

Jesus: Our Great High Priest Forever
(Week 12)
Hebrews 6:9-20
“Can You Believe It?”

Introduction

The writer of *Hebrews* wanted his readers to understand that God not only wanted those who would come to faith in Christ to attain full spiritual maturity, but that God Himself has actually guaranteed that they would. Full maturity (or “perfection” as the writer calls it) is the process by which every believer will be transformed into the very image of Christ Himself.

“We all, with unveiled faces, are looking as in a mirror at the glory of The LORD and are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory; this is from The LORD Who is The Spirit.”
2 Corinthians 3:18 (CSB)

I think that most Christians do not fully understand the commitment that God has made to them once they have been enlightened by The Holy Spirit and have placed their trust in Christ. Not only are we guaranteed that our eternal security is found in Christ, which means that those who truly believe will never lose their salvation, but God also guarantees that HE will continue to sanctify us until we attain Christ like perfection! This is why the writer of *Hebrews* could say with confidence to the Jewish believers:

“...dearly loved friends, in YOUR case we are confident of things that are better and pertain to salvation.”
Hebrews 6:9

Why can he say this? Because he has the assurance that those he is addressing are genuine believers. Therefore, he knows that God will finish what He has begun in them (**Philippians 1:6**). Why? Because God has Guaranteed it. This passage of scripture is so very incredible, because it juxtaposes the hopelessness of those who have rejected Christ alongside the endless hope that is offered to those who will simply come to Christ by faith. Are you needing some encouragement this morning? Then how about this. God has not only promised to keep us secure in Christ and conform us to His image in perfection... but He has also sworn to do so with an oath!

We shall inherit ALL that Christ has promised us, if we will believe in Christ and commit to follow Him. God Himself will see to it that we reach His PERFECTION, and He gives us two things in which we can place our trust: His PROMISE and His PLEDGE.

His Perfection

First, allow me to start off by saying, if **Hebrews 6:1-6** was truly about someone “losing their salvation” then **verses 9-20** would make absolutely no sense whatsoever! Why? Because **verses 9-20** are about the work that God has promised to do in every believer. He has promised to keep them safe and bring them to perfection in Christ. If a genuine believer could ever “lose their salvation”, then God could not promise that every believer will reach spiritual maturity. As we explained last week, a believer’s salvation is a work of Christ, and Christ alone. Remember the two on the road to Emmaus? Jesus Enjoined them, Explained Himself to them, and then ultimately Enlightened them, so that they could believe in Him. Every bit of their salvation experience was a work of God, and not of themselves. If you are a believer this morning then you have nothing that you can boast about, for it was ALL God.

“For you are saved by grace through faith, and this NOT FROM YOURSELVES; it is God’s gift.”
Ephesians 2:8 (CSB)

So you see, everything that you have been given in Christ was a GIFT. The only thing that was required of you to receive God’s gift of salvation was to believe the promises of God. That’s it my friends. No boasting allowed! Just listen to what the writer of *Hebrews* has to say about it:

“Even though we are speaking this way, dearly loved friends, we are confident of things that are better and that pertain to salvation. For God is not unjust; He will not forget your work and the love you demonstrated for His Name by serving the saints—and by continuing to serve them. Now we desire each of you to demonstrate the same diligence for the full assurance of your hope UNTIL THE END, so that you won’t become lazy but will be imitators of those who inherit the promises through faith and perseverance.” **Hebrews 6:9-12**

I LOVE the word that he uses here to address his readers! It is translated in English as “dearly loved friends” (**vs. 9**), but the Greek is “Agapetos”. Now, if you have ever heard me preach in this church, then you know exactly where this word comes from. The root of “agapetos” is Agape. And Agape is the kind of love that one only receives from God. It is the love that God gives to believers to enable them to love one another as Christ has loved us. Only a group of Christians would **ever** be addressed in the scriptures as “agapetos”, for it is only believers who can love and are loved in this manner. Therefore, we KNOW that the author of *Hebrews* is addressing fellow Christians here. He tells them in essence that he is confident that they will reach spiritual maturity and be kept until the very end. Why? **Because they ARE Christians!** And those, who are truly born again, can never lose their salvation. Those who have been truly born again MUST reach spiritual maturity, for this maturity is what the writer is referring to when he says, **“the things that pertain to salvation”**. You see, if you have been saved by Christ, then you will “grow up in Christ”. It isn’t something that **you** do. It’s something that God has promised to do **for you!**

