

Hebrews - A Letter Addressed to Modern-Day Christians

Part 10

Hebrews 5:11 – 6:20

Hebrews 5:11-14 [NIV] *“We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn. In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God’s word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.”*

The writer of Hebrews breaks off at this point to express his frustration about his readers failure to understand what he had already expressed about the role of Jesus Christ as our High Priest.

The writer of Hebrews wants to lead his readers into a deeper understanding of Jesus’ new role as a high priest in “*the order of Melchizedek*” but with their present lack of understanding he would leave them behind.

Maturity in Christian discipleship and understanding does not come automatically with the passing of years in the Christian faith.

Faith in Jesus as our Saviour is just the starting point.

Christian **maturity only comes** about by working out in our lives the ramifications of our accepting Jesus Christ as our Saviour from our eternal death we earned as a result of our sins against God.

Some of these Jewish Christians were immature as many Christians are today.

When they should be teaching others about the Christian life they had **not** been applying the basics to their own lives.

These immature Christians were reluctant to move beyond the age-old traditions of their former life.

They were reluctant to move forward into a greater understanding of what living a Christian life meant on a day-to-day basis.

Perhaps they attended church meetings on a fairly regular basis, supported their church fellowship financially, and felt by doing this they were good Christians in the eyes of God.

The writer of Hebrews feared that unless they moved out of their comfortable position and cut some of their ties with their pre-Christian life and stopped trying to blend two very different cultures they would not mature as Christians.

True commitment to Jesus Christ moves us out of our “comfort zone”.

Romans 12:1-2 [NIV] *“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is — his good, pleasing and perfect will.”*

If we really value what God has done for us through Jesus Christ, we will offer our whole life as a living sacrifice to God.

John 4:23-24 [NIV] *“Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshippers the Father seeks. **God is spirit, and his worshippers must worship in spirit and in truth.**”*

Only by such a personal sacrifice will we be truly worshipping our Creator God.

The writer of Hebrews is also asking these people one very basic but deep question.

Are you so well versed in Christian doctrine that you can teach others?

John 14:26 [NIV] *“But the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.”*

The Holy Spirit can and will only bring to remembrance the scriptures we need to live a Christian life in many different situations, if we have studied and made a part of our lives God’s Word.

When we refer to the “*Word of God*” remember we include Jesus Christ who is the Word of God, as well as the scriptures in the Christian Bible.

John 16:12-13 [NIV] *“I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. **But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.**”*

The Holy Spirit, if we let Him, will guide or lead us into all truth.

Everything that has life in the physical creation is growing and maturing or it is dead.

The same principle applies to our Christian life, we are either growing and maturing or we are spiritually dead.

Romans 8:12-18 [NIV] *“Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation — but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, because **those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.** For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.” **The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children.** Now if we are children, then we are heirs, heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory. I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.”*

This powerful scripture, strongly reminds us that unless we are led by the Holy Spirit we are not children of God and we will not receive an inheritance in the Kingdom of God, the created family of God.

Hebrews 6:1-2 [NIV] *“Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and **go on to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.**”*

Here are listed the six elementary teachings of the Christian faith.

These are doctrines that every Christian should know so well and practice in their lives that they do **not** need to study again and again.

This statement prompts the question: Do we know these doctrines so well that we have no need to renew them?

Repentance – have we really repented?

Acts that lead to death – what are these acts?

Faith in God – what does this involve, do we know?

Baptisms – more than one baptism?

Laying on of hands – what does this mean?

Resurrection of the dead – scripture refers to both physical and spiritual dead; are we aware of this and its implications?

Eternal judgement – how and when will this judgement take place and by what standards are we all going to be judged?

Perhaps we now have a big question mark next to our personal maturity as a Christian?

Hebrews 6:3 [NIV] *“And God permitting, we will do so.”*

The object of this study is not to cover these basic doctrines but to be a “wake-up call” for all of us to seek real maturity in our Christian lives.

Hebrews 6:4-5 [NIV] *“It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age,”*

If we add to these verses:

Hebrews 10:26-31 [NIV] *“If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God. Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know him who said, “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” and again, “The Lord will judge his people.” It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”*

We are warned that those who have begun on the Christian path in life will **not** necessarily reach the end of it, but become lost people.

How can we resolve the apparent sharp contrast these scriptures make with other passages of scripture?

John 10:27-29 [NIV] *“My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no-one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no-one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand.”*

This scripture assures us that Christ’s sheep can never be snatched from the protection of His hand.

Romans 8:28-39 [NIV] *“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified. What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all — how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is*

*God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died — more than that, who was raised to life — is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. **For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.**"*

Romans 5:9-10 [NIV] *"Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, **how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!**"*

Paul also insists that those whom God has called He will bring safe to glory.

