Hebrews 6:9-20 Inductive Bible Study Notes and Discussion Questions

Outline: Hebrews 6:9-20

I. Fulfill your responsibility to follow God diligently (9-12)
II. God’s promises are sure (13-18)
III. We have a sure hope in Christ our high priest (19-20)

I. Verses 9-12

Discussion Questions

What contrast does the “but” signify? What is the connection of this passage to the preceding passage?

Better things than what?

What kind of things accompany salvation?

What good things had they done before? Should they rely on those past works towards God?

Last time we discussed eternal security. How can we balance verse 11 with eternal security? Does this verse mean we can only be saved if we diligently follow God? Are we saved by our works?

Since Christ has saved us, what do you view your responsibility towards Him to be? How much do you owe Him? What part of your time, finances, and life should you give to Him?

What is the “full assurance of hope” mentioned?

Cross-references

Ephesians 2:10, James 2:18,26, Matthew 7:20 – Verses showing works accompany faith

Philippians 1:6 – God will finish the work He has begun in us.

Hebrews 11 – People of faith whom we should imitate.

1 Corinthians 11:1 – Follow me as I follow Christ

Hebrews 12:1 – A great cloud of witnesses.

Teachings Points

Notice that the writer he begins to encourage his audience. In the beginning part of chapter 6 and the end of chapter 5, he is rebuking them and warning them quite severely for their lack of growth in Christ. Now he begins to encourage them. They needed a certain amount of humility. Now he seeks to build them up. He writes his belief and expectation that they can do better, that they will grow and live out a spiritual life filled with fruit as they should. This is a reminder for us as to how to communicate
with others. Correction requires first showing the error of someone’s ways. However, after that it requires showing them what they should be doing. Throughout the Bible we can see this duel teaching. What should you NOT do. And what SHOULD you do. A parent should not only give his children negative feedback (rebukes, criticism, discipline.) He should also seek to compliment and build them up. He should praise them when they do well. He should try to give them a vision for how to reach their full potential always motivating them to aim higher. This approach is sometimes termed the “carrot and the stick.” A parent/teacher need to correct, but they also need to look optimistically at their children/students and push them forward in hope that they can and will do better.

Things that accompany salvation – This phrase shows clearly that salvation is not just an intellectual assent to a list of facts about God. There are certain things (often termed fruit) which accompany genuine salvation. What are some of those things?

Repentance

Good deeds

Love for God

Commitment to Christ

This should motivate us to examine ourselves and see if we are evidencing signs of these things that accompany salvation. Are you a tree that is bearing fruit? Is the fruit a little bit and kind of withered or is it abundant and vibrant? How can we begin to bear more fruit? See Psalms 1.

The report of this group was not all bad. At least some of them had done some good things including work, love, and ministering. However, the Christian life is not something we are living in the past. It is something we have to live anew each day. We should never think that yesterday, or last week, I had a spiritual victory so I am safe now, or I can rest today. Each day is a new battle and has its own set of temptations and opportunities. God sees and remembers every single thing we do for Him. Knowing that God sees all of our service which we render to Him, how does that make you feel? It inspires me to keep doing more for God. It doesn't matter who sees or doesn’t see me because God sees and He is the one who can give true rewards. He is the one whom pleasing really matters.

Verse 11 is yet another of the many warnings in the book of Hebrews to keep following God faithfully. These warnings take a number of forms including not drifting away, not falling away, holding firm, etc. Here it says to be “diligent so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end.” What does it mean? I believe it shows our responsibility towards God after salvation. The Bible teaches us that God is sovereign, He saves us, and cannot lose us. It also teaches us that we are responsible to respond to God’s message. We are responsible to confess our sins. We are responsible to obey God. Imagine that this coming Easter you meet a person at church whom you have not seen before. After talking with them you realize they only attend church on Easter and Christmas. They tell you that they made a decision to trust in Christ 20 years ago and therefore are confident in their eternal destiny. Yet it is also clear that their lifestyle is not following the Bible. What would you tell them? I would share with them the idea in this verse. Yet this verse applies to all of us. Each one of us MUST be diligent to obey what God has revealed to us everyday. Our hope hasn’t been 100% fulfilled yet. It will be when we face God and He says to us “well done, good and faithful servant.” Until that moment, we need to be that good and faithful servant.
Sluggish – This is the same word used as back in 5:11, which there was translated dull. It denotes a spiritual lethargy and laziness. We should train ourselves to be disciplined and diligent spiritually.

Imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises – One of the great benefits of the Bible is that it records the real lives of many believers. It shows us both their successes and their failures. These people (Noah, Abraham, Joseph, David, Ruth, Daniel, etc.) are examples for us. We can imitate their great faith and learn from them how to deal with a variety of trials and temptations. Even since Bible times there are many more saints who demonstrated amazing faith in God through difficult times. Books and biographies have been written about many of them. By reading these, we can be motivated to follow their examples in serving God no matter what the cost. Also, in modern times we may know other believers who live out a good testimony before others. Perhaps we have seen businessmen who don’t give in to bribery or corruption. Maybe we see a young couple who stands up to pressure from their parents by refusing to turn away from their faith. Maybe we see a student who rejects cheating. Maybe we see parents who raise up godly children even when there are peer pressures and temptations everywhere. The list goes on and on. Of course Christ is the only perfect model. But some Christians are doing a good job of following Christ’s example in certain ways and we can look to them for some help and tips so that we can be successful as well. In the meantime, we should live our lives in such a way that others can look at us and find good examples to follow instead of only mistakes that they want to avoid making themselves.

