those who 'believe God' are the real 'sons of Abraham' (Phillips).*

This promise was accompanied or confirmed by an oath whereby God 'swore by Himself' (see Exodus 32.13, Isaiah 45.23, Jeremiah 22.5). The purpose of an oath is to confirm what is said and put an end to all argument (v.16). God graciously added His oath in order to give a double assurance to the human heart so prone to doubt and unbelief. The word of some is not trustworthy or reliable and so a promise removes doubt. There should be no need for the believer to make promises. Their word alone should be sufficient and fully trustworthy (Matthew 5.34-37). We say what we mean and mean what we say.

God's repetition of 'bless' and 'multiply' (v.14) is a Hebrew mode of expression denoting emphasis and certainty. It also serves to extend the promise without measure and for eternity. This is the second occurrence of such an expression in Scripture. The **first** is found in *Genesis 2.17: And of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou dost not eat of it, for in the day of thine eating of it—dying thou dost die (YLT)*. In **Adam** = eternal death. The spiritual seed of **Abraham** = eternal blessing in Christ. The ultimate blessing is that of justification by faith, i.e. salvation (Galatians 3.6-9, 14). Note. After patient endurance Abraham obtained this promise. *In his lifetime he received a partial fulfilment or foretaste of the full and final realisation of this promise in heaven.*

17 *Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath:*

In accordance with the custom of men (v.16), God in grace confirmed His word 'by an oath'. This was done in order to assure all true believers (heirs of promise) that His purpose or 'counsel' is unchangeable ('immutable'). **There are two aspects of the will of God in NT Scripture.** There is the revealed will of God which brings responsibility and may be rejected by mankind (Luke 7.30, 1 Thess. 4.3). There is also the secret and immutable purpose of God which can never be thwarted (Rom. 9.19, Acts 4.27-28). This is *everlasting decree* or *eternal purpose* and is clearly the thought of v.17.

Every believer is an 'heir of promise'. *Jack Hunter: All that was promised to Abraham has been fulfilled in Christ, so that to be united to Christ the true Seed, is to be linked with Abraham and thus to be constituted heirs in association with the Christ. Galatians 3.29: And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to **the** promise.* The blessing of justification by faith in Abraham's Seed (Christ) has been fulfilled and conferred upon all believers.

18 *That by two immutable things (God's promise and oath), in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:*

All believers now have strong comfort and confidence in God. There is no room for doubt or discouragement. God has bound Himself to bless His people in Christ with every spiritual blessing. This is the eternal purpose of a God Who cannot lie! The Object of our faith and hope is therefore Christ. He is the One to Whom we 'fled for refuge'. This presents Christ as a city of refuge (Numbers 35, Joshua 20), One in whom safety, security and salvation is found. He is the Hope that we have laid hold of (through faith) and He is the ultimate goal of the Christian race (Hebrews 12.1-2). We therefore run with eyes fixed upon Him.

19 *Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil;*

Our Hope is an Anchor of the soul. *Albert Leckie: In these days of sailing ships, the anchor would be lowered onto a smaller boat and rowed in to the harbour. The anchor would then be secured and the crew would pull the ship into harbour via the rope connected to the anchor steadfast and sure. Our Hope is now on the shore (heaven). We are linked to Him by the chain of faith. As He is there, we also shall enter as He has. The greater the storm, the stronger the pull on the chain. As our Anchor, He is 'sure' or 'unfailing' and 'stedfast', i.e. 'firmly fixed' or 'able to bear any weight or stress'. Our Hope has entered within the veil, the heavenly sanctuary itself, where He is now seated (Hebrews 1.3, 9.12, 24). This Same is our Forerunner, even Jesus.*

20 *Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.*

The 'Forerunner' is one who goes in advance and prepares the way; one who was the first in a series that follows after. Jesus is our Forerunner. His very presence in heaven guarantees the eventual entrance of His redeemed people (John 14.3). This was a new concept to the Jewish mind. In the OT, the only person who could enter within the veil was the High Priest and that once a year not without blood. He entered as a representative of the people and no one could go with or follow after him. Praise God, Christ has opened up the way behind the curtain. We shall one day enter the Father's House!

*Will your anchor hold in the storms of life,
When the clouds unfold their wings of strife?
When the strong tides lift and the cables strain,
Will your anchor drift, or firm remain?*

*We have an anchor that keeps the soul
Steadfast and sure while the billows roll,
Fastened to the Rock which cannot move,
Grounded firm and deep in the Saviour's love.*