

Keep Moving Forward Series

Move Forward Toward God's Promises (Hebrews 10:23)

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At A Glance:

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These sermon study notes are designed to be a tool used after listening to the sermon. This resource is a guide to help deepen understanding regarding the Scriptures and ideas presented in the sermon. Those who use these study notes are encouraged to look up, read through, and think about Scripture references in this guide. There is more information in these notes than what is presented in the sermon. These study notes are designed to be used as an independent study tool to help the formation of Biblical convictions, character, and conduct.

Move Forward Toward God's Promises

I. Introduction

A. Illustration: Our Wedding Promise

1. Mandi and I have been married twenty years, but I can still remember the day of our wedding. I can recall standing before the pastor with our friends and family present as Mandi and I exchanged our wedding vows.
2. Here is the wording of traditional wedding vows, “I, *Groom's Name*, take you, *Bride's Name*, to be my wedded wife, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death do us part, according to God's holy ordinance; and there to do I give you my pledge.” Essentially, wedding vows are a promise.
3. After the wedding is over and the couple begins their married life together, the rest of their lives are spent putting their promise into action. The wedding promise is fulfilled in the remainder of their lives. The only way to determine if the promise made on a person's wedding day is fulfilled is by examining a life once it's over. Only if the spouse acts consistently with the promise they made until their last breath, can it be said of that person that they fulfilled their wedding promise.

B. The promise we make at our weddings is a close parallel to the promises God makes to those who belong to Jesus. The promises of God remain active and relevant throughout the rest of our lives. It is the nature of the promises of God that these promises will be fully fulfilled after this life is over. God's actions are aligned with His promises throughout our lives and even after our time on earth is complete.

C. The fourth major theme found in the book of Hebrews relates to the promises of God. As disciples we are instructed to hold tightly to the promises of God always being confident that God will act according to the promises He has made to us. One of the ways we can keep moving forward in the Christian life is by continually relying on and acting as if the promises of God are secure and reliable. If we are going to live the way God desires us to live, we need to understand the nature of the promises of God as communicated in the book of Hebrews.

II. Promises of God (Heb. 8:6)

- A. In this series we're exploring the major themes and lessons communicated in the book of Hebrews. Hebrews is both wonderfully encouraging and extremely convicting at the same time. There is a strong tension that runs throughout the book that balances encouragement for those who are faithfully obeying God along side many warnings against drifting away and abandoning God. Depending on where a person is at spiritually in their pursuit of God, they will walk away aided or alarmed.
- B. Hebrews started with a vision of the magnitude of God and our need to pay careful attention to the words of God through Jesus. Once the importance of our response to God's word was understood we were taught to continue moving forward toward God by working hard at living our life to enter the rest He offers. We do this through implementing proper responses to God's word. There is an open and ongoing promise of God still available to us today to be blessed by

God through the life Jesus offers to us. This lesson was followed by the main section of the book that demonstrates why we should stay connected to Jesus as our High Priest. Jesus leads and guides us spiritually to all the advantages He makes available and offers to humanity. Jesus can connect humanity to God in a way that no one else is able to do.

