

A Greater Hope

JESUS IS GREATER #10 - Pastor Gary Combs - September 29, 2024 - Hebrews 6:9-20

INTRO: Good morning church! We're returning with Part 2 to a series that we began last Fall. It's entitled, "JESUS IS GREATER: An Exposition of Hebrews." Our theme verse is:

Hebrews 1:4 (NLT) This shows that the Son is far **greater than** the angels, just as the name God gave him is **greater than** their names.

Last Sunday, we heard the warning from Hebrews 5:11-6:8, not to fall away from the path of spiritual growth and to instead press on toward the goal of maturity in Christ Jesus. Now today, we're going to consider the wonderful encouragement from Hebrews 6:9-20 and see how we are can be assured of **a greater hope** because of the faithful promises of God.

Need: We live in a world that often feels unstable, where uncertainty looms large, and the promises that people make to us often come up empty. Unkept political promises, unfulfilled contracts, broken wedding vows... who can we trust? It's hard not to lose hope.

Trans: Yet, as followers of Christ, we are called to live with confident hope, a hope that is grounded in something far greater than the fleeting assurances of this world. Our hope is anchored in the promises of God, and this hope is not wishful thinking, but a firm and steadfast confidence that God will be faithful to fulfill His Word.

BODY: In Hebrews 6:9-20, the author encouraged believers not to lose heart, but to cling to a greater hope in the promises of God. We can have this greater hope in the promises of God. How can we have this greater hope in the promises of God? The text gives **three reasons** we can have this greater hope in the promises of God?

Read text: Hebrews 6:9-20 (ESV) ⁹ Though we speak in this way, yet in your case, beloved, we feel sure of better things—things that belong to salvation. ¹⁰ For God is not unjust so as to overlook your work and the love that you have shown for his name in serving the saints, as you still do. ¹¹ And we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness to have the full assurance of hope until the end, ¹² so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises. ¹³ For when God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself, ¹⁴ saying, "Surely I will bless you and multiply you." ¹⁵ And thus Abraham, having patiently waited, obtained the promise. ¹⁶ For people swear by something greater than themselves, and in all their disputes an oath is final for confirmation. ¹⁷ So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath, ¹⁸ so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us. ¹⁹ We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, ²⁰ where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

WE CAN HAVE THIS GREATER HOPE IN GOD'S PROMISES...

1. Because we can be assured by **God's justice**.

EXP: (9-12) First, note two key words in today's text: "**hope**" (11,18,19 - 3x) and "**promise**" (12,13,15,17 - 4x). Last week's passage ("Though we speak in this way") was not aimed at making believers doubtful of their salvation. It was written to warn them about being negligent in pursuing spiritual maturity. Having been warned, this wonderful encouragement about being assured because "God is not **unjust**" (10) is given.

"**In your case beloved**" (9) (ἀγαπητός, *agapētos*) - beloved, esteemed, dear. In contrast to "the case of those" (6:4) who may have "fallen away" (6:6), he "feels sure" about the "beloved" recipients of his letter.

"**Feel sure**" (9) (πειθω, *peithō*) - to persuade, to trust, have confidence, be confident

"**Better things**" (9) (κρείττων, *kreittōn*) - more advantageous, more excellent

"**Belong**" (9) (ἔχω, *echō*) - to have, i.e. to hold, to possess, KJV renders it "accompany." The "things of salvation," or that "accompany salvation." Not conversion, but sanctification.

"**Unjust**" (10) (ἄδικος, *adikos*) - Lit., "not just." God is not "not just." He is both just and Justifier.

"**Overlook**" (10) (ἐπιλανθάνομαι, *epilanthanomai*) - to forget, to neglect, overlook. God is just. He will not forget their "**work**" (ἔργον, *ergon*), nor "**love**" (ἀγάπη, *agapē*). Lit., "work and labor of love."

"**Earnestness**" (11) (σπουδή, *spondē*) - with haste, earnestness, diligence; to give all diligence.

"**Full assurance**" (11) (πληροφορία, *plērophoria*) - full assurance, most certain confidence.

"**Hope**" (11,18,19 - 3x) (ἐλπίς, *elpis*) - expectation of good, hope; joyful and confident expectation.

"**Sluggish**" (12) (νωθρός, *nōthros*) - slow, dull, sluggish. Same as 5:11 "dull" of hearing.

"**Imitators**" (12) (μιμητής, *mimētēs*) - an imitator:—follower. Where we get the word mimic.

