Holding to a Better Hope

Hebrews 6:9-20

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We’re continuing our series of **Fixing our Hearts on Jesus** with view toward **Holding to a Better Hope of the Future.**

Please turn with me to the New Testament book of Hebrews 6:9-20 – this is the Word of the Lord.

**Hebrews 6:9-20** “**9**But, beloved, we are convinced of better things concerning you, and things that accompany salvation, though we are speaking in this way. **10**For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward His name, in having ministered and in still ministering to the saints. **11**And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end, **12**so that you will not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.**13**For when God made the promise to Abraham, since He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, **14**saying, “I will surely bless you and I will surely multiply you.” **15**And so, having patiently waited, he obtained the promise. **16**For men swear by one greater *than themselves*, and with them an oath *given* as confirmation is an end of every dispute. **17**In the same way God, desiring even more to show to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His purpose, interposed with an oath, **18**so that by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have taken refuge would have strong encouragement to take hold of the hope set before us. **19**This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a *hope* both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil, **20**where Jesus has entered as a forerunner for us, having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

**2 reasons we can have full assurance of hope to the end**

**I. We Serve a Just God (vv.9-10)**

Just to set the context so that it makes sense. In verses 4-8, the NT writer to the Hebrews just gave what is perhaps the most severe of warnings about apostates walking away from Christ.

Walking away from the only Savior they will ever know. We’re talking full blown apostasy – a turning away from the faith.

An intentional Judas kind of forsaking of the Person of Christ.

Categorically, this doesn’t refer to non-Christians – the world is filled with unbelievers. An apostate doesn’t refer to a struggling Christian in the sense that they have backslidden for a time.

Scripture and the annals of church history is replete with believers in Christ who have struggled or have backslidden in their walk with Christ – King David is one such an example.

But categorically speaking, *no one would say* that King David apostatized or had left the faith.

Categorically speaking, an apostate is a person who is inside the covenant community. This person has professed faith in Christ and outwardly appears to be a believer.

And then later, consciously and intentionally repudiates their faith in Christ and leaves the community of the redeemed. Such a person was never a believer at all.

Such was the case with Judas Iscariot

For instance…

* Judas was one of the twelve apostles. He was commissioned by Christ to perform miraculous signs and wonders. Part and parcel of performing the miraculous was the casting out of demons from people.
* Judas walked with Christ for 3 ½ years. And after all that he saw – after all that he had witnessed, he ultimately and intentionally turned his back on Christ.

Judas had, for all intents and purposes, the highest form of divine revelation right there in front of him, incarnated in human flesh. And he utterly and completely *defected* from Jesus Christ.

Categorically speaking, *Judas bears all the earmarks of what an apostate is.*

But that is not what happened with the Apostle Peter.

* Peter was one of the twelve apostles. He was commissioned by Christ to perform miraculous signs and wonders too.
* He as the clear leader of the apostles.
* Peter walked with Christ for 3 ½ years. Like Judas, Peter had witnessed all that Jesus was and is: the Christ, the Son of the living God.

Peter had, for all intents and purposes, the highest form of divine revelation right there in front of him, incarnated in human flesh.

And when the pressure was on due to the questioning of a little girl who recognized Peter as being an apostle of Christ, Peter scandalized his Lord by lying, despite people already knowing who he was!

Categorically, Peter bears the earmarks of a believer who through fear stumbled/scandalized and later restored by Christ – but did not apostatize or defect from the faith completely (Luke 22:32)

Now fast forward to the NT book of Hebrews where the writer is speaking to the Hebrew church at large – a much broader audience.

And for whatever reason or another, he appears to be concerned. Perhaps because of Christian persecution, it appears some in the church were tempted to turn away from Christ completely and to return back to the dead works of their Judaism.

So what does he do?

He gave an example of those who were among the community of the redeemed turn away from Christ utterly and completely as a warning to those who are faithful to encourage God’s people to stay the course.

To press on. To persevere.

But what makes this a particularly hard saying for any of us reading this is that at first blush, he appears to submit this application to genuine believers in Christ!

As though there was the remote possibility that their salvation could be lost!

