

Hebrews 6:11-20
(Genesis 15:1-21)
“Holding Fast to God’s Promises”

Introduction

Why should we hope that things will work out in the end? We don’t often see truth triumph in the public square. Laws are made, books written, courses taught, movies filmed, that tempt us to despair of ever again seeing the true, the good and the beautiful satisfy the intellectual, moral and aesthetic needs of this, and every other, society.

Instead, the bottom-line usually prevails. What sells? If it is the fantastic, then who cares for truth? If it is the erotic and violent, then who cares for the good? If it is the kinky, the weird, then who cares for the beautiful? Add to that: governments worldwide that find it increasingly difficult to govern, global terrorism, exploding population, shrinking resources. Add to that the lessons of history and this mornings’ news, and who but a starry-eyed optimist or brainwashed cultist really expects that everything will be just fine in the end?

And yet our text speaks of a reason for hope offered to us by none other than the living God. We are called to flee to that hope and take hold of it. We are promised that it will not give way, for it is anchored to the very throne of God, firm and secure. The author of Hebrews has been warning us negatively, but now he calls us positively to deeper study and apprehension of the deep things of God by showing us how practically these things meet our deepest longings and our need for hope in an otherwise hopeless world.

Hope is crucial to survival. We cannot go on indefinitely in a situation that is hopeless. Depression and despair will finally enervate us and sap our ability to go on. Dr Curt Richter of Johns Hopkins Medical School performed experiments in the mid-20th century in which he placed two groups of rats into cylinders of water from which they could not escape. One group was rescued within a few minutes and then placed back into the water. The rats that were not rescued all drowned within a very short time. The rats that were rescued continued to swim for three days in hope of being rescued again.

God’s Word is full of promises that give us reason for hope. The particular promise in view here is God’s promise to give us “a high priest in the order of Melchizedek,” and he is almost ready to develop that theme. But first, the author wants us to understand the nature of all of God’s promises, especially why we should believe them and how we are to claim them as our own. So he turns to God’s great promise to Abraham to show that what is true of that promise is true of all God’s promises.

Body

1. What makes God's promise to Abraham so special an illustration?

God's promise to Abraham was universal in scope.
God pledged to bear the covenant curse in order to fulfill his promise.
Christ is the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham.
Therefore, Abraham is called "the father of *all* who believe" (Romans 4:11).

2. What does this teach me about all of God's promises?

God's purpose in salvation is unchanging.
God's character is unchanging.
God has borne in Christ the consequences of our sin in order to save us.
Therefore, his promises may be believed.

3. How do we claim God's promises and live in hope of their fulfillment?

Trust God's promises, as Abraham trusted.
Obey God's call, as Abraham obeyed.
Claim Christ Jesus as our righteousness and seek the power of his Spirit
Therefore, we will live in hope if we trust and obey Jesus' call, "Follow me!"

Conclusion

It is in the obedience of faith that we journey with growing confidence toward that "city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God" (11:10). No matter what happens along the way, no matter what comes, we believe God's promises. Why? Because,

We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek (6:19-20).