

Encouragement and Exhortation about Our Salvation

Hebrews 6:9-20

Hebrews 6:9-20 - *“But, beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you, yes, things that accompany salvation, though we speak in this manner. ¹⁰ For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister. ¹¹ And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, ¹² that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.*

¹³ For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, ¹⁴ saying, “Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you.” ¹⁵ And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. ¹⁶ For men indeed swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is for them an end of all dispute.

¹⁷ Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath, ¹⁸ that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us. ¹⁹ This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil, ²⁰ where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.”

Background Notes

There are five warning passages in the epistle to the Hebrews. The first warning is in Hebrews 2, the second is in Hebrews 3 & 4, and the third is in Hebrews 5 & 6. The fourth warning is in Hebrews 10, and the fifth is in Hebrew 12. The third warning passage begins in verse 11 of chapter 5 and continues all the way through chapter 6, so we are still working through the third warning in this section of Hebrews 6.

The writer to the Hebrews was concerned that some of his readers might turn back to Judaism. Why would Judaism appeal to them? Well, there was certainly more grandeur in the rituals of Judaism than there was in the simple Christian faith. And there was greater safety in Judaism. The Roman persecution of Christians had already begun when this epistle was written in the mid to late 60sAD.

The author warned his readers that abandoning Christianity and going back to Judaism was serious business. Returning to the Old Testament sacrifices and the Temple worship meant that they did not believe the work of Christ was sufficient and finished. By returning to Judaism, they would be aligning themselves with those who crucified Christ and put Him to open shame (v6). Abandoning the Christian faith would demonstrate that they had never been true Christians, who place their faith in Christ alone.

But in verse 9 there was good news: *“But, beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you, yes, things that accompany salvation, though we speak in this manner.”* Verse 9 indicates that the author of Hebrews was convinced that most of his readers were true believers and they would not turn away and go back to Judaism.

Do you see how verse 9 is another indication that the people described in verses 4-6 were unbelievers who only professed Christianity? Clearly those people who only professed to be believers (v4-6) were contrasted to the true believers (v9). In addition, notice that the author referred to the mere “professors of faith” (v4-6) as *“they”* - whereas he referred to the true believers (v9) as *“you.”*

The “better things that accompany salvation” are better than the items mentioned in verses 4-5. Those items were not evidence of true faith. That’s a powerful argument.

The rest of the chapter presented some further truths about salvation.

Doctrinal Points

1. Christian love and service give evidence of salvation.

Verses 9-10: *“But, beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you, yes, things that accompany salvation, though we speak in this manner. For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister.”*

Even though the writer spoke about the possibility that some of them might fall away and turn back to Judaism, he was confident that most of them were true believers. Why? Because of their love and their service for Christ (v10). They had ministered to the saints, and they had labored in love for one another. This was evidence of their salvation.

Christian love and service give evidence of salvation today as well. If people say they’re Christians it may be only a mere profession of faith if there’s no fruit in their lives. That’s what James meant when he said that *“faith without works is dead”* (James 2:26).

Good works do not save a person. They don’t even partially save a person! God saves people when they put their faith in Jesus Christ! But not any old kind of faith is saving faith. The spur-of-the-moment emotion that raises a hand or walks down an aisle is not saving faith. True saving faith results in the good works of Christian love and service.

What kind of faith do you have? Perhaps you’ve made a profession of Christian faith - but is there evidence in the way you live that indicates you are truly saved? Or do you just attend services on Sunday morning?

Examine your heart. What kind of faith do you have? Is it saving faith? Christian love and service are evidences of salvation.

2. Endurance and perseverance bring assurance of salvation.

Verses 11-15: *“And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises. For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, saying, “Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you.”¹⁵ And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.”*

Do you ever have doubts about your salvation? If you do, what’s the best solution to your doubts? The answer is: **don’t give up!** Continue on in the faith! Hang in there! Continue to be diligent in reading your Bible, even though you’re discouraged. Continue to meet with other believers, even if you’d rather stay home. Enduring and persevering are not only **evidence** of your salvation – enduring and persevering will bring you **assurance** of your salvation.

Back in my early college days, I had a lot of questions about the Christian faith, and as a result I had a lot of doubts about my salvation. I went to a secular university, and when those unbelieving college professors began to raise questions about the existence of God and the credibility of the Bible, I begin to have doubts. What was the solution? I continued to read my Bible. In fact, I began to study the Bible like never before! And I continued to meet with other Christians, both on the college campus and in church. And guess what? Gradually the doubts went away, and in their place came great assurance of salvation. Endurance and perseverance brought assurance of salvation.

In verses 13-15, the writer used Abraham as an example of a believer who endured and persevered. Abraham waited many long years for the promised son, Isaac, and he endured through the test of sacrificing Isaac. And then God gave him assurance of His promise of blessing. Endurance and perseverance bring assurance of salvation.

3. God’s promise and oath are a guarantee of salvation.

Verses 16 -20: *“For men indeed swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is for them an end of all dispute. Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us. This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil, where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.”*

When a person promises to tell the truth and then adds, “So help me God,” that’s an oath. It’s like a double promise to tell the truth - no matter what. The point of these verses is that God has confirmed His promise of salvation to believers **by His promise** and **by His oath**. He didn’t have to doubly confirm the promise, because God cannot lie (v18). But He did it for our sakes, so that we might be greatly encouraged by His absolute guarantee of salvation. God condescended to promise salvation **and** to back it up with His own oath! These are the “two immutable things” of verse 18 – His promise and His oath.

That's a pretty good guarantee, isn't it? How much more security do you need? God's immutable promise and oath are our guarantee of salvation.

In verses 18-20, four figures are used to emphasize the believer's security and God's guarantee of salvation :

Figure 1 - the city of refuge. "...that... we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us" (v18). In the Old Testament, people who fled to the city of refuge were absolutely safe. No one could harm them.

Figure 2 - an anchor. "This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil" (v19). Just as sailors anchor their ship in a secure place, so we are anchored in an absolutely secure place, the very presence of God in Heaven.

Figure 3 - a forerunner. "...where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus." In the Old Testament Tabernacle and Temple, the focus of God's presence was behind the veil, in the Holy of Holies. As our Forerunner, our Lord has entered into Heaven itself, into the very presence of God. He's not in heaven only as our representative, like the Old Testament priests - He is there as our **Forerunner**. His presence there guarantees that we'll be there some day! He guarantees our salvation and an eternal future in Heaven.

Figure 4 - a high priest. "...having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek." We'll discuss Melchizedek in chapter 7. The point here is that we have an **eternal High Priest** who is in Heaven right now. He's representing us, and He's waiting for us! Do you think He's going to let us go and forget about us? No way! This is all part of God's guarantee to us. God's promise and oath are a guarantee of salvation.

Practical Application

Imitate the right people!

Verse 12: "...do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises." It's not wrong to imitate people, as long as you imitate the right people. Who are the right people? Who are the people whose faith we should imitate? Look at the verse. It's **those who patiently endure and persevere in the faith**.

Who do you want to imitate? Unfortunately, we tend to want to imitate sports icons, and entertainment stars, and people who are financially successful. So often we fail to imitate the humble believers who endure and persevere in the Christian faith.

Be careful! Make sure you choose the right role models! And this advice is not just for young people - it's good advice for all of us. Imitate the right people!