

STUDIES IN THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

STUDY NUMBER ELEVEN - Hebrews 6:9-20

TEXT:

v. 9 But, beloved, we have been convinced of better things concerning you, things that are belonging to salvation, though we are speaking in this way.

v.10 For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you demonstrated toward His name, in that you ministered and are still ministering to the saints.

v.11 And we are desiring that each one of you be demonstrating the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end,

v.12 in order that you may not become sluggish (lazy), but imitators of those who through faith and patience are inheriting the promises.

v.13 For when God made the promise to Abraham, since He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself,

v.14 saying, "Blessing, I will bless you, and multiplying, I will multiply you."

v.15 And thus, having patiently waited, he obtained the promise.

v.16 For men are swearing by one greater [than themselves] and with them an oath [given] as confirmation is an end of every dispute.

v.17 In the same way God, desiring even more to demonstrate to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His purpose, guaranteed by means of an oath,

v.18 in order that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we may be having strong encouragement, we who fled for refuge in laying hold of the hope set before us.

v.19 This hope we are having as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and secure and one which is entering within the veil,

v.20 where Jesus entered as a forerunner for us, having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

INTRODUCTION:

(I've Got Tears in My Ears from Lyin' on My Back in My Bed
While I Cry Over You . . .: Country Music's Best (and Funniest) Lines by Paula
Schwed)

"I BOUGHT THE SHOES THAT JUST WALKED OUT ON ME"

"IF YOU'RE GOING TO DO ME WRONG, DO IT RIGHT"

"LEAVING YOU IS EASIER THAN WISHING YOU WERE GONE"

"DON'T PAY THE RANSOM, HONEY, I'VE ESCAPED"

"YOU'RE SO COLD, I'M TURNING BLUE"

"SHE GOT THE GOLDMINE, I GOT THE SHAFT"

"THERE AIN'T NO QUEEN IN MY KING-SIZED BED"

"IF I SAY I LOVE YOU, CONSIDER ME DRUNK"

"THANK GOD AND GREYHOUND YOU'RE GONE"

"YOU'RE THE REASON OUR KIDS ARE UGLY"

"THAT'S MORE ABOUT LOVE THAN I WANTED TO KNOW"

(When God Whispers Your Name by Max Lucado)

Attending a game show wasn't your idea of a vacation activity, but your kids wanted to go, so you gave in. Now that you're here, you are beginning to enjoy it. The studio frenzy is contagious. The music is upbeat. The stage is colorful. And the stakes are high.

"Higher than they've ever been!" The show host brags. "Welcome to What Is Your Price?" You're just about to ask your spouse if that is his real hair when he announces the pot: "Ten million dollars!"

The audience needs no prompting; they explode with applause.

"It's the richest game in history," the host beams. "Someone today will walk out of here with a check for ten million!"

"Won't be me," you chuckle to your oldest child. "I've never had any luck at luck."

"Shhhh," she whispers, pointing to the stage. "They're about to draw the name."

Guess whose name they call. In the instant it takes to call it, you go from spectator to player. Your kids shriek, your spouse screams, and a thousand eyes watch the pretty girl take your hand and walk you to the stage.

"Open the curtain!" the host commands. You turn and watch as the curtains part and you gasp at the sight. A bright red wheelbarrow full of money--overflowing with money. The same girl who walked you to the stage now pushes the wheelbarrow in your direction, parking it in front of you.

"Ever seen ten million dollars?" asks the pearly toothed host.

"Not in a while," you answer. The audience laughs like you were a stand-up comic.

"Dig your hands in it," he invites. "Go ahead, dive in."

You look at your family. One child is drooling, one is praying, and your mate is giving you two thumbs up. How can you refuse? You burrow in up to your shoulders and rise up, clutching a chestful of one-hundred dollar bills.

"It can be yours. It can be all yours. The choice is up to you. The only question you have to answer is, 'What is your price?'"

Applause rings again, the band plays, and you swallow hard. Behind you a second curtain opens, revealing a large placard. "What are you willing to give?" is written on the top. The host explains the rules. "All you have to do is agree to one condition and you will receive the money."

"Ten million dollars!" you whisper to yourself. Not one million or two, but ten million. No small sum. Nice nest egg. Ten million bucks would go a long way, right? Tuition paid off. Retirement guaranteed. Would open a few doors on a few cars or a new house (or several).

You could be quite the benefactor with such a sum. Help a few orphanages. Feed a few nations. Build some church buildings. Suddenly you understand: This is the opportunity of a lifetime.

"Take your pick. Just choose one option and the money is yours."

A deep voice from another microphone begins reading the list.

"Put your children up for adoption."

"Become a prostitute for a week."

"Give up your American citizenship."

"Abandon your church."

"Abandon your family."

"Kill a stranger."

"Have a sex-change operation."

"Leave your spouse."

"Change your race."

"That's the list," the host proclaims. "Now make your choice."

The theme music begins, the audience is quiet, and your pulse is racing. You have a choice to make. No one can help you. You are on the stage. The decision is yours. No one can tell you what to pick.

But there is one thing I can tell you. I can tell you what others would do. Your neighbors have given their answers. In a national survey that asked the same question, many said what they would do. Seven percent of those who answered would murder for the money. Six percent would change their race. Four percent would change their sex.

If money is the gauge of the heart, then this study revealed that money is on the heart of most Americans. In exchange for ten million dollars:

25 percent would abandon their family.

25 percent would abandon their church.

23 percent would become a prostitute for a week.

16 percent would give up their American citizenship.

16 percent would leave their spouse.

3 percent would put their children up for adoption.

Even more revealing than what Americans would do for ten million dollars is that most would do something. Two-thirds of those polled would agree to at least one--some to several--of the options. The majority, in other words, would not leave the stage empty-handed. They would pay the price to own the wheelbarrow.

What would you do? Or better, what are you doing?

pp. 61-64

(The Essential Abraham Lincoln by John Gabriel Hunt)

Before entering upon so grave a matter as the destruction of our national fabric, with all its benefits, its memories, and its hopes, would it not be wise to ascertain precisely why we do it? Will you hazard so desperate a step while there is any possibility that any portion of the ills you fly from have no real existence? Will you, while the certain ills you fly to are greater than all the real ones you fly from--will you risk the commission of so fearful a mistake?

(Abraham Lincoln in his First Inaugural Address, March 4, 1861)
p. 217

(Broken in the Right Place by Alan E. Nelson)

Most of us never consider giving up the right to be ourselves. In fact, we often promote that "right" as a necessary requirement to finding fulfillment and self-actualization. But Jesus never sang the song "I've Gotta Be Me." Psychologists counsel us to find ourselves. The Bible says you will not really find yourself until you lose yourself--in God. There is a Ziggy cartoon in which Ziggy is talking to himself in the mirror. "Who are you?" he finally asks himself. Discouraged that he made little progress toward self-discovery, Ziggy walks away. The reflection in the mirror is watching him leave and says, "Get over yourself, Ziggy." That's pretty good theology.
p. 108

(The Life God Blesses: Weathering the Storms of Life That Threaten the Soul by Gordon MacDonald)

I heard David Burnham, a well-traveled spiritual coach to athletes, tell a similar story. "The football was my god," he said. "And one day in a championship game, I was carrying the ball into the line and was hit so hard that I was knocked unconscious. They had to carry me off the field and to an ambulance. I came to while they were loading me into the ambulance behind the stadium. And the first thing I heard was the crowd roaring for another ball carrier. My god was in another man's arms, and the crowd was on to other heroes."
p. 30

(Measuring the Days: Daily Meditations with Walter Wangerin, Jr. by Walter Wangerin, Jr.)

Which Would We Choose?

This, precisely, is the timeless choice of humankind.

If they choose the latter, they choose humanity over divinity. They choose one who will harm them over one who would heal them.

If they choose Barabbas, they choose the popular revolutionary hero, the swashbuckler, the pirate, merry Robin Hood, the bloody-lusty rake, the law-flout, violence glorified, appetites satisfied, James Bond, Billy Jack, Rambo, the celebrated predator, the one who "turns them on," over one who asks them to "deny themselves and die." They choose (voluntarily!) entertainment over worship, self-satisfaction over sacrificial love, getting things over giving things, being served over serving, "feeling good about myself" and having it all and gaining the whole world and rubbing elbows with the rich rather than rubbing the wounds of the poor--

The choice is before them. And they think the choice is external, this man or that man. In fact, the choice is terribly internal: this nature or that one, good folks or people essentially selfish and evil, therefore. It's an accurate test of their character. How they choose is who they are.

Behold a people in desperate need of forgiveness.
pp. 74-75

(The Message: Psalms by Eugene H. Peterson)

Psalm 4

Why is everyone hungry for more? "More, more," they say.
"More, more."
I have God's more-than-enough,
More joy in one ordinary day

Than they get in all their shopping spree.
At day's end I'm ready for sound sleep,
For you, Yahweh, have put my life back together.

p. 9

We come now to the latter part of Hebrews 6. We are going to be picking up at verse 9.

Bruce titles this section:

ENCOURAGEMENT TO PERSEVERE (6:9-12)
p. 150

Westcott titles this section:

(3) Words of hope and encouragement (9-12).

The spiritual dulness and sluggishness of the Hebrews had not yet checked their active exercise of Christian love. In this the Apostle found the assurance of better things (9, 10). And he grounded upon it his desire for a corresponding development of hope through long-suffering faith (11, 12). Thus in this brief section we have a view of (a) the Apostle's confidence; and (b) the Apostle's wish.
p. 153

Draper says:

Immediately preceding Hebrews 6:9-12 is one of the harshest, sternest passages in the entire Book of Hebrews. The writer of Hebrews there warns of a condition that could result in the judgment of God. The Christian could come to a place where it is impossible to renew him again to repentance, where the only thing left is the judgment seat of Christ. Immediately after this strict warning for Christians to be very careful in their faith, he proceeds to share (in 6:9-12) a beautiful description of what the Christian life ought to be.
p. 157

v. 9 But, beloved, we have been convinced of better things concerning you, things that are belonging to salvation, though we are speaking in this way.

The author expresses the CERTAINTY OF SALVATION on the part of the recipients of this letter.

The word "BUT" forms the CONTRAST to Hebrews 6:7, 8:

For land which drank the rain which is often falling upon it and is bringing forth vegetation suitable to those for whose sake it is also being tilled, is receiving a blessing from God; but if it is bringing forth thorns and thistles, it is worthless and almost cursed, and its end is burning.

"BUT, BELOVED."

This is the only occurrence of this wonderful word here in the book of Hebrews.

The word occurs 61 TIMES in the New Testament:

It is used here just 1 TIME in HEBREWS 6:9,

PAUL uses the word 27 TIMES,

PETER uses it 8 TIMES,

JOHN uses it 10 TIMES,

LUKE uses it 3 TIMES,

JUDE uses it 3 TIMES,

MATTHEW uses it 3 TIMES,

MARK uses it 3 TIMES,

JAMES uses it 3 TIMES,

making a total of 61 TIMES the word is used.

In the gospels it is the word used by the Father referring to His Son: "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased."

1 Corinthians 4:14

I do not write these things to shame you, but to admonish you as my beloved children.

Ephesians 5:1

Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children;

2 Corinthians 7:1

Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

2 Peter 3:17

You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard lest, being carried away by the error of unprincipled men, you fall from your own steadfastness,

2 Peter 3:14

Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless,

1 Peter 4:12, 13

Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing; so that also at the revelation of His glory, you may rejoice with exultation.

Ephesians 1:6

to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones in his commentary on Ephesians 1 (God's Ultimate Purpose) says:

The Apostle deliberately says 'in the beloved' and not 'in the Lord Jesus Christ' or 'in Jesus Christ' or 'in Christ'. He does so, I suggest, because he is concerned to bring out in its full force and intensity what is after all the most wonderful thing of all about this great salvation. It is a glorious and wonderful thing that you and I should be made holy; it is equally marvelous that we are made, by adoption, the sons of God. It is almost incredible, but nevertheless true, that it is through people like ourselves that God is eventually going to show to 'the principalities and powers in the heavenly places' His manifold wisdom; it is by the Church that He plans to manifest the glory of His wisdom. But the most wonderful thing of all about this salvation is the way in which God has done all this. He has done so, says the Apostle, reaching the topmost height of his climax, 'in the beloved'.
p. 138

WHO NEEDS SELF-ESTEEM?

