

A Stout Encouragement

Hebrews 6:18

Nutshell: We usually don't think of God's integrity being on the line, but we should. He makes it the premise for our encouragement.

I. Context: Imitate those who inherit the promises.

II. Text

Heb 6:18 that through two unchangeable deeds, in which *it was impossible for God to lie*, we might possess a forcible encouragement, the ones having run well away to seize the hope laid out ahead.

Literal Standard Version with modifications

The next four outline items, III. - VI., are based on the 4 uses of Scripture listed in 2 Tim 3:16 AND the 3 depictions of preaching in 2 Tim 4:2.

III. Teaching

A. Paul wrote an inspired book to a Jewish audience; 2 Pet 3:15-16; 1 Pet 1:1; 2 Pet 3:1. Hebrews is the only possibility.

1. The "us" of Heb 2:3 only puts the author outside the original 12
2. Peter speaks of the Apostles in the 3rd person as well, 1 Pet 1:12

B. Outline of Hebrews to this point:

The Preeminence of the Son

Authority: God has at last spoken In **Son** (*Ἰερωφῆτ*), ← follow this font

His express image, 1:1-3a

Theme: **THE SON** purified us from sin (Priest), then sat in authority (**King**), **1:3b**

I. Supreme **over** the angels, Inheritor by ordeal, 1:4-14

Therefore hear Him, 2:1-4

II. Supreme **as** man, 2:5-9

Psalm 8- Since man must inherit, 2:5-8a

but man failed, 2:8b, **Christ** became man, 2:9a

Theme reprise: crowned with glory and honor (**King**), **2:9b**
to taste the death of "each one" of His own (**Priest**), **2:9c**
to bond with them and help them, 2:10-18

- freeing them from bondage to Satan and fear, 2:14-15
- III. A better stewardship than Moses, 3:1-6
 Therefore **THINK HARD ON HIM**, unhardening our hearts,
Ps 95- for Moses' folk didn't inherit God's **rest**, 3:7-19;
 consequently, **EXHORT ONE ANOTHER DAILY**, 3:13
- IV. A better **Rest** than Joshua, 4:1-11
- ♦ Therefore, fear (4:1a), lest we also miss **God's rest**
Ps 95- David invited his generation into that same **rest** of
 Creation, a type of Salvation, 4:1b-8
Christ's Salvation has become the final *Sabbatismos*, 4:9-
 10, which we must **EXERT** ourselves to enter, 4:11
 For the Word penetrates, exposing us before God, 4:12-13
Theme reprise: Having the highest high priest (**P**riest), the
Son of God (**K**ing),
 Let us hold to our confession of Him (*℟**ep**h**e**t*), **4:14**
 especially since He felt all our temptations +, 4:15
- V. A better **priesthood** than Aaron, **4:14 - 10:18**
- VI. Exhortations based on Christ Supreme, 10:19-13:21
 VII. Concluding remarks, 13:22-25
- C. “**Let us approach**” (Προσερχώμεθα) in **4:16** and **10:22** tells
 us that Jesus' priesthood is so we will approach God.
Prayerlessness, then, dismisses Jesus' priesthood.
- D. 5:1-10, OT priests from Aaron; Christ from *℟**e**l**c**h**i**z**e**d**e**k*
 1. 5:11-14, The Hebrews were too babyish to learn of *℟**e**l**c**h**i**z**e**d**e**k*
 2. 6:1-2, Back to the **FUNDAMENTALS** : repentance + faith;
Washings (esp. baptism) + hand-laying. (for the Spirit's
 endowments); the dead's resurrection + eternal judgment.
- E. *or*, 6:4-6, risk being beyond repentance, having fallen away
 after real *contact* (*e**o**n**n**e**c**t**i**o**n*) with God's grace and power.
 1. Thus re-crucifying the Son. Unthinkable to the Father.
 2. 6:7-8, Like cultivated land that only yields thorns.
- F. But there are signs of life among you! Especially some of
 you helping persecuted Christians. Keep that up, 6:9-11

Kid-speak: What book are we studying today? Hebrews.

1. Don't be lazy. Imitate overcomers; e.g., Abe, 6:12-15
2. Since God promised x4, incl. a Self-oath, 6:13-14
3. Abe obtained the promise, receiving back a 'resurrected'
 Isaac, 6:15 (11:19)

4. Men receive confirmation by oaths, so God swore the promise of blessing to Abe in an oath! 6:17-18

G. *In 6:18, we'll see that God did that for Abe so that "we" might have forcible encouragement!*

Outline: Hebrews 6:18

I. God Cannot Lie in His Promise + His Oath to Abraham

A. Impossibility with God.

B. "Nothing impossible" = God's capability, not His character.

II. Our Ownership of Forcible Encouragement

III. Encouragement for Escapees

IV. Escapees Seize the Hope God Lays Before Us

H. "That through two unchangeable deeds"

1. One being God's promise, Gen 12, referenced in v 13

2. The second being His oath, Gen 22, the subject of v 13-17

3. God promised that all the families of the earth would be blessed through Abe

a. After he offered up Isaac, God solidified the promise with an oath, swearing by Himself

b. Abe's endurance in that oath is our model.

