

17—Hebrews 6:13-20—God’s Faithfulness Gives Us Unshakeable Hope

By Pastor Jason Snider

I. Introduction

- A. Have you ever had someone go beyond what was necessary to assure you of that they were going to do what they had promised?
 - 1. Marriage is one of those things intended to do just that. It is a public commitment between a man and a woman in front of witnesses and especially before God to love each other until death do them part. A relationship cannot thrive as it ought without that level of commitment. If either cannot be sure they will be there for them in the most difficult of times, then I’m not sure how you will endure in a marriage relationship. The public promises and the vows are meant to assure each other to freely love each other and reserve such only for one another.
 - 2. In our relationship with God through Christ, we should want certainty of our relationship too. We do that similar ways. Baptism is our public profession of faith to witnesses and before God. Our membership in a local church is meant for us to walk with each other in such a way to help us grow in our relationship with the Lord and call us back if we stray away. Without those things in our lives, it’s hard to see that we have any visible fruit of faith in Christ.
- B. This morning, God makes clear that he goes beyond what was necessary to assure us that he will keep his promises. Romans 8:32 He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

II. Main Point

- A. Our text this morning is meant to answer, while we wait, the question we face everyday whether to continue trusting and patiently waiting on God’s promises or not.
- B. A promise is an answer. There are promises that you have yet to receive. Certainly, there is an already and not yet aspect to our salvation. But we are anticipating Christ’s return to deliver us out of this evil world and set up his eternal Kingdom. He will defeat all enemies and we will live with him in perfect righteousness forever. This text is meant to give you a sure and certain anchor for your soul until that day.

III. Outline

- A. The Example of Abraham’s faith and perseverance
- B. The Finality of Oaths
- C. The Encouragement of a unshakeable hope

IV. Exposition

- A. Last week, we ended with the understanding that the path to having full assurance of hope in the Lord until the end and to keep us from being sluggish was to imitate those who through faith and perseverance inherit the promises. Conveniently, the example of Abraham is given for us to see. Let’s take a look at what Abraham did that we might imitate his faith and patiently wait to obtain the promises of God.
 - 1. The emphasis begins on Abraham. The sentence literally begins with him which is hard to pull off in English since he is the one the promise was made to and God is the subject of the sentence.
 - 2. The preacher wants us to see an ordinary person trusting the extraordinary God and patiently waiting for the promise made to be fulfilled.
 - a) We have promises we are waiting on and we need to see real examples of those who did not waver in faith but obtained the promise.
 - b) In 9-12, we hear that the author was convinced that the listeners were headed for salvation. That is the intended outcome of our faith—the salvation of our souls. But those promises of eternal life are still in the future.
 - (1) Hank Williams said if heaven ain’t a lot like Dixie he didn’t want to go.
 - (2) I am certain heaven isn’t like the Southland and if it were I would not be longing for it.
 - 3. To imitate Abraham’s faith and patience, we need to know the story of Abraham, right?
 - a) The preachers has given us clues by the use of Abraham’s name and a quotation from Genesis 22:17 there in verse 14.