"Until we believe that we are as bad as God says we are, we can never believe that He will do for us what He says He will do. Right here is where popular religion breaks down."

--A.W. Tozer
(quoted in The Berean Call,
Sep 1993)

(From InfoSearch 3.51)

"BUT, BELOVED, WE HAVE BEEN CONVINCED OF BETTER THINGS CONCERNING YOU"

With the word "CONVINCED" we ask ourselves the QUESTION:

HOW?

It has to be by:

the QUALITY OF THEIR LIVES

and CONSISTENT COMMITMENT.

It is their "work" and "love" that is recorded in verse 10.

The Greek word communicates the thought of a PAST CONFLICT ISSUING IN A SETTLED JUDGMENT.

Hughes says:

He is confident that the things that characterize a real work of salvation are part of their inner and outer experience.
p. 165

When we have the inner and outer evidences of the "things that accompany salvation," we have reason for great confidence. When the Holy Spirit whispers that we are children of God, when the reflex of our heart cries, "dear Father," when we have a sense of the shalom of Christ, when our character has been spiritually altered by Christ, we can be confident of our spiritual state.
p. 165

Delitzsch underscores what we have already said about the word "BELOVED":

This is the only passage in the epistle in which the author addresses his readers as [agapetoi]. And certainly, if the epistle was to contain the term but once, no other place could be found in which it would be more needed or more impressive than here.
p. 297

Pink points out:

The principal things that "accompany salvation" are sorrow for and hatred of sin, humility or self-abnegation, the peace of God comforting the conscience, godly fear or the principle of obedience, a diligent perseverance in using the appointed means of grace and pressing forward in the race set before us, the spirit of prayer, and a joyous expectation of being conformed to the image of Christ and spending eternity with Him.
p. 325

Lane says:

The optimism concerning the congregation expressed in vv 1-3 is reiterated impressively in v 9 ("we remain sure"). The basis of the writer's confidence is that a true work of God has taken place among them.
p. 143

Wuest comments on the word "CONVINCED" as:

"Persuaded" in the Greek implies that the writer had felt misgivings but had overcome them. His conviction was the result of proof. The perfect tense is used, "I have come to a settled conviction." He assures them that he is persuaded better things of them than those of falling away and crucifying the Son of God. He also is persuaded that things that accompany salvation are true of them.
p. 120

Stedman points out:

There were certain evidences that convinced the writer of this letter that the case was not one of embryo Christians being threatened with stillbirth. There had been a true birth, he thinks, for he has seen unmistakable evidence of love and concern for others, expressed in deeds of compassion. Not simply words but deeds, ministry, help to others. This is the test the Lord has said He will look for. As you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, [unconsciously, unknowingly, out of a heart filled with concern for me] you did it to me (Matt. 25:40).
pp. 90-91

Wiersbe calls this section:

The improbable (9-12). But the writer did not believe that his readers were in that condition. Although they had a long way to go in their Christian experience, the fruit was there. Diligence, faith, and patience are required to live the Christian life. Maturity is not automatic.
p. 817

MacArthur admits:

Beloved is never used in Scripture to refer to unbelievers.
p. 151

Griffith Thomas correctly observes:

The emphasis on "you" is in direct contrast with the solemn teaching of the former section (vv. 4-8), the second person being used instead of the third. The basis of his confidence is the character of God.
pp. 76-77

Hewitt, commenting on the phrase "BETTER THINGS" says:

The use of the plural, . . . better things, suggests a fruitful spiritual life in contrast to a life bringing forth thorns and briers, and a destiny of eternal blessedness in contrast to the curse and perdition.
p. 111

Barclay rightfully observes:

One thing stands out here. This is the only passage in the whole letter where the writer to the Hebrews addresses his people as beloved. It is precisely after the sternest passage of all that he uses the address of love. It is as if he said to them: "If I did not love you so much I would not speak with such severity." Chrysostom paraphrases the thought this way: "It is better that I should scare you with words than that you should sorrow in deeds." He speaks the truth, but, however stern that truth may be, he speaks it in love.
p. 60

"BUT, BELOVED, WE HAVE BEEN CONVINCED OF BETTER THINGS"

This points back to the 2 PREVIOUS VERSES.

They are following the PATH OF FRUITFULNESS and not the "thorns and thistles."

"BUT, BELOVED, WE HAVE BEEN CONVINCED OF BETTER THINGS CONCERNING YOU, [those better] THINGS THAT ARE BELONGING TO SALVATION, THOUGH WE ARE SPEAKING IN THIS WAY."

What are those "THINGS THAT BELONG TO SALVATION"?

We would think of the:

PURITY OF HEART,
SERVANTHOOD ASPECT,
UNCONDITIONAL LOVE FOR THE LOST.

We would think in terms of:

EVANGELISM,
CHASTITY,
COMPASSION,
CHARITY,
and CONCERN.

These are the "THINGS THAT ARE BELONGING TO SALVATION" that he is seeing manifest in the lives of these believers.

KEEP ON KEEPING ON

A student who later became a skilled mathematician was discouraged by the difficulties he was encountering in his studies. One day when he opened a used textbook he had purchased, he noticed that a piece of paper had been pasted to the inside cover, and that some of the words were showing through from the other side. His curiosity aroused, he carefully moistened the cover and peeled back the leaf. He was surprised to find that on the paper was a short letter written by his instructor to the previous owner of the book, apparently another student who had become very disheartened. The note read, "Go on, sir, go on! The difficulties you meet will resolve themselves as you advance. Proceed, and light will dawn with increasing clearness on your path."

(From InfoSearch 3.51)

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

The author did not want his readers to believe that he had despaired of them. It's like the pastor warning his congregation: "But I'm sure you people would never do that!" It is an expression of hope. The "better things" about which he had confidence were the **things that accompany salvation**. . . . It is that experience of victory and glory which the persevering companions of the King inherit. It is also the inheritance-rest which the persevering are allowed to enter. . . . The writer insisted here that he had every expectation that the readers would persevere to the end and acquire these blessings, even though he felt constrained to warn them against a contrary course.
p. 796

J. Vernon McGee says:

Oh, how careful we should be about our Christian lives. And we cannot live the Christian life in our own strength. We need to recognize that Christ is the vine. If we have any life, it has come from Him, and if there is any fruit in our lives, it comes from Him. We are sort of connecting rods, as branches connect into the vine and then bear fruit. Christ said that, "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me" (John 15:4).
p. 548

In verse 9 the writer to the Hebrew believers is saying:

"I am persuaded that you are going to live for God, that you are not going to remain babies in Christ; but that you will grow up and go on to maturity, to Christlikeness."

v.10 For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you demonstrated toward His name, in that you ministered and are still ministering to the saints.

Now the writer addresses the REASON for this conviction of "better things" concerning them and brings DEFINITION to the "things that are belonging to salvation."

"FOR GOD IS NOT UNJUST SO AS TO FORGET YOUR WORK AND THE LOVE WHICH YOU DEMONSTRATED TOWARD HIS NAME"

1 Thessalonians 1:3, 4

constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father, knowing, brethren beloved by God, His choice of you;

MacArthur says:

A Christian's works are not what saved him or what keep him saved, but they are an evidence of his salvation. As James tells us, faith without works is dead--not alive, not real, not genuine. Our faith is demonstrated by our works (James 2:18, 26). God is not so unfair and insensitive that He fails to see the works of love His beloved children perform. He clearly sees the fruit of our righteousness.
p. 154

Lane says:

The writer's persuasion that the commitment displayed by the community was genuine was based on the recollection of their conduct in the past.
p. 144

Hughes points out:

Thus the writer has a well-grounded confidence in the spiritual authenticity of his people. A lifestyle that caught the rewarding eye of God, which, in serving others, was serving him--this lifestyle, coupled with the inner "things that accompany salvation" such as a sense of forgiveness, shalom, and God's Fatherhood, plus the outer character changes coming from salvation, was substance for the author's great confidence that the church would go forward.

p. 166

Draper comments:

There is a remembrance seen. God remembers. He sees, he takes note of our commitment. We have committed our lives to him, we have expressed it in service to those around us; and God has seen it. God notices it. He is not unrighteous to forget.

That should encourage us. It is impossible for God not to notice what people do for him. Our labor is not in vain. We do not serve in vain. No work for the Lord will return void or empty. When we commit our lives to God, no one else may see or know the depths of our love, our commitment, or the desire of our souls--but God does. He does not forget. God sees our commitment and remembers us.

p. 162

Lange says:

This verse contains the ground on which the author bases his persuasion.
p. 118

"GOD IS NOT UNJUST SO AS TO FORGET"

2 Corinthians 5:10

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that everyone may receive the things done in his body according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

Matthew 10:42

"And whoever in the name of a disciple gives to one of these little ones even a cup of cold water to drink, truly I say to you he shall not lose his reward."

When you watch a FOOTBALL GAME on television now with the instant replay and the slow motion and the stop action and the reverse angle, there is just nothing that is missed in each play in the ball game.

The same thing is true when someone tries to ROB A STORE OR A BANK, you get caught on video.

There is going to be no need to try to impress the Judge in glory, for He will stop our words with:

"We got it all on video."

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

The author knew that **God is not unjust**. His readers would not be forsaken. God would remember **their work and love** toward other believers. . . . God was conscious of all their aid and available to help them in any needed way.
p. 796

"FOR GOD IS NOT UNJUST SO AS TO FORGET YOUR WORK AND THE LOVE WHICH YOU DEMONSTRATED TOWARD HIS NAME, IN THAT YOU MINISTERED AND ARE STILL MINISTERING TO THE SAINTS."

Now in the remaining part of verse 10 we have the DEFINITION of:

"WORK" and "LOVE."

The definition basically is SERVANTHOOD.

It has been done in the past and it is still being done:

"IN THAT YOU MINISTERED [past] AND ARE STILL MINISTERING [present] TO THE SAINTS."

You are still serving others.

Mark 10:45

For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.

Joe Aldrich in his book Secrets of Inner Beauty says:

Humpty Dumpty was pushed and the king's best men couldn't put him back together again. Sin has broken all of us and we can't put ourselves back together, but God can. He does beautiful work and desires that we yield ourselves whole-heartedly to Him as candidates for beauty. We are already sons, He wants us also to serve. Servants are beautiful. Check your wardrobe. The ones who will hear, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant" will be wearing towels that are worn, faded and patched because of heavy use.

How extraordinary!!! is the situation of us mortals! Each of us is here for a brief sojourn; for what purpose he does not know, though he knows not, though he sometimes thinks he senses it. But without going deeper than our daily life, it is plain that . . . WE EXIST FOR OUR FELLOW MAN--in the first place for those upon whose smiles and welfare all our happiness depends, and next for all those unknown to us personally but to those whose destinies we are bound by the tie of sympathy. A hundred times every day I remind myself that my inner and outer life depends upon the labors of other men, living and dead, and that I must exert myself in order to give in the same measure as I have received and am still receiving.

--Albert Einstein

(SOURCE UNKNOWN)

(First Things First by Stephen R. Covey, A. Roger Merrill, & Rebecca R. Merrill)

This is the true joy in life . . . being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one . . . being a force of Nature instead of a feverish selfish little clod of ailments and grievances complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy. . . . I am of the opinion that my life belongs to the whole community and as long as I live it is my privilege to do for it whatever I can. I want to be thoroughly used up when I die. For the harder I work the more I live. I rejoice in life for its own sake. Life is no brief candle to me. It's a sort of splendid torch which I've got to hold up for the moment and I want to make it burn as brightly as possible before handing it on to future generations. p. 49

(This was also quoted in The Top Ten Mistakes Leaders Make by Hans Finzel; taken from Man and Superman by George Bernard Shaw. Baltimore: Penguin, 1972. 84.)

Albert Schweitzer remarked of servanthood:

"One thing I know; the only ones among you who will be really happy are those who will have sought and found how to serve."

