

Hebrews

The Certainty of God's Promise

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INTRODUCTION:

The New Testament warns believers to persevere in their faith. This is a warning that is different from that given to unbelievers. Their warning is that if you fail to believe in Jesus and continue to do the deeds of the flesh, you will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Galatians 5:16-24 (NASB95)

¹⁶ But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law. ¹⁹ Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, ²¹ envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that **those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.** ²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. ²⁴ Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

The Holy Spirit's warning in this chapter is that we must not become dull of hearing and fall away from our faith. We must persevere in our faith and seek to become more mature in our faith day by day.

Galatians 6:7-10 (NASB95)

⁷ Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. ⁸ For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. ⁹ Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary. ¹⁰ So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.

Paul tells us that no created thing will be able to separate us from the love of God.

But I will warn you that **you** can choose to fall away from God because He gave us free will and that is a very dangerous thing. Our free will continues when we accept Christ as our Savior. But as a truly saved believer our **will** needs to be a **continuous** avoidance of the desires of the flesh and seek Christ's righteousness in our lives. That is perseverance!

Hebrews 6:4-6 (NASB95)

⁴ For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, ⁵ and have tasted the good word of

God and the powers of the age to come, ⁶ and *then* have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame.

We must persevere in our faith. Our lives must be filled with the desire to glorify God in everything that we do and say. We must avoid dullness of hearing where we no longer desire to mature according to God's word.

When it comes to the subject of growing up there are a ton of different opinions as to what it means and who has reached some level of maturity. And apparently when it comes to rules there are a lot of kids who do not want to live under a set of rules especially if mom and dad are making them.

The reality is that God has given parents the responsibility of raising their children to maturity which is defined in Hebrews 5 as being able to consistently make good decisions, or more precisely, the ability to distinguish good from evil and then to live accordingly.

Unfortunately, immaturity does not recognize its lack of experience... which leads us into a lot of conflict with immature people. Children simply do not know what they do not know. We who are further along on the growth curve have learned through experience many lessons that they simply do not have a clue about.

So what do we do? We warn our kids. We make rules. We keep tabs on where they are, what they are doing, and who they are with. Is it a lack of trust? No, it is an experienced knowledge of hazards that can happen in this world.

Last Sunday we looked at the first few verses of Hebrews 6 where the author gave a severe warning urging all who follow Jesus to stay firm in their faith and to persevere in his ways. He warned us to not to allow our hearts to harden against God and his word after having turned to him but to stay close to Jesus.

So, is that a lack of trust that is being displayed here? No. It is simply an understanding of the dangers that the immature followers of Jesus lack. But now the warning changes to encouragement. The author of Hebrews concludes with a confidence and hope that the reader – today that is you and I – will mature in our faith and become a master at living.

All Stand and Read Scripture

Hebrews 6:9-20 (NASB95)

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.

Prayer

I. God's Character Promotes Our Maturity.

Hebrews 6:9 (NASB95)

⁹ But, beloved, we are convinced of better things concerning you, and things that accompany salvation, though we are speaking in this way.

I want you to note the sudden shift in tone which has gone from a stern warning to an encouraging statement of confidence. Now, instead of the “in your face” concern of the past few verses he suddenly stops, puts his arm around you and draws you close to say that more warnings are not needed because most of you are different.

Unlike the dull of hearing, you are growing into a confident spiritual maturity. You are not like the immature in the world that bounce like pin balls in an arcade machine from post to bumper to spinners and thumpers only to be lost down the center hole after scoring a few measly points. You are not like them at all!

You are different than them. You are becoming a master of the game called life. So let me ask you a very important question. This is critically important. Are you ready? Here it is...

Are you different?

Does the author speak here of you? Are you really becoming a master at living? Are you maturing into a man or woman of God? Where ever you are on the scale of maturity you can become more mature and you can be the person that the author of Hebrews is envisioning.

So let me ask a second question. So what makes it possible to be different and mature in our faith? Verse 10 identifies **two critical factors directly connected to the nature of God** that will encourage us in our quest for maturity.

1) God is Just and Fair.

Hebrews 6:10 (NASB95)

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.

God is above all other things – just. He is fair. Life is not fair, but God is. Eventually all that is unjust in this world will be made right in the next.

2) God Will not Forget.

And secondly, God will not overlook all of the things that you have done for Him if you are able to endure unto the end.

ILLUSTRATION:

I have read that a missionary coming home from Africa arrived in NYC and embarked from the same boat on the same day as Teddy Roosevelt when he came home from one of his safaris. As Teddy stepped from the boat there was a brass band, a limo, and a host of important personalities including the mayor of the city. For the missionary and his wife there was no one. No band. No limo. No entourage of celebrities and important people.

Teddy left the pier to be taken to the Waldorf-Astoria where he enjoyed a round of banquets and a night of parties celebrating his return from Africa. The missionary left the pier and after a quick taxi ride found a cheap flat to rent. Teddy had spent a few weeks shooting lions and rhinos. The missionary had spent a few decades telling lost people about Jesus and helping them build new and rich lives.

Now I ask you, "Is this life fair?" No it is not. But God is, and I know that this missionary ultimately received everything that was fair and just because God is not unjust.