- (1) Look there in your Bible. When a Scripture is quoted, you need to go read the context from which the quotation came. In my Bible, they have put the statement in quotation marks to help me know that.
 - (a) Additional help comes from the small little “a” next to the quotation and then at the bottom of the page in my Bible, that little “a” has beside it Genesis 22:17.
 - (b) They have done the work for me.
 - (c) That means we need to go read this story to see what’s going on.
- b) When we turn back to Genesis 22, we find out that this is the part of the story after Abraham gladly obeyed God to offer up Isaac as a sacrifice.
 - (1) The first verse of chapter 22 says, “God tested Abraham.” This was the purpose behind this incident.
 - (a) Why is God testing Abraham? Why did God ask him to offer up his only son, Isaac? You might not be thinking any of that because you know how the story ends, right? All is well that ends well, right?
 - (2) When Genesis 22 explains what God asked Abraham to do, we should be screaming—wait! All the promises God had already made rest on this son, Isaac.
 - (a) The verse quoted in Hebrews 6:14 says, “Surely I will bless you and multiply you.”
 - i) The problem with that promise is that could not happen if Abraham sacrificed his son. To do that would cut off the ONLY means of blessing and multiplying.
 - ii) How do I know this? Well the first promise God made to Abraham was in Genesis 12:2–3 ² And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”
 - (1) That still might not make since why Isaac was so important. It could be that you just simply think it was wrong of God to ask Abraham to sacrifice his son and that is the problem that was resolved.
 - (2) That’s not the problem that needs resolving. God promised to make Abraham a great nation and that means having children who have children and so on and so forth is necessary to keep that promise.
 - (3) The promise included an inheritance of land. Genesis 12:7 Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, “To your offspring I will give this land.”
 - (4) Problem after problem arises like you need a wife to have a child and Abraham almost gave her away in Egypt.
 - (5) But time passed on and on. Abraham grew stronger and stronger. His wealth increased. His flocks increased. His servants increased. Indeed, God had blessed Abraham.
 - (6) There’s more to the story that we will talk about later in Hebrews but for now, Abraham does not understand how this all shakes out. Notice how this exchange goes.
 - (a) Genesis 15:1–3 ¹ he LORD came to Abram in a vision: “Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great.” ² But Abram said, “O Lord GOD, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?” ³ And Abram said, “Behold, you have given me no offspring, and a member of my household will be my heir.”
 - (b) What good is all that Abraham has and what good is the promise to make him a great nation and bless all nations through him IF HE HAS NO CHILD?
 - (c) God answers: Genesis 15:5–6 ⁵ And he brought him outside and said, “Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your offspring be.” ⁶ And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness.

- (d) Years continue to pass on and no child is born. In fact, Sarah said to Abraham that the LORD had prevented her from bearing children. She had been barren her entire life. They try to have a child the only way they know how and Ishmael is born through Hagar, Sarah's servant.
 - (e) God rejects their attempt and then promises that Sarah will have a child. She is not only barren but she is beyond the age of bearing a child.
 - (f) What is the evidence that Abraham believed God's promise? To have a child he must know his wife. She bears a son a year later. The heir of God's promises. The one through whom this blessing is to continue.
 - (g) If no Isaac then no Jacob. If no Jacob then no twelve sons of Israel. Then no son named Judah through whom Jesus was born through whom all the nations were to be blessed with salvation in him.
- (3) How can God say more clearly that all of this will come to pass? How will the LORD encourage Abraham to believe and patiently wait on the promise?
 - (a) And I know this doesn't seem to make sense. I would never have imagined this was the way to do that. But God tells Abraham to go sacrifice his son, Isaac.
 - (b) We are back where we started. In Genesis 22:17, God had responded to Abraham's faith shown through his obedience by saying there in Hebrews 6:14, "Surely I will bless you and multiply you."
 - i) This is the promise Abraham was waiting on. Hebrews 6:13 confirms that God made the promise. And as you ought to know, a promise is only as good as the person giving it.
 - ii) Normally, we might make a promise and swear by someone higher than us to make our promise sure.
 - iii) We would do that because to do so invited a curse upon ourselves if we failed to keep it.
 - iv) In this case, there is no one higher than God. So, he swore by himself. In other words, he put his character on the line. To not keep this promise would say that God isn't who he says he is.
 - v) What was the confirmation to Abraham that God would keep his promise?
 - (1) Getting Isaac back! In fact, Abraham believed so strongly already that he expected to receive him back even if he had not been stopped from slaying his son by the Lord.
 - (2) How can I say that Isaac was the evidence of the things promised? Hebrews 11:17-19 ¹⁷ By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son, ¹⁸ of whom it was said, "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named." ¹⁹ He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back.
 - (3) We hear also in our text there in Hebrews 6:15 that Abraham, having patiently waited, obtained the promise.
- 4. The story of Abraham is meant to encourage you to model his faith of patiently waiting for the promise.
 - a) Either actively or passively, you are asking will God keep his promises even when they take years to be fulfilled?
 - b) I just finished reading Daniel this morning. After all the visions and explanations, Daniel asks when this will be. The angel abruptly stops and ends with "Blessed is he who waits."
 - c) Are you persevering in faith while you wait? Are you as certain as Abraham of God's promises that you would obey any command from him? Even when it doesn't seem to make sense?
- B. Now let's look at the finality of an oath and how important they are to our lives.
 - 1. There in verse 16, the preacher raises the practice of taking an oath and how it settles disputes.
 - a) He says that people swear by something greater than themselves.