(From InfoSearch 3.51)

THE FELLOWSHIP OF LOVE

In 1765 John Fawcett was called to pastor a very small congregation at Wainsgate, England. He labored there diligently for 7 years, but his salary was so meager that he and his wife could scarcely obtain the necessities of life. Though the people were poor, however, they compensated for this lack by their faithfulness and warm fellowship. Then Dr. Fawcett received a call from a much larger church in London, and after lengthy consideration decided to accept the invitation. As his few possessions were being placed in a wagon for moving, many of his parishioners came to say goodbye. They realized that a man of his abilities could not soon be replaced. Others would gladly take the pastorate in the city, but few would sacrifice to work in their needy community. Even though the farewell sermon had already been preached, some of the people refused to accept the decision of their pastor. Once again they pleaded with him to reconsider. Touched by this great outpouring of love, he and his wife began to weep. Finally Mrs. Fawcett exclaimed, "O John, I just can't bear this. They need us so badly here." "God has spoken to my heart too!" he said. "Tell them to unload the wagon! We cannot break these wonderful ties of fellowship."

(From InfoSearch 3.51)

"THE ROMANCE IS STILL GOING"

A story is told about William Jennings Bryant, that great American orator and defender of the faith. As he was having his portrait painted, Bryant was asked, "Why do you wear your hair over your ears?" Bryant responded, "There is a romance connected with that. When I began courting Mrs. Bryant, she objected to the way my ears stood out. So, to please her, I let my hair grow to cover them." "But that was many years ago," the artist said. "Why don't you have your hair cut now?" "Because," Bryant winked, "the romance is still going on."

(From InfoSearch 3.51)

(The Tribute by Dennis Rainey with David Boehi)

Many years ago, renowned soprano Marian Anderson was asked by a reporter to name the greatest moment in her life. She had many big moments to choose from. There was the night the famous conductor Toscanini told her that her voice was the finest of the century. There was the private concert she'd given at the White House for the Roosevelts and the King and Queen of England.

In addition, she had received the \$10,000 Bok Award as the person who had done the most for her hometown, Philadelphia. And, to top it all, there was the Easter Sunday in Washington, D.C., when she'd stood beneath the Lincoln Memorial and sung for a crowd of 75,000 that included Cabinet members, Supreme Court justices, and members of Congress.

Which of these big moments did she choose?

None.

The greatest moment in Marian Anderson's life was the day she had gone home and honored her mother by telling her she wouldn't have to take in washing anymore.

As the famous soprano obviously knew, honoring one's parents may be one of the most rewarding and memorable deeds of one's life.

p. 40

v.11 And we are desiring that each one of you be demonstrating the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end,

This verse takes us back to 5:11-14:

Hebrews 5:11-14

Concerning Him there is much to be said, and it is hard to explain, since you have become sluggish in hearing (hard of hearing). For though by this time you are under moral obligation to be teachers, you are having need again for someone to be teaching you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have become such as are having need of milk and not solid food. For everyone who is partaking only of milk is unacquainted with the teaching about righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice are having their powers of perception trained to discern good and evil.

Whereas in verse 10 we had the:

PAST

and PRESENT

manifested on the part of these saints sacrificially serving others, we now point to the:

FUTURE in verse 11.

In verse 9 it was:

"we have been convinced . . . we are speaking in this way."

Then in verse 10 it was:

"you" and "your."

Now in verse 11 we return to:

"WE"

"WE ARE DESIRING"

This is the KEY PURPOSE of the letter.

It is a PASSIONATE DESIRE.

"AND WE ARE DESIRING THAT EACH ONE OF YOU"

He is very specific. He does not want to leave anybody out. He does not want anybody to get discouraged, fail, and turn back to Judaism.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

If they would only diligently hold onto the good course they already were pursuing--and of which God was fully mindful--they would thus guarantee the **hope** which is duly awarded to those who so persevere.
p. 796

Westcott says:

The activity of practical love among the Hebrews fills the Apostle with the desire that the spirit from which this springs may find a wider work among them in the strengthening of hope and faith, through which alone the divine promises can be realised.
p. 156

Lenski says:

The fact that the readers had been and still were diligent in one direction makes the writer confident that the readers will show themselves diligent also in this other direction in which they were beginning to be slack. He praises them for the one diligence in order to move them to the other.
p. 193

Wiersbe says:

"You will obtain and enjoy what God has promised if you diligently apply yourself to the development of your spiritual life," is what the writer stated.
p. 68

Richards says:

Oswald Chambers, in Our Utmost for His Highest, captures the thrust of this significant passage in a single sentence. "Launch out in reckless trust that the redemption is complete . . . and bother no more about yourself." This is just what the writer of Hebrews is telling us to do. Let's stop struggling to "hold on" to truths God expects us to accept with such a firm assurance that they become the foundation we build our lives on.
p. 64

DeHaan says:

Obedience and self-judgment and faithfulness and diligence in our service will result in full assurance. It is not a matter of salvation, but of reward and assurance and fruit, and the final approval of His "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." Christian, walk carefully, with your eye on the goal.
p. 108

"AND WE ARE DESIRING THAT EACH ONE OF YOU BE
DEMONSTRATING THE SAME DILIGENCE SO AS TO REALIZE THE
FULL ASSURANCE OF HOPE UNTIL THE END"

He is challenging them by saying:

"Don't go dead in the water!"

Keep on "DEMONSTRATING THE SAME DILIGENCE" that you have in the past as you have ministered, and are doing in the present in ministering to the saints. Keep on exercising that same diligence so as to realize the REWARD of that kind of action:

"THE FULL ASSURANCE OF HOPE UNTIL THE END"

--which, of course, is Christlikeness, maturity.

"Soon we shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is."

1 Peter 1:3, 4

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,

I am convinced that the more a person becomes godly, the more disciplined he becomes. That DISCIPLINE turns to DILIGENCE in the rearranging of PRIORITIES and the accomplishment of PURPOSES which are divine.

JESUS was heard to say often:

"My hour has not yet come."

And He also said:

"I must work the works of Him that sent me while it is day; for the night is coming when no man can work."

THE APOSTLE PAUL:

"forgets those things which are behind and he presses toward those things which are in front."

JOHN THE BAPTIST said:

"He (Christ) must continually be increasing and I must be decreasing."

JAMES says in James 4:7, 8:

Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

PETER says in 1 Peter 1:13:

Therefore, gird your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

2 Peter 1:10

Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble;

Andrew Murray points out:

We have here the same three words we had in the second warning. There we read, "Let us give diligence to enter into that rest." If we hold fast the glorying of our hope firm to the end, we hold fast the beginning of our confidence firm to the end. The great marks of Christian perseverance are here once again joined together. Hope looks forward and lives in the promises. It glories beforehand in the certainty of their fulfillment. Bright hopefulness is one of the elements of a healthy Christian life, one of the surest preservatives against backsliding. This hopefulness must be cultivated. Diligence must be given unto the fullness of hope, the hope that embraces all the fullness of God's promises and that fills all the heart.

(Beyond Culture Wars by Michael S. Horton)

Vaclav Havel, playwright-dissident, in his inaugural speech as the president of a liberated Czechoslovakia in 1990, after describing the great economic and social crises, declared, "But all this is not even the main problem. . . . We have fallen morally ill because we became used to saying one thing and thinking another. We have learned not to believe in anything, to ignore each other, to care only about ourselves" (*italics added*).
p. 221

(Don't Shoot, It's Only Me by Bob Hope and Melville Shavelson)

Don't look back.
Somethin' may be gainin' on you.
--Satchel Paige

Intro.

(Abba's Child: The Cry of the Heart for Intimate Belonging by Brennan Manning)

Eagan, a flawed man with salient weaknesses and character defects, learned that brokenness is proper to the human condition, that we must forgive ourselves for being unlovable, inconsistent, incompetent, irritable, and potbellied, and he knew that his sins could not keep him from God. They had all been redeemed by the blood of Christ. In repentance he took his shadow self to the Cross and dared to live as a forgiven man. In Eagan's journey one hears echoes of Merton: "God is asking me, the unworthy, to forget my unworthiness and that of my brothers, and dare to advance in the love which has redeemed and renewed us all in God's likeness. And to laugh, after all, at the preposterous ideas of 'worthiness.'" pp. 48-49

(Can We Save the Evangelical Church? by Bill Hull)

The first is a commitment to the basic spiritual disciplines. There is absolutely no possibility that a church can please God without this commitment. Christians cannot grow properly without regular intake of the Word, a meaningful prayer life, encouragement from others, accountability in the context of community, and personal witness to faith in Christ. p. 23

As Vance Havner said, "The alternative to discipline is disaster." p. 143

(The Life of God in the Soul of Man by Rev. Henry Scougal)

Thus, I say, we may bind up our natural inclinations, and make our appetites more moderate in their cravings, by accustoming them to frequent refusals.
p. 107

(Holiness by J. C. Ryle)

Make a wrong choice in life, an unscriptural choice, and settle yourself down unnecessarily in the midst of worldly people, and I know no surer way to damage your own spirituality, and to go backward about your eternal concerns. This is the way to make the pulse of your soul beat feebly and languidly. This is the way to make the edge of your feeling about sin become blunt and dull. This is the way to dim the eyes of your spiritual discernment, till you can scarcely distinguish good from evil, and stumble as you walk. This is the way to bring a moral palsy on your feet and limbs, and make you go tottering and trembling along the road to Zion, as if the grasshopper was a burden. This is the way to sell the pass to your worst enemy, to give the devil vantage ground in the battle, to tie your arms in fighting, to fetter your legs in running, to dry up the sources of your strength, to cripple your energies, to cut off your own hair, like Samson, and give yourself into the hands of the Philistines, to put out your own eyes, grind at the mill, and become a slave.
p. 151

v.12 in order that you may not become sluggish (lazy), but imitators of those who through faith and patience are inheriting the promises.

Here is the PURPOSE for the desire that they demonstrate diligence.

In this verse we have:

a NEGATIVE

and a POSITIVE.

"IN ORDER THAT YOU [negatively] MAY NOT BECOME SLUGGISH (LAZY), BUT [forms the contrast, positively] IMITATORS OF THOSE WHO THROUGH FAITH AND PATIENCE ARE INHERITING THE PROMISES."

There is no PLACE in the PATH and PURSUIT of godliness for laziness.

Proverbs 24:30-34

I passed by the field of the sluggard and by the vineyard of the man lacking sense and behold it was completely overgrown with thistles. Its surface was covered with nettles and its stone wall was broken down. When I saw, I reflected upon it. I looked and received instruction; a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest--then your poverty will come as a robber and your want like an armed man.

2 Thessalonians 3:7ff

For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example, because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you, nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with labor and hardship we kept working night and day so that we might not be a burden to any of you; not because we do not have the right to this, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you, that you might follow our example. For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone will not work, neither let him eat. For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies. Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread. But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary of doing good.

English points out:

Diligence toward heavenly things will rout sluggishness in earthly exercises, and in such a way we all need to be followers or, better, imitators of others who, through faith and patience, have inherited the promises of God.
p. 170

A. T. Robertson says:

[This is a] Negative final clause with second aorist middle subjunctive of ginomai, "that ye become not sluggish (or dull of hearing)" as some already were (5:11).
p. 377

Montefiore in Black's commentary says:

Once again, there is a hint that the future is still dangerous. At present they were dull of hearing (v. 11); soon their enthusiasm might flag.
p. 112

Owen points out:

In chap. v. 11 the Apostle had warned them not to be dull--slothful in hearing; here he warns them against being dull--slothful in works. Spiritual slothfulness is ruinous of any profession, though otherwise never so hopeful; it is the habitual indisposition and unreadiness of the mind to the entire principle of our spiritual welfare. The principal cause of slothfulness is unbelief, as faith is the principal cause of diligence and watchfulness.
p. 103

Hughes points out:

Henry Fairlie, writing in his highly-regarded The Seven Deadly Sins Today, engages in some astute social criticism in his chapter on acedia, sloth:

Children are too idle to obey. Parents are too sluggish to command. Pupils are too lazy to work. Teachers are too indolent to teach. Priests are too slack to believe. Prophets are too morbid to inspire. Men are too indifferent to be men. Women are too heedless to be women. Doctors are too careless to care well. Shoemakers are too slipshod to make good shoes. Writers are too inert to write well. Street cleaners are too bored to clean streets. Shop clerks are too uninterested to be courteous. Painters are too feckless to make pictures. Poets are too lazy to be exact. Philosophers are too fainthearted to make philosophies. Believers are too dejected to bear witness. . . .

p. 167

Barclay in his study Bible says:

He tells his people to be imitators of those who through faith and patience inherited the promise. What he is saying to them is: "You are not the first to launch out on the glories and the perils of the Christian faith. Others braved the dangers and endured the tribulations before you and won through." He is telling them to go on in the realisation that others have gone through their struggle and won their victory; that others have dared their voyage and come safe to harbour. The Christian is not treading an untrodden pathway. He is treading where the saints have trod.

p. 62

Delitzsch points out:

The aspect of the present is far from exhibiting in full developed reality all the rich and glorious blessings contained in the promise. It is easy, then, to grow faint and slothful . . . Their endeavour should be to hold fast the full assurance of this hope unto the end, . . .

p. 303

"SLUGGISH (LAZY)" is the same word rendered "slow" in Hebrews 5:11 in the phrase "slow to learn."

