

Hebrews 6: 13-20 "Don't Give Up Hope, God Is With Us"

Our writer has been encouraging these people, as the Holy Spirit is doing with us today, to consider our salvation and how God desires for us to go forward despite the many obstacles which would hinder our service unto the Lord or would tempt us to simply lay down and give up.

And as we ended last week we saw how we are to view our walk and the kind of attitude we must have to accomplish God's will in our lives, and the lives of others, as we are faithful to be used of God.

HEB 6:11-12 "We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure. 12 We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised."

Our patience can only be derived from the faith and trust we place in our Savior. To try and be patient with what God may be trying to accomplish in our lives, without trusting Him, is like trying to play a song on the piano having thrown the sheet music in the garbage. And we end up making it up as we go and then claim it's of God. Something's wrong with that tune.

God wants us to be able to sing a new song; His song according to His will. That new song is our new life in Christ. And for us to sing His praises He must be trusted in all things for the song to be heard and for the notes to be sweet as the world tastes and sees the love of Christ in us.

With trusting Christ comes the perseverance we will need from Him to continue to fight the good fight. Thus what we ended with last week in verses 11-12 are designed to help take our focus off of self and place it squarely on our God who gives us hope. With hope we will continue on the path. When our eyes are taken off of Christ hope fades and the path seems hard because we find ourselves walking it in our own strength.

But our writer wants us to understand that it's not as though others haven't had a hard path to follow and yet by God's grace, as they trusted the Lord, they were able to persevere to the end as they were patient to trust God, because they knew God is faithful. His point is that the same God who gave grace and strength to one

servant is the same God who gives grace and strength to all of His servants.

HEB 6:13-15 "When God made his promise to Abraham, since there was no one greater for him to swear by, he swore by himself, 14 saying, "I will surely bless you and give you many descendants." (Gen. 22:17) 15 And so after waiting patiently, Abraham received what was promised."

Our writer goes to back to a figure in history whom all Jews knew of and honored as the father of their nation. He was the stellar example of what it was to trust God in all things and to persevere to the end. But the focus here in our text is not really on Abraham as much as it is on God who made a promise to Abraham.

And what is interesting about this is the way God made this promise. He swore with an oath. Now, the reason this is so interesting is that God doesn't have to swear by oath to anything He does. His word is perfect, all His ways are just. And we'll see in a moment why He does this.

But first notice the way in which this oath is made. He swears by Himself. An oath or a vow is always made by calling upon someone higher in authority or power. The ancient pagans would enter into agreements with one another, and to bind their agreement they would call upon their gods as witnesses to their word and thus they were obligated to keep their word lest their gods would punish them for going back on their word.

The Israelites would do the same in many cases as they called upon the God of heaven to witness their transaction. But who does God call upon, higher than Himself, when He enters into a promise with an oath? No one. He can only swear by Himself, which is one of the reasons He's not obligated to make any oaths.

And yet He does. Now let's look quickly at the promise He made to Abraham.

HEB 6:14 saying, "I will surely bless you and give you many descendants."

If we were to go back to the place where God originally spoke this promise to Abraham we would find it in Gen.22:16. This promise was given right after Abraham was about to slay his son Isaac at the command of God.

GEN 22:16-18 "I swear by myself, declares the LORD, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, 17 I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, 18 and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me."

But remember the point of this quote in our text in Hebrews. It's in connection to faith and patience in the promises we receive from God. And this is why we read in HEB 6:15 "And so after waiting patiently, Abraham received what was promised."

Keep in mind that when our writer speaks of the patience of Abraham he wasn't talking about being patient for a few weeks, but to the very end. According to Gen.17:17 Abraham was 100 years old when God made the promise that he would have a child to his wife Sarah who was 90 years old. Of course that child was Isaac.

We know that Abraham, according to Gen.25:7, died when he was 175 years old. Abraham's perseverance was no small thing. For 75 years he looked forward to the fulfillment of the promise made to him by God. He stayed the course. He persevered to the end and yet we know that he personally did not see the promise fulfilled, in one sense.

Yes, he did dwell in the promised land and yes he did see his son born, but the seed of Abraham who would ultimately be a blessing to all nations didn't come in his lifetime, because the seed would come in Christ. But Abraham knew this, and he found that God really did fulfill His promise to him, in one sense, when he finally went home to be with God.

And yet, this same Abraham, like all of us who are in Christ, wait for the final fulfillment of this promise as we long for the hope we have when the kingdom of God will finally find its ultimate expression in the new heavens and the new earth, the same new earth Abraham longed for as we see later in this same book.