"**Faith**" (12) (πίστις, *pistis*) - conviction of the truth of anything, to trust completely, to believe.

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“**Patience**” (12) (μακροθυμία, *makrothumia*) - Lit., “longsuffering,” patience, endurance, perseverance.

“**Inherit**” (12) (κληρονομέω, *klēronomeō*) - to be an heir, to inherit; to receive the portion assigned to one, receive an allotted portion, receive as one's own or as a possession

“**Promise(s)**” (12,13,15,17 - 4x) (ἐπαγγελία, *epangelia*) - pledge, promise, divine assurance of good.

ARG: God is both just and Justifier. He will not unjustly charge sin to us after our redemption.

Romans 3:26 (ESV) It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

“Judgment now decides for the sinner instead of against him. ...If God be just, I, a sinner, alone and without a substitute, must be punished; but Jesus stands in in my stead and is punished for me; and now, if God be just, I, a sinner, standing in Christ, can never be punished. God must change His nature before one soul, for whom Jesus was a substitute, can ever by any possibility suffer the lash of the law.” — Charles Spurgeon, *Morning & Evening*, p. 538

ILL: The double jeopardy clause of the Fifth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution says, “Nor shall any person be subject for the same offense to be twice put in jeopardy of life or limb.” This is even more true with God.

APP: We may feel as if the work we do for the Lord is wasted. You’re pursuing maturity, but you feel stuck in a spiritual slump. Yet nothing we do for the Lord is wasted! He is just and will not overlook our work and labor of love. Therefore, let us... 1) Show full assurance of hope to the end (11), 2) Avoid being sluggish in our spiritual progress (12), and 3) Be imitators of those who inherit promises (12). We can have assured hope!

2. Because we can be convinced by God’s character.

EXP: (13-18a) The 2nd reason we can have a greater hope is God’s “unchanging character” (17). When God made His promise to Abraham, He swore by Himself because there was no one greater. This was a declaration that His word is irrevocable, backed by the weight of His divine character. God’s promises are not like human promises, which can be broken or altered. They are as sure and steady as God Himself!

“**Greater**” (13, 16 - 2x) (μέγας, *meγas*) - large, great. God is greater than all.

“**Swear**” (13) (ὀμνύω, *omnuō*) - to swear, to promise, with an oath.

“**Bless and multiply**” (14) - refers to the word of God to Abraham after offering his son Isaac:

Genesis 22:15-18 (NKJV) ¹⁵ Then the Angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time out of heaven, ¹⁶ and said: “By Myself I have sworn, says the Lord, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son— ¹⁷ blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. ¹⁸ In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.”

The apostle Paul said that this “Seed” is Christ:

Galatians 3:16 (NKJV) Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, “And to seeds,” as of many, but as of one, “And to your Seed,” who is Christ.

“**Patiently waited**” (15) (μακροθυμέω, *makrothumeō*) - believers should wait patiently as Abraham did.

“**Oath**” (16, 17 - 2x) (ὄρκος, *horkos*) - that which has been pledged or promised with an oath

“**Confirmation**” (16) (βεβαίωσις, *bebaiōsis*) - stabiliment:—confirmation; to produce confidence.

“**More convincingly**” (17) (περισσότερον, *perissoteron*) - over and above, more than is necessary.

“**Heirs of the promise**” (17) - one who by faith, receives the promise of salvation through Jesus Christ. They inherit the same promise given to Abraham, now fulfilled in Christ.

Galatians 3:29 (ESV) And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.

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“**Unchangeable character**” (17) (ἀμετάθετος, *ametathetos*) - not transposed, not to be transferred, fixed, unalterable, immutable(-ility).

“**Purpose**” (17) (βουλή, *boulē*) - volition, i.e. advice, or (by implication) purpose, advise, counsel, will.

“**Guaranteed**” (17) (μεσιτεύω, *mesiteuō*) - to act as a mediator between litigating or covenanting parties to accomplish something by interposing between two parties; to mediate; act as a sponsor or surety

“**Two unchangeable things**” (18) (πρᾶγμα, *pragma*) - a deed, a thing, an accomplished fact. What are these two unchangeable things? God’s purpose and God’s promise (Some say oath and promise).

“**Impossible**” (18) (ἀδύνατος, *adunatos*) - no strength, impotent, powerless. God cannot lie.

