

“The Anchor of Christian Hope”

Heb. 6:13-20

- INTRO. - Our world is desperately seeking security. With all the violence and turmoil around the world today, we are all consumed with doing everything we can to insure our safety and security.
- We have all kinds of safety measures to protect ourselves from harm. We have locks on our doors, alarm systems, and perhaps even weapons. We have elaborate security systems at airports and public buildings.
- We buy all kinds of insurance against any form of disaster. We have bank accounts to ensure that we will have enough money to survive for a while. *Some* have vast stockpiles of food put back. We are even reading about certain wealthy people who are building elaborate underground bunkers.
- And yet, with all those safeguards, those who are rational know that everything could be gone in a moment's time. An illness, a business failure, an automobile accident, a fire, some other natural disaster – suddenly everything could be gone in spite of all our efforts to protect.
- The truth of the matter is, there are no absolute certainties in this life. That's why the Bible says, “...you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are *just* a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away.” (James 4:14)
- There is nothing in this life that is absolutely secure – but the Bible declares, our Christian hope is! In our text today we see that our hope is anchored on the Rock of Ages. It remains steadfast and sure, no matter what kinds of storms may come.
- Our Christian hope is *not* like the “hope” of the world – some sort of optimistic wishful thinking – but is a divinely-anchored promise sealed with an oath that can never be broken. It is *not* just some sort of insipid, earth-bound emotion. It is absolutely, eternally secure.
- And this is especially precious in a day and time when you can never know who you can trust. John MacArthur says, “In our age we are well on our way to trusting no one.”
- We can't trust the media, we can't trust the government, we can't trust the people we do business with – and on and on it goes. Most promises (today) are made with little intention of keeping them. Lying is just accepted as something everybody does – and what you have to do to get by.
- Hardly ever can you say (anymore) that a man's word is his bond. Even written contracts are often

worthless. And this has created an atmosphere of distrust that has permeated every aspect of society. The vast majority of young people (today) are taught to question those in authority – and no one seems to be able to find *anything* that is reliable and trustworthy.

- Some think they can find this in religion. Some even spend an entire lifetime in a particular religious system – only to become disappointed and disillusioned when they discover it does *not* bring peace and security.
- Some turn to prosperity gospel preachers and faith healers – only to discover that these celebrity evangelists are only there to take their money and build empires for themselves.
- And the truth of the matter is, when it comes to the question of “in whom can we trust?” the answer is, **ONLY GOD HIMSELF**. Genuine believers understand this. Christians understand that men will always let you down, but God can always be trusted fully.
- Over and over again in the Bible we are admonished to trust fully in the Lord. “Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.” (Prov. 3:5-6)

- And here in our text this morning we see that assurance absolutely confirmed. We have an anchor for our souls that will never fail. We have the eternal promise of God, sealed with an oath – and that promise will certainly be kept.
- What a tremendous passage of Scripture this is! It will have you shouting “hallelujah” before we are done! And this kind of certain hope is so *critical* in the uncertain world in which we live. When everything else is falling down around us, we can know that His promises will never fail. (Pause)
- But before we get to that, I want to say something about how this passage fits in with the flow of this book. ILL. – If you have ever taken a detour, you know that it can sometimes be difficult to get back on the main road.
- There is a sense in which the author of Hebrews has taken a “detour” from the subject of Jesus’ high-priestly role “after the order of Melchizedek,” as he has exhorted his hearers in regard to their spiritual dullness.
- So a good way to look at our present text (6:13-20) is like that of an “on-ramp” to transition back to Melchizedek in chapter 7. He has said that he wants to give them the deeper truth concerning the high priesthood of Christ, but that they weren’t ready for that. He is going to go on and give them that, but he has to have a way of moving back into

that from his exhortation. That's what this current passage is.

- And you may remember that the context for all this is Ps. 110:4, which was introduced by the author at 5:6. There he said (of Christ), "You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek."
- And in the last verse of this present passage, he is going to go back to that and say, "Having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek." (That's 6:20.)
- So we clearly see this transition back to this subject – and he is going to deal with that fully in chapter 7. But here (in the present passage) we see four elements that point to the absolute certainty of our Christian hope. First of all, we see:

I. THE PROMISE (vv. 13-15)

- Look with me at v. 13, "For when God made the promise to Abraham..." (Stop right there for a moment.) For this Jewish audience there would be no one greater than Abraham. He was the father of the Jewish nation.
- And one of the main reasons why the writers of the NT pointed so often to Abraham, is *not only* because he was the father of the Jewish nation (and so highly revered by all Jews), but he is also the ultimate example of genuine faith.

