

## **Steadfast Anchor, Certain Hope** **Hebrews 6:13-20**

### **Introduction**

I'd like to start this morning by having you *think of a person you've been able to observe living with faith and patience toward God over the years.* Have that person in mind? Perhaps you can think of more than one. Consider the ways they displayed by their everyday living their confidence in God and their longsuffering in difficulty, holding fast to the promises God had promised as their inheritance. Hebrews 6:12 has called us in to imitate people like this.

In the very next verse, Hebrews points us to Abraham as a prime example of "those who by faith and patience inherit the promises." There is a reason the Scriptures include not just precepts but also real-life history. We are to learn from both, along with all the other types of literature in the library of writings we call the Bible, the Book. Law, history, poetry, wisdom literature, apocalyptic prophecy, gospels, epistles (letters). In this variety God shows us the comprehensive nature of the truth He has revealed. It touches every part of us—mind, emotion, imagination, will, body. *We dare not confine Scriptural truth to a small part of our lives, to be referenced only every now and then. It should permeate*

*every part and thus transform us at every level.*

So look with me this morning at what Abraham teaches us about persevering faith through his own life story. His life will point us to the steadfast anchor of our souls, our certain hope of inheriting what God has promised.

**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, 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 two 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.

1. Divine Promise Guaranteed (13-18)
2. Persevering Faith Rewarded (15, 18)
3. Heavenly Mediator Established (19-20)

### **1. Divine Promise Guaranteed (13-18)**

<sup>13</sup> For when God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself, <sup>14</sup> saying, "Surely I will bless you and multiply you." <sup>15</sup> And thus Abraham, having patiently waited, obtained the promise. <sup>16</sup> For people swear by something greater than themselves, and in all their disputes an oath is final for confirmation. <sup>17</sup> 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, <sup>18</sup> so that by two 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.

Look how often the word *promise* appears. Verse 12 has just exhorted us not to be sluggish or dull, but imitators of those who through faith inherit the promises. Now the writer runs with that theme. "God made a promise." Think about that.

People make promises. Sometimes the promise is a lie from the beginning. Sometimes they change their minds. Sometimes they forget. Sometimes they can't

do what fulfilling the promise takes even when they want to. Not so, God. His promise makes it as good as done.

The problem has never been God's dishonesty or inability. It has always been our being convinced enough to trust Him. So God goes the extra mile to assure us that His promise is good, no matter how impossible it might seem or how long we must persevere to enjoy its fulfillment.

Hebrews 6:17

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.

His promise reveals His unchangeable purpose, and His oath guarantees the promise.

What makes you believe someone's word? Words are cheap and easy—and often empty of reality or fulfillment. It is the character and track record of the person speaking that makes his or her words something you can lean the weight of your trust on.

God's purpose to give an inheritance to His chosen people is unchangeable. His character is perfect, and His ability is infinite. He is the Lord of history. Whatever He says will stand.

The entire universe came into being out of nothing through His Word.

So He puts His purposes into a promise to the heirs. He's going on record. And He further ratifies the promise with an oath.

It's like He is in a courtroom, taking an oath to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. People will place their hand on a Bible and swear to tell the truth. They will swear to tell the truth, "so help me, God." They are swearing by something or someone greater than themselves.

No one is greater than God. But He swears to tell the truth anyway. He swears by the highest Being in all the universe—Himself. There's no one higher. God has backed his promises by His own infinite omnipotence, His own infinite truthfulness.

He makes the promise and backs it with His oath in order to strengthen our conviction that we will one day actually inherit what He has in love purposed for us. He knows we need help being convinced. Life can be brutal, and the fulfillment of the promise can seem so far away. We're not sure we can make it. We struggle to hang on. So much of it seems too good to be true, even impossible given all the obstacles. That's what Abraham experienced, too. Listen to how Paul describes

Abraham's battle to hold on to faith in God's promises.

Romans 4:18-22

**18** In hope he believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations, as he had been told, "So shall your offspring be." **19** He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead (since he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb. **20** No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, **21** fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. **22** That is why his faith was "counted to him as righteousness."

*God's promise to us articulates His purpose for us and is guaranteed by His own infinite reliability and power. All who put their trust in Him cannot lose.*

Abraham was convinced of God's goodness and omnipotence backing the promises God made. It was counted to him as righteousness. Why? Because it was a reversal of what happened in the garden. Adam and Eve fell for Satan's lie that God was in fact not good or reliable. That their best bet was to be the masters of their own fate, that disobeying God was the path to personal fulfillment. They found a prison

instead. They tried to find life apart from God, and found death.

Hebrews 11:6 Whoever would draw near to God must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who seek Him.

What is your view of God?  
Get that wrong and everything becomes unsteady.  
Good in His purposes  
Faithful in His promises  
Infinite in His power

## **2. Persevering Faith Rewarded (14-15, 18)**

<sup>14</sup> saying, "Surely I will bless you and multiply you." <sup>15</sup> And thus Abraham, having patiently waited, obtained the promise.

<sup>18</sup> so that by two 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.

By definition a promise is connected to the future. You have to wait for it. That is why inheriting the promises of God calls for perseverance in hope.

Romans 8:24-25

<sup>24</sup> For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for

what he sees? <sup>25</sup> But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

Abraham was 75 years old when God first promised that he would make of him a great nation. At that time his name was Abram—“high father.” When Abram was 99, his only son Ishmael by Sarah’s servant Hagar, God would change his name to Abraham—father of a multitude. He was 100 when Isaac the son of promise was finally born.