The Greek of this verse can mean, "we do not want you to be lazy" rather than to "become lazy."

Their real goal should be the inheritance that is set before them.

The great cavalcade of stars along this line are recorded in Hebrews 11. The 2 KEY INGREDIENTS are:

FAITH

and PATIENCE.

As they have been faithful to sow the seeds of faith and patience, the harvest is now being enjoyed--which is the inheritance of the promises.

FAITH and PATIENCE are ANTIDOTES to sluggishness.

UNBELIEF and LACK OF ENDURANCE are the cause of it.

It is possible to be sluggish either in hearing or in acting. Faith and patience, things that accompany salvation, enable the believer so to inherit God's promises that he enters into the realization of them as if they were being fulfilled, knowing that full possession of them will be his portion hereafter, according to God's pledged word. Promises are not merited but inherited.

LOST AND FOUND

In his book Light on Life's Duties, F. B. Meyer makes this brief observation: "The story of the lost chord has been told in exquisite verse and in stately music. We have all heard of the lady, Adelaide Proctor, who in the autumn twilight which softly filled the room, laid her fingers on the open keys of a glorious organ." Later she wrote:

"I know not what I was playing,
 Or what I was dreaming then;
 But I struck one chord of music
 Like the sound of a great Amen.
 It flooded the crimson twilight,
 Like the close of an angel's psalm,
 And it lay on my fevered spirit
 With a touch of infinite calm;
 It quieted pain and sorrow
 Like love overcoming strife;
 It seemed the harmonious echo
 From our discordant life.
 It linked all perplexed meanings
 Into one perfect peace,
 And trembled away into silence
 As if it were loath to cease."

Meyer continues, "Something called her away, and when she returned to the organ, she had lost that chord sublime. Though she longed for it and sought it, it was all in vain. It was a lost chord. Whenever I hear that story, it reminds me of the lost joy, the lost peace, the lost power of which so many complain."

(From InfoSearch 3.51)

FOLLOWING IN YOUR FOOTSTEPS

A father and son were walking along the beach one day. The boy was lagging behind and suddenly gave a joyous shout of satisfaction: "Look, Daddy, I'm walking in your footsteps." This simple statement made the man realize that he had to set a reasonable pace. It also spoke to his heart about giving spiritual leadership to his youngster. An unknown author has written:

A careful man I ought to be;
 A little fellow follows me.
 I do not dare to go astray,
 For fear he'll go the selfsame way.
 Not once can I escape his eyes;
 Whate'er he sees me do he tries.
 Like me he says he's going to be,
 That little chap who follows me.
 I must remember as I go
 Through summer sun and winter snow,
 I'm molding for the years to be--
 That little chap who follows me.

(From InfoSearch 3.51)

(Even Eagles Need a Push by David McNally)

Pablo Casals, the great cellist, was asked why, at eighty-five years of age, he continued to practice five hours a day. He replied, "Because I think I'm getting better."

p. 3

Great works are performed not by strength but by perseverance.

--Samuel Johnson

p. 160

(Abba's Child: The Cry of the Heart for Intimate Belonging
 by Brennan Manning)

Passion is not high emotion but a steely determination, fired by love, to stay centered in the awareness of Christ's present risenness, a drivenness to remain rooted in the truth of who I am, and a readiness to pay the price of fidelity.

p. 137

(The Mature Man: Becoming a Man of Impact by David DeWitt)

Desire is one of the key elements of creative discipleship. In the Journal of Creative Behavior, Ochse emphasizes this:

Few would dispute the suggestion that the most salient characteristic of creative achievers is strong motivation. The literature is now replete with findings suggesting that eminent creative people are typically persevering, conscientious, energetic and dedicated to excellence. Practically every individual in every sample of eminent creators seems to be highly motivated, single minded, persevering, and devoted to work.

p. 190

(Over the Top by Zig Ziglar)

Everyone has individual goals that might be positive or negative, but 97 percent of the people in our society do not have an organized goals program.

p. 160

FACT: You will never realize more than a small fraction of your potential as a wandering generality. You must become a meaningful specific.

p. 184

Important: Until you commit
your goals to paper you have
intentions that are seeds
without soil .
Anonymous

p. 191

That's the reason I love the acrostic for GOALS: godly objectives assure lasting success.

p. 201

(The Leader in You by Dale Carnegie & Assoc., Inc.)

Dale Carnegie articulated the principle. "Patience and perseverance," he said, "will accomplish more in this world than a brilliant dash. Remember that when something goes wrong.

"Don't let anything discourage you," he wrote. "Keep on. Never give up. That had been the policy of most of those who have succeeded. Of course, discouragement will come. The important thing is to surmount it. If you can do that, the world is yours."
pp. 171-2

(First Things First by Stephen R. Covey, A. Roger Merrill, & Rebecca R. Merrill)

If we don't translate vision into action, we lose touch with reality, become idealistic dreamers, and lose credibility with ourselves and with others.
pp. 154-5

(The Top Ten Mistakes Leaders Make by Hans Finzel)

One final piece of advice on goal-setting: When you put together a set of goals for your mission, they should be SMART goals:

S -specific
M -measurable
A -attainable
R -relevant
T -trackable
p. 193

"I am a dreamer. Some men see things as they are, and ask why; I dream of things that never were, and ask why not?"

--George Bernard Shaw

p. 195

(The Complete Book of Zingers by Croft M. Pentz)

Man doesn't plan to fail--he just fails to plan.
p. 67

(Our God Is Awesome by Tony Evans)

A man once went to visit a farmer and noticed something very odd. On the side of the farmer's barn were a number of targets with holes dead center in each bull's-eye. Evidently, his farmer friend was an excellent shot, a tremendous marksman. The visitor said, "My goodness! Every single hole is right in the center of every single bull's-eye! I didn't know you were that good."

His farmer friend said, "I'm really not."

"Wait a minute. I see a hole in the center of every single bull's-eye. How could you not be that good and shoot that well?"

The farmer replied, "It's like this. I shoot the hole into the barn first, then I draw me a bull's-eye."

That's the way a lot of us live our lives. We shoot for riches and then draw the meaning of life around it. We shoot for power and draw the meaning of life around it. We shoot for education and draw the meaning of life around it. Then we go around saying, "I hit a bull's-eye!" We give the impression that we know how to shoot, making our friends think we know what we are doing, making the people we come in contact with think we have been successful, when in actuality we don't know what in the world we are doing. We are as confused as those around us. Why? Because we hit a bull's-eye shooting at the wrong target.

p. 21

(The Life God Blesses: Weathering the Storms of Life That Threaten the Soul by Gordon MacDonald)

No one knows where he is going; the
aim of life has been forgotten and the
end has been left behind. Man has set
out at a tremendous pace--to go
nowhere.

--Jacques Ellul

p. 111

If one's mission is too small, too vague, too parochial, there is the supreme danger of ending up being driven by someone else's mission.

I read how Quixote in his random ride,
 Came to a crossing once,
 and lest he lose
 The purity of chance, would not decide
 Wither to fare, but wished his
 horse to choose.
 For glory lay where ever he might turn.
 His head was light with pride,
 his horse's shoes
 Were heavy, and he headed
 for the barn. (Richard Wilbur)

p. 113

(Acts of Love: The Power of Encouragement by David Jeremiah)

In her book, Fully Alive, Gloria relates the following story that took place shortly after that marvelous experience:

One day in the late fall, we had some men come to pave the parking lot behind our office. They brought load after load of coarse rocks, pea gravel, and sand. They brought huge heavy rollers and smashed all of that down. Again and again they rolled it. Finally came the streaming truckloads of molten asphalt to be poured atop the gravel, then rolled again and again until it was smooth and hard and "permanent."

Very early the next spring, Bill's dad came into the office one morning, and stood around on first one foot then the other, grinning as he does when there's something special on his mind.

"Come out here," he finally said to Bill and me. We followed him out the back door onto the shining new pavement. Right in the middle of it he stopped and pointed, "Look, there."

Up through the sand, up through the gravel, up through the rocks, up from the darkness and through the thick layer of asphalt had pushed a green shoot. It wasn't tough, it wasn't sharp, it wasn't strong. Any child could have plucked it up with nearly no effort at all. But it was alive! And there it stood, bright green in the sunlight, boasting to the world of its photosynthetic miracle: life wins!

There wasn't much to say. We just smiled our message of reassurance at each other; but I couldn't help thinking of the song we had just written after our own personal bout with darkness:

God sent His Son; they called Him Jesus.
He came to love, heal and forgive.
He bled and died to buy my pardon;
An empty grave is there to prove
MY SAVIOR LIVES.

How sweet to hold our newborn baby,
And feel the pride and joy he gives;
But greater still the calm assurance:
Our child can face uncertain days
BECAUSE HE LIVES.
Because He lives
I can face tomorrow!
Because He lives
All fear is gone!
Because I know
He holds the future,
And life is worth the living
JUST BECAUSE HE LIVES!

pp. 40-41

(The Message: Psalms by Eugene H. Peterson)

Psalm 119

I took one look at the quitters and was filled with loathing;
they walked away from your promises so casually!

p. 172

(Amazing Grace: 366 Inspiring Hymn Stories for Daily Devotions by
Kenneth W. Osbeck)

Do not pray for easy lives; pray to be stronger men! Do not pray for tasks
equal to your powers. Pray for powers equal to your tasks. Then the
doing of your work shall be no miracle, but you shall be a miracle.

--Phillips Brooks

p. 305

John Wesley once said: "Never be unemployed and never be triflingly
employed."

p. 305

(Collected Poems of Robert Service by Robert Service)

CARRY ON!

It's easy to fight when everything's right,
And you're mad with the thrill and the glory;
It's easy to cheer when victory's near,
And wallow in fields that are gory.
It's a different song when everything's wrong.
When you're feeling infernally mortal;
When it's ten against one, and hope there is none.
Buck up, little soldier, and chortle:

Carry on! Carry on!
There isn't much punch in your blow.
You're glaring and staring and hitting out blind;
You're muddy and bloody, but never you mind.
Carry on! Carry on!
You haven't the ghost of a show.
It's looking like death, but while you've a breath,
Carry on, my son! Carry on!

And so in the strife of the battle of life
It's easy to fight when you're winning;
It's easy to slave, and starve and be brave,
When the dawn of success is beginning.
But the man who can meet despair and defeat
With a cheer, there's the man of God's choosing;
The man who can fight to Heaven's own height
Is the man who can fight when he's losing.

Carry on! Carry on!
 Things never were looming so black.
 But show that you haven't a cowardly streak,
 And though you're unlucky you never are weak.
 Carry on! Carry on!
 Brace up for another attack.
 It's looking like hell, but--you never can tell:
 Carry on, old man! Carry on!

There are some who drift out in the deserts of doubt,
 And some who in brutishness wallow;
 There are others, I know, who in piety go
 Because of a Heaven to follow.
 But to labour with zest, and to give of your best,
 For the sweetness and joy of the giving;
 To help folks along with a hand and a song;
 Why, there's the real sunshine of living.