- b) As kids we took an oath with our friend to guard a secret. “Cross my heart, hope to die, stick a needle in my eye” was the one we used. It rhymes so well I’m not sure we paid attention to what we were actually saying.
 - c) If you buy a poultry farm, you will sign your name at least 100 times promising that you will pay for these things.
 - d) If you are a witness in court, you will have to take an oath to testify and your answers are under oath which makes you responsible for what you say.
 - e) I heard of someone who found out that someone was building a house on his property. They had cleared the land and were moving right along when the owner of the land found out.
 - f) Obviously, having the deed was important to resolving the issue.
2. The example of how we use an oath is now compared to God making an oath.
- a) The strange thing about this is that God doesn’t need to go beyond making a promise. His words are trustworthy because he is trustworthy.
 - (1) The very use of an oath gives the impression that your words could be in question.
 - (2) For God to make use of an oath seems unnecessary. And it is.
 - b) However, it says there in verse 17 that God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise.
 - (1) Just hear that. God desires his people to trust him and wait patiently for his promises and he goes beyond what is expected to prove it.
 - (2) Therefore, not only did God make the promise but he also made an oath.
 - (3) Verse 17 goes on to say—the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath.
 - (a) God is unchangeable therefore his purposes are unchangeable.
 - i) If God is unchangeable and his nature is righteous and good then he cannot change that and lie. God is truth.
 - ii) This is a simple but profound truth that is invaluable when we think of believing and waiting on his promises—God cannot lie.
 - (b) God’s unchangeable purpose speaks to his intentional design to show his people proof to hold fast to until the end.
 - (c) How do you think Abraham made it? Was it not an ongoing work of grace? Absolutely!
- C. As we move to our last point, we’ve seen the example of Abraham, the convincing evidence of God’s unchangeable promise and oath, and now we get to end with the purpose for which he did it—for us to have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us.
1. At the end of verse 18, this strong encouragement is for—those who have fled for refuge!
- a) The image of fleeing for refuge is not something we normally think about. My guess is that you have heard of people in the news having to flee for refugee camps in other countries but this is not something you have likely experienced.
 - (1) So how can we understand this in our own experiences?
 - (2) Well let’s think of it like this—fleeing for refuge is to flee to safety.
 - (3) Maybe the experience of fleeing for refuge is similar to fleeing to the ER in an emergency. We are in danger of some sort and there we are seeking help and safety from some injury or sickness.
 - (4) There we find doctors and nurses to discover the problem and fix it.
 - b) Spiritually speaking, all of humanity is in danger because we are all sinners. Sin separates us from God. Therefore we all need to flee for refuge!
 - (1) The gate into the refugee camp is Jesus! When we turn from our sin and flee to Jesus, he will save us from the dangerous penalty of our own sin.
 - (2) Through him we have access to the city of refuge and our souls are eternally safe in him.
 - c) However, we have not yet entered that city. Indeed, we have by faith but for now we patiently wait for it.
 - (1) We ought to hold fast to the hope set before us.
 - (2) Why? Because we have a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul.

- (3) This hope is sure and steadfast because it is a hope that enters behind the curtain—the very presence of God.
 - (4) We have hope of entering because Jesus entered as the forerunner on our behalf.
 - (5) He went in as the high priest to represent us before God!
 - (6) And he was not only the representative but the sacrifice too. He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.
 - (7) All who enter behind him will be in the presence of God as it was meant to be forever.
2. Be encouraged by what God has done to show his love for us. He not only promised to love us but he proved his love by sending his only Son.
- a) The Son of God proved his love for us by dying on the cross. The Father accepted his payment by raising him from the dead.
 - b) If by faith your life is hidden in Christ, that anchor holds within the veil.
 - c) We are going to sing, “Great is thy faithfulness” to which we will say, “Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not: As Thou hast been, Thou forever wilt be.”
 - d) God’s faithfulness gives us unshakeable hope! Can you say that? Will you say that?