

FAITH AND PATIENCE

Hebrews 6:9–12 — *"But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak. For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister. And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end: That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises."*

We're starting here with the apostle making a contrast of what he optimistically believes about his audience even though he just finished giving them a sober warning. He wants to believe they are indeed the fruitful, i.e., believing, soil ("but beloved we are persuaded better things of you"), rather than to consider them as part of the burn pile that is in verse 8.

"I want to believe that you are saved" seems the obvious sense, and in a way not to cast doubt, but to explain why the warning was expressed as it was. "I want to believe that you are saved, but it is important for you that I said what I just said" is to say further the sense of verse 9.

Many today are taken aback by verses 4-8 as these were when Paul wrote them. And he knew that they would be, so in verses 9-12 he explains his intentions to those of the company that do believe.

Verse 10 explains his knowledge of the history of those saved among them as Christians¹¹. They are showing the fruit of salvation, and we are making a separation here of the believing company from the unbelieving. God sees the fruit and remembers it. Paul speaks the same way about how he (Paul) remembers fondly the Thessalonian Christians:

1 Thessalonians 1:3 — *"Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father;"*

We can see through Acts that there was a believing remnant of Jews under the ministry and authority of the 12 apostles still in Jerusalem and thriving. They had some difficulties with the issues of life, like the famine in Acts 11:27-30, the vexing from Herod in chapter 12, etc., but recall that it was said that *"then had the churches rest throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied:"*, Acts 9:31.

Many were scattered after the stoning of Stephen, but it says plainly that the apostles were not, Acts 8:1. They were not done with Jerusalem.

There was a problem with being in Jerusalem and eventually being at rest. You see that in Acts 21 when Paul went back to Jerusalem and met James. They were still going in and out of the temple, seemingly without problem, and were still zealous for Moses and the law, and we see little issue with their existence and acceptance among the unbelieving Jews. It seems that these Jewish believers had less problem with the Jewish unbelievers around them than they did with Gentile believers who were not

¹¹ I'm not getting too technical here on the term "Christian". I simply mean one that believes on Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. It is true that no one was called a Christian in the Bible until the Antioch assemblage of believers was called that in Acts 11. That does not mean that those before they were called that would not be accurately described as that.

conforming to “Judaism”. Acts 15 and Galatians 2 show much of this. The offence of the cross had ceased, see Galatians 5:11. “We’re all good Jews together” seems to be the overarching “spirit” among the Jews in Jerusalem under James. In Galatians, Paul tells the Galatians who were being affected by those who wanted to make them good Jews starting by circumcision to have nothing to do with this “Judaizing”. It is about Christ and Christ alone.

There is much in Paul’s epistles about the absolute affinity that the Jewish and Gentile believers have in Christ, because of Christ, and because of nothing but Christ.

Now we also have that other than wanting them to be saved, there should be no affinity between the saved Jews and the unsaved Jews, which seems unfortunately stronger than the bond in Christ that should have been growing between the saved Jews and saved Gentiles. If we fast-forward to the end of Hebrews, we have the saved being called *outside the camp* to suffer there with Christ and to bear His reproach. Who would they find there with Him? The saved Gentiles. These are their true brethren.

HOPE TO THE END

This is the continued thought of going on to perfection. The believing Hebrews have started out well. Now let’s finish well. Let’s not forget what our hope and assurance is. It is not their heritage as “God’s chosen people”, it is Christ, in whom all of the promises to them are made and possible¹².

To be slothful is to be the opposite of diligent. It is to be lackadaisical, and in this instance, it is to be in action oblivious to what they (we) now have in Christ. It is to not go on unto perfection, but to stay in that same state of being “babes” and not being adults. In the context here in Hebrews, it is remaining in the elementary things of the old, former, obsolete covenant that was broken and is being done away¹³

The faith and patience needed should remind them and us of especially Caleb and Joshua, who were not of those that rebelled, but believed, and were trying to get the people to repent from their unbelief. However, they still had to wait to enter in to the promised land with the rest of the group, which was comprised of the children of those who rebelled, but excluded every one of the rebels because of their unbelief.

Verse 12 I believe has this in mind, and if we are familiar with the rest of Hebrews, we have chapter 11, the “hall of faith”, which is a collection of many examples of this. Notice even verses 39 & 40 of “the faith chapter”:

Hebrews 11:39–40 — *“And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.”*

¹² I am not saying that all of the promises to the people of Israel have vanished in Christ and have been made to mean something else, as “Covenant theology” says. The Biblical covenants are all as sure as the word of the covenant maker, and will be fulfilled in the way that is true to the words which are said. That is the point of a covenant, to say plainly the terms. See Galatians 3:15. Covenants to Israel, Abraham, David, etc., will all be completed as said plainly in them, but it will be by Jesus Christ that it can happen, and it will not be to an unbelieving and rebellious “chosen people”. See Romans 11:25-36.

¹³ There is one covenant without continuance, it is this one of which we speak. We will get to read and understand that when we get to chapters 8 and 9, and it is first being replaced because it was broken by Israel, and then because the New Covenant is so much greater.

We will see in the next few verses that God always has every intention and ability to do that which He says that He will. The Word of God is as true and powerful as the God of the Word. The sureness of the promise rests on His faithfulness and ability to accomplish it. To add to that, He made an oath, to show it doubly sure — “by two immutable things”.

Hebrews 6:13–15 — *“For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself, Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.”*

Even Abraham had to patiently endure. We do see much in Genesis of Abraham (Abram), and Sarah, doing things showing impatience, but that is often the way of the life growing in faith. It is also showing God’s patience with those to which He makes a promise and seals it with an oath. It is sure. He will make it happen in spite of all odds and everything that will fight against the promises of God, both from without and from within. God said it and will do it.

Abraham and Sarah waited a long time for the promise of Isaac, and in spite of them and their setbacks of faith, God fulfilled this part of His promise to them with Isaac. The continuance of that faith would still be tested later, and even forged, when we see *“By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac...”* (Hebrews 11:17).

We should certainly see here that God is true to His Word, and that which has yet to happen will happen. Our part is patience, which also carries with it obedience and faithfulness. We can believe this promise from God without reserve made to those in Christ, and only to those in Christ:

Romans 8:37–39 — *“Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

Hebrews 13:5 — *“...for he hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.”*

This said in Hebrews 13:5, first said to Joshua in Deuteronomy 31:6 and Joshua 1:5 is as true to all in Christ. He will never leave us nor forsake us. Because of that, remain with Him in faith and patience.

1 Corinthians 15:58 — *“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.”*

Galatians 6:9 — *“And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.”*