

FPFWC Christian Development



Experiencing Hope

June 2024

Summer Quarter

June 22, 2024

Lesson #4 – Full Assurance

SCRIPTURE TEXT – Hebrew 6:9-20

ICE BREAKERS-

How would you describe to a friend the hope that you have in Jesus Christ?

How can a believer's patience be strengthened?

Key Verse: “Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.”—Hebrews 6:19–20

LESSON BACKGROUND –

The book of Hebrews is unique in the collection of New Testament letters in that the author's name is never divulged. But anonymous doesn't mean completely unknown since the original readers had a personal relationship with that person (Hebrews 13:22–24). Throughout the centuries, scholars have speculated that the writer could have been Barnabas, Silas, Apollos, Luke, Paul, or Priscilla. Even so, the book's anonymity does not make it any less God's truth; not stating the identity of the author was a common practice at that time, especially when the original audience had a connection with the author. Even though we don't know the author's name, the original audience did!

The absence of a title to this letter in the earliest existing Greek manuscripts makes it challenging to identify the original recipients. Some scholars think that the author lived in Rome. This assertion is based on the writings of Clement of Rome (lived about AD 35–99), who cited numerous passages from Hebrews (see the many quotes from Hebrews 1 in the nonbiblical 1 Clement 36). In addition, there is a reference to Italy in Hebrews 13:24.

The lack of information regarding the recipients has resulted in no shortage of proposals! The passage of time alluded to in Hebrews 5:12 is thought to indicate that a second generation of believers is in view. The word remember in Hebrews 13:7 is taken to support this proposal, as this verse challenges the original audience to recall instructions from the leaders of the first generation of believers. This theory is viable as long as the word remember is intended to mean “recall information from memory.” But the Greek word translated remember

can also mean “keep thinking about,” as it seems to intend in Hebrews 11:15. There, the same underlying Greek word is translated “mindful.” In any case, the many references to the priesthood and numerous Old Testament personalities (Hebrews 11) point to an audience of Jewish background.

There are various ways to outline the book. One way is in terms of five passages of warning. These five are Hebrews 2:1–4; 3:7–4:13; 5:11–6:12; 10:19–39; and 12:14–29. Each warning section includes a call to salvation and a vivid description of the consequences if God’s way is rejected.

Today’s text includes part of the third warning. This passage consists of four sections split between negative and positive appeals. Hebrews 5:11–14 is negative, balanced by the positive 6:1–3. Hebrews 6:4–8 returns to a negative warning and is offset by the encouragement found in today’s lesson.

LESSON COMMENTARY

6:9–12. Despite the rebuke, exhortation, warning, and fearful illustration, the writer now gives a word of encouragement. This section marks a vast contrast to the apostates of 6:4–8. Even though the writer is speaking in this ominous way, in the readers’ case he is convinced of better things concerning them (6:9) than being “cursed” and “burned” like the thorns and thistles of 6:8. The better things that he is certain to see in his readers are the virtues that accompany salvation. He is hopeful of most of them being genuinely saved and optimistic about those who were dull (5:11) or sluggish (6:12) coming to Christ by faith. The for beginning 6:10 furnishes the basis for this optimism. God will not forget the readers’ work and the love shown when they ministered ... to the saints (true believers) and were still ministering to them (6:10). Brotherly love is an unquestioned token of possessing spiritual life (1Jn 3:14). He clearly sees this in most of them. Saved though they are, the writer is not satisfied with their spiritual growth. He wants each one of them to show the same diligence that they have already shown in loving service to others, so as to obtain a full assurance of their hope (Heb 6:11). They are to exert necessary moral effort so as to increase in the certainty of someday possessing all that is divinely pledged to them. The design of this growth in assurance of salvation is so that they will not be sluggish in discharging their spiritual duties. Rather he wants them to become imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises (6:12). But some of the readers of Hebrews did not have faith and were in danger of not resting in Christ. 6:13–20. The basis of the writer’s above encouragement is his assurance that God is faithful to His promises. This paragraph confirms the claim of 6:12 that only a persevering faith eventually secures divinely promised blessings. This

confirmation comes through the example of Abraham, the father of Jewish people. He is the classic biblical example of a person who believed God's promises. For when God made the promise to Abraham (v. 13) in Gn 12:2 that someday he would father numerous offspring, He guaranteed this promise by adding an oath to it. The oath was sworn by God in Gn 22:17, assuring Abraham that the Lord would surely multiply his children (Heb 6:14). The effect of this divine oath on the patriarch was that it encouraged him to patiently wait, and eventually he obtained the promised progeny (6:15).

For (6:16) explains the significance in antiquity that an oath had on its recipient. A person customarily swore in the presence of an authority, such as a ruler, king, etc. Such an authority could use his power to punish him, should he fail to live up to his sworn oath. Consequently a sworn oath verified by appropriate authority would end every dispute and remove all doubt from the recipient. Because God wanted to show ... the unchangeableness of His purpose to bless Abraham even more than His promise could, He interposed the promise with an oath (6:17).

God's objective in all this was that by the two unchangeable things, guarantees of the divine promise and oath, Abraham and his heirs would have strong encouragement to persist in the hope set before them (6:18). This hope is sure—a joyful certainty of someday possessing all benefits divinely pledged them. Such a hope is also an anchor of the soul. An anchor is thrown overboard, and though a sailor does not see it, it plunges to, and takes hold in, the sea's bottom, securing the ship and holding it in place during a storm. Similarly, a believer's hope enters within the heavenly sanctuary behind the veil (6:19) and rests on God; here Jesus has entered ... for us (6:20). Inasmuch as divine promises rest on God's character and are confirmed by His oath, they are absolutely certain of fulfillment. Jesus has entered heaven, preceding us as a forerunner. The gospel has pledged that we, too, will someday enter there. It is absolutely certain to happen. This hope, this certainty, the believer can confidently maintain.

LESSON NUGGET – Diligence, faith, and patience, are required to live the Christian life. Maturity is not automatic. God's promise and God's oath assure us that we are His, and God's character backs up His words.

Sources: Moody Bible Commentary, Standard Lesson Commentary, The Word for Today Bible, and The Essential Everyday Bible Commentary