



Christ Our Anchor and Our Hope

Hebrews 6:13-20

The writer of Hebrews has been sternly warning the church to not drift away from the Word of God and become dull of hearing but rather, let this warning stir within you a greater zeal and desire for godliness. So, the question we come to this morning is “If this is the warning for us, what are we going to do about it? How are we going to respond?” Let’s read the text.

13 For when God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself, 14 saying, “Surely I will bless you and multiply you.” 15 And thus Abraham [he], having patiently waited, obtained the promise. 16 For people swear by something greater than themselves, and in all their disputes an oath is final for confirmation. 17 So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath, 18 so that by two¹ unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us. 19 We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, 20 where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

This text is a further explanation and concluding thought to what was previously mentioned in verses 11 and 12. Note how it begins with the word “For” in verse 13. This means it is a continuing thought and is structured in just the right way to bring us to a point of emphasis. *We have a “hope” that is set before us and a strong anchor of the soul.* In order to understand the complete thought, let’s go back and read verses 11 and 12.

11 And we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness to have the full assurance of hope until the end, 12 so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

So the big point of emphasis the writer of Hebrews is trying to make here is, “You, the church, should have a godly zeal and earnestness to have the full assurance of our hope all the way until Jesus returns. Do not drift away by becoming sluggish, dull of hearing, embracing a spiritual lethargy! Turn your present course around and seek to grow in godliness.” How?

¹ New ESV Study Bible (ESV Text Edition:2011), Crossway. Study Note (Hebrews 6:17-18) “The two unchangeable things are God’s promise/purpose and his oath. The character of God is holy, and he does not lie. Thus his announcement of his promise is sure, and doubly sure when combined with his oath. This encourages one to hold fast (see 4:14) to the hope (3:6; 6:11; 7:19; 10:23) of God’s promises.”

1. Look to God's Promise

"God made a promise to Abraham." The writer of Hebrews take us all the way back to an amazing story in Genesis. Genesis 22 speaks of how Abraham takes his Son Isaac, and at the command of God climbs a mountain in order to offer up his son as a sacrifice. His son, whom he loves. He has to kill him. This is God's instruction. Abraham knew in his heart that He *must* follow the instruction of God and cling to his promise.

What was that promise? Well, God promised Abraham a literal offspring. In Chapter 17 verse 19 God says, "Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his offspring after him." So Abraham was promised a literal son, who would have offspring and who was to be the forerunner of a great nation. But there seems to be a little more to it. The promise seems to bear an astonishing resemblance to the promised seed of Genesis 3:15 who would be the serpent crusher and redeem all creation from the curse. There are subtle hints in this Genesis account that may indicate that Abraham may have thought that Isaac was the promised seed who would conquer the curse. Subtle hints like their change of names. Abram "exalted father" is now Abraham "father of a multitude" and Sarai "princess" is now called Sarah "mother of nations." This seems to indicate that this seed is going to be a ruler of nations – a great conqueror. Could Isaac be the promised seed?

Now, I know it seems like we are off on a rabbit trail here, but bear with me because the writer of Hebrews is going to bring this all together. Look to God's promise as Abraham looked to God's promise. It may be, that Abraham was so willing to carry out the Lord's instruction because he was *sure* that the Lord would work a miracle in either raising his son up from the dead or in providing a way of escape.² In the end, the Lord provided a way of escape, and that escape was through the perfect Son of God, Jesus Christ. It wasn't Isaac who needed to die. It was Jesus. But Abraham had faith, that God's promised seed would come.

Believer, look to God's promise. He already *has* come. Jesus the Christ is the fulfillment of God's promise to His children. We no longer have to wait and hope in a future redeemer who would come and cleanse us from all our sin, but have the great privilege of knowing that He already has. Look to God's promise – the cursed One on the cross who bore our iniquity, our shame, and our guilt. How are you to have full assurance of your hope? Believe that Jesus came and died. The One Whom Isaac was only a shadow of. The true King of Kings and Lord of Lords who will redeem us from all our sin and reign in an everlasting Kingdom.

2. Remember God's Oath

What's the point of an oath? An oath has been brought about because of sin. Think about it. If we humans were so honest that we always delivered on our promises or were men and women of our word, then there would be no need to swear by something or make an oath. The very gesture of making an oath is because we have chosen the path of lies and deceit. Man is sinful and cannot be trusted. Jeremiah 17:9 states, "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately sick". That is why man has come up with a solution – an oath is more binding. Man's word is not enough. But what about God's word? Isn't that enough? Why is it, that if oaths are direct result of sin, that God would make an oath to man?³ Beloved, it's because His love for us transcends the great chasm that stands between us and Him. And because of that love He tells us "If it makes you feel any more secure. If it causes you to cherish my Words. If it makes you trust my promises any more,

² Hughes, R. Kent. *Preaching the Word: Hebrews, An Anchor for the Soul*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015. Page 177 – "Abraham so believed that God would bless him through Isaac, giving him offspring as numerous as the stars, that he was sure God would resurrect his son!"

³ The MacArthur Study Bible (*Revised & Updated Edition*), New King James Version. Study Note (Hebrews 6:16-18) "God's Word does not need any confirmation from someone else. It is reliable because God Himself is faithful. People confirm their promises by appealing to someone greater (especially to God) as witness. Since no one is greater than God, He can only provide an oath from Himself. By doing so He is willingly accommodating Himself to human beings who desire the confirmation because of the characteristic unreliability of human promises."

then yes, I will swear to you. Though my word is sufficient and powerful, I will condescend and make an oath to you. It will come to pass.”⁴

And so God swore to Abraham. Since one usually swears by something greater than themselves, God swore by Himself. The text says in Genesis 22:16 “By myself I have sworn”. God is not sinfully arrogant or prideful in swearing by Himself, for indeed He Himself is the most wonderful, glorious, powerful, magnificent, majestic, beautiful and holy Being. Nothing outside of Him is greater than He is, and I can’t even begin to describe Him to you this morning.

In swearing to Abraham, God has sworn to us. The writer of Hebrews declares that this oath God has sworn is not only for Abraham, or for the Israelite nation, but for the heirs of the promise.⁵ The seed and offspring of God that transcends any one race or people group but has reached out to all peoples. Ephesians 3:6 says, “the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.”

17 And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. 18 For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. 19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,
– Ephesians 2:17-19

This is where the text brings us this morning. Believer, if you have put your faith in the promised seed – Jesus Christ, and believe that He was the Son of God Who died in your place. This oath is for you. It’s as if God is saying, “By the powers invested in me and by the absolute greatness of my name, I swear to you, I will bring you home to glory.” That should affect you and it should cause you to turn the boat around and stop drifting.

Stop letting the lie fill your mind that Jesus isn’t enough. Stop listening to the tune of this world that life is better lived apart from Him. Don’t just sit there in your chair and believe that what you’re doing right now is enough, it’s fine. How are you striving for godliness? How are you going to respond to this great promise? Don’t tune me out, because if you tune me out then you have become dull of hearing. You cannot stay where you are now! There is one direction you must go – godliness. Heavenward. I don’t care if it’s hard for you to get up just a few minutes earlier to open the Word. I don’t care if you think you just aren’t made for memorizing Scripture. I don’t care if you feel like you don’t have time to pray. I don’t care if you struggle getting together with brothers and sisters because they annoy you. How are you going to respond to this great promise?

Get this. Every time an oath was made, there were witnesses present to hear the oath and hold the oath maker accountable. You see it in Scripture and you see it in Society. Whether it’s the swearing in office of the president or Boaz taking Ruth to be his wife. Oaths are made in the presence of many witnesses. Now, who was present to hear God’s solemn oath to Abraham and his descendants? Every flower, every tree, every fish, every bird, every star and every galaxy listened and witnessed as God declared is solemn oath to His children. Even today, all of creation groans⁶ waiting eagerly for the redemption of the created order that all would be made right again. Creation is waiting for the oath to be complete. And not only this but all the hosts of heaven bear witness as every angel of God rejoices when a sinner repents.⁷

⁴ Gospel Transformation Bible, ESV Crossway. Study Note (Hebrews 6:13-20). “God stooped to meet us in our weakness; he added his oath to his promise (as if his Word were not enough!). Why? So that we, heirs of the promise made to Abraham and believers in Jesus, ‘might have strong encouragement’ (v. 18). God does not want us to doubt our salvation.”

⁵ New Geneva Study Bible (*Christian Statesman Edition*), NKJV, Coral Ridge Ministries. Study Note (Hebrews 6:17) “God’s oath-bond promise was not only for Abraham but for all who follow his footsteps of faith (1:14; 6:12; 10:36; Rom. 4:23, 24).”

⁶ English Standard Version. *Holy Bible* (Crossway) Romans 8:19-23 – “19 For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. 20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. 23 And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.”

⁷ English Standard Version. *Holy Bible* (Crossway) Luke 15:10

Let the beauty of creation serve as a reminder to you of God's oath to every believer. Let this spur you on to a greater godly zeal and earnestness. Let it sink in that there is nothing that can reverse his promise.⁸ Because of the blood of Christ, it *will* come to pass.

3. Hold Fast to Your Hope

The writer of Hebrews returns to the foundation of the whole argument – the gospel of Jesus Christ. You see, what good is God's promise if it's not completed through Jesus?⁹ Why be comforted by an oath that would not apply to me or you apart from Christ? Jesus Christ is the reason the promise is complete and Jesus Christ is the reason the oath is for me and you. He is the very essence of these things and our hope for all eternity.

Jesus Christ came as prophesied. He lived and died and rose again as prophesied. He *is* the promised seed, but more than that He *is* the *promise*. For God spoke with words to make the promise with Abraham and those words became flesh and fulfilled the promise that had been spoken of Him. Jesus Christ is not only the promise, but He is the promised promise sealed with an unchangeable oath that the Promise is going to happen. And you're still doubting. You just don't think Jesus is really enough. Somehow your faith has waned and you have drifted from the promises of God. Focus believer, focus.

God says, "I swear to you, by the powers invested in me, I will bring you home to glory.

Behold the Lamb, lifted up on a tree.

See Him dying there, on Calvary.

He, though innocent was raised in your place.

Won't you seek Him? Seek His wonderful face?

Yes, Jesus really is the hope¹⁰ that we should hold fast to. He is the hope set before us. A hope that has entered into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God. The writer of Hebrews uses the term "anchor". An anchor is a vital piece to the ship. The anchor holds the ship from drifting away into the sea. How fitting that the author calls Jesus our anchor while he is warning us to not drift away. Turn to Christ! Seek His face. He is the "anchor" for your soul set in heaven so that you will not drift away.¹¹ The anchor is set in the "inner place behind the curtain". This is a reference to the Holy of Holies that was depicted in the design of the tabernacle. However, the earthly tabernacle was only a shadow (miniature replica) of the real tabernacle in the heavens where Jesus has gone.¹² And He, your anchor, has become the High Priest Who intercedes for you on your behalf.¹³

⁸ Matthew Henry's Commentary *Acts to Revelation*, Volume VI, (MacDonald Publishing Company, Mclean, VA). P. 915 – "The promises of God, which are founded upon these immutable counsels of God, and confirmed by the oath of God, may safely be depended upon; for here we have two immutable things, the counsel and the oath of God, in which it is impossible for God to lie, contrary to his nature as well as to his will."

⁹ Hughes, R. Kent. *Preaching the Word: Hebrews, An Anchor for the Soul*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015. Page 180 – "Here our hope centers on the objective promise of God, which are fleshed out for us in the ultimate blessing of the world through Jesus Christ, "The hope set before us" comes from the fact that we are *in* Christ, the Son who fulfilled Abraham's covenant, and that at the last we will be *with* Christ and *like* Christ (cf. John 14:3; 1 John 3:2). Jesus is the foundation and substance of our hope."

¹⁰ The MacArthur Study Bible (*Revised & Updated Edition*), New King James Version. Study Note (Hebrews 6:19,20) "Our hope is embodied in Christ Himself who has entered into God's presence in the Heavenly Holy of Holies on our behalf."

¹¹ Hughes, R. Kent. *Preaching the Word: Hebrews, An Anchor for the Soul*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015. Page 181 – "We are anchored in the Father's presence for eternity – and Jesus at his right hand perpetually intercedes for his Church. His continual priestly prayer for us is the medium for our survival."

¹² New Geneva Study Bible (*Christian Statesman Edition*), NKJV, Coral Ridge Ministries. Study Note (Hebrews 6:19) "Our life's anchor is secured in the innermost section of the heavenly tabernacle, the original from which the earthly sanctuary was modeled (8:2; 9:11, 12, 24 25; 10:19, 20)."

¹³ New Geneva Study Bible (*Christian Statesman Edition*), NKJV, Coral Ridge Ministries. Study Note (Hebrews 6:13-20) "Faith can endure patiently because God's oath secures His promise to us, as it did to Abraham. Our confidence rests in the eternal high priesthood of Jesus after the order of Melchizedek, a priesthood secured by divine promise and oath (7:20-22, 28)."

If this passage is a further explanation of verses 11 and 12, then the call for us today is to show earnestness, have full assurance of our hope – Jesus Christ.¹⁴ Don't be sluggish, and don't drift away from your anchor. Salvation has come to you through the Promised Promise. Be zealous to grow in godliness and good works.

11 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, 12 training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, 13 waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, 14 who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works. – Titus 2:11-14

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4. The MacArthur Study Bible (Revised & Updated Edition), New King James Version.
5. Matthew Henry's Commentary Acts to Revelation, Volume VI, (MacDonald Publishing Company, Mclean, VA).
6. New ESV Study Bible (ESV Text Edition:2011), Crossway.

¹⁴ Gospel Transformation Bible, ESV Crossway. Study Note (Hebrews 6:13-20). "Such hope inspires us to love him who loved us like this and to "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness" (Matt. 6:33).