I. "In which it was impossible for God to lie"

1. God was unable to lie in the *promise*

2. God was unable to lie in the *oath*

a. The original purpose of oaths for man was to ensure that we thought through our promise and spoke it deliberately.

b. God deliberated in confirming His promise to Abraham

3. A promise further necessarily implies that God is omnipotent, *able to carry out what* He promised

4. Note that there is something impossible for God to do: lying

Kid-speak: What is impossible for God to do? To lie.

a. Of course, lying is merely a subcategory of the larger category of sin or wrongdoing.

b. God could not choose wrongdoing "if He wanted." And that's the point. His character is as eternal and fixed as

Himself. He never want to lie.

5. Is it a limitation for God- that He can't choose whether or not lying is OK? Or that He can't make an exception for Himself?
 - a. It is not a limitation on His power. It's just that His power is only available for what He chooses, and He chooses according to His eternal nature.
 - b. We should be very glad that God *cannot* begin approving of lying. Rather than defining it in terms of limitation, it is a matter of definition. According to who God is, lying is not part of that.
6. What about Lk 1:37, which says "no pronouncement of God will be powerless/ impossible/ disabled."
 - a. That one sounds a little different when correctly translated, as Vincent points out and about 1/3 of the translations follow
 - b. "No thing" (the common translation) is "no *hrema*." *Hrema* (66x) is always "word" or such. Lk 2:15 and Acts 5:32 are the only other possible exceptions, but they're better as "words/ sayings" as well.
 - c. Regardless, "nothing is impossible with God" is still to be taken in terms of **capability**, not **choice of actions**.

Kid-speak: If God cannot tell a lie, does that mean He's not very powerful, since He can't do anything He likes? No, it means He hates lying.

7. Some modern Christians question the idea of impossibility with God, though Heb 6:18 states it plainly.
 - a. The idea of *absolutely* nothing being impossible for God has become a non-negotiable for many;
 - b. therefore, some are willing for God to be able to lie in order to maintain His unfettered power
 - c. This is disturbing. It is more Allah-like, and Allah is a false god.
- J. "That... we might hold/ possess forcible encouragement"
 1. Paul is applying the idea of imitating our good forerunners, v 12, Abe especially
 - a. God promised to Abe; Abe persevered; Abe inherited.
 - b. If *we* persevere, *we* will inherit
 - c. But it must be perseverance in what God has promised,

- d. the CONTENT OF THE PROMISE being the whole issue of the letter: Did God’s promise in Christ outdate the Aaronic priesthood?
- ★ 2. God did what He did for Abe that “we” might have “strong consolation”
 - a. Of course, He did it for Abe himself
 - b. And He did it for Christ
 - c. But there was always going to be a whole PEOPLE on the receiving end of the promises as well!

Kid-speak: Why did God make a super big promise to Abraham? For one thing, so that you and I would say, “Wow, God really means it! I believe Him!”

- K. “Encouragement,” Gk., *paraklesis*, 29x, based on the compound verb “to call near,”*
 - 1. The noun is used both for consolation and exhortation. Here, consolation/ encouragement.
 - 2. In 12:5 and 13:22, it’s used of exhortation. In 3:13 the verb was used of exhortation. Maybe that meaning fits in our verse too?
- L. “Forcible encouragement”
 - 1. First, God wants us to be encouraged
 - a. He wants us to have a sense that He has **“called Himself near”* us
 - b. Nor is that sense optional to our spiritual success/ avoidance of defeat
 - 2. Second, God wants our encouragement to be *vibrant, stout, resolute, thriving*: He wants it to have force/ strength.
 - 3. God swore to Abraham to confirm the promise to him, thereby giving US “hardy reassurance.” He’s bolstering us “little-faiths.”
 - 4. Or course, the flip side is: how dare I *not* believe now?
 - a. But that shouldn’t trip us up. We should move straight to: “Well, do I *want* to be confirmed of soul?”
 - b. Yes? Lay hold, then.
- M. “Possess/ hold/ have”
 - 1. “That we might possess / own a stout encouragement”
 - a. The word almost always translated “have,” but that means “to possess.” Weymouth uses “possess.”
 - b. It’s something God is holding forth for our possession