There are true Christians who continue to be plagued with doubt and fear and find it hard to relax in the confidence that God is in ultimate control, for such people **John 10:27-29** and **Romans 8:28-39** are most essential teaching.

They are designed to support the faint-hearted.

Revelation 3:14-18 [NIV] *"To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation. I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, **because you are lukewarm — neither hot nor cold — I am about to spit you out of my mouth.** You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realise that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so that you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so that you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so that you can see."*

There are also other Christians whose danger is not doubt but complacency.

An arrogant assumption that all is well, coupled with a disregard for God's Word, a dangerous cocktail.

Revelation 3:19-20 [NIV] *"Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent. Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. **If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.**"*

These Jewish Christians also needed the same sharp pastoral warning as did those in the church at Laodicea.

In both cases it is "a shot across the bows" for being careless with their Christian living.

The writers in both cases is warning these Christians to turn back from the brink.

All the Christians addressed in these scriptures had received from God certain privileges only available to true Christians.

Enlightened –

John 1:1-5 [NIV] *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. **In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.**"*

John 9:4-5 [NIV] *“As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no-one can work. **While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.**”*

There is no doubt that the writer of Hebrews is referring to Jesus Christ as the light that has come into the world.

Tasted the heavenly gift –

This is the free gift of forgiveness that we receive by accepting the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for the cleansing of our sins.

Shared in the Holy Spirit –

Romans 8:9 [NIV] *“You, however, **are controlled** not by the sinful nature but **by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you.** And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.”*

Every Christian has the Holy Spirit working with them, or if they allow Him, dwelling in them.

John 14:15-18 [NIV] *“If you love me, you will obey what I command. **And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor to be with you for ever — the Spirit of truth.** The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. **But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.**”*

The Holy Spirit with or in us is Jesus Christ living His life with us or in us.

This relationship is not available to non-Christians.

John 16:13 [NIV] *“But when he, **the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth.** He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.”*

The Holy Spirit will lead us into all truth.

Galatians 5:22-25 [NIV] *“But **the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.** Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. **Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.**”*

If we walk with the Holy Spirit in our lives these very characteristics of God will begin to develop in us.

Luke 12:11-12 [NIV] *“When you are brought before synagogues, rulers and authorities, do not worry about how you will defend yourselves or what you will say, **for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say.**”*

The Holy Spirit will speak through us as Christians when our commitment to Jesus Christ is challenged.

Tasted the goodness of the Word of God –

Even on a physical level the wisdom that is found in the Christian Bible will assist us to avoid making many foolish mistakes in our physical life. [Read Proverbs and Ecclesiastes for such practical wisdom.]

On a spiritual level the Christian Bible is the only source for being shown the way to receive eternal life not just a good life now.

John 10:10 [Message Bible] “... *I [Jesus Christ the Good Shepherd] came so they can have real and eternal life, more and better life than they ever dreamed of.*”

God’s Word, Jesus Christ who is God’s Word, came to free us from eternal death, that is good news.

Add to this all the other promises that God makes in His Word.

The powers of the coming age –

Jew and Christian alike divide time into two ages, the present age and a future age that will begin at Christ’s Second Coming.

Matthew 4:8-9 [NIV] “*Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour. “All this I will give you,” he said, “if you will bow down and worship me.*”

Jesus did **not** tell Satan that this present world was **not** His to give, but accepted it was at this time his kingdom **not** God’s.

2 Corinthians 4:4 [NIV] “*The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.*”

Referring to Satan as god of this world.

Revelation 12:9 [NIV] “*The great dragon was hurled down, that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.*”

Satan whose rule of society has led the whole world away from the true God.

1 John 5:19 [NIV] “*We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one.*”

All the pain, suffering, violence, tears, hatred, pride and arrogance are the product of the present ruler of this world, Satan.

Revelation 20:1-3 [NIV] “*And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations any more until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time.*”

Satan’s rule of deception will come to an end at Christ’s return.

Revelation 21:1-5 [NIV] “*Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” Then he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.*”

The beginning of the new age, ruled by the returning Jesus Christ.

Our relationship with Jesus Christ right now allows us to experience this future age by allowing the Holy Spirit to dwell in us, the Spirit of Christ.

Hebrews 6:6 [NIV] *“if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance, because to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and **subjecting him to public disgrace.**”*

If Christians turn their back on all of these spiritual experiences, they are subjecting Jesus Christ to the public abuse that He received at the time of His crucifixion.

