

(9) Though we speak in this way, yet in your case, beloved, we feel sure of better things --- things that belong to salvation. For God is not unjust so as to overlook your work and the love that you have shown for His Name in serving the saints, as you still do. And we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness to have the full assurance of hope until the end, so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

(13) For when God made a promise to Abraham, since He had no one greater by whom to swear, He swore by Himself, saying, "Surely I will bless you and multiply you." And thus, Abraham, having waited patiently, obtained the promise.

(16) For people swear by something greater themselves, and in all their disputes an oath is final for confirmation. So, when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of His purpose, He guaranteed it with an oath, so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us.

(19) We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

Think on these things:

- 1) Vs. 9 is a bit like a "therefore" statement, calling to mind the discussion of faithfully saved or unfaithfully lost, God's productive crop or Satan's thorns and thistles, in verses 4-8. "Though we speak in this way..." What about "your case, beloved," what does the writer say about them? What are the "better" things (a Hebrews theme)? Do you enjoy these as a believer?

For these beloved... **we feel sure of better things!**

Better things belong to... **salvation, being saved, for those God has saved. (Personal answer...)**

- 2) Since we are not saved by good works, does God care about them? Consider Ephesians 2:8-10. Remember Hebrews 4:9-10, where to enter "God's rest" we must stop advancing our own works before Him. Good works are a service --- not a means to become saved --- a proof of our faith. Check out James 2:14-18.

Yes, God does care about our good works service. Per Ephesians, He has a plan and expectation for each one of us. James says genuine faith is proven by works.

- 3) What is the desire of the writer for these readers (two concepts, v. 11), to keep them from becoming "sluggish" in living their faith? Who are they encouraged to imitate?

Desire 1 – **To show the same unity of earnestness (commitment) and zeal.**

Desire 2 – **To hold onto their full assurance (of faith) and hope to the very end.**

Imitate? **Imitate those who through faith and patience inherit God's promises (i.e., people who have been committed Christians through many of life's experiences w/o giving up faith).**

- 4) We all know the story of Abraham and his patience to receive God's promise for his life. Let's see if we can calculate the years. How old was Abraham when he left his homeland? How old was he when Ishmael was born through Sarah's servant girl, Hagar? How old was he when Isaac was born to Sarah at an impossible child-bearing age? How many years between leaving home to Isaac's birth (test your math skills)? See Genesis 12:4; 15:4; 16:16; and 21:5 for the answers.

How old leaving his homeland? 75 How old with Ishmael's birth? 86

How old with Isaac's birth? 100 How many years from leaving home to Isaac's birth? 25

- 5) How much "faith" would it require from you to wait this many years for God to keep His promise to you? What is a good descriptive word to hold on this long to God's promise? Sometimes, the stories on the pages of the Bible camouflage the passage of time...!

Waiting 25 years for God to keep a promise would be hard to do. To wait this long is to "persevere." 25 years is 1/3 of a normal lifetime today....

- 6) Why do people swear oaths? We have to look carefully to find the two unchangeable things about God's promise to Abraham's descendants through Isaac (v. 18). God desired to convince the Israelites about the "unchangeable character of His purpose" (v. 17).

Why do we swear oaths (v. 16)? **It is a "final" confirmation of something we declare/promise.**

Unchangeable #1 (v. 17b) – **God made this promise with an oath (in His own Name).**

Unchangeable #2 (v. 18a) – **It is "impossible" for God to lie.**

- 7) God's character and word are unchangeable. See Romans 11:1, 28-29 and Hebrews 13:8. How should this truth impact us who have turned to God for refuge in this life (v. 18b)? What imagery is presented in v. 19a to describe its effect on our souls?

"Hold fast" to the hope God has set before us. He is our source of refuge. This offered promise is an "anchor for the soul."

- 8) Our hope here allows us to enter what place (in prayer, Hebrews 10:19-23), which in Tabernacle days was only open to the High Priest? Are you **bold** and comfortable enough to do this?

V. 19 – The "inner" place behind the curtain, called the "most holy place," is where only the High Priest could enter annually for the Jews. Jesus 'opens' it up for believers today, inviting us to come into it with bold prayer.

People and situations I want to pray for this week: