

INTRODUCTION

EXPOSITION

I. THE WRITER’S CONFIDENCE AND DESIRE – vv.9-12

⁹ But, beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you,
yes, things that accompany salvation, though we speak in this manner.

¹⁰ For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name,
in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister.

- While giving them a strong warning, he tempers it with an expression of his confidence and love
- Here, as in no other place in the letter, he calls them “beloved”, which doesn’t weaken, but strengthen his words
- This confidence is fueled like a fire by evidence that he sees in their lives – particularly the work of love
- This work of love is toward God’s Name – toward God Himself as He has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ
- The way this love is manifested was toward the saints of God in both the past and in the present
- This ministry included suffering with them – 10:32ff; possibly suffering with Gentile Christians in context of Rome
- One of the clearest evidences of salvation is practical love and ministry toward the people of God in Christ’s Name
- This is that which is the particular work of pastors, equipping the saints for this work – Ephesians 4:12
- The evidence of salvation is not merely knowledge, but service to the body (contra self-absorption or manipulation)

¹¹ And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence
to the full assurance of hope until the end,

¹² that you do not become sluggish
but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

- Notwithstanding this clear evidence, the writer is not content to rest in this – there is a desire for ongoing diligence
- This diligence is more of what they have already had, and that persevering to the end
- The danger is that they will become sluggish or dull (through difficulty, through the passing of time)
- They have need to look to and imitate (Gk. *mimaytays* – *imitate* or *mimic*) those who have gone before them
- Those they are to imitate are those who continued in faith and hope and inherited the promises
- In the next section (and more in ch.11) the writer gives examples of those we are to imitate
- This is where for us having biblical and historical examples to inspire us are important

II. GOD’S OATH AND ABRAHAM’S FAITH – vv.13-18

¹³ For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater,
He swore by Himself, ¹⁴ saying, "Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you."

¹⁵ And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.

¹⁶ For men indeed swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is for them an end of all dispute.

¹⁷ Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel,
confirmed it by an oath, ¹⁸ that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie,
we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us.

- The example to be imitated given is that of Abraham, an important example as the “father of the faithful” – Rom4:16
- The assurance of hope which is linked to the promise of an inheritance in vv.11-12 is that which God has spoken
- He says that God Himself not only makes a promise of what He will do, but then swears and oath to it
- Because there is no higher authority to Himself, and because of His desire to give assurance to the promise, He swears it by Himself¹
- The promise (by way of example) is the promise to bless and multiply Abraham and his seed
- This did not happen for a long time, and eventually at a time when it seemed impossible
- But God gives witness to Himself, the God who cannot lie, and does so to give extra confidence to Abraham
- There is a connection between Abraham’s faith in God’s promise that was an oath and the readers
- They are described as the “heirs of promise”, and he switches the pronouns from speaking of Abraham to them
- The outcome of this double assurance is that we (NC believers, and so us) might have strong consolation
- This strong consolation (or assurance/confidence) is to those who “have fled for refuge” – refuge from coming wrath
- It is also to those who “lay hold of the hope set before us” - the hope of eternal life
- God has not only in the Gospel of Jesus Christ given promise of refuge, but also of hope

¹ This is a significant text in relation to the discussion of whether it is appropriate for Christians to take oaths, especially in light of the apparent blanket prohibitions of Matthew 5:34 and James 5:12.

- Just as Abraham waited a long time, and was sometimes called to do that which seemed contrary (the sacrifice of Isaac), so He is calling them to imitate Abraham, not to grow dull, but continue to exercise persevering faith

III. OUR ANCHOR AND HIGH PRIEST - vv.19-20

¹⁹ This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast,
and which enters the Presence behind the veil,

²⁰ where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus,
having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

- He continues with another analogy of hope – that of an anchor of the soul
- An anchor is cast overboard and is used for security or stability to keep currents or storms from moving the ship
- There is, for the believer, a single anchor of the soul, that will give it security and stability in the midst of difficulty
- To push the illustration, “faith” (in some abstracted sense) is not an anchor; it must be attached
- The anchor is no good by itself, but must be fastened to – then cast into the murky waters where it becomes invisible
- Likewise, the Christian is attached to Christ who goes into the presence of God behind the veil unseen
- He is there sure and steadfast and immovable; as long as I remain attached to Him I too am secure
- Then the imagery changes, and now the anchor morphs into a forerunner – one who goes before to prepare the way and who is followed – this is unlike the high priest of the Old Covenant who went alone and returned
- Now, under the New Covenant, the High Priest forever of the order of Melchizedek goes and has entered for us, and in death (and in life through prayer) we follow and because we attached to Him as our anchor
- Who or what is your anchor? What enables us to remain unmoved, though not un-tossed, in the midst of difficulties?
- Something that strikes me as I read history is that every single person is dead; some of old age, some of horrible acts, some of withering diseases – and one inescapable truth is that every single one of us in 100 years will be gone
- Everyone is anchored to something – there is only One worthy of all our hope and confidence
- This is demonstrated by the cross for refuge from wrath and the promise of God in hope of future resurrection