Carry on! Carry on!
 Fight the good fight and true;
 Believe in your mission, greet life with a cheer;
 There's big work to do, and that's why you are here.
 Carry on! Carry on!
 Let the world be the better for you;
 And at last when you die, let this be your cry:
Carry on, my soul! Carry on!

pp. 351-2

(Amazing Grace: 366 Inspiring Hymn Stories for Daily Devotions by
 Kenneth W. Osbeck)

I have heard of Your fame; I stand in awe of Your deeds, O Lord. Renew them in
 our day, in our time make them known. (Habakkuk 3:2)

Set us afire, Lord, stir us, we pray--
 while the world perishes, we go our way
 Purposeless, passionless, day after day;
 set us afire, Lord, stir us, we pray!

p. 267

--Unknown

v.13 For when God made the promise to Abraham, since He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself,

The Bible Knowledge Commentary titles these next verses:

A MODEL TO IMITATE WOULD BE ABRAHAM.

Wiersbe titles these remaining verses:

The immutable (13-20). The chapter ends with one of the greatest statements on security found anywhere in Scripture. God's promise and God's oath assure us that we are His, and God's character backs up His words. Instead of drifting (2:1) we are anchored heavenward where Jesus ministers in the very presence of God, and that anchor will not fail. We are anchored so we can make progress!
p. 817

Delitzsch summarizes the remainder of the chapter this way:

Having thus expressed his confident persuasion on behalf of his readers, that they will through steadfast faith obtain the promised salvation, the sacred writer now proceeds to set before them the example of Abraham, who had also through patience entered into the possession of a promise which God had confirmed to him by an oath upon Himself. They, too, have a hope confirmed in like manner, and one reaching onwards into the innermost sanctuary, into which, as their forerunner, Jesus Himself was already entered, being made (also by the oath of God) High Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.
p. 305

G. Campbell Morgan says:

The argument now goes back in the history of the Hebrew people to Abraham, and the writer returns there for a definite purpose. He returns to that point where God spoke through angels, and to the particular hour in which He made His final appearance to Abraham in connection with the offering of Isaac.

p. 71

MacArthur points out:

No one in the universe is greater than God. And the reason He cannot lie is that He invented truth. He is truth. By definition, whatever He says is true. By the very nature of His person, He cannot lie. He has no capacity to lie. His promises, then, are first of all secured by His Person. Whatever He does has to be right and whatever He says has to be true. If God makes a **promise**, therefore, He not only will keep it, He must keep it.

p. 162

Bruce points out:

Our author here, and more fully in 11:8-19, presents Abraham as the supreme example of a man who received promises from God, and lived in the good of these promises, persevering to the end in faith and hope.

p. 152

Wiersbe says:

In spite of Abraham's failures and sins, God kept His promise and Isaac was born. Many of God's promises do not depend on our character but on His faithfulness.

p. 68

The covenant here rests upon the:

UNCONDITIONAL PROMISES OF GOD.

Salvation does too, so you don't undo it.

It is an ETERNAL, UNCONDITIONAL TRANSACTION.

In Genesis 15, where God institutes the covenant, He puts Abram out of the way; and as a smoking lamp or furnace, He alone passes between the pieces of the sacrifice, obligating Himself unconditionally to carry out the promises made to him.

v.14 saying, "Blessing, I will bless you, and multiplying, I will multiply you."

Genesis 22:14-19

So Abraham called that place The Lord Will Provide. And to this day it is said, "On the mountain of the Lord it will be provided." The angel of the Lord called to Abraham from heaven a second time and said, "I swear by myself, declares the Lord, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me." Then Abraham returned to his servants, and they set off together for Beersheba. And Abraham stayed in Beersheba.

Yes, this covenant rests upon the unconditional promises of God. The marvelous thing is that our eternal salvation does too! This is something you just cannot undo. It is an eternal, unconditional transaction.

English confirms this when he says:

The record is found in Genesis 22. Abraham had just demonstrated his trust in and submission to the Lord by offering his only son, his own seed, upon an altar, in obedience to God's command. Was not this son the seal of Jehovah's promise? How, then, could God thus command and still fulfill His promise, seeing Abraham and Sarah were both aged people? Abraham did not doubt, however, "accounting that God was able to raise him [Isaac] up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure" (Heb. 11:19). This was the occasion for God's oath with His promise: . . . pp. 171-2

Romans 4:20, 21

yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief, but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully assured that what He had promised, He was able also to perform.

v.15 And thus, having patiently waited, he obtained the promise.

Those words, "PATIENTLY WAITED," involve 25 YEARS in an impossible set of circumstances; and yet waiting in faith, believing that God was going to be faithful to fulfill the unconditional promise that He had made to Abraham.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary points out:

The word translated "patience" here is related to the word "patience" in 6:12. This word is common in the New Testament and refers to the ability to hold one's feelings in restraint without retaliation against others.
p. 797

Through the process of 25 years Abraham had NUMEROUS EXPERIENCES which only helped to mature him as he waited for the fulfillment of the promise:

He took a side trip into EGYPT.

He had to be separated from his NEPHEW LOT.

He had the experience of TRYING TO HELP GOD OUT THROUGH USING SARAH'S HANDMAID HAGAR. Ishmael was born some 15 years before God was ready to open Sarah's womb and provide the son that He had promised.

The writer is just telling us that if someone like Abraham could wait for 25 years for God's promises to be fulfilled, certainly these Hebrew Christians could spend the rest of their lives in the patient endurance of hope, persevering through the problems and persecutions of life, keeping their eyes fixed upon the inheritance which should be theirs at the end of the race.

DELAY, NOT DENIAL

When God does not immediately respond to the cries of His children, it is because He wants to accomplish some gracious purpose in their lives. The life of John Bunyan is an example of this. The door of the jail in which he was confined has been preserved in Bedford, England. We don't know what agonizing petitions must have ascended to Heaven from behind that heavy barrier. Yet it remained locked for 12 long years. This delay, however, was most fruitful, for within his bolted prison cell Bunyan wrote that outstanding Christian allegory The Pilgrim's Progress. If he had been given his freedom shortly after his imprisonment, millions of people would have been denied the help and encouragement of his great inspirational classic.

(From InfoSearch 3.51)

WHY IS HE CALLED A WAITER WHEN I'M DOING ALL ALL THE WAITING?

A sad-looking little man had been waiting quite some time for his order to be filled. Finally a waiter appeared and said, "Your fish will be coming in a few minutes now."

The customer brightened up a bit. "Tell me," he asked, "what kind of bait are you using?"

(From InfoSearch 3.51)

GOD, I NEED PATIENCE--RIGHT NOW!

Patience--That which is most often needed just as it is run out of.

(From InfoSearch 3.51)

FIVE O'CLOCK MIRACLE

A pastor observed: "We certainly believe in the resurrection at our church. If you doubt it, just visit our offices sometime and watch our staff come back to life at quitting time."

(From InfoSearch 3.51)

The difficult we do immediately, the impossible takes a little longer.
<Unknown>

(From InfoSearch 3.51)

Let us not burden our remembrances with a heaviness that is gone.
William Shakespeare

(From InfoSearch 3.51)

The only difference between the saint and the sinner is that every saint has a past, and every sinner has a future.

Oscar Wilde

(From InfoSearch 3.51)

Do not turn back when you are just at the goal.

Publius Syrus

(From InfoSearch 3.51)

Joshua 23:14

"Now I am about to go the way of all the earth. You know with all your heart and soul that not one of all the good promises the Lord your God gave you has failed. Every promise has been fulfilled; not one has failed.

1 Kings 8:56

"Praise be to the Lord, who has given rest to his people Israel just as he promised. Not one word has failed of all the good promises he gave through his servant Moses.

Ira D. Sankey, the hymn writer, says it well,

His banner over us is love,
Our sword the Word of God;
We tread the road the saints above
With shouts of triumph trod.
By faith they, like a whirlwind's breath,
Swept on o'er ev'ry field;
The faith by which they conquered death
Is still our shining shield.

Refrain:

Faith is the victory!
Faith is the victory!
O, glorious victory,
That overcomes the world.

("Faith Is the Victory" by John H. Yates and Ira D. Sankey.

The New Church Hymnal, Lexicon Music, Inc., 1976. #216)

REAL FAITH is why our "IF'S" become "WHEN'S."

"AND THUS, HAVING PATIENTLY WAITED"

He endured 25 years in an impossible set of circumstances and ultimately obtained the promise that God had given.

Jeremiah 32:27

"Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh. Is anything too difficult for me?"

Jeremiah 33:3

'Call to me and I will answer you and I will tell you great and mighty things which you do not know.'

v.16 For men are swearing by one greater [than themselves] and with them an oath [given] as confirmation is an end of every dispute.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary points out:

At this point Abraham is left behind as a model and **the oath** made to him is treated as for the benefit of Christians generally. . . . An oath **puts an end to all arguments**.

Owen says:

. . . 2. That the promises of God are gracious proposals of the only way and means for the ending of that strife. 3. That the oath of God, interposed for the confirmation of these promises, is every way sufficient to secure believers against all temptations and objections, in all trials and straits about peace with God through Jesus Christ.
p. 106

v.17 In the same way God, desiring even more to demonstrate to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His purpose, guaranteed by means of an oath,

"IN THE SAME WAY GOD, DESIRING EVEN MORE" takes us back to chapter 6:11:

"And we are desiring that each one of you be demonstrating the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end"

"IN THE SAME WAY GOD, DESIRING EVEN MORE TO DEMONSTRATE TO THE HEIRS OF THE PROMISE THE UNCHANGEABLENESS OF HIS PURPOSE, GUARANTEED BY MEANS OF AN OATH"

Men take an oath and that ends the dispute that they are going to fulfill their part of the bargain or contract.

God does not really have to but

"IN THE SAME WAY, GOD, DESIRING EVEN MORE TO SHOW TO THOSE WHO ARE INHERITORS OF THE PROMISE"

(who by the way, are the children of God who have come to know Christ as Savior--heirs and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ)

"THE UNCHANGEABLENESS OF HIS PURPOSE, GUARANTEED BY MEANS OF AN OATH."

This is a KEY PHRASE in understanding Hebrews 6.

Whereas it is "impossible" back in verse 4,

we see now why it is here in verse 17.

He is the Lord God and He changes not.

When we get down to verse 18, we see again the word "IMPOSSIBLE":

"It is impossible for God to lie."

Owen says:

God was willing to give a peculiar evidence of the immutability of His counsel; He would do so "more abundantly;" the promise of God is sufficient to give us security; yet, because something further might be useful, He would add a further confirmation to His word; this He did from a superabounding love and care; He confirmed His promise by an oath.
p. 107

Bruce observes:

Our author emphasizes the fact that when God repeated his promise to Abraham after the offering up of Isaac, he confirmed it with an oath. When human beings swear an oath in order to underline the certainty and solemnity of their words, they swear by someone or something greater than themselves. "As (surely as) Yahweh lives" was the supreme oath in Israel.
p. 153

G. Campbell Morgan says:

There can be no doubt that faithful souls, through centuries, had built upon that oath of God. God had given to them not merely the declaration of His intention, but had condescended to employ the method of man, and had sworn by Himself that that intention should be carried out.
p. 75

J. Vernon McGee says:

When God does a thing like this, He doesn't need to take an oath, but He does take one to make it very clear how all-important it is.
p. 549

"IN THE SAME WAY GOD, DESIRING EVEN MORE TO DEMONSTRATE TO THE HEIRS OF THE PROMISE THE UNCHANGEABLENESS OF HIS PURPOSE"

Romans 8:16, 17

The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him.

Proverbs 19:21

Many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails.

Isaiah 46:10

I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please.

The "UNCHANGEABLENESS OF HIS PURPOSE" is a KEY PHRASE to understanding the book of Hebrews.

Our love may WAX and WAIN;

our hearts be hot and cold.

We may experience:

the UPS and DOWNS,
 the FAT and the LEAN,
 the GOOD and the BAD,
 the FRUIT and the FAILURE

but God's purpose still remains unchangeable.