Matthew 27:27-31 [NIV] *“Then the governor’s soldiers took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole company of soldiers round him. They **stripped him** and put a scarlet robe on him, and then twisted together a **crown of thorns** and set it on his head. They put a staff in his right hand and knelt in front of him and **mocked him**. “Hail, king of the Jews!” they said. They **spat on him**, and took the staff and **struck him** on the head again and again. After they had **mocked him**, they took off the robe and put his own clothes on him. **Then they led him away to crucify him.**”*

Matthew 27:41-44 [NIV] *“In the same way **the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders mocked him**. “He saved others,” they said, “but he can’t save himself! He’s the King of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, ‘I am the Son of God.’” In the same way **the robbers who were crucified with him also heaped insults on him.**”*

The only thing that makes it impossible for such a person to be brought back to the state of repentance is a lack of desire on their part.

It is not that someone else has “snatched them from Christ’s hand” they have done themselves.

In so doing they have placed themselves beyond the help of God.

Genesis 2:7 [NIV] *“the **LORD God** formed the man from the dust of the ground and **breathed into his nostrils the breath of life**, and the man became a living being.”*

At creation God implanted into the newly-created human being, who was composed of the same physical elements of the rest of the physical creation, **a spiritual entity.**

Job 32:8 [NIV] *“But it is **the spirit in a man, the breath of the Almighty, that gives him understanding.**” [Proverbs 20:27; 1 Corinthians 2:11]*

Part of that understanding or intellect, is the power to choose to live one way or another.

Deuteronomy 30:19-20 [NIV] *“This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that **I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life**, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the **LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the LORD is your life, and he will give you many years in the land he swore to give to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.**”*

God did not force them to follow His way of life.

Proverbs 1:28-31 [NIV] *“Then they will call to me but I will not answer; they will look for me but will not find me. **Since they hated knowledge and did not choose to fear the LORD**, since they would not accept my advice and spurned my rebuke, they will eat the fruit of their ways and be filled with the fruit of their schemes.”*

We have a choice in life but not the outcome of the way we choose, that is only God’s right as Sovereign.

Hebrews 11:24-28 [NIV] *“By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh’s daughter. **He chose to be ill-treated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the***

*pleasures of sin for a short time. He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward. By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible. **By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, so that the destroyer of the firstborn would not touch the firstborn of Israel.***"

The choice a Christian makes is always linked to faith in what God has promised.

Jeremiah 15:6 [NIV] *"You have rejected me," declares the LORD. "You keep on backsliding. So I will lay hands on you and destroy you; I can no longer show compassion."*

It is not a matter of what God can do, so much as what He will do.

There can come a point where He will not interfere with a deliberately human decision.

If we do not value what God is offering He will withdraw the offer.

Mark 3:28-30 [NIV] *"I tell you the truth, all the sins and blasphemies of men will be forgiven them. But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; he is guilty of an eternal sin." He said this because they were saying, "He has an evil spirit."*

Such an open-eyed reversal of our path in life, our turning our back on God and His way of life is an unforgiveable sin.

The person involved does not seek repentance or even desire it.

That is a terminal choice as far as God is concerned.

Such a person has taken on totally the very nature of Satan where pride doesn't allow him to repent of his sinful ways.

Christ died once for all. He will not be crucified again.

Apart from humbly accepting the cross sacrifice of Jesus Christ there is no other way of salvation.

Hebrews 6:7-8 [NIV] *"Land that drinks in the rain often falling on it and that produces a crop useful to those for whom it is farmed receives the blessing of God. But land that produces thorns and thistles is worthless and is in danger of being cursed. In the end it will be burned."*

Note to be fruitful we have to take in God's Word not just allow it to flow over us.

Matthew 25:24-26 [NIV] *"Then the man who had received the one talent came. 'Master,' he said, 'I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.' "His master replied, 'You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed?"*

God has blessed us greatly with life and talents and expects a return on His investment.

Luke 13:6-9 [NIV] *"Then he told this parable: "A man had a fig-tree, planted in his vineyard, and he went to look for fruit on it, but did not find any. So he said to the man who took care of the vineyard, 'For three years now I've been coming to look for fruit on this fig-tree and haven't found any. Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?' " "Sir," the man replied, 'leave it alone for one more year, and I'll dig round it and fertilise it. If it bears fruit next year, fine! If not, then cut it down.'"*

God expects us to produce fruits that are useful to Him in our lives, not just an outward façade of religion and righteousness.

We have to ask the question, will God be able to use the fruits we are producing in our lives to feed others spiritually?

People cannot be nourished by thorns and thistles!

How do we assure we produce the right fruits?

John 15:1-8 [NIV] *“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. “I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.”*

Only when we are joined to Jesus Christ, by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit can we ever produce fruit that is useful to our Creator God.

Physically fruit is produced on branches that are constantly receiving nourishment from the trunk of the tree.

Remember that the fruit produced is not for the benefit of the branch on which it is produced.

Fruit will be taken by others to eat but each piece of fruit has within it the seed that could grow to produce another fruit-growing branch in that person.