HEB 11:8-10 "By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. 9 By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him

of the same promise. 10 For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God."

Abraham had his eyes on the prize, which was not of this present cursed world, but of that future reality in a world devoid of the curse and sin that Peter speaks of.

2 Peter 3:13 ¹³ But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.

And this is what God calls us to do; keep our eyes on the prize, who is Christ. God has made a promise to Abraham and He confirmed it with an oath. That promise wasn't just for Abraham, but also to his seed. You and I are the spiritual seed of Abraham in Christ.

We have received the promise just like Abraham who received it by faith, but just like Abraham we should realize that the fulfillment of it is not in this world but when we see Christ face to face.

And with that great hope always set before us we should find our patience and perseverance in our Savior who is faithful to all of His promises to us.

Now our writer goes back to the concept of oaths and their importance and how they are used among men.

HEB 6:16 "Men swear by someone greater than themselves, and the oath confirms what is said and puts an end to all argument."

What he's saying here is that an oath is used to confirm the truthfulness of something without any doubt. It's supposed to completely settle the matter. And yet the reason men take oaths is precisely because their word many times cannot be trusted. And so they call upon another witness to stand for them in their word to hold them accountable.

And so what God is showing us is that because of the weakness of our flesh He will make a gesture toward us which will ensure the seriousness and yet the reliability of His word. And so He swears an oath.

HEB 6:17 "Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath."

Again, remember, God was not obligated to do this. He doesn't have to prove anything about His nature and His reliability. The fact that He exists as the Eternal Creator is sufficient proof that He is reliable.

By the way you'll notice in verse 17 that it speaks of the unchanging nature of His purpose. In the NAS it reads "to show the unchangeableness of His purpose." His purpose has always been the same from all of eternity. He didn't decide one day to create a redemptive plan for mankind after man sinned. The eternal counsel of God has always included a plan to redeem mankind. That has never changed with God and never will. We can be certain of our redemption in Christ.

This unchanging nature of His purpose is spoken of in a number of places. We read in EPH 1:9-10 "And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, 10 to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment - to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ."

That good pleasure which God purposed in Christ suggests that since Christ is God from all of eternity His purpose has existed from all of eternity. And as Paul says in Eph.1:10, he put it into effect when the times reached their fulfillment - "to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ."

We see this eternal plan of God in ACT 2:23 "This man was handed over to you by **God's set purpose and foreknowledge**; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross." All of this was determined by God from all of eternity.

Once again Paul points this out in TIT 1:1-3 "Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ for the faith of God's elect and the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness - 2 a faith and knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, **promised before the beginning of time**, 3 and at his appointed season he brought his word to light through the preaching entrusted to me by the command of God our Savior,"

And so when God says that He will show men the unchangeableness of His purpose, which is eternal in nature, "He interposed with an oath" as the NAS puts it. The word interposed there could also be translated guaranteed. He guaranteed with an oath that He is true to fulfill His promises to us in Christ.

Arthur W. Pink makes the comment: "It was to Christ that the original promise and oath were made. Hence, in Tit.1:2 we read, "In hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised before the world began": as [the elect] (men) were not then in existence, the promise must have been made to their Head (who is Christ). Concerning God's oath to Christ we read, "The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind: "You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek." (PSA 110:4)

This oath which God declared in Psalm 110 is referring to the promise and oath He made to the Son. And the whole point of this is to assure and encourage these believers to trust that God isn't some fly by night Savior. He has planned this out before any of them were even born.

His promises go back before this world was formed. His promises were made to the Son who is eternal and who willingly chose to be our Savior from eternity past. And our writer lifts the hearts of his readers as he continues in HEB 6:18 "God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope offered to us may be greatly encouraged."

There are two unchangeable things which we know to be true of God as it relates to our passage. They've both been mentioned. They are His promise and His oath. They are unchangeable. He cannot go back on His word and remain God. It's impossible for God to lie.

I've been in philosophical discussions with people who would suggest that God can't be God if there is anything that is impossible for Him to do. The argument is not valid. Because the answer clearly is that there are things which are impossible for God to do. He cannot deny Himself. He cannot change His nature or His attributes. He cannot lie. He cannot do anything which would violate any aspect of who He is.

And in saying that it is impossible for God to lie our writer then goes on to say, if God has promised that He will save us and keep us and protect us, and that He would drive this truth home with an oath, this should give us great encouragement. But only for those who have "fled for refuge in laying hold of the hope set before us" as the NAS puts it.