- C. The next major theme starts in chapter four and continues to the end of the book being mentioned in chapter twelve. This theme is found in many sections of the book: the theme of God's promises. God's promises are mentioned 17 times in the book of Hebrews.¹ If every promise of God mentioned in Hebrews was listed, the list would be very long. God makes promises to Abraham, the promise of an eternal inheritance/salvation, the promise of rest, the promises made to Sarah, the promises of the New Covenant, and the promises given to many individuals documented in the Old Testament are all referred to by the author of Hebrews throughout his book. God routinely makes promises.
- D. Here is an important statement on the theme of God's promises,
 - ⁶ But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, to the extent that He is also the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises. (Heb. 8:6)
- E. While God has made many promises to His people throughout human history, the most important promises are given through Jesus ("which has been enacted on better promises", v. 6). The new covenant is better than the old one because the promises on which it is based are better. The promises given through Jesus are better than the promises connected to the Jewish law and sacrificial system both because of the nature of the promises themselves and the results that are connected to the promises. The promises themselves are more secure since God Himself guarantees the outcome. The results of the promises are also better. Our heavenly home and the new earth are better than the land of Israel. The life of blessing from Jesus is better than the life of blessing for the nation of Israel. The sacrifice of Jesus is better than the sacrifice of animals. For many different reasons, the New Covenant promises are better than the Old Covenant promises. The promises in view are most likely the promises of Hebrews 8:8-12 which we will discuss below.²
- F. The better promises of the New Covenant—a new way of relating to God through Jesus—are summarized by quoting from Jeremiah 31:31-34,
 - ¹⁰ "For this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel After those days, declares the Lord: I will put My laws into their minds, And write them on their hearts. And I will be their God, And they shall be My people. ¹¹ And they will not teach, each one his fellow citizen, And each one his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' For they will all know Me, From the least to the greatest of them. ¹² For I will be merciful toward their wrongdoings, And their sins I will no longer remember." (Heb. 8:10-12)
- G. Because of the new way God is relating and responding to humanity through Jesus, God promises to put His Word into the way we think ("I will put My laws into their minds", v. 10). Disciples will develop the ability to think like Jesus through the work of the Spirit in their soul (1

¹ Hebrews 4:1, 6:12, 6:13, 6:15, 6:17, 7:6, 8:6, 9:15, 10:23, 10:36, 11:9, 11:11, 11:13, 11:17, 11:33, 11:39, 12:26

² Douglas J. Moo, [Hebrews](#), ed. Clinton E. Arnold, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2024), 280.

Cor. 2:16). God’s word will be placed in the intellect—the source of our thinking.³ This change in perspective and thinking is promised to those who are connected to Jesus in a healthy way. Followers of Jesus will understand God’s word, heart, desires, ways, commands, and moral standards.

- H. God promises to give us His desires and priorities at the core of our being (“And write them on their hearts”, v. 10). Disciples won’t merely have the perspective of God in their mental life, we will also care about the things of God. The influence of God will be evident in the deepest levels of our being and personhood. Disciples will experience inwardly what God requires.⁴ Hypocrisy will be eliminated. Insincerity will be a feature of the past like CD’s and VHS tapes. That which God cares about will be most important to us. This is another work of the Spirit in the lives of disciples.
- I. God promises to be our God (“And I will be their God”, v. 10). Through Jesus, disciples have a personal and intimate connection with God—many refer to this as having a relationship. There is a healthy connection between God and those who are attached to Jesus. Because of Jesus disciples have access to all the benefits and privileges of being properly aligned with God. God listens to our prayers, watches over our lives in a loving way, builds us up spiritually, and looks on us with favor.
- J. God promises those rightly connected to Jesus will be and are His people (“And they shall be My people”, v. 10). Those who accept Jesus for the person He claimed to be and trust Jesus to do what He said He will do in their life, become part of the people of God who are called out of the world and set apart for God’s purposes. In short, they become part of the church—the body. They can fully participate in and enjoy the life and activities of God’s people.
- K. God promises that everyone in whom Jesus’ lives will know and experience Him personally (“For they will all know me”, v. 11). Jesus reveals Himself to those who belong to Him primarily through the Bible in conjunction with the work of the Spirit. Every person who is part of the new covenant have a personal understanding of who God is. While they can continue to grow in their understanding of God and His word, God is still known throughout the learning process. Everyone in the New Covenant knows God is a way that is consistent with those who are saved and will inherit God’s kingdom.
- L. God promises to interact with disciples in a lenient, compassionate, and a ready to forgive type of way (“For I will be merciful toward their wrongdoings”, v. 12). The overall tone of a disciple’s relationship with God is one that is gracious, God’s posture toward them is that He is eager and ready to forgive, and there is a warm disposition to give blessings to those who love Jesus.⁵ There is an accepting, friendly tone to a disciples’ relationship with God the Father.
- M. Lastly, God also promises to forgive every moral failure we commit in our lifetime (“And their sins I will no longer remember”, v. 12). Every instance when we fail to perform God’s moral principles, commands, or laws, are removed from God’s memory. What this means is that God does not treat us as we deserve. He treats us much better than we have earned. God doesn’t

³ J. Harold Greenlee, [*An Exegetical Summary of Hebrews*](#), 2nd ed. (Dallas, TX: SIL International, 2008), 284.

