

Reward for faithful service

- The consequences of rebellion

- But this is not the Hebrews' situation

- Final salvation

- The theme here is reward or inheritance

- Reward – a certainty for those who persist in faith

Inheriting the Promises

- 1. God has rich promises for us

- 2. Persistent faith

Every warning passage in Hebrews is followed by a word of encouragement! Those who fall into rebellion and come under God's oath of wrath cannot be renewed to repentance. This seems to mean two things: (i) they become so insensitive that they can no longer hear God's voice, (ii) they cannot be brought back to the position they were in before an oath of God's anger was taken against them.

But our writer does not want his readers to think they have actually fallen in this way. If they had he would not be writing to them! ⁹*But even though we speak like this, beloved friends, we are persuaded of better things in your case – things that belong to salvation.* The writer is quite certain they have not committed this sin, and he does not want them to think that they have fallen in this way. Discouragement never helps anyone! What makes him sure that they have not sinned in this way is their obvious spiritual sensitivity. He is sure they will be brought to final salvation. 'Salvation' here does not refer here to initial-salvation but ¹ to final-salvation which is the same as final reward. There is no difference here between 'having salvation' ² and 'having...a reward' ³ or 'having' heavenly treasure ⁴ or 'having' inheritance ⁵.

He says: ¹⁰*For God is not so unjust as to overlook your work and the love that you have shown for his honour in serving his holy people, and you are still doing so.* This verse makes it certain that the writer's theme is reward or inheritance. God does not give justification or new birth as a reward! But he does reward works of faith. The writer can see the love of his people towards other Christians. He can see their persistence in practical faith, and that in itself is enough for him to know the people have not fallen into hardness of heart beyond recovery.

But he has further hopes for them. ¹¹*And we long that each one of you should show the same diligence to the very end in aiming for that full assurance of hope.* What is this full assurance of hope? It is the joyful certainty that inheritance and reward are on their way and sure to come if we persist in faith! It is the same as 'entering into rest'. It comes by diligence and persistence in faith. It is the opposite of laziness and discouragement. ¹²*Then you will not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.*

1. God has rich promises for us. He promises to use us, to give us a calling and a ministry. He promises everything we need – mercy and grace to help – in order to fulfil that ministry and achieve God's will for our lives. He promises to sympathize with our weaknesses, to sustain us amidst delay and opposition, to bring us all of the way to the full achievement of his will. Such promises are for every Christian. Our writer mentions 'each one of you'.

2. What is needed is persistent faith. By faith and patience we inherit the promises. By unbelief or by impatience we lose the promises!

¹ as in 1:14

² 6:9

³ 10:35

⁴ Matthew 19:21

⁵ Ephesians 5:5

• 3. **Unbelief produces laziness**

3. **Unbelief produces laziness.** If we have no reason to believe that there are promises which are there for us, then we have no reason to go after them. But if God has revealed to us his promises we are encouraged not to be sluggish.

• 4. **Believers in earlier times are a stimulus to us**

4. **Believers in earlier times are a stimulus to us.** The reference to imitating those who in previous ages have inherited the promises of God is a foretaste of Hebrews 11. It also gives us an idea of what those promises are that we must inherit. Everyone in Hebrews 11 had a particular calling. Abel pioneered the sacrificial system of the Old Testament. Noah rescued his family amidst the judgement of God. Abraham was the founder of the people of God. Samson defeated the Philistines. And so on. So it is with us. Each Christian has something to achieve for God. It will be unique and distinctive. It is part of God's personalized will for each one of us. It is as if the list of Hebrews continues: 'By faith Abel...By faith Enoch...By faith Noah...Abraham...Sarah...Isaac...Jacob...'. But then it is as if the list continues. 'By faith Eaton...By faith Kamau...Banda...Singh...Wong...'. The name of every Christian should be there. But this requires faith and patience.

• **Each Christian has something to achieve**

• 5. **We may expect challenges and difficulties**

5. **We may expect challenges and difficulties.** Our writer speaks of 'faith and patience'. Why patience? Because the promises will not be fulfilled immediately. We may expect delays – as the promise of a seed to Abraham was delayed for many years. We may expect opposition. Also our own weakness is a challenge to our faith. We might often feel like Moses when he said, 'Who am I that I should go...?' ^{Ex 1}.

• **On the way to hearing God say "Well done"**

Our writer is convinced that his people can be added to the list of the heroes of faith. They have not become unreachable. They are serving God. There is no possibility of their losing justification or new birth. But there is an outside possibility that they might become so discouraged as to cease living for God and fail to reach the promises. This is what might conceivably be lost. But he is encouraged. God is not so unjust as to fail to reward their works of faith. He believes they are ready to trust Jesus as our Melchizedek. They are on the way to hearing God say, 'Well done'.

• **But we need to keep going**

^{Ex 1} Exodus 3:11



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Dr Michael Eaton is highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. He lives in Kenya where he is one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship. His *Preaching Through The Bible (PTTB)* books are highly popular worldwide. Michael Eaton puts the theological and practical meaning of the Bible in a clear and down-to-earth way so that what is written can be easily understood by the reader.



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