His Promise

Many theologians have argued that the author of *Hebrews* is not telling believers that they are guaranteed to reach maturity, but rather, that they must strive for maturity in Christ. If that is the case, then once again, what he chooses to say next would make no sense. He goes from telling his readers that he “expects them” to reach maturity, to explaining to them that God has promised that they would reach maturity, and not only that, He has sworn an oath, or a “pledge”, that He will keep that promise! All that a believer is required to do to “take hold” of God’s promise then is simply to BELIEVE it! God has promised eternal life to everyone who believes in Christ:

“For God loved the world in this way: He gave His one and Only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish, but will have eternal life.” **John 3:16**

Now, of course, that doesn’t mean that if you just “believe” in Jesus that you will be saved. The devil Himself “believes” in Jesus. I think that we can all agree that he probably isn’t going to make the cut, so to speak. So what does this “belief” that we are told we must have actually entail? To “believe” in Jesus in the manner that **John 3:16** so eloquently speaks is to be convinced by His promises with enough faith to follow Him, accepting Him as both Savior and LORD. When a person does that, then they have permanently “taken hold”, so to speak, of the promises of God, and therefore, are guaranteed to not just be saved, but also transformed, into the image of Christ. Just listen to how the writer of *Hebrews* explains how secure a believer is once He has, by faith, accepted the promise of God. He goes all the way back to **Genesis 15** as an example of God’s kind of promise:

“For when God made a promise to Abraham, since He had no one Greater to swear by, He swore by Himself: I will indeed bless you, and I will greatly multiply you. And so, after waiting patiently, Abraham obtained the promise. For people swear by something greater than themselves, and for them a confirming oath ends every dispute. Because God wanted to show His unchangeable purpose even more clearly to the heirs of the promise, He guaranteed it with an oath, so that through two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to seize the hope set before us. We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain. Jesus has entered there on our behalf as a forerunner, because He has become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.” **Hebrews 6:13-20**

Oh my goodness! There is so much deep theology in these few verses that it boggles the mind! As far as I'm concerned, this is the best passage of scripture in the entire book of *Hebrews*. Let us take all the time we need to "unpack" everything that is being said in these eight verses. The writer of *Hebrews* is comparing the promise that God makes to all believers, to the covenant promise that He made to Abraham in **Genesis 15**.

God chose Abraham to be the father of a great nation. There was only one small problem. Abraham had no children. As if that weren't bad enough, both he and his wife Sarah were way beyond child bearing age. But God (two very powerful words by the way), made Abraham a promise. He promised Abraham that he would indeed be given a son in his old age, and through that son, all the nations of the earth would be blessed. He told Abraham that one day his descendants would become a multitude (**Genesis 15:5**). Which brings us to my favorite verse in all of scripture:

"Abram believed The LORD, and He credited it to him as righteousness."

Genesis 15:6

Did you SEE that?! Abraham, a sinful and imperfect man, just like us, received "righteous credit" from a Holy and perfect God, simply by **believing** His Word. Listen to me now church. This is exactly the same way that we were made righteous, by FAITH!

God went on to promise that He would give the land of Canaan to Abraham as his possession. And Abraham asked God, "How can I know that I will possess it?". And THAT is when something miraculous occurred. God instructed Abraham to take 5 animals (five is the number of grace) and sacrifice them. He told Abraham to divide each of their carcasses in half (except for the birds) and lay them upon the ground in a row, leaving a pathway between the halves. Now Abraham knew exactly what this meant, but many people today do not. This was an ancient custom that was known as "cutting a covenant".

The way this was supposed to work was for two parties that intended to swear an agreement with one another would slaughter some animals, cut them in half, and lay them out on the ground, leaving a path between the halves. The two men would then meet each other in the middle between the pieces and agree upon the covenant between them. The significance of the sacrificed animals was a symbolic gesture meant to convey a single thought; that if either man failed to hold up his end of the agreement, may his punishment be as those slain animals that lay upon the ground.

Abraham waited and waited for God to show Himself, so that they could meet between the sacrifices. But God delayed His appearing all day, and just before He revealed Himself, He caused Abraham to fall into a deep sleep (**Genesis 15:12**). God spoke to Abraham in a vision and explained to him the conditions that would enable his descendants to inherit the land (**vs.13-16**). Then, when the sun set, God appeared in the form of a smoking fire-pot and a flaming torch and passed between the pieces. Now don't miss this. God made a covenant with HIMSELF by passing between those sacrifices! Abraham was flat upon the ground and could do nothing. God swore by Himself that these things would surely come to pass. All that Abraham was allowed to do was to slaughter the sacrifice, while God did all the rest.