(Amazing Grace: 366 Inspiring Hymn Stories for Daily Devotions by Kenneth W. Osbeck)

"God Moves in a Mysterious Way" was originally titled, "Conflict: Light Shining Out of Darkness." It is thought to be Cowper's final hymn text and a reflection of God's leading throughout his own lifetime. There is even speculation that it was written following a failed attempt at suicidal drowning. Regardless of the original motivation for their writing, these words have since been used to bring much comfort to God's people for nearly two centuries:

God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform; He plants His footsteps in the sea and rides upon the storm.

You fearful saints, fresh courage take: The clouds you so much dread are big with mercy, and shall break in blessings on your head.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense, but trust Him for His grace; behind a frowning providence faith sees a smiling face.

Blind unbelief is sure to err and scan His work in vain; God is His own interpreter, and He will make it plain.

p. 25

(The Pleasures of God by John Piper)

Her husband Jonathan Edwards had been away from home for some weeks in 1758 to assume the presidency of Princeton College. On February 13 he was inoculated for smallpox; but the cure became the killer, and he died from the inoculation on March 22, 1758. He was fifty-four years old and left his wife with ten children. When Sarah heard of her husband's death, the first letter she wrote was to her daughter Esther:

My very dear child!

What shall I say? A holy and good God has covered us with a dark cloud. O that we may kiss the rod, and lay our hands on our mouths! The Lord has done it. He has made me adore his goodness, that we had him so long. But my God lives; and he has my heart. O what a legacy my husband, and your father, has left us! We are all given to God; and there I am, and love to be.

Your affectionate mother,

Sarah Edwards

p. 63

Someone has said, "If bad things didn't happen to good people, then we would all be good for the wrong reasons."

"IN THE SAME WAY GOD, DESIRING EVEN MORE TO DEMONSTRATE TO THE HEIRS OF THE PROMISE THE UNCHANGEABLENESS OF HIS PURPOSE, GUARANTEED BY MEANS OF AN OATH"

v.18 in order that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we may be having strong encouragement, we who fled for refuge in laying hold of the hope set before us.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

These "two unchangeable things" are: (1) It is **impossible for God to lie**; (2) His ever truthful Word was supported in this case by His oath. These are the **two unchangeable things**, which encourage those who **take hold of the hope**.
p. 797

We can actually say that the "TWO UNCHANGEABLE THINGS" are:

1.HIS PROMISE

2. HIS OATH

"IN ORDER THAT BY TWO UNCHANGEABLE THINGS, IN WHICH IT IS IMPOSSIBLE FOR GOD TO LIE"

Numbers 23:19

God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?

Hewitt says:

God's promise and oath are the two immutable things, the two unchangeable spiritual realities, the two unalterable facts in which it was impossible for God to lie (or deceive). The unchangeable God is faithful, His word is sure and always dependable, but when it is confirmed by an oath it is even more worthy of our trust. In all this the weakest Christian should find strong consolation and comfort.
p. 114

Lange says:

The strongest assurance of our salvation as purposed by God, and the most powerful incitement to a believing maintenance of our Christian hope, lies partly in the reliableness which belongs to those sure promises which God for our establishment has confirmed by an oath; partly in the fact, that Jesus, as forerunner, has already entered into heaven on our behalf, and there mediates forever for our salvation, embodying in Himself not only the Aaronic but the Melchisedek high-priesthood, and carrying the type of that priesthood to perfection.

p. 128

Draper says:

There is at least one thing that God cannot do. It is not within his power, character, or nature to do it. It is impossible for God to lie. God cannot falsify his word. As powerful and omnipotent as God is, he cannot lie to us. He cannot go back on his word. It is impossible for God to lie.

p. 166

Lane observes:

Although the two items remained unspecified in the text, the reference is almost certainly to the promise of God and his oath.

p. 152

English observes:

God's promise in the first place was immutable. Prior to the record of the oath given with the promise (Gen. 22:15ff), the Lord promised Abram seed to number as the stars of the heavens (Gen. 15:4, 5). Such a promise is unailing; it is the Word of God and can no more fail than He Himself can fail. It is stronger than the mountains of earth and more enduring than the heavens. God's promise was the first immutable thing. And the second was this: "He swore by Himself, saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee." Since it is not possible for the truth to be untrue, since it is impossible for God to lie, His promise and His oath are unchanging.
pp. 176-7

The expression, "have fled for refuge," bears allusion in the writer's mind, doubtless, to the cities of refuge of old (Num. 35), symbolic of Christ who is indeed the sinner's refuge. With David we can surely exclaim: "I cried unto Thee, O Lord: I said, Thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living" (Psa. 142:5). Those who have thus fled for refuge, have laid hold upon the hope set before us, and that hope is Christ Himself, in heaven today, as we shall see.
p. 177

A. T. Robertson points out that the word for:

"Strong encouragement" [is there] by those two immutable things.
p. 378

Owen says:

The "two immutable things" are the promise and the oath of God. Both of these are equally immutable. The promise is not confirmed by the oath because it was weak, and therefore needed the oath to strengthen it. We must carry along with us the infinite and inconceivable condescension of God in this matter. "In which it was impossible for God to lie"--that is to deceive. The highest security among men consists in a promise confirmed by an oath; God uses these in our case, and therefore it is impossible that He should lie. The special design in this was that,

"We might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us."

p. 108

(Credibility by James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner)

Frederic M. Hudson, president of the Hudson Institute and founding president of the Fielding Institute (which provide life/career planning, executive development, and organizational consultation), offers poignant, personal testimony to the power of a supportive relationship in overcoming despair and restoring hope.

In August 1943, when I was nine years old, I awakened one morning in silent terror. I was unable to move any part of my body except my eyes. My muscles seemed frozen, and my voice was silenced. Although I had gone to bed as a walking, talking, wiggling boy, I woke up the next day paralyzed with polio. Neither my legs nor my arms would respond to my desperate efforts to move, and my neck and jaw were rigid as rocks. Breathing was panicked and pain was everywhere. . . .

The next thing I remember was lying on the back seat of my parents' old automobile as they drove me thirty miles from my home in upstate New York to a hospital in Syracuse. That journey was unbelievably painful. I was sicker than I had ever felt in my life, and I knew the seriousness of the journey. I felt a helplessness and fear never experienced before. . . .

At the hospital, they placed me on a very hard bed (with no pillow) in a quarantined ward. I spent my waking moments staring upward at the ceiling--my only option--and feeling totally helpless. . . .

A wise nurse named Susan spent lots of time with me. Quiet and caring, she visited me frequently and told me many things. Her main message went like this: "Your future, Frederic, is hidden on the ceiling, and you can find it if you look very hard. Look for what you will be doing as you grow up. It's all up there. Will you be a track star, a tennis player, a scientist? Will you be going on trips to faraway places? Will you be making model airplanes and flying kites? Will you be going to summer camps and swimming? Will you go to college and become someone special? Will you marry and have a family? Frederic, all you have to do is to study the ceiling. When you see your future it will start to happen!

pp. 218-19

In keeping hope alive, credible leaders demonstrate their faith and confidence by first accepting responsibility for the quality of their lives and for those of their constituents. Even when everything goes wrong or when resounding defeats occur, leaders bounce back by taking charge of the situation.

p. 221

(Perilous Pursuits by Joseph M. Stowell)

The pilgrim song of the redirected pleasure is:

Living for Jesus a life that is true,
Striving to please Him in all that I do;
Yielding allegiance, glad-hearted and free,
This is the pathway of blessing for me.

If there were a biblical Declaration of Independence, it would declare that every person has the right to find pleasure in God and to bring pleasure to God by obeying Him and serving others.

Strange but true: We maximize our pleasure when we focus it on Him--His glory and His gain--and when we minimize impulses to bypass Him in an effort to find pleasure apart from God.

p. 128

RENEWED HOPE

Joanie Yoder told of reaching a point of despair in her role as a pastor's wife. She cited some of the stresses she faced: sharing her husband 24 hours a day, resenting perfectionist standards, feeling guilty about recurring bitterness and anger, and having no one to share her feelings with. Gradually she became so discouraged that she was ready to give up.

Mrs. Yoder tells what happened next. "One day I opened my sorely neglected Bible to the writings of the prophet Jeremiah. As I read, I watched over Jeremiah's shoulder as the potter worked a lump of clay on his wheel. I began to get emotionally involved when the clay became marred in the potter's hand. Between the lines I assumed the potter would toss aside the lump of spoiled clay to take up another, hoping for better results. For a moment my life was that lump of clay, and I felt the old nagging fear that God, like this potter, might lay aside my disappointing life and take up another to do His work. But I read on to see what the potter really did with the clay: 'and he reworked it into another vessel, as it seemed good for the potter to do!' As if written for me alone, the next verse read, 'Can I not do with you as this potter has done?' says the Lord. Behold, like the clay in the potter's hand, so are you in My hand.'" With renewed hope, Mrs. Yoder realized that God was molding her for His use.

(From InfoSearch 3.51)

(The Life of God in the Soul of Man by Rev. Henry Scougal)

Oh! the happiness of those souls that have broken the fetters of self-love, and disentangled their affection from every narrow and particular good, whose understandings are enlightened by the Holy Spirit, and their wills enlarged to the extent of thine, who love thee above all things, and all mankind for thy sake! I am persuaded, O God, I am persuaded that I can never be happy, till my carnal and corrupt affections be mortified, and the pride and vanity of my spirit be subdued, and till I come seriously to despise the world, and think nothing of myself. But, oh! when shall it once be! Oh! when wilt thou come unto me, and satisfy my soul with thy likeness, making me holy as thou art holy, even in all manner of conversation! Hast thou given me a prospect of so great a felicity, and wilt thou not bring me unto it? hast thou excited these desires in my soul, and wilt thou not also satisfy them? Oh! teach me to do thy will, for thou art my God, thy Spirit is good, lead me unto the land of uprightness. Quicken me, O Lord, for thy name's sake, and perfect that which concerneth me: thy mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever, forsake not the works of thine own hands.
pp. 83-84

(Oswald Chambers: Abandoned to God by David McCasland)

They had just visited their friend Gertrude Ballinger, suffering from typhoid fever and lying near death in a hospital.

Biddy had said, "I wonder what God is going to do."

Between brushstrokes, Oswald had replied, "I don't care what God does."

It's what God is that I care about."
p. 13

The writer is doing everything possible to help the readers understand that they can have strong encouragement, and that they ought to continue to press on.

"WE MAY BE HAVING STRONG ENCOURAGEMENT, WE WHO FLED FOR REFUGE IN LAYING HOLD OF THE HOPE SET BEFORE US"

Titus 2:11-13

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus;

v.19 This hope we are having as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and secure and one which is entering within the veil,

This is the 3RD and 4TH TIME we have had the occurrence of the word "HOPE" in this passage.

USAGE #1 was back in verse 11:

"and we are desiring that each one of you be demonstrating the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of **hope** until the end"

USAGE #2 is in verse 18:

"we who fled for refuge in laying hold of the **hope** set before us."

USAGE #3 and #4 are here in verse 19:

USAGE #3:

"THIS **HOPE** WE ARE HAVING AS AN ANCHOR OF THE SOUL"

USAGE #4:

"A **HOPE** BOTH SURE AND SECURE AND ONE WHICH IS ENTERING
WITHIN THE VEIL"

Ephesians 2:12

remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

Romans 5:1, 2

Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

The image suggested in verse 18 by the words "fled to take hold" of hope was that of a fortified refuge. By a swift change in his figure, the writer then suggested the thought of a harbor where **the soul** may securely drop anchor. That **anchor** has been carried to the safest point of all--**the inner sanctuary behind the curtain--by Jesus, who went before us.**
p. 797

Our writer returns to the NAUTICAL METAPHOR. We saw it in the warning back in Hebrews 2:1:

For this reason we must be paying much closer attention to things which we have heard, lest we should drift away from them.

Jackie Deere points out:

The image now shifts to a safe anchorage for the soul. The readers' souls can find stability if they lay hold of this hope. Again the image shifts to entering the Holy of Holies, where he sees the hope going in because of the forerunner Christ. This is a very personal conception. This person carries our hope with him. Note the inclusion with the reference to the oath of or given to Melchizedek. We are thinking here of fleeing inside the veil to God through Christ, laying hold of His resources, thus procuring help and consolation in time of trouble.

