

Intro

The book of Hebrews is unique in the New Testament letters because the author is not known for sure. At least six well-known people are possible according to various scholars—Barnabas, Silas, Apollos, Luke, Paul, and Priscilla. Though the exact identity of the writer isn't known, the people being written to did know the author (see Heb. 13:22-24). One way to outline Hebrews is by five passages of warning: 2:1-4; 3:7-4:13; 5:11-6:12; 10:19-39; and 12:14-29. Today's passage includes part of the third warning. We can break this warning into 4 passages split between negative and positive appeals. Hebrews 5:11-14 is negative, followed by 6:1-3 which is positive. Hebrews 6:4-8 returns to a negative warning, and is offset by the encouragement found in today's lesson passage.

Read Hebrews 6:9-20

1. vs. 9: The verse begins with “even though we speak like this”
 - This refers to the negative warning given in vs. 4-8
 - The writer now encourages the readers to remember that “better things” are in store
 - These better things aren't defined, but they are to be anticipated
 - These “things” are connected to salvation, so they are significant
 - The writer also refers to the readers as “dear friends”
 - This indicates the two have a close and endearing relationship

2. vs. 10: God is the one who has promised these “better things”
 - The writer reminds his readers that God is not unjust—He doesn't forget his promises
 - The fact that He doesn't forget shows He is just—He does what He says He will
 - Here God won't forget the good works that these people have done
 - Good works don't save us, but they are evidences of our salvation
 - These people “have helped His people and continue to help them”
 - They have loved God's people through actions, both past and in the present
 - This shows that they have been consistent in living out their faith

3. vs. 11: Here, the author encourages “diligence to the very end”
 - These people have been faithful in doing good works; they are called to continue this
 - Paul saw life as a race to be finished so as to receive the reward (I Cor. 9:24-27)
 - The readers of this letter are being given the same advice: finish the race well

4. vs. 12: The writer here encourages his readers to “imitate those who...inherit what has been promised”
 - There are people who live their lives in ways that are examples to others
 - These people are good models to copy
 - They have been living “through faith and patience”
 - They don't expect things to be easy
 - They have put their trust in God
 - They use patience to deal with disappointments and delays
 - They result is that these people have inherited what was promised by God

5. vs. 13: Making a vow and swearing an oath are essentially the same thing
In OT times, it was permitted to swear by the name of Israel's God
He was the only true God
Here, God swears *by himself* since there is no one greater by whom He can swear
6. vs. 14-15: This promise of God to bless Abraham is found in Gen. 22:15-18
God's promise was that through Abraham, all the world would be blessed
This would happen through the many descendants God would give Abraham
It took 25 years before this promise was fulfilled, thus Abraham waited patiently
Abraham did tire of waiting, as he had Ishmael through Hagar
As often happens, God's intent gets distorted by self-serving humanity
In Jesus' time, physical descent from Abraham was widely held as being right with God
However, the more important descent from Abraham is spiritual, not physical
See Rom. 4:9-17; Rom 9:6-8; and Gal. 3:7-9
7. vs. 16: This verse gives the reason why people swear by someone greater than themselves
"the oath confirms what is said"
"puts and end to all argument"
The swearing of an oath is intended to accomplish both of these things
8. vs. 17: In vs. 16, we are told that people take oaths to confirm the truth of what they are saying
Here, God is communicating with man in ways that man can understand
God takes an oath (vs. 13) that what He is saying is true and can be trusted
He does this so people can see the "unchanging nature of His purpose"
9. vs. 18: God can do anything He wants to
One thing, though, that He cannot do is an action that would violate His own nature
Here we are told that "it is impossible for God to lie"
This is one of the "two unchangeable things" the write notes about God
The other is the unbreakable oath that God took (see vs. 13, vs. 17)
This letter is written to believers who are struggling with their Christian faith
They are being criticized, persecuted, and mocked for it
Some are considering going back to the Judaism that they formerly practiced
The writer is showing them the absolute reliability of God's promises
10. vs. 19-20: Here the author focuses on the idea of *hope*
He uses two examples to carry this idea
First, he says our hope is an anchor
Anchors are heavy; they keep boats from moving
Anchors are a symbol of stability and steadfastness
Second, he brings up the temple curtain
The curtain separated the Most Holy Place from the rest of the temple
There were rules regarding who could enter the Place and when
When Jesus died, the curtain was torn from the top to the bottom
This symbolized that access to God was no longer restricted
Jesus is our "forerunner", the One who "entered on our behalf"

This idea of Jesus as the One who entered is developed more in Heb. 10:19-25
Jesus is also called “a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek”
He is a mysterious priest found only in Gen. 14, with a reference in Ps. 110
Chapter 7 of Hebrews, immediately follow this verse, explains this further

Application: God made a promise to Abraham that his descendants would bless all nations. The fulfillment of that promise happened in the work of Jesus on the cross. Once humanity’s debt of sin was paid, no further payment would be needed. That means that we are invited to be heirs to the promise also. We can rest in the work of Christ as our guarantee of this promise; we don’t need to do any kind of work to earn our salvation, which we have inherited by faith.

Prayer: Almighty God, thank You for the certainty of your promises, which were fulfilled by Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross. Help us remember that you always do the things you have promised, to trust in what You say. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

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