Now I shouldn't even have to say anything else here, but just in case you missed it: For you to receive the grace of God and your inheritance, eternal life, you had to believe God's Word, and then God swore by Himself that He would keep you and conform you into the image of Christ. You did NOTHING, well almost nothing... For you see, it was you and your sins that killed the sacrifice. Let that sink in for a moment, before we continue. Our only part in this covenant was that our sins crucified the LORD Jesus. You have received your salvation today, because God did everything else.

God passed between those sacrificed animals that day and made a deal with Himself. It was a picture of salvation, the greatest of all inheritances! The trinity was fully represented that evening to make this amazing agreement with Abraham. The Smoldering Fire-pot was God, The Blazing Torch was God, and in case you missed it, don't forget The Sacrifice! Can you see him now? The Father, The Spirit, and The Son. **Do you see now why it is impossible for you to lose your salvation? Because your salvation is all about God and His grace. You brought nothing to the table. You just have to believe His promise and follow Jesus!**

His Pledge

“God wanted to show His unchangeable purpose even more clearly to the heirs of the promise. He guaranteed it with an oath, so that through two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to seize the hope set before us.” Hebrews 6:17-18

All that God really needed to do was to promise Abraham that he would have a son, and that he would inherit the land. After all, God cannot lie, but in order to reassure Abraham, He not only made a promise, but also an oath or “pledge” to keep that promise (two unchangeable things - **vs.18**). That is why He performed the covenant ritual for Abraham. In the same way, God has promised us that if we will come to Christ, then we will also have the assurance of our promised inheritance. Not only did God promise this great salvation to us, but Christ confirmed the promise by dying for our sins and raising from the dead. True believers need not worry about their security in Christ. It is sealed with God’s promise and His Pledge. So what is required to obtain salvation. Flee from your sins to Jesus for refuge and seize upon the inheritance that has been promised (**vs. 18**)!

Verse 18 is yet another example of a whole sermon’s worth of information wrapped in a tiny package! “...**fleeing to Christ for refuge**” is also based upon an *Old Testament* provision of God’s mercy and grace. You see the penalty in *The Old Testament* for premeditated murder was death. No exceptions. But if someone in Israel unintentionally killed someone, they were instructed to flee to one of the designated cities of refuge, and no harm would come to them. If they refused to flee to the city of refuge, then there was no escape from the death penalty for murder, but if they agreed to go, then no one could lay a hand upon them. And it gets better... when the High Priest of Israel died, the guilty ones who had fled to the city of refuge were set free! Upon the death of the High Priest, there was no more condemnation that could be placed upon the accused. They were set free to go anywhere they pleased in all Israel with no fear of retaliation from the victims family. They were forgiven (**Joshua 20:1-6**).

Church, I am here to inform you this morning that though you are guilty as can be, your sins have been forgiven. And why? Because Christ, Our Great High Priest Forever, has died! And what’s more, He, like no other High Priest before Him, has RISEN from the dead! The penalties of sin can no longer be required of you.

“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus.”

Romans 8:1

If you are here this morning, and you have never run to Christ for refuge. Why not do it today? Don’t harden your heart and refuse to accept the promise and pledge of God, that He will not only save you, but conform you into the perfect image of His Son. All that is required of you to be forever forgiven is to turn away from your sins, flee to Jesus, and take hold of Him for refuge. He promises with His oath that you will be forever forgiven and forever changed. To reject Him once you have been shown the truth is to stand condemned for your crimes.

“For God loved the world in this way: He gave His one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him. Anyone who believes in Him is not condemned, but anyone who does not believe is already condemned, because he has not believed in the Name of the One and only Son of God.”

John 3:16-17

Isn’t it time that you fled to Jesus for refuge? His promise of salvation is secure. He is the anchor that holds us fast, so that we can enter into the Holy of Holies and stand before the very throne of God. He is Our Great High Priest, Forever. He alone can present you spotless before God’s throne, and He alone will keep you safe there for all eternity. You can trust Him today. He has made a promise, and He has sworn by His very self to keep it. That is why it is called “The Good News”!

And ALL of God’s People said... TRUTH!!!