The imagery of one fleeing for refuge is not a coincidence as our writer is addressing Jews. A Jew would have immediately

understand this to coincide with the cities of refuge God provided for Israel.

A.W. Pink says, "Those cities are spoken of in Num.35, Deut.19, Josh.20. Those cities were built on high hills or mountains (Josh.20:7), that those seeking asylum there, might have no difficulty in keeping them in sight. So, the servants of Christ who hold Him up, are likened unto "a city which is set upon a hill" (Mat.5:14) They were a refuge from "the avenger of blood" (Josh.20:3) "flee from the wrath to come" (Mat.3:7) They had a causeway of stones approaching them as a path to guide them (Deut.19:3): so in the Gospel a way of approach is revealed unto Christ. Those who succeeded in entering these cities secured protection and safety (Num.35:15): so Christ has declared "him who comes unto Me I will in no way cast out" (Joh.6:37)

The analogies are abundant but Pink also makes it clear there are many stark contrasts. He say's, "let us not fail to note here the immeasurable superiority of Christianity over Judaism as seen in the vast difference between the refuge under the law, and that made known in the Gospel. The cities of refuge were only available for those who unintentionally killed a person. But we have been conscious, deliberate, lifelong rebels against God; nevertheless Christ say's, "Come unto Me all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest".

..... Again, the man-slayer in the city was safe, yet his very refuge was a prison: it is the very opposite with the believer -- Christ opened for Him the prison-door and set him at liberty (Isa.61:2), Christ makes free (Joh.8:36). Again, in entering the city of refuge he turned away from his inheritance, his land, and cattle; but the one who lays hold of Christ obtains an inheritance (1Pet.1:4). For the man-slayer to return to his inheritance meant death; for the Christian, death means going to his inheritance."

But as with the man-slayer, Pink points out that he must personally get up and go to the city as he recognizes his need for refuge. And this is what our writer of Hebrews makes clear as well. Fleeing to Christ, not away, is where we find encouragement as we lay hold of the hope set before us.

And this hope is something which will keep us rock steady as we rest on it.

HEB 6:19-20 "We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, 20

where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek."

If we understand the hope we have in Christ, even when the storms come, our hope doesn't have to be shaken, because our hope, who is Christ, is an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. We might get bounced around at times but when the anchor is set deep there's no moving it.

This is the imagery the Holy Spirit wants us to understand. He's saying that this should be our encouragement. God is the One who has become our anchor. He is the One who has promised with an oath that He will be for us and no one can be against us, because we are tied or united with Christ. He's the anchor who will not be moved.

It is this hope that is so united to the anchor (who is Christ) that it can actually enter into the inner sanctuary where our anchor and hope are found. This is what we read at the end of verses 19-20..... "It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, 20 where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek."

Remember, only the High priest could enter the inner sanctuary or the holy of holies in Israel on the Day of Atonement. Our writer is telling us that since the curtain has been torn in two by Christ's death and since He has risen from the dead we too can enter with Him.

In fact, the imagery here is that He brings us along since we are tied to Him. He goes before the Father as our representative. And we being tied to Him are given the same privilege to come into the Father's presence since Christ has made peace for us through His shed blood.

Our new relationship with God in Christ is one of peace and acceptance, and the encouragement we should gain from this is that this cannot be taken away. His unchangeable love for us is just that, unchangeable. Nothing can separate us from the love of Christ.

And Jesus has become the forerunner for us having become a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek. He went into the sanctuary before us and He brings us along to be with Him forever. It's at this point in this letter that our writer begins to resume where he left off in Heb.5:1-10, before he took this detour to get the

attention of these Hebrew Christians to get their eyes back on Christ and to live in the encouragement and joy of their salvation instead of getting caught up in the cares of this life.

This is certainly an area every Christian in our age must come to grips with as well, because quite honestly there are many ways in which we can be swayed to look away from our Savior as we're tempted to become like the church of Laodicea found in Revelation, which turned out to be lukewarm.

Their anchor was not firmly planted because their anchor was something other than Christ. As a result their hope had been affected. And as I said earlier, when your hope dims, the zeal does as well.

But even as Christ did with the church at Laodicea, He does with the church at large today as well where He says, REV 3:20-22 "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me. 21 To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne. 22 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

This is our hope. This is our encouragement. This is the reason for us to persevere with patience because Jesus is the One at the door saying, 'one more step, I'm right here for you