But the oath referenced here is from Genesis 22, after God had tested Abraham by commanding him to sacrifice Isaac as a burnt offering in the mountains of Moriah. Abraham obeyed. According to Hebrews 11:19, “He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back.” God stopped Abraham as he reached for the knife to slay his son, through whom God had promised that Abraham’s offspring would be named. And there caught in the thicket was a ram to take Isaac’s place. Thus Abraham said, “On the mount of the Lord it will be provided.” Jesus God’s Son would one day be provided by God as our substitute, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

*So Abraham’s faith was clearly not a once and done sort of thing. He had to hang in there, believing God even when faced with painful*



*impossibilities like being too old to have any children at all, and then once the son of promise was born, being called to give Isaac up.*

He patiently endured. 25 years waiting. Well past the time it was humanly possible for them to have children at all. Sarah suffered the frustration of infertility with him, as did a number of the subsequent women of faith—Rebekah, Rachel, Hannah, Manoah's wife, Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist. Long, hard years. But Abraham held on in faith. He persevered and obtained the promise. The impossible birth of Isaac.

It was the first miracle necessary to all the rest to come. Isaac's name means laughter. It recalls how laughable their ever having children was. And it expresses their great joy when he finally came anyway. Abraham further persevered in offering up this son of promise, receiving him back from God at the last possible moment. God gave him Isaac twice. By faith in God Abraham obtained the promise.

When Abraham died at 175, Isaac's only children Esau and Jacob were only 15, and Jacob was the heir of promise. So much for a vast nation as numerous as the stars. He died in faith not having received the full measure of the promise yet, living in a tent as a

foreigner in the promised land. The only part of the land he owned was a cave in which to bury his wife. But he was “looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God” (Hebrews 11:10).

The first-century recipients of Hebrews knew more of the story. Abraham’s descendants finally took possession of the land promised to him. They became a numerous people. The promised offspring through whom all the nation of the earth would be blessed came as promised. Jesus the Messiah, son of David, son of Judah, son of Abraham, son of Eve.

There are divine promises yet to be fulfilled. God has proven faithful time and time again. He cannot lie. He has sworn by the highest Person in the universe, Himself, that He will make good on his promises.

That is why we have fled to Him for safety. We are refugees from a war-torn, sin-cursed world, seeking asylum, peace, safety, the new Eden, the heavenly city. He will not fail to fulfill what remains. We hold fast to that confidence.

*All who persevere in their faith will be richly rewarded. So persevere no matter what. Don't be shaken. Hold fast to Jesus.*

Past when it seems impossible. Despite the setbacks, the defections, the losses, the crosses, the failings, the fears. Don't let anyone or anything make you let go.

What attacks your faith and weakens your grip on God?

Can you honestly say it is any different from what other believers have had to face? That the Scriptures gave you no warning and offer you no help? That whatever it is so outranks God and His promises that it's worthy letting go of your hope in Him?

### **3. Heavenly Mediator Established (19-20)**

<sup>19</sup> We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, <sup>20</sup> where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

An anchor keeps a boat from drifting away; it keeps it tethered in the storm; steady against the crashing waves. Life can be rough. And death swallows all. We need an anchor for our souls stronger than life or death. We need Jesus, Lover of our souls. He has conquered death and passed into the heavens. As the high priest entered through the curtain into the holy of holies on the Day of Atonement,

Jesus has entered heaven itself to make atonement for us.

Our sins are covered, washed clean. Death has no more claim on us because He has died our death for us and conquered it. He ever lives to make intercession for us. Yesterday, today, tomorrow. He is a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek—more on that in verses to come. Our King of Righteousness. Our King of peace. He is always ours. We are always His. We cannot lose. He is what makes our future certain. He is what anchors our souls, steadfast and sure.

John 14:1-3

<sup>1</sup> "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. <sup>2</sup> In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? <sup>3</sup> And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.

"I go"—to the cross to die—"to prepare a place for you."

"I will come again"—from the tomb, resurrected

"And will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also."—He is the forerunner. He opened the way for us to enter paradise. He will welcome us home.

The ultimate representative of the human race is safe at home with God in heaven, having blazed the trail for all who are trusting Him to take them to their heavenly home. He has done the hard part. He will not turn back now. He endured all He did on our behalf. He will not lose us in the storms of life or in the dust of death.

Hebrews 1:3

He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

So understand that you are not the one that guarantees this outcome. God has promised it. He cannot lie. He cannot fail. *Jesus is our Heavenly Mediator. He has procured your place for you. He guarantees you will reach your heavenly home— the house of the Lord where you will dwell in forever.*

*Let me no more my comfort draw  
From my frail grasp of Thee.  
In this alone rejoice with awe,  
Thy mighty grasp of me.*

John Campbell Sharp

When you draw your last breath on earth, you can't get yourself to heaven. You can't do

anything at all. Someone else will have to get you home.

Illustration: Summer trips as a child—dad or mom driving

Remember how easy it was to play or read or sleep with no worries. You knew whoever was driving would get you there.

Jesus will get you there. Rest in that. Trust.

## **Conclusion**

1. Divine Promise Guaranteed (13-18)
2. Persevering Faith Rewarded (15, 18)
3. Heavenly Mediator Established (19-20)

## Discussion Questions

1. What do you think God's backing His promise with an oath to show His purpose more convincingly to us tell you about God and His understanding and love of us?
2. Of all the promises ever made to you, what makes God's promises the most reliable?
3. In what ways does knowing Abraham's long journey of faith help you to persevere in faith?
4. In what ways are the promises God made to Abraham (promised land, a

nation, offspring in whom all the nations would be blest) connected to us who are trusting in Jesus Christ to save us?

5. Why is Jesus' having entered into heaven as our high priest an anchor for our souls in the storms of our lives?
6. What is the significance of Jesus' being our forerunner into heaven?
7. Why do you think it matters that He is both Priest and King (King of Righteousness and King of Peace—order of Melchizedek)?
8. Why do you think it is important that Jesus' high priesthood on our behalf is forever?