- Paul (of course) spoke much of Abraham in the Book of Romans. In Rom. 4:11 he called him "...the father of all who believe..." In Romans 4 he makes it clear that Abraham was justified – he was counted as righteous before God – because of his faith.
- In Gal. 3:7 he wrote, "...it is those who are of faith who are [the true] sons of Abraham." So it is natural (here) that the author of Hebrews would point to Abraham as an illustration of one who believed God's promise.
- At the very end of his exhortation (in 6:12) he has said he wanted these Hebrews to be "imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises."
- *Now* he points them to the ultimate example of that in the person of Abraham. And (by the way) the example of Abraham is also the perfect example for him to use, because he was a key character in the biblical account of Melchizedek (and he's going back to Melchizedek in the next chapter).
- But go back to v. 13, "For when God made the promise to Abraham, since He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, saying, 'I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply you.'"

- Now, we're going to come back to the idea of "swearing" in a moment, but this was from Gen. 22:17 and was a re-affirmation of the Abrahamic covenant that was made years earlier. Gen. 22 contains the account of Abraham offering his son Isaac (as a sacrifice) on Mount Moriah – and this re-affirmation of the covenant came after he had demonstrated to God that he was willing to totally trust Him, even if it meant He would have to raise his only son from the dead to keep His promise.
- God had promised to make of him a great nation, and Isaac was his only son. This was the ultimate test of Abraham's faith because Isaac was the only vehicle through which God could keep His promise.
- But Abraham fully trusted God, and raised the knife to slay his only son before God stopped him and provided a substitute sacrifice.
- But the point (here in Hebrews) is *not* that Abraham was a man of faith, but that God always keeps His promises. Look at v. 15, "And thus, having patiently waited, he obtained the promise."
- The original promise (the original covenant) was made years earlier, when Sarah was barren and Abraham had no offspring at all. He had to wait patiently for the birth of Isaac, but even then he had to wait beyond that for the complete fulfillment of the promise.
- Isaac alone was *not* a mighty nation, so Abraham had to wait for the future, when God would bring all this to pass. In fact, we would have to say, that even though this verse tells us Abraham "received" the promise, *some* of that promise was *not* fulfilled in his lifetime.
- Yes, he *did* "receive the promise" in the sense that he witnessed the miraculous birth of his son in his old age, but there was *much* to that covenant promise he did *not* see in his lifetime. And yet, he completely believed God for it, and trusted fully that God would (indeed) bring it to pass.
- By the way, this is a reminder to us that God does *not* always keep His promises in this earthly life, but He always keeps them. Sometimes we have to wait until we get to glory to see the fulfillment of His promises – but He is always trustworthy.
- His healing does *not* always come in this life, but His ultimate healing will come for those who are His. The glories of His salvation may *not* always be experienced in this life, but they *will* be fully experienced some day.
- And notice, Abraham had to wait patiently before he received the promise. This has often been referred to as "God's waiting room" and we are (generally) *not* very eager to be in it.

- You and I don't usually want to *wait* for anything. We live in a world of instant gratification. We are used to fast food, instant messaging, and everything given to us right away. If we have to wait longer than 20 seconds at a traffic light we get antsy. Think about waiting for almost 100 years for God's promise to even *begin* to be fulfilled!
- And yet, we know from Scripture that God always has a purpose for putting us in His "waiting room." He wants us to learn to fully trust in Him. He wants to build character in us through waiting on Him.
- But Abraham was a man of faith, and he waited patiently on the Lord, and he ultimately received the promise. Why? Because God always keeps His word. Every promise of God is secured by His immutable character.
- The anchor of our Christian hope is built on that. The promises of God are guaranteed by the integrity of His Person. And when he said (in v. 14), "I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply you," His ultimate purpose was to bring His salvation into the world through the Messiah.
- The Abrahamic covenant is ultimately tied to His eternal plan of salvation. God's purpose for Abraham was *not* merely to make of him a mighty nation (for his own sake) but to bring His Messiah into the world through that nation.
- In other words, His blessing of Abraham was intended to become a blessing to the entire world. The salvation of God came from the Jews. Jesus Himself was a Jew. And the Abrahamic covenant was the first step in bringing His salvation into the world.
- By the way, the Abrahamic covenant is an unconditional, eternal covenant. Abraham was commanded by God to do a number of things, but the keeping of the covenant (from God's perspective) was not dependent upon anything Abraham did (or did *not* do).
- We know from Scripture that Abraham was obedient to God, but that is *not* why the Abrahamic covenant was guaranteed to be fulfilled. This covenant is unconditional and eternal because God Himself guaranteed its fulfillment.
- You see, this was *not* a covenant made between God and Abraham. It was a covenant God made with Himself. Abraham was merely a spectator. If you go back to Gen. 15 (where the covenant was ratified) Abraham was asleep when God moved between the pieces of the sacrifice. Only God walked between those pieces, signifying that only God was making the covenant.
- Of course, Abraham was the vehicle God used to accomplish His purpose in this covenant, but its conditions and obligations were God's alone. This

is a covenant God made with Himself to benefit Abraham and the rest of the world through him.