“**God to lie**” (18) (ψεύδομαι, *pseudomai*) - to lie, to speak deliberate falsehoods; to deceive one by a lie, to lie to. “*His not being able to deny Himself is a proof, not of weakness, but of strength incomparable.*” — JFB

ARG: God does not lie. He always keeps His promises.

Numbers 23:19 (NIV) God is not human, that he should lie, not a human being, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?

Speaking of Abraham, Paul wrote...

Romans 4:20-21 (ESV) ²⁰ No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, ²¹ fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised.

ILL: The time between God's initial promise to Abraham when he was age 75 (Gen. 12:1-4), and the birth of Isaac when he was 100 (Gen. 21:5) was approximately 25 years. Despite the long wait, God remained faithful to His word, and Abraham's faith in God's promise is highlighted throughout Scripture as a model of enduring faith. “And thus Abraham having patiently waited, obtained the promise” (15).

APP: In a world where people fail us, where even the best intentions sometimes fall short, it is easy to become cynical about promises. Yet, God's promises are different because God is different. His character is true, faithful and unchangeable. And His Word is always reliable. Don't lose hope! We can let God's perfect, unchanging character convince us to cling to greater hope in His promises. We can have convinced hope!

3. Because we can be anchored in God's Son.

EXP: (18b-20) The 3rd reason is because of Jesus Christ, our anchor. He is our hope. He has entered into the very presence of God on our behalf, becoming our great High Priest. Because of Jesus, our hope is not tethered to this world, but is anchored in heaven, in the very presence of God!

“**Fled for refuge**” (18) (καταφεύγω, *katapheugō*) - to flee away. “Referring to the fact that one charged with murder fled to the city of refuge, or laid hold on an altar for security. So we guilty and deserving of death have fled to the hopes of the gospel in the Redeemer.” — *Barnes' Notes on the Bible*

“**Strong encouragement**” (18) (ἰσχυρός παράκλησις, *ischyros paraklēsis*) - strong or mighty encouragement, consolation, comfort, solace; that which affords great comfort or refreshment

“**Anchor**” (19) (ἄγκυρα, *ankura*) - Anchors are used to keep ships from drifting. As earlier in Hebrews:

Hebrews 2:1 (ESV) Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it.

“**Inner place behind the curtain**” (19) (ἐσώτερος, *esōteros*) - the Holy of Holies, said of heaven by a figure drawn from an earthly temple. “Esoteric” in that it is currently secret or hidden from us.

“**Forerunner**” (20) (πρόδρομος, *prodromos*) - one who comes in advance to where the rest are to follow

“**Melchizedek**” (20) - In Hebrew: “king of righteousness,” the king of Salem and priest of the most high God, whom Abraham paid a tithe. The author has returned to the topic he began at 5:10 before offering a warning (5:11-6:8) and an encouragement (6:9-20). Much more on him in coming weeks.

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ARG: Our hope is a living hope. For our hope lives in the Person of Christ Jesus!

1 Peter 1:3-5 (ESV) ³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, ⁵ who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

Our hope is sure. For all of God's promises are "Yes" in Jesus.

2 Corinthians 1:20 (NIV) For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so through him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God.

ILL: This Christian hope is a greater hope because it is an anchored hope! Our hope is like a rope! Tied on one end to the historical fact of Christ's cross and empty tomb and passing through the veil to be anchored on the other end to the hope we have in Jesus our Great High Priest.

APP: Are you feeling overwhelmed by life's challenges? Do you feel like you're drifting spiritually, unsure of where to find stability? Look to Jesus as your anchor. Because He has gone before you and stands as your advocate before the Father, you can rest assured that your hope is secure. No storm can sever the anchor of your soul in Christ. Fix your eyes on Him, and let the confidence of His finished work give you peace and hope in every trial.

CONCLUSION: In Hebrews, God's Word has given us a powerful encouragement to "hold fast" to the hope we have in His promises.

We can have this greater hope in God's promises...

- 1) Because it is assured by in God's justice,
- 2) Because we are convinced by His unchanging character, and
- 3) Because our hope is anchored in the finished work of God's Son, Jesus Christ.

This is a hope that never fades, never wavers, and never disappoints.

As we live out our faith in this world, let us remember that our hope is a greater hope. It is not fragile or uncertain. It is anchored in the eternal promises of a faithful God. Let us continue to serve Him with diligence, trust Him with confidence, and rest in the assurance that in Christ, our hope is secure.

Let's pray.