Lightfoot points out:

Hope is to the believer what a secure anchor is to a ship. Hope sustains and braces the Christian in the midst of all of his trials. But when hope fails, he is left to drift aimlessly and falls victim to the merciless ocean. The Christian anchor of hope is sure and steadfast because it is based on the two unchangeable things.

What an anchor is to a vessel and its tossings, so the hope is to us in our times of trial, difficulty and stress. The anchor is outside the ship. It is connected with it and keeps it secure.

1 Timothy 1:19

keeping faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith.

Romans 8:38, 39

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Draper says:

So our hope, our faith, our commitment and obedience to God is an anchor that reaches down into the inner sanctum, into the holy of holies within the veil, and lays hold of God and brings peace in the storm. What a beautiful picture. Our hope is anchored in Christ. We need not fear what the storms of life may do to us, because our anchor holds within the veil.
p. 174

Westcott says:

The stability of hope is twofold. It is undisturbed by outward influences, and it is firm in its inherent character.
p. 163

Lenski says:

The writer says that the anchor of our soul extends into the inner part behind this curtain; it grips the Holy of Holies, the very ark of the covenant, the mercy seat where the atoning blood was sprinkled by the high priest. We know that he is not thinking of the physical Herodian Sanctuary in which the ark of the covenant no longer stood, nor even of the Tabernacle in the wilderness or of Solomon's Temple and Sanctuary. He has in mind the Holy of Holies in heaven, into which Jesus entered with his all-atoning blood.
p. 205

Montefiore in Black's commentary says:

This is not just a sheltered mooring for that most precious part of human personality which is commonly called the soul. On the contrary, it is an anchor which guarantees inner peace and security for the whole of life.
p. 116

Bruce says:

The "two unchangeable things" from which this encouragement is derived are (a) the promise of God (for "it is impossible for God to lie"), and (b) the oath by which his promise is confirmed. We are refugees from the sinking ship of this present world-order, so soon to disappear; our hope is fixed on the eternal order, where the promises of God are made good to his people in perpetuity. Our hope, based upon his promises, is our spiritual anchor.
p. 154

Wiersbe says:

However, this spiritual anchor is different from material anchors on ships. For one thing, we are anchored upward--to heaven--not downward. We are anchored, not to stand still, but to move ahead! Our anchor is "sure"--it cannot break--and "steadfast"--it cannot slip. No earthly anchor can give that kind of security!
p. 70

Phillips says:

A vessel, drifting before the wind toward a lee shore, throws out an anchor. Down, down it goes until it grips the unseen solid rock below. The hawser tightens and the anchor holds. The vessel is safe. Our hope is an anchor cast upward to the inner sanctuary of heaven, where it lays hold of Christ and cannot be moved. Life is the sea, the soul is the ship, hope is the anchor, Christ is the hidden rock within the veil.
p. 97

Macaulay says:

On the day John Knox, the "great apostle of the Scots," passed from the conflict of this life, he called to his wife, "Go, read where I cast my first anchor." She understood, and read the seventeenth chapter of John's gospel, which commentators have entitled the "High-Priestly Prayer." We are "within the veil" there, in the Holy of Holies.
p. 87

Let us therefore look to our anchor, and see to our moorings. Then let the breakers roll and the floods swell and the tides lift and the gales sweep; let our sails be torn to shreds and our masts and tackle carried off as driftwood; let our timbers creak and the old ship rock and reel in the storm: we may still enjoy the quiet of the presence of God, and smile at the sea and the wind, for with our anchor fast "within the veil," we are safe, and drawing every day nearer to heaven and home.
p. 88

J. Vernon McGee says:

When Christ ascended back to heaven, He assumed the office of High Priest.

"Entereth into that within the veil." Christ as High Priest entered into the temple in heaven (after which the earthly tabernacle was patterned, Hebrews 8:5). He passed through the veil into the Holy of Holies, into the presence of God, and presented His blood there. Then He "sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high."

Now one difference between Aaron and the Lord Jesus is (and I say this reverently) that poor old Aaron never did sit down. There were no seats in the tabernacle--there was the mercy seat, but that typified God's throne. Aaron only hurried in and hurried out. But you and I have a superior High priest. He has gone in. He has sat down. He has a finished redemption.
p. 550

Wuest observes:

This hope which the believing soul has in the Lord Jesus is an anchor of the soul which cannot be made to totter nor break down when put under stress and strain.

p. 124

We have some rich figures here. This present life is the sea; the soul, the ship; the hidden bottom of the sea, the hidden reality of the heavenly word. The soul is seen as storm-tossed on the troubled sea of life. The soul of the believer, as a tempest-tossed ship, is held by the anchor within the veil, fastened by faith to the blessed reality within the veil.

p. 125

Pink observes:

The "anchor" is Christ Himself, sustaining His people down here in this world, in the midst of the wicked, who are likened unto "the troubled sea, when it cannot rest" (Isa. 57:20). Did He not declare, "Neither shall any pluck them out of My hand" (John 10:28)? Certainly there is nothing in us "both sure and steadfast": it is the love (John 13:1), power (Matt. 28:18, 20), and faithfulness (Heb. 7:25) of Christ which is in view.
p. 354

WHERE'S YOUR ANCHOR?

An unknown author made this analogy: "Can you imagine the captain of a ship, driven about by rough winds and desiring to drop anchor, trying to find a suitable place to do so right on board his own vessel? Such a thing seems ridiculous, but for the sake of a lesson let's picture the skipper doing that. He hangs the anchor at the bow, but still the boat drives before the wind. He sets it on the deck, but this too fails to hold it steady. At last he puts it down into the hold, but has no better success.

"You see, an anchor resting on the storm-driven craft will never do the job. Only as it is thrown into the deep can it be effective against the wind and tide. In the same way, the person whose confidence is in himself will never experience true peace and safety. His actions are as futile as one who keeps the anchor aboard his own ship. Cast your faith into the great depths of God's eternal love and power. Place your trust in the infinitely faithful One."

This is excellent advice! Remember, if your hope for riding out the storms of life is anchored on your own capabilities, your confidence has been tragically misplaced. Instead, with the psalmist declare, "In You, O Lord, I put my trust" (Ps. 71:1). --RWD

Though waves and billows o'er me roll
In crushing floods of ill,
Within the haven of God's love
My soul is anchored still.--Anon.

WE'LL BE STEADY IN THE STORM IF WE'RE ANCHORED TO CHRIST THE ROCK.

(From Our Daily Bread, August 10, 1994)

William J. Kirkpatrick wrote the hymn:

"WE HAVE AN ANCHOR"

Will your anchor hold in the storms of life,
When the clouds unfold their wings of strife?
When the strong tides lift, and the cables strain,
Will your anchor drift, or firm remain?

Refrain:

We have an anchor that keeps the soul
Steadfast and sure while the billows roll,
Fastened to the Rock which cannot move,
Grounded firm and deep in the Savior's love.

("We Have an Anchor" by William J. Kirkpatrick. The New Church Hymnal,
Lexicon Music, Inc., 1976. #46)

(Becoming a Contagious Christian by Bill Hybels & Mark
Mittelberg)

As its truth began to transform my values, a friend made an interesting suggestion. He said I should get a bunch of red stickers, write on them, "Soon To Be Burned," and put them on everything I owned! It would serve as a constant reminder that every car, every motorcycle, every boat, every piece of furniture--everything I had or wanted--is subject to rust, decay, and theft, and will ultimately be destroyed in a great fiery blaze.

p. 33

Another hymn writer put it this way:

In times like these you need a Savior,
In times like these you need an anchor;
Be very sure, be very sure
Your anchor holds and grips the Solid Rock!

Refrain:

This Rock is Jesus, Yes, He's the One;
This Rock is Jesus, the only One!
Be very sure, be very sure
Your anchor holds and grips the Solid Rock!

("In Times Like These" by Ruth Caye Jones. The New Church Hymnal, Lexicon Music, Inc., 1976. #89)

BRIGHT HOPE FOR TOMORROW

To a lamentable extent the church has been infected with the despair and hopelessness of society today. Yet we have a God of hope. Peter the apostle was a man who experienced hopelessness because of his personal failures, but later in his life he shared a powerful message of hope with the beleaguered believers of that day.

~The person of our hope. Our hope is grounded in Christ Himself and His resurrection, which is our guarantee of an inheritance in heaven (1 Pet. 1:3-4).

~The permanence of our hope. Peter urges us to fix our hope completely on the grace that we will receive when Jesus comes again. This enduring hope should spur us on to holy living (1 Pet. 1:13-16).

~The place of our hope. The eternal, unchanging God is the basis of our hope--a sure and steady anchor in the turbulence of our times (1 Pet. 1:21).

~The purpose of our hope. Making Christ first in our lives will enable us to effectively answer anyone who questions why we have hope even in the midst of difficult circumstances (1 Pet. 3:15). Our testimony can give them hope, too, by pointing them to God.

("Bright hope for tomorrow" by Owen Fraser. Interest, Sep 1992. Pages 4-5.)

(From InfoSearch 3.51)

DOWN, BUT NOT OUT

An old legend tells of an angel who was sent by God to inform Satan that all the methods he uses to defeat God's children would be taken from him. The devil pleaded to be allowed to keep just one. "Let me retain depression," he begged. The angel, thinking this is a modest request, agreed. "Good!" he exclaimed, as he laughed to himself. "In that one gift, I have secured all."

In his book Depression, What It Is and What to Do About It, Roger Barrett describes this condition as "a miserable, wretched experience that leaves you exhausted, uninvolved, and in deep, hopeless despair. There seems to be absolutely nowhere to turn and not one single thing you can do to escape these horrible feelings. You feel doomed, trapped, and at the end of your rope. . . . It's awful!"

(From InfoSearch 3.51)

Sometimes we have to let go of the past in order to enjoy the present, and be able to dream of the future.

--A Hallmark Card

(From Parson's Bible Illustrator for Windows 1.0d)

Many people say they do not fear death, but the process of dying. It's not the destination, but the trip that they dread.

John Newton, a one-time slave trader, was converted and became a great preacher and hymn writer in the Church of England. Two years before his death, in 1807, he was so weak that he could hardly stand in his pulpit; someone had to support him as he preached. Shortly before he died, when he was confined to his room and unable to move, he told a friend, "I am like a person going on a journey in a stagecoach, who expects its arrival every hour and is frequently looking out of the window for it--I am packed and sealed, and ready for the post."

You may have heard of Newton; he wrote some words which are sung around the world: "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound."

--Facing Death and the Life After, by Billy Graham, p. 241

(From Parson's Bible Illustrator for Windows 1.0d)

BILLY GRAHAM, in one of his messages just a few weeks ago, was telling the story of the US Air crash when so many lives were hurled into eternity. One of the men who was responsible for overseeing the gathering of the remains after the crash tells the story of finding two arms that were separated from their bodies with the two hands clasped tightly together. We do not know whether those hands were the hands of a husband and wife, a couple of young lovers who were looking forward to life together in the future, but we do know that they were two hands clasped together going out into eternity.

Billy Graham asked the question:

"Whose hand are you hanging on to tonight?"

(from a 1995 televised message)

The hymn writer says it well:

When darkness veils His lovely face,
I rest on His unchanging grace;
In ev'ry high and stormy gale,
My anchor holds within the vale.

His oath, His covenant, His blood
Support me in the whelming flood;
When all around my soul gives way
He then is all my hope and stay.

Refrain:

On Christ the solid Rock I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand.
All other ground is sinking sand.