- But the point (in Heb. 6) is that God always keeps His word, and that we can always count on His promises, and His promise of eternal salvation is something we can absolutely base our hope upon. (Pause) But there is a second element we see here, and that is:

II. THE PRACTICE (v. 16)

- Look with me at v. 16, “For men swear by one greater *than themselves*, and with them an oath *given* as confirmation is an end of every dispute.” This is typical Hellenistic legal terminology.
- It was common in the NT era for a person (in a court of law) to take an oath – to swear by *something* or *someone* greater than themselves. This is still done in our own day and time.
- We see people placing their hands on a Bible and taking an oath. We see people swearing to tell the truth and nothing but the truth so help us God.
- The idea (in the NT era) was that this would be the end of discussion because no one would ever take such an oath unless he intended to keep his word. If he didn’t keep his word it would bring him under the direct judgment of God.

- Now, it doesn’t seem to mean that much anymore, but the concept is that “I am swearing by something greater than myself, therefore I am confirming that what I say is true.”
- In Israel the supreme oath was “as surely as the Lord lives.” In the OT the Book of Genesis tells us that Abraham himself swore by God and make others do the same. The OT prescribed that oaths should be taken in God’s name and that any lying under such an oath was a violation of the third commandment.
- In the Greco-Roman world oaths were sworn in the name of God, a king, the genius of the empower, or the empower himself. Those who violated the oath would put themselves under the judgment of God or the wrath of the empower. But the interesting thing (in this particular passage) is that God Himself took an oath – and that leads us to a third element, which is:

III. THE PURPOSE (vv. 17-18)

- In God’s oath we see His eternal purpose – to make us eternally secure and give us a steadfast hope. Now, we see this primarily in vv. 17-18, but go back to v. 13 for a moment. In v. 13 it says, “When God made the promise to Abraham, since He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself...”

- Since there is no one greater than God, in order for Him to take an oath, He had to swear “by Himself.” He had to take this oath based on His own integrity.
- In fact, God’s integrity and faithfulness are the theme of this passage. The question is, “Can we take God at His word?” and the answer is, “We absolutely can!” This is why our Christian hope is eternally secure.
- Look at vv. 17-18, “In the same way [in the same way men take an oath of their truthfulness] God, desiring even more to show to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His purpose, interposed with an oath, in order that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we may have strong encouragement, we who have fled for refuge in laying hold of the hope set before us.”
- God (of course) does *not* need to take an oath to show His trustworthiness. His eternal, immutable character alone ought to be enough for us. But what this is all about, is that God wants us to be absolutely certain about our eternal hope in Christ.
- This amounts to “double assurance.” He wants us to have “strong encouragement” and to be able to completely lay hold of “the hope set before us.” All this is based on the character of God – that He cannot lie and that He does *not* change.
- The Bible tells us there are some things God cannot do. One thing God cannot do is, God cannot lie. And since God cannot lie, He can never go back on His word.
- God is truth, and by very definition whatever He says is absolute truth. Truth is part of His eternal character. For God to lie would mean to deny His own nature.
- And this is connected (in Scripture) to His promise of eternal salvation. Verse 17 refers to “His purpose” and we see that Greek word used many times (especially in Luke and Acts) to refer to the saving purpose of God. In Titus 1:2 Paul wrote, “...in the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised long ages ago...”
- For centuries God has been bringing about His plan of salvation, and if God has promised us that all those who come to put their faith in Jesus Christ will be saved forever, we can absolutely count on that to be certain.
- Jesus said (in John 1:12), “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, *even* to those who believe in His name...”
- Just as surely as God kept his promise to Abraham, so He will keep His promise to us. We know He

kept His promise to Abraham because there are over 16 million Jews in the world today.

- God has never failed to keep His word and He never will! We can always trust God's promises because His very nature prevents Him from ever lying or deceiving us in any way.
- And connected to this is (also) the doctrine of the immutability of God. He cannot change. This is another thing God cannot do. His promises are secured by His unchanging character.
- We read in James 1:17, "Every good thing bestowed and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation, or shifting shadow."
- God is the same yesterday, today, and forever! Num. 23:19 says, "God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent; Has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?" What is the implied answer there? Of course He will!
- God cannot lie and He cannot change. That is why our Christian hope is eternally secure. And in order to accommodate the weak faith of men, God swore on Himself that this is absolutely true.