⁴ J. Harold Greenlee, [*An Exegetical Summary of Hebrews*](#), 2nd ed. (Dallas, TX: SIL International, 2008), 285.

⁵ Logos 10 Bible Study Software Exegetical Guide on Hebrews 8:12 “merciful”

literally forget the wrongs we have done, God still knows everything, but God does not interact with us based on those failures. God forgives us, cancels the debt, and considers us to be as righteous as Jesus.

- N. In this basic description of the “better promises” from the New Covenant provided by Jesus, God promises to bless those who belong to Him with seven wonderful benefits that are now guaranteed. If God is working in our life as a spiritually adopted child of His, we will experience each of these promises.
- O. Has anyone ever broken a promise they made to you? It is a safe assumption to expect everyone to be familiar with a broken promise. Broken promises are the normal experience we have of promises. Broken promises are so common that they become the filter through which we understand and experience promises. In fact, we have a saying that reflects the unreliability of people’s words, “Words are cheap.”
- P. Since broken promises is our normal experience, we have a hard time realizing and understanding the reliability of God’s promises because we haven’t ever met someone who has the depth of character and faithfulness to fulfill every promise they make. This is why it is necessary and instructive for us to read through the Bible as we pay attention to the promises God makes and then track how each of those promises play out. As we do this, we will begin to see how faithful and reliable God is regarding His promises. By observing how God keeps His promises, sometimes through centuries under very difficult and seemingly impossible situations, we can start to gain confidence in the fact that God always keeps His promises. There is not a single promise that God has ever made that He didn’t fulfill.
- Q. Only after we have done this work can we gain the depth of confidence that God wants us to have in His promises. Since God has fulfilled every promise He has made in the past, up to the present day, we can be confident that God will also fulfill the future promises that are not yet complete. Since God has a perfect unblemished track record of keeping all His promises, we can be confident and assured that any unrealized promises made by Jesus will be brought into reality when He is ready.

III. Spiritual Lessons of God’s Promises

- A. What are some of the main spiritual lessons the author of Hebrews wants us to learn from the promises of God? Here is the primary one,
 - ²³ Let’s hold firmly to the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; (Heb. 10:23)
- B. Behind God’s promises stand the firm foundation of God’s faithfulness and character (“for He who promised is faithful”, v. 23). Words are only as valuable as the person who speaks them. The reason God’s promises can be trusted is because of the reliable character of God that secures His promises. As God makes verbal commitments to us, we should respond with a confident trust that God will do what He said He will do.⁶ The reason this is the response of disciples is because the words are coming from a certain type of person—a morally perfect God. Since disciples know and understand the character of God they know that He is

⁶ Logos 10 Bible Study Software Exegetical Guide on Hebrews 10:23 “promised”

characterized by steadfast affection and allegiance.⁷ God is permanently loyal to those who belong to Him. It is this knowledge of God's character that grounds a disciple's confidence in the promises of God. If a person doesn't trust God they will not have confidence in His promises. A person's view of God determines how they respond to His promises. Since God is trustworthy, we can have confidence regarding His promises.