- c. A possession, then, that we can use ‘when we like’.
 - d. Of course, if we knew what we had, we’d ‘like’ using it all the time!
- N. “Those having made complete escape *in order* to clasp the expectation laid out ahead”
- 1. Now Paul describes those who obtain the promises along with Abraham
 - 2. *These* are the ones who should be steadied by God’s oath-confirmed promises
- O. “Those having made complete escape”
- 1. This 5-word English phrase translates one Gk participle
 - a. It is a compound word, “escape” with an intensifying prefix
 - b. The only other time it is used is in Acts 14:6, of Paul’s escape from Iconium, once he heard of a plot against him
 - c. The root word is translated by forms of “escaped” or “fled” all 29x, incl. Heb 11:34
 - 2. Paul doesn’t say what they escaped *from*
 - a. He rather defines their escape in terms of what they *escaped TO*
 - b. They escaped in order to lay hold of what God laid out before them as their hope
 - 3. In general terms, our former prison from which we escaped was sin, as indicated in 1:3, Christ “cleansing our sins”
 - 4. God gives us legs that work, motivation to run, and His presence to aid our escape

Kid-speak: How far are we supposed to run away from sin? ALL the way away.

- 5. “Run well away” is how I translated it on the front page
 - a. If it is not apparent *to ourselves at least* that we have **escaped** something- what is our relationship to Jesus?
 - b. Doesn’t He necessarily become some kind of ‘add-on’ in that case? I keep what I had and just add Him on?
- 6. But much modern evangelism is just trying to fix a *lack of relationship with God*. That’s what we’re escaping. Our **hostility** toward God is barely taken into account, if at all.
- 7. But is lack of relationship what the Bible says we’re escaping? Lk 3:7

8. The rest of the letter indicates the primary enslavement the Hebrews should have been running from: captivity to the Old Covenant
 - a. Which only became an automatic enslavement once the New Covenant was established
 - b. But the NC *has been established* in Christ's blood
 - c. The Gospel is "to the Jew FIRST"
 - d. But the Jew must FIRST see the OC as the **port of exit** to the NC
 - e. Any other understanding is 5-alarm dangerous, Gal 5:4; Note the words "justified" and "fallen."
9. Peter describes our escape, warning of re-entanglement with the flesh, 2 Pet 2:17-22
- P. "To seize the hope laid out ahead/ before *us*"
 1. "Before *us*" has no pronoun. It may be understood.
 2. Our escape is not merely an escape
 - a. We're not safe just because we got clear of sin, 2 Pet 2:18
 - b. because we didn't get clear of sin without Christ, His cross, and His Spirit, all of which must continue with us and keep us.
 3. "The hope laid out before *us*" is to **finally** leave this sin nature behind and to finally be with the one who washed us from our sins
 - a. It is a hope, meaning that we have not come into final possession of it yet
 - b. The hope in our hearts is what gets us there
- Q. "Seize," Gk. *krateo*, from a root for strength/ vigor
 1. The word plays prominently in the "seizing" of Jesus before His trial, Matt 26:4, 48, 50, 55, 57
 2. As they seized Him from *hatred*, let us seize Him and His hope from a heart of *love*
 - a. But let us seize Him *as* forcibly and definitively as they did!
 - b. Like Jacob wrestling: "You're the one who can bless. Bless me!" Gen 32. Bless me first with a heart of worship.

Kid-speak: What is encouragement? It's when we're happy because we feel like things are going to work out right. What kind of encouragement does God want us to have? *Strong* encouragement, so we say, "Hey, God's going to take care of everything."

R. “Laid out before *us*”

1. There it is, laid out before us. Jesus made the path plain. It’s Him. It’s in His words.
2. As it has been laid out in front of us, let us ‘gather it up’, one morning prayer at a time, on Bible reading at a time, one worship meeting at a time, until they’re all complete.

IV. For the Walking Wounded (1 Thess 5:14, “Uphold the strengthless”)
If we’re holding with all our might, our lack of overall strength is not a demerit in God’s eyes.

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V. Conviction (2 Tim 4:2, “Convince, rebuke”): **What have I done wrong?**  
**How have I lost righteousness?**  
Does God’s integrity encourage me? Forcefully?

VI. Correction/ Realignment (2 Tim 4:2, “Exhort/encourage”):  
**How will I correct my error? How will I regain uprightness?**  
I will affirm my definition as an escapee from sin.

VII. Schooling in Righteousness: **How do I take this on the road?**  
God, thank you for holding out hope in Christ. Christ, thank You for aiding me in holding firm.

Vision: To take the kind of encouragement God wants us to have, we must think about His truthfulness. We need to answer the question: Did God promise something? Including to me? \* *How serious is He about standing behind it?* Address Him in those terms.

Until I can feel the encouragement, I haven’t answered those questions.

\* If my only doubt is on the “to me” part, that is probably the opposite of humble. It pits the power of *my sinfulness* against the power of *God’s grace*. “My sinfulness is the one He can’t overcome.”