- By the way, the Bible talks about God's "pledge" to us. That pledge is His Holy Spirit. Three times Paul says the Spirit was given by God as a pledge.
- For example, 2 Cor. 1:21-22 says, "Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God, who also sealed us and gave *us* the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge."
- Interestingly, the modern usage for the Greek word for "pledge" is "engagement ring." As if the promises of God are not enough – He has given us the "engagement ring" of His Holy Spirit indwelling us as a token of our eternal security.
- But going back to Heb. 6:18 notice that the author of Hebrews points to "two unchangeable things." In addition to the fact that God Himself is unchangeable, there are two things we see (here in this passage) that are also unchangeable: His promise and His oath.
- The Greek word that is used for "unchangeable" literally means "immutable, without any possibility of change or variance." It was commonly used in wills of that day. Once a will was entered into, it could *not* be altered by anyone other than the maker of that will.
- If this is true in a human court of law, how much more secure is it when God swears an oath by Himself? The guarantee can never be annulled.

- And the message (here in Hebrews) is that our salvation is so secure that *nothing* can ever alter it or take it away. Even we can't take it away because we are *not* the ones who secured it.
- Only God could ever alter it and He has given His word He will never do that. The "heirs of the promise" never have to worry about the security of their inheritance.
- By the way, under the surface (here) there are some *other* attributes of God that contribute to this assurance. There is the *eternality* of God – that God will be around to carry this out.
- There is the *omnipotence* of God – that He has absolute power to accomplish what has been promised. No power exists that can ever shake the fulfillment of God's promises to us.
- Well, I could say a lot more (at this point) but we need to move on (now) to the last element in this passage, and that is:

IV. THE PRIEST (vv. 19-20)

- Look with me at v. 19, "This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a *hope* both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil, where Jesus has entered as a forerunner for us, having become a

high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek."

- This brings us back to Melchizedek, but notice this incredible word of assurance. We have this eternal hope as an anchor for our souls. Nothing in this world can shake us because of our absolute guarantee of salvation!
- Quickly, notice some key terms here. The idea of the anchor is *not* explained, but it is commonly used to refer to something that is moored to an immovable object.
- He is going to explain to us in chapter 9 that this immovable object is the heavenly throne of God – the Holies of holies in heaven. Our hope is fixed there because Christ is seated there "at the right hand of the Majesty on high." We saw that in 1:3.
- The term "sure" means "certain" and the term "steadfast" means "secure." The anchor will never be moved. It is solidly secure forever.
- Notice, this "hope...enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain." That is a clear reference to the Holy of holies. That is where the mercy seat was, the place where the high priest sprinkled the blood of the sacrifice to atone for sin.
- This is obviously pointing to the finished work of Christ on our behalf. The anchor of our eternal

hope is based on that atoning work of Christ. We're going to see much more about that in this book. Because of Christ's atoning work on the cross, our anchored souls are already seen (in God's mind) as being secure within the veil (within His eternal sanctuary).

- And notice v. 20, "...where Jesus has entered as a forerunner for us..." The idea of the "forerunner" is that of someone who goes *before* us (on our behalf).
- F. F. Bruce says this points to "the sublime office of intercession above vested in the Eternal Priest...[as] the safeguard of his church and the earnest of her glorification."
- In contrast to the priest under the Old Covenant, who made the sacrifice year after year, and was only allowed to enter the Holy of holies briefly once a year – Christ entered the heavenly Holy of holies, after offering a once-for-all sacrifice, and "sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high."
- He "ever lives to make intercession for us" and His continued presence there assures that the promise of salvation will be kept. He is the "Guardian of our souls" in heaven.
- Here's the picture – Ron Phillips explains it this way: "The Greek word for "hope" is *elpis*. It means

an anchor rope. In past times in every harbor great stones were embedded in the ground near the water's edge. These served as moorings for the sailing vessels. Sometimes the ships could *not* make it to mooring under their own sail. In such cases a "*forerunner*" would go ashore in a small boat with a line which would be tied to the anchor rock. When the rope was fastened, those on the ship would pull the ship to shore with the anchor rope."

- Then he gives this conclusion: "Our Lord Jesus, the great forerunner, has gone into glory and tied the rope of our salvation to His throne. Though we cannot see that rope, it is tied firmly to the Rock of Ages. Thank God for the unseen certainty, our hope in Jesus Christ."
- We have an eternal Friend on the inside. He has gone before us and opened the door. He has split the veil and gained access for us into the eternal presence of God.
- What about you today? Do you have that anchor for your soul? Do you know the One who sits on that eternal throne? Is your salvation secure behind the veil? It can be.
- MAKE APPEAL
- PRAYER