- C. A second major lesson regarding the promises of God is understanding the nature of God's promises—they are unchangeable, (Heb. 6:17-18)

¹⁷ In the same way God, desiring even more to demonstrate to the heirs of the promise the fact that His purpose is unchangeable, confirmed it with an oath, ¹⁸ so that by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have taken refuge would have strong encouragement to hold firmly to the hope set before us. ¹⁹ This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a *hope* both sure and reliable and one which enters within the veil, (Heb. 6:17-19)

- D. It will be helpful to start our discussion of this passage by answering a common question that immediately jumps out at us. If God's purpose is unchangeable, what about those times when God's purpose did change or seems to change? In response, we can start by understanding God can will (determine to perform some action) an outcome in one of two ways: conditional and unconditional. There may be conditions or requirements that need to be met to get the outcome promised by God. In other cases, God promises to perform some action by Himself and He says He will do it regardless of any other conditions.
- E. The statement of God's purpose being unchangeable is specifically in reference to the promise of salvation through the example of Abraham (Heb. 6:9, 6:13). The promise of salvation offered to us is unconditional in the sense that once God works in a person's life to bring about salvation, He will see this work through to the end (Phil. 1:6).⁸ God is not lacking in power or strength to save (Numb. 11:23, Isa. 50:2, 59:1). Once God attaches Himself to us, we are safe and secure. We're in. We will inherit salvation, and nothing can change that (Rm. 8:31-39).
- F. Now that we've climbed over that obstacle, we can move to the main focus of this text, God's promises are reliable and can be counted on because they don't change ("the fact that His purpose is unchangeable", v. 17). The author of Hebrews wants disciples to understand the reliable nature of God's intention and purpose toward those who believe in Jesus. There are two reasons given for why God's promise can be trusted in addition to God's faithful character mentioned in the previous passage ("by two unchangeable things", v. 18).⁹ First, there is the unchangeable nature of the promises of God ("the heirs of promise", v. 17). When God makes an unconditional promise, He guarantees that He will do it. Since His character is faithful, it will happen as discussed above.
- G. The second unchangeable feature of God's intention is reflected in God taking an oath that He would do what He said He would do through His promises ("confirmed it with an oath", v. 17,

⁷ Logos 10 Bible Study Software Exegetical Guide on Hebrews 10:23 "faithful"

⁸ All those who the Father gives to Jesus will come to Him and Jesus will not lose any of them (Jn. 6:37-40).

⁹ It is also possible that the two unchangeable things are the oath and the unchangeable nature of God's character "it is impossible for God to lie" but this seems to be a minority view.

and “it is impossible for God to lie”, v. 18).¹⁰ Like a pinky promise, God confirms His promise to Abraham with an affirmation that demonstrates His sincerity to do what He promised—called an oath. The oath being referred to is the one made to Abraham (Gen. 22:16-17).¹¹ God didn’t swear on His mothers’ life—He swore on Himself.

- H. God always speaks the truth. God’s words communicate reality as it is. Because of this, God’s promise and oath can be trusted. God can perfectly and permanently speak truth because He has all knowledge and He is morally perfect. God doesn’t ever get His facts wrong and He doesn’t lack information. He also never misleads or distorts the accurate information He knows because He always acts in morally correct ways. In these ways God always speaks the truth.
- I. How grounded are you? Do you feel stable, safe and secure in life? Or do you lack peace because you feel like life is out of control? Our hope grounded in the promises of God ought to stabilize our soul. God wants us to trust Him and He establishes the validity of His promises through His example and an explanation of His promises.¹² Because God makes truthful and reliable promises regarding salvation, disciples can and should live their lives full of hope (“This hope we have as an anchor of the soul”, v. 19). No matter how challenging life becomes, how alone we feel, or how bleak the outlook is, we can be fully assured in every moment of life that God will not abandon us, and we will be saved in the end! This indestructible hope is the anchor of our soul that stabilizes us in all the various circumstances of life.
- J. While the situations and seasons of life will want to pull us in all different directions, the secure promises of God ground us on a firm foundation. A foundation we can return to any time we need and as many times as we need. Centering our perspective on the trustworthiness and reliability of God and His promises can calm our waves of emotion as the anchor of our soul.
- K. God will save us even when we don’t feel like we will be saved. God will save us even when we think our guilt has overcome us. God will save us even when it seems as if God is punishing us and His blessings have been removed from our lives. God will save us even if it appears everything in our life stands against us. God will save us because He has promised to save us. If you are a child of God and God has put His Spirit in you, it is desirable for you to never doubt or question your salvation or standing with God ever again. God wants confidence, peace, and comfort to be experienced regarding your spiritual condition.