Matthew 28:16-20 [NIV] *“Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”*

The commission that the disciples were given was to produce more disciples, and this was accomplished by Jesus making new disciples through them as He lived again on earth within them, by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. [**John 14:15-18**]

Hebrews 6:9 [NIV] *“Even though we speak like this, dear friends, we are confident of better things in your case, things that accompany salvation.”*

The author of Hebrews is afraid that he might have expressed himself too directly and strongly, so he now enters on a “*damage limitation exercise.*”

While he meant what he said, he does **not** want his readers to think that he has “*written them off.*”

He redresses the balance by expressing his confidence in them and appealing to their sense of Christian commitment.

Hebrews 6:10 [NIV] *“God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them.”*

God will not overlook a long and honourable record of genuine Christian service.

Service that has been directed towards other Christians, as well as towards non-Christians, giving them an example of God’s love for them.

No-one who serves God by serving others in Christian love will finish up the loser.

We have nothing to fear, so long as we remain faithful to Christian discipleship.

All these warnings are about what might happen.

As a good pastor, He knows the value of encouragement and affirmation being given at the same time as loving correction and warnings.

Hebrews 6:11-12 [NIV] *“We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure. We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.”*

Hope keeps a Christian from becoming lazy or feeling bored, like a worker who leaves a job half done.

Philippians 3:14-16 [NIV] *“I press on towards the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenwards in Christ Jesus. All of us who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. **Only let us live up to what we have already attained.**”*

Sometimes trying to live the perfect Christian life can be so difficult that it leaves us drained and discouraged.

Those who are mature must press on in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Knowing that Christ will reveal and fill any discrepancy between what we are and what we should be.

Christian maturity involves acting on the guidance that we have already received.

It is always easy to make excuses that we still have so much to learn about Christian living instead of looking on our present lack of knowledge as a challenge to search for greater truth.

This will prepare us well for eternal life.

John 17:3 [NIV] *“Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.”*

Eternal life will be an endless seeking to understand the mind and character of God in an ever closer personal relationship with Him.

We can experience the joys and fulfilment of eternal life by developing a closer, more intimate relationship with Him **now**.

Hebrews 6:13-15 [NIV] *“When God made his promise to Abraham, since there was no-one greater for him to swear by, he swore by himself, saying, “I will surely bless you and give you many descendants.” **And so after waiting patiently, Abraham received what was promised.**”*

The mention of promises leads the author of Hebrews to mention the prime example of waiting for God to fulfil what He has promised.

Which will only be accomplished when it is most beneficial for us, to receive the promise fulfilled.

Abraham waited patiently 25 years from the time God had promised him a son [**Genesis 15:4**] to Isaac's birth [**Genesis 21:1-3**].

Only one lapse in this patient waiting is recorded when Abraham was encouraged by his wife to take the initiative for the promised son to be born. [Genesis 16:1-4].

The end result was nothing but trouble for Abraham.

This conflict still continues today with the ill feeling between Jews and Arabs, the ancestors of Isaac and Ishmael.

A powerful warning not to try to take the initiative away from our Sovereign God.

Hebrews 6:16-17 [NIV] *“Men swear by someone greater than themselves, and the oath confirms what is said and puts an end to all argument. **Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath.**”*

God’s promises are unchanging and trustworthy because God is unchanging and trustworthy.

The oath was for Abraham’s benefit to put an end to any excuses he had for taking the initiative.

Hebrews 6:18-20 [NIV] *“God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope offered to us may be greatly encouraged. **We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure.** It enters the inner sanctuary **behind the curtain**, where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest for ever, in the order of Melchizedek.”*

The two unchangeable things are God’s nature, He is love and truth.

Therefore as He cannot lie and we can be secure in what He has promised, as an anchor in any storm our lives may encounter.

The curtain refers to the curtain in the temple at Jerusalem that was across the entrance to the most holy place where symbolically God sat on the Mercy Seat above the Ark of the Covenant.

Under the Old Covenant only the high priest and only once a year, on the Day of Atonement, could enter into this part of the temple without instantly dying.

Matthew 27:50-51 [NIV] *“And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit. **At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.** The earth shook and the rocks split.”*

At the moment of Christ’s death this curtain was torn in two from top to bottom, making entry into the symbolic presence of God available for all humanity.

Jesus is now our High Priest who is constantly within the presence of God the Father.

Romans 8:31-34 [NIV] *“What, then, shall we say in response to this? **If God is for us, who can be against us?** He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all — how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died, more than that, who was raised to life, is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.”*

Jesus went into the presence of God to make it safe for all humanity to follow.

Before Jesus came, God was a distant stranger who only a few might approach and that at the peril of their lives.

John 15:12-14 [NIV] *“My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. **Greater love has no-one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.** You are my friends if you do what I command.”*

Now because of what Jesus Christ has done God has become the friend of every human being.