But then the writer pumps the breaks, so to speak, and doesn’t reach that conclusion.

No, the sigh of relief come in verse 9 – let’s read it…

**Hebrews 6:9-10** “But, beloved, we are convinced of better things concerning you, and things that accompany salvation, though we are speaking in this way.” God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward His name, in having ministered and in still ministering to the saints.”

In other words, he spoke in a certain manner to them, not in the normal way to provoke them to persevere. He really does believe they are truly saved. To put it by way of application…

**A. He warns us to help us persevere (cf. 6:4-8)**

* He knows that they are not descriptive of *verse 6* such that they have utterly forsaken Christ and are now counted enemies of the Cross of Christ.
* He also understands that they not descriptive of verse 8 such that they yield “thorns and thistles” “unfit and cursed” to be “burned.”

No, no, that’s not you – “***beloved*** (a term used exclusively for believers) we are convinced of better things concerning you, and things that accompany salvation, though we are speaking in this way.”

How does the writer know this?

**B. He remembers and rewards our work and love for him (v.10)**

**Hebrews 6:10** “For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward His name, in having ministered and in still ministering to the saints.”

In other words, the writer is essentially saying *‘here’s how I know this doesn’t describe genuine believers in Christ*’ – there’s a track record.

1. **Their labors in ministry – “your work”**
2. **Their affection for God – “the love which you have shown toward His name.”**
3. **Their love for God’s people – “serving the saints”**

We’re talking about a track record that is seen and felt by way of their love for Christ and for the saints. We’re talking about the good works of one who’s born again.

Having said that, out of necessity, let me say this: Doing good works is not a means to salvation, but is the result of salvation!

My faith in Christ and yours is demonstrated by an overflow of our works which are a bi-product of our salvation in Christ alone.

For instance, in James’ letter to the scattered twelve tribes. One of the issues he had to face were some who made a profession of faith, but he found that their life didn’t match up with their confession.

So he said that faith without works is dead – meaning that it has not come alive in that person’s living. It’s not real at all.

The Apostle Paul thanked the Thessalonians for their “work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thess. 1:3) and it was for this reason that he knew they had been chosen by God to be His (verse 4)

Why? Because what came out of their heart went along with their statement of faith.

The NT writer to the Hebrews called to mind in chapter 10 their service toward the saints and said to…

**Hebrews 10:32-35** “But remember the former days, when, after being enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings, **33**partly by being made a public spectacle through reproaches and tribulations, and partly by becoming sharers with those who were so treated. **34**For you showed sympathy to the prisoners and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one. **35**Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward.”

In other words, look how you persevered through it all.

If you find that a person’s faith has been shaken to its core, call to mind for them their former days – encourage them in the everlasting way (Ps. 139:23-24)

Remind them of their calling. Remind them to…

*“Take up the Cross for Jesus,
Despising all the shame,
Resolved whate’er oppose you,
His kingdom to proclaim.*”[[1]](#footnote-1)

We serve a just God. He is mindful of our frame and understands we are but dust. And it’s only by God’s divine power that he keeps us.

In fact, our being kept in Christ is an answer to Jesus’ high priestly prayer for his elect – that would remain in him and not apostatize.

For instance, in John 17:6-9 Jesus prays *not to Judas*, but for his disciples.

**John 17:6** “I have manifested Your name to the men whom You gave Me out of the world; they were Yours and You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word.”

In other words, out of the world of unredeemed humanity, God the Father had appointed some to salvation in Christ – that’s his prayer.

Now, spotlight your attention to verse 12

**John 17:12** “…While I was with them, I was keeping them in Your name which You have given Me; and I guarded them and not one of them perished *but the son of perdition*, so that the Scripture would be fulfilled.”

That is to say, Jesus’ prayer was to keep His people in his sovereign hands. And God the Father answered his prayer and none of them perished, except Judas.

Now notice verse 20

**John 17:20-21** “I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; **21**that they may all be one; even as You, Father, *are* in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me.”

Now, Christ looked beyond the disciples to those appointed to salvation – out from the world of humanity not only in Jesus’ day – not only in the apostles day – but in the church age that you people in this room whom God appointed for salvation because of Christ’s prayer.