IV. The Desired Response (Heb. 10:19-25)

- A. A healthy response to the promises of God is to hold onto our confidence in Jesus no matter what life throws at us or how our lives turns out. Our lives rarely turn out the way we thought, hoped, desired, or planned. An insightful and conformed quote by J.M. Barrie in *The Little Minister* says, “The life of every man is a diary in which he means to write one story, and writes another.”¹³ Although it needs to be added that the ending should be, “and God writes another”.

¹⁰ Douglas J. Moo, [Hebrews](#), ed. Clinton E. Arnold, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2024), 218, J. Harold Greenlee, [An Exegetical Summary of Hebrews](#), 2nd ed. (Dallas, TX: SIL International, 2008), 210.

¹¹ William L. Lane, [Hebrews 1–8](#), vol. 47A, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1991), 152.

¹² Logos 10 Bible Study Software on Hebrews 6:17 “to demonstrate”

¹³ <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/105784-the-life-of-every-man-is-a-diary-in-which>

God tells us that we and our lives are His masterpiece that He is sculpting or painting (Eph. 2:10). God crafts our lives in such a way that they are beautiful in what they produce in the end.

- B. God explains how He wants us to respond to the promises He makes to us through His word,

³⁵ Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. ³⁶ For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised. ³⁷ For yet in a very little while, He who is coming will come, and will not delay. ³⁸ But My righteous one will live by faith; And if he shrinks back, My soul has no pleasure in him. ³⁹ But we are not among those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith for the safekeeping of the soul. (Heb. 10:35-39)
- C. Don't give in to discouragement, despair, or depression ("Therefore, do not throw away your confidence", v. 35). Disciples confidently live a life of trust in the promises of God's word — called a life of faith ("will live by faith", v. 38). Everyone who is righteous lives a life like this. We do this because there is great reward for continuing to faithfully and obediently follow and serve Jesus ("which has great reward", v. 35). Disciples who endure to the end will inherit all the corresponding promises of God ("you may receive what was promised", v. 36).
- D. When life gets difficult or we start to lose our passion for Jesus, it is critical for us to remember the faithfulness of God. God fulfilling His promises and knowing that He rewards those who love Him is the hope that anchors our soul in the storms of life. Motivated by hope, disciples can remain firmly and immovably committed to doing the will of God no matter how challenging it becomes ("when you have done the will of God", v. 36).
- E. Wrestling with our own internal devotion to God is a spiritual battle that continues throughout the Christian life. There may be long and extended seasons in our Jesus journey when following, serving, and obeying Jesus will be a joy and blessing. At these times we will not feel like our commitment to Jesus is an issue or struggle at all. But, when life gets difficult or discouragement set in, we may begin feeling the struggle of our commitment to Jesus. When we start suffering or are in pain, we will likely begin to feel the struggle of our commitment to Jesus once again. This is why disciples need to grow in the strength of their commitment to Jesus and regularly remind themselves of the faithfulness of God and the goodness of His promises.

V. Conclusion

- A. We can count on the promises of God because they are reliable. The reason these promises are trustworthy is because God is morally good and He is faithful. God does what He says He is going to do and He has demonstrated His consistency in acting this way throughout human history. The reliability of God's promises gives us hope.
- B. As you are out in the world faithfully doing what you know God wants you to be doing, remember,

¹⁰ For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward His name, by having served and by *still* serving the saints. ¹¹ And we desire that each one of you demonstrate the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end, ¹² so that you will not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and endurance inherit the promises. (Heb. 6:10-12)