II. Verses 13-18

Discussion Questions

What promise did God make to Abraham?

How long did Abraham wait to see God’s promise (of having Isaac) fulfilled? How do you think he felt in the interim? If you were in his shoes, how would you have felt? What attitude was necessary for Abraham as he waited? What principle is revealed in this time gap between promise and fulfillment?

Did God’s purposes/plans change? Did they change when Abraham/Sarah “helped” God by having a child through Hagar? Can we change God’s eternal purposes? Then what should you do?

How do you feel about the fact that God’s purposes are unchangeable? What effect does this truth have on us? Are there any applications we can make based on this?

What are your thoughts on the phrase “it is impossible for God to lie?”

What is the author’s conclusion as to how the knowledge that God’s promises never fail should effect us?

Cross-references

Genesis 12:1-3 – The first promise from God to Abraham.

Genesis 22:15-19 – God’s promise to Abraham.

Hebrews 13:8 – Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever.
Isaiah 14:24, 46:11 – What God has promised He will bring to pass.

Psalms 2 – God laughs at those who would try to thwart His plans.

Acts 4:25-28 – God’s purposes will stand, no matter who allies themselves against Him.

**Teaching Points**

God made the promise to Abraham – In verse 12, the author introduced the idea of having faith in God’s promises. It would be an interesting study to go through the Bible and look at the various promises of God. There are many, stretching from God’s promise to Noah and his family, to Christ’s promise to return. Not all of these are easy to believe because many times there is no evidence that this promise will happen except the evidence of God’s character. God made several promises to Abraham including promises for descendants and giving him the land. The key promise to Abraham as listed here in verse 14 is that God would give him many descendants.

This was not an easy promise to believe. Abraham was old and Sarah was old. They had surely tried having children many, many times. Even when Sarah was young and should have been fertile she couldn’t have any kids. Then how could she have a child when she was 90 years old? From man’s perspective it seemed impossible. Sarah herself laughed at the possibility. How long did Abraham have to wait to see this promise come true? The promise was made quite a while before Ishmael was born and Ishmael was 14 years older than Isaac. So let’s say a minimum of 15 years and perhaps much as 30-40 years. There were times when Abraham doubted. His doubt led him to fall into sin with Hagar. Yet basically he took God at His word. He even took up his whole family and moved to a far away unknown country in obedience to God’s command and expectation that His promise would be fulfilled. Verse 15 shows us that he waited patiently and finally obtained it. He didn’t obtain the ultimate fulfillment of receiving the land and seeing his descendants number as the stars of heaven during his lifetime (that in itself was obviously a “long-distance promise”). But he did have a son with Sarah, Isaac. A real life “miracle child.” He saw the most difficult part of God’s promise come true. How about you? Do you believe in God’s promises to you? Are there times when doubt? If so, what should you do? How can we learn to be patient? Is there something you have to learn to be patient about now? Perhaps marriage, job, career, children?

Verse 16-17 show that God is the highest power in the universe. Because He is the highest power He has nothing higher to swear by. So when He makes a promise, He does so from His own mouth, which is the ultimate authority in the universe.

Abraham’s faith was commendable, but the thrust of this passage is God’s faithfulness. He made an unchangeable promise. Verse 18 says that it is impossible for God to lie. (As a side note this shows that God cannot do everything. He cannot sin. This comes in handy when answering foolish questions such as “Can God make a rock so big He can’t lift it?”) See cross-references. If God says it, we can believe it. He is the source of truth. He never makes mistakes. His omniscience guarantees He won’t be surprised by some unforeseen circumstances. His omnipotence guarantees that He has the power to carry out all His plans. His omnipresence guarantees He is always there to carry out His purposes. Can you think of any examples in the Bible where people didn’t listen to or heed God’s stated plans and faced disaster because of it? Can you think of any examples where they did listen to God’s stated plans and were saved because of it? How should you respond to the knowledge that God’s promises are sure? The lesson is clear. Trust and obey.
Verse 18b gives the answer. We should take strong encouragement in this fact. The world may mock us for our beliefs. Our families may think we are out to lunch. It doesn’t matter. God is the judge. He is the one who holds us accountable for our actions. The promise is there. WE must take hold of it in faith. Set our hope completely on Christ. If He can rise from the dead and defeat death, He can do anything!

III. Verses 19-20

Discussion Questions

What words which convey security are mentioned in verse 19? How does this concept balance with the admonition to be diligent back in verse 11?

What does it mean “one which enters within the veil?”

In what way or ways is Jesus our forerunner?

Cross-references

1 Corinthians 15:20-28 – Jesus, the firstfruits.

Teaching Points

This hope is sure and steadfast – You don’t need to doubt. Nonetheless times of doubting may come. What should you do when you start to doubt? You could look through the Scriptures to see the many times God has been faithful to keep His promises. If He kept His promises the last 1000 times, He will do it again. Jesus Himself, upon whom we set our hope, has risen from the dead and sits at the right hand of God (within the veil could be a reference to the heavenly holy of holies).

Jesus is our forerunner – See cross-reference. Jesus rose from the dead, showing that God does have the power over death. He received His glorified body already. If Jesus rose from the dead, we will too.

Application: What is the key application you want to make based on the truth we have studied today?