("The Solid Rock" by William B. Bradbury. The New Church Hymnal,
Lexicon Music, Inc., 1976. #54)

John 14:1-6

Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way where I am going." Thomas said to Him, "Lord, we do not know where You are going, how do we know the way?" Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me.

v.20 where Jesus entered as a forerunner for us, having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

The DOMINANT FOCUS of these remaining 3 VERSES are upon 5 THINGS that Jesus is to us:

1. HE IS A REFUGE
2. HE IS A HOPE
3. HE IS AN ANCHOR
4. HE IS A FORERUNNER
5. BY HIM WE HAVE ACCESS INTO HIS PRESENCE

Hebrews 10:20

by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh,

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

Prodromos ("who went before us") suggests a "forerunner." If the harbor imagery is still in mind it recalls the role of sailors who leave their ship in a smaller craft in order to carry the anchor forward to a place where it can be firmly lodged. So too the Lord Jesus, by His entrance into the heavenly sanctuary where He functions as **a High Priest forever**, has given to a Christian's hope an anchorage from which it cannot be shaken loose. Since, therefore, the reader's hope was sure, they could cling to it tenaciously right to the very end.

p. 797

MacArthur says:

Jesus entering **within the veil** signifies His entering the Holy of Holies, where the sacrifice of atonement was made. Under the Old Covenant it was made yearly by the high priest. Under the New i[t] has been made once for all time by Christ's sacrifice on the cross. Our anchored soul is, in God's mind, already secure within the veil, secure within His eternal sanctuary. When Jesus entered the heavenly Holy of Holies, he did not leave after the sacrifice as did the Aaronic high priests, but "He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Heb. 1:3). In other words, Jesus remains there forever as Guardian of our souls. Such absolute security is almost incomprehensible. Not only are our souls anchored within the impregnable, inviolable heavenly sanctuary, but our Savior, Jesus Christ, stands guard over them as well! How can the Christian's security be described as anything but eternal? Truly we can trust God and His Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, with our souls.
pp. 168-9

Richards says:

When we trust Jesus fully, we really can forget ourselves, and, launching out in reckless trust, go on to maturity.
p. 65

G. Campbell Morgan says:

An arresting word in this connection is the word "Forerunner." It marks a difference between Christ's passing within the veil, and everything that had preceded it in the ritual of the Hebrew people. Aaron had entered within the veil once a year, but never as a forerunner. He entered as the representative of those who were left outside. But they were always left outside. No one followed Aaron when he entered within the veil to stand in the presence of the ark and the mercy-seat. When Jesus passed within the veil, He went as a Forerunner, which at once suggested that the way was open for others to follow Him.
pp. 76-77

Hession in his book, From Shadow to Substance, says:

He is never going to fall down on the job the Father has given Him to do, that of taking care of the interests of the feeblest saints before His face. No matter how failing they may feel themselves to be, no matter how disappointed in themselves they may become, they will never fail to find a "Friend at court" to represent them, someone to whom they can go in every time of need just as they are. The Father has arranged it that way. My peace with God, then, does not depend on my faithfulness to God; it does not even depend on Christ's faithfulness to me, but rather on Christ's faithfulness to Him who has appointed Him for me. What a pillow to rest the head on!

p. 58

A. T. Robertson commenting on the word "FORERUNNER" says:

[It is an] Old word used for a spy, a scout, only here in N.T. Jesus has shown us the way, has gone on ahead, and is the surety . . . and guarantor of our own entrance later. In point of fact, our anchor of hope with its two chains of God's promise and oath has laid hold of Jesus within the veil. It will hold fast. All we need to do is to be true to him as he is to us.

p. 379

Hewitt says:

He is the Christian's link between the visible and invisible, and a certain pledge that one day the believer will also enter within the veil to share His eternal glory.

p. 115

English says:

So our great High Priest, Jesus the Son of God, has entered within the veil before us and for us. His is not a temporary entry, as it were, like that of the high priest of old, but He abides there, our Intercessor and Advocate at the Father's right hand. "Who [therefore] shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us" (Rom. 8:33, 34).
p. 181

Griffith Thomas says:

Perhaps, therefore, the word is an allusion both to the High Priest and to the cities of refuge, as the phrase "fled for refuge" is found here. It seems clear, however, that the fundamental idea is not that of the sinner fleeing to Christ as a refuge, but of the believer finding refuge in the heavenly sphere, whither Christ has entered as "a Priest for ever." It has been noted that we have here three metaphors: the anchor, the refuge, and the forerunner.
p. 80

What a wonderful practical tie there is between this truth of the coming of the Lord and our appearing before Him, and the living of our daily life! "Every one who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure." Let me illustrate that by the life of Martha Snell Nicholson who, for more than thirty-five years, was so transcendently triumphant through those many weary years that she wrote some of the finest Christian poetry which has ever been written. A number of years before she died she wrote about her hope of the coming of the Lord. This is what she says: The best part is the blessed hope of his soon coming. How I ever lived before I grasped that wonderful truth, I do not know. How anyone lives without it these trying days I cannot imagine. Each morning I think, with a leap of the heart, "He may come today." And each evening, "When I awake I may be in glory." Each day must be lived as though it were to be my last, and there is so much to be done to purify myself and to set my house in order. I am on tiptoe with expectancy. There are no more grey days--for they're all touched with color; no more dark days--for the radiance of His coming is on the horizon; no more dull days, with glory just around the corner; and no more lonely days, with His footsteps coming ever nearer, and the thought that soon, soon, I shall see His blessed face and be forever through with pain and tears.

(From Parson's Bible Illustrator for Windows 1.0d)

(31 Days of Praise: Enjoying God Anew by Ruth Myers)

A friend of mine, who serves Christ as a professional in a restricted country, came across a quote from Amy Carmichael that says, "O Lord Jesus, my Beloved, may I be a joy to Thee." She has made this her major and constant prayer request. Above her desire for marriage (she's single and not too young), above her desire for success, above her desire to see friends and loved ones half a world away, she has chosen this supreme desire, "May I be a joy to Thee." That's worship.
p. 148

CONCLUSION:

What are some of the lessons that we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: Are you in the "beloved" because you have received Jesus Christ as your personal Savior?

LESSON #2: Are people convinced that you are a Christian by the quality of your life and your commitment to the Savior?

LESSON #3: Are chastity, compassion, charity and concern manifested regularly in your life?

LESSON #4: God does not forget your work and the love which you exhibit.

LESSON #5: We manifest our relationship to Christ by being servants for Jesus' sake.

LESSON #6: We are warned not to be lazy, but through faith and patience to inherit the promises.

LESSON #7: Our inheritance rests upon the unconditional promises of God.

LESSON #8: God's sovereign purpose is unchangeable.

LESSON #9: The promise and the oath give us the assurance and the strong encouragement that our hope is secure.

LESSON #10: The anchor within the vale is Jesus Christ our Savior.

LESSON #11: Christ our forerunner has entered into the Holy of Holies and He there intercedes on our behalf twenty-four hours a day.

(Broken in the Right Place by Alan E. Nelson)

The beauty of God is that when junk happens to you, regardless of the junk, He can create something good out of it. He recycles our trash. He can salvage gold from the garbage--if we let Him--by His loving response to us when we call to Him out of our brokenness in the right place, the soul.

I want to reiterate that not everything that happens to you is an episode of brokenness. There are definite times when God tries to prune some of the dead wood that may be stopping the Spirit from producing fruit in your life. However, even small problems have the potential of breaking and making us. If we respond to even silly, minuscule events with an attitude of humility and dependence and submission to God, we can maintain (voluntarily) a spirit of brokenness.

p. 54

(Holiness by J. C. Ryle)

If any reader of this paper really feels that he has counted the cost, and taken up the cross, I bid him persevere and press on. I dare say you often feel your heart faint, and are sorely tempted to give up in despair. Your enemies seem so many, your besetting sins so strong, your friends so few, the way so steep and narrow, you hardly know what to do. But still I say, persevere and press on.

The time is very short. A few more years of watching and praying, a few more tossings on the sea of this world, a few more deaths and changes, a few more winters and summers, and all will be over. We shall have fought our last battle, and shall need to fight no more.

The presence and company of Christ will make amends for all we suffer here below. When we see as we have been seen, and look back on the journey of life, we shall wonder at our own faintness of heart. We shall marvel that we made so much of our cross, and thought so little of our crown. We shall marvel that in 'counting the cost' we could ever doubt on which side the balance of profit lay. Let us take courage. We are not far from home. It may cost much to be a true Christian and a consistent holy man; but it pays.

pp. 77-78

(The Seeking Heart by Fenelon)

Your aim should be to die to all such ambitions by letting yourself be humbled. You must learn to accept obscurity and scornful disregard while you keep your eyes solely on God.
p. 37

(Oswald Chambers: Abandoned to God by David McCasland)

On December 15 Oswald began his final Irish mission in Antrim. He wrote:

My Lord Jesus Christ grows grander and more and more central to my mind and heart and being daily. How much, how intolerably much, we owe to Him, none of us begin to realize it. Such an indignation gets hold of me, such a passion of penitency, when I think of the days I have given over to thoughts and concerns other than Himself. How the prince of this world presses and throngs with clamours, more or less noble and good, but all in order to keep us away from devoting all to Him.

p. 155

(Amazing Grace: 366 Inspiring Hymn Stories for Daily Devotions by Kenneth W. Osbeck)

The author of this text, Henry Gilmour, came to the United States from Ireland as a teenager. He practiced dentistry for a number of years and then spent the last 25 years of his life as a gospel musician. He was a gifted soloist and was greatly respected as a choir director. "The Haven of Rest" first appeared in Sunlight Songs, published in 1890.

My soul in sad exile was out on life's sea, so burdened with sin, and distress, till I heard a sweet voice saying, "Make me your choice!" And I entered the Haven of Rest.

I yielded myself to His tender embrace, and faith taking hold of the Word, my fetters fell off, and I anchored my soul--The "Haven of Rest" is my Lord.

The song of my soul, since the Lord made me whole, has been the old story so blest of Jesus, who'll save whosoever will have a home in the Haven of Rest!

O come to the Savior--He patiently waits to save by His power divine; Come, anchor your soul in the Haven of Rest, and say, "My Beloved is mine."

Chorus: I've anchored my soul in the Haven of Rest; I'll sail the wide seas no more; the tempest may sweep o'er the wild, stormy deep--
In Jesus I'm safe ever more.

p. 195

Dear Ann Landers:

The enclosed appeared in the Schenectady Gazette. It was written by a teenage boy who died from cancer. His parents were divorced and he and his sisters were being raised by grandparents. Please try to find room for this farewell message in your column. We went to school with Kevin, and he was truly one in a million.

A Very Special Thank You

If I were back on earth, I would want to express my thanks:

To the doctors and nurses at Ellis Hospital who attended me and made sure I did not suffer any unnecessary pain during my illness.

To all my school friends for your concern and kindness; for the many visits you made to the chapels and churches to pray for me; for the many hours you spent at the hospital helping to cheer me up and lift the spirits of my family. For the memorial services you held on the steps of Draper High School the day I left this earth.

To all who came by the funeral home to pay their last respects. I stopped counting when the number reached 400.

To all who sent cards and sympathy letters. They were so helpful.

To you dear friends and neighbors who cooked all that delicious food and baked those wonderful pastries. Your goodies just about covered every flat surface in our home. How I wish I could have tasted some of them.

To the thoughtful friends, relatives and neighbors who sent donations to charities in my name--and, oh, those gorgeous flowers! What a beautiful array! It was almost as if I was back in the Hawaiian islands again--a place I truly loved. Many of the plants and flowers are now in our home, being tenderly cared for by my grandmother.

To those who made up the funeral cortege. What a sight that was! There were over 30 vehicles--one after the other, all with their lights on. What a great send off. I loved it!

To my family--Kelly, Celia, Gina and Katie. I am proud to have been your one and only brother. I'm sorry I had to leave you, but I know you will all grow up to be good citizens and a credit to our grandparents.

To Gram and Grandpa. Thanks for everything. Too bad God called me just when I was reaching the age when I could have been of help to you. I realized a long time ago that you were exceptional people. I was a lucky guy to be your grandson.

To all: This isn't the end. We are sure to meet again. I'll be on hand waiting when you arrive, and we'll take up where we left off.

--Kevin Dolan, 1964-1981

Dear Friend in Schenectady: Thank you for sharing that extraordinary message. For those who may be wondering how Kevin knew the number of vehicles in the funeral cortege and the fact that more than 400 passed his coffin, his farewell message was written several days before he passed away. He left blank spaces for his older sister to fill in after his death.

(From Parson's Bible Illustrator for Windows 1.0d)