Do you get the idea? It is not about justice and rewards in the here and now. God's perspective is vastly larger than ours. We are limited by time and space, history and culture, and the finite and temporary. But God's world is not confined by a cradle at the beginning and a casket at the end.

If you know that – I mean really know it – it changes the way you live. Knowledge changes practice. So what does it change? The text reveals two characteristics of change.

II. Our Active Faith Promotes Maturity.

Hebrews 6:10 (NASB95)

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.

Do you want to become spiritually mature? The first step is a life of service.

A. Steps to Maturity: Acts of Service.

Now notice the language of love here in this verse – acts of service. We display our love of God through our service to others. Serving others is one of God's love languages.

One of the greatest challenges of the American church today is that we have become a body of consumers rather than a family of contributors. This represents a level of maturity that is not seen in every person and in every place. It involves the continuous process of teaching people to become servants instead of catering to their constant demands for satisfying their nonstop needs.

Do you think you are mature? Let me ask you a simple question. Are you part of the consuming culture or are you contributing in service to others and displaying your love of God by serving others?

There is a second sign. It is very simple – diligence.

B. Steps to Maturity: Diligence

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.

Maturity calls for diligence to the very end. That is, staying with it to the very conclusion of things and never ever quitting. Simple – but at times incredibly difficult.

There must also be a diligence displayed in our lives to the task at hand. We have started to harvest the field but there is much more to be done. It is hard – harder than it looks and we grow weary at the work, but it is ours to do – if we are seeking God's blessings.

III. The Assurance of God's Promises Promotes Maturity.

Hebrews 6:13-17 (NASB95)

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,

What it all comes down to is that your faith and patience is rooted in the promises of God. The author of Hebrews makes it very clear that when God makes a promise and backs it up by an oath that what he said he will do he will do.

ILLUSTRATION:

When you were a kid, did you ever make a promise and then say, “Cross my heart and hope to die...stick a needle in my eye”. When I was a kid – that was a serious promise! Or maybe you made a “pinkie promise.” Or, you made a promise to do something and then swore on your mother’s grave – which is an oath that I do not quite understand its meaning. Do I have to kill my mother if I break my promise? Or maybe you would make a sort of gross deal and each of you spit in your hand before you sealed it with a handshake.

Listen, there is a progression in life that leads from Promise to Blessing. You see this progression throughout the Bible and observe it in all of life.

First there is a Promise. An agreement is reached between two involved parties. Someone is the giver and someone is the receiver. Someone is to be the blessed and someone else is to be the blesser. In the case of marriage you see a double promise and the hope of blessing flowing both ways.

After the Promise comes the Vow. This is the moment that the terms of the promised is mutually agreed upon. The pinkie promise is not really made until the pinkies are linked – that is just the way it works.

After the Vow comes the Diligence to keep the promise. Life happens. Here is where the diligence takes place. Here is where the faith and patience happens. Here is where the fulfillment of the promise is lived out – day after day until the time is complete and we come to the final moment when the blessing is reached.

After the Diligence comes the Blessing.

Do you remember the story of Noah. God made him a promise of a flood and his family's salvation. He told him to build an ark. The days that Noah spent on this earth building a 450 ft ocean liner out of wood to house thousands of animals took service, diligence, and patience. But eventually in the fullness of time the waters came out of the sky and the blessing of salvation was obtained through the promise.

Do you remember the story of Moses and the people of Israel? God made them a promise. If you will follow my laws and my ways I will bring you to a land of milk and honey – the promised land. They walked to the edge of the Jordan and because they lacked the service, diligence and the patience they fell back and wandered for 40 years in the wilderness of life but eventually – in the fullness of time they obtained the blessing of the promised land.

Do you remember the promise that God has given you? If you will put your faith in my son and follow him all the days of your life I will prepare a place for you in heaven. You will enjoy with me all the wonders of eternity. Today you walk in the wilderness of life and with service and diligence. As you patiently wait on God you **will** receive the blessings of the promise! It may not be in this lifetime, but God will be faithful to His promises.

CONCLUSION:

Then the Holy Spirit concludes by reminding us of the assured **hope** that we have when we understand God's character, live an active faith, and rest on the promises of God.

Hebrews 6:18-20 (NASB95)

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.

What are the "two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie"? It is God's promise, which in itself is absolutely trustworthy, and God's oath confirming that promise.

Numbers 23:19 (NASB95)

¹⁹ "God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent; Has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?"

ILLUSTRATION:

In the Wizard of Oz, Dorothy and her friends, the scarecrow, the tin man, and the cowardly lion, all followed the yellow brick road to find the Wizard – only to discover that there was no wizard at all – only a lonely old man hiding behind the curtain pulling levers and making noisy promises.

We, who follow after Jesus, whether a new Christian or a seasoned one, do not seek a wizard but a Savior. Our road is rough and the way is narrow but behind the veil in the inner sanctuary is our Lord Jesus Christ. The hope set before us is Jesus Himself, our eternal high priest, and the gospel He has brought. Our access to God is direct. Our hope is sure. Our future secure and our confidence is untouchable.

What A Day That Will Be.