You are Jesus’ answer to prayer, and your position in Christ is the most secured position you will ever come to know.

So even though we are speaking in this way by way of warning – “beloved, we are convinced of better things concerning you, and things that accompany salvation.”

And your spiritual body of work will demonstrate that you are no Judas!

Ephesians 1:4-6 “In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, **6**to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.”

So we can…

**II. Rejoice That Our God Desires You to be Overflowing with Rock Solid Hope (vv.11-20)**

**A. God has given many examples to imitate to help us persevere on to inherit his promises (vv.11-12)**

**Hebrews 6:11-12** “And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end, so that you will not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.”

That is to say

* Don’t be lazy in your faith. Your Christian walk is a life of steady persistence and takes work (v. 12) The diligence that you show in your faith is confirmation of the hope that is in you.
* Look forward. Follow the saved. And a prime example he offers to the Hebrews and by extension to us is…

**1. The example of Abraham (vv.13-15)**

**Hebrews 6:13-15** “For when God made the promise to Abraham, since He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, saying, “I WILL SURELY BLESS YOU AND I WILL SURELY MULTIPLY YOU.” And so, having patiently waited, he obtained the promise.”

Why Abraham? Ok, we can look back through the annals of biblical history to think this through.

Remember what happened in Genesis 12 – Call to mind God calling of Abraham

* **God commands Abraham to leave** his country, people, and father's household (Genesis 12:1).
* **God promises to show him a new land** (the land of Canaan).
* **God promises to make Abraham into a great nation** (Genesis 12:2).
* **God vows to bless Abraham** and make his name great.
* **Abraham is called to be a blessing** to others.
* **God declares He will bless those who bless Abraham** and curse those who curse him (Genesis 12:3).
* **All peoples on earth will be blessed through Abraham**—a reference to the coming of the Messiah through his lineage.

Now, fast forward to Genesis 22. God told Abraham to sacrifice his one and only son Isaac.

Regardless of how Abraham felt when he heard those words – he obeyed. And just when the knife was about to slice the throat of his son Isaac, God steadies Abraham’s hand and offered him a substitute.

After that, God not only reaffirmed his promise to Abraham, he multiplied promise after promise to him (Gen. 12:2; 13:16; 15:5; 17:4; 18:18).

All Abraham witnessed was the birth of his son Isaac as a confirmation of God’s future promises, but he never did get to see the unfolding of God’s promise – but he believed in the character of God.

And if God had kept his promises to Abraham, a man of great faith, will he not keep his promises to you of little faith?

* God has promised to meet your needs, yes? (Luke 12:22-31)
* God has promised to hear your prayers, yes? (Matthew 7:7-11)
* God has promised to never leave you nor forsake you, yes? (Hebrews 13:5)
* God has promised to forgive you of your sins if you trust in Christ, yes? (Ephesians 1:7)
* God has promised to take you home one day and to usher you into eternal glory, yes? (Col. 3:4)

Will we doubt our Lord at times – yes. We will become impatient? Yes. But should those doubts begin to overshadow our faith – look to Abraham and imitate his faith and be patient.

Our Lord will come through, as he promised.

Although Abraham didn’t see God’s promises right away –

Verse 15 “And so, having patiently waited, he obtained the promise.

**B. God has gone over and above with two unchangeable things to guarantee the promise (vv.13-18)**

**Hebrews 6:16-18** - For men swear by one greater than themselves, and with them an oath given as confirmation is an end of every dispute. In the same way God, desiring even more to show to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His purpose, interposed with an oath, so that by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have taken refuge would have strong encouragement to take hold of the hope set before us.

**1. God makes promises**

**2. God makes an oath**

**3. God cannot lie**

**C. God has given us an anchor of hope for our soul (vv.18c-20)**

**Hebrews 6:18c-19** “We who have taken refuge would have strong encouragement to take hold of the hope set before us. This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil…

**1. Jesus the forerunner and eternal high priest**

**Hebrews 6:20** “where Jesus has entered as a forerunner for us, having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

1. <https://hymnary.org/text/take_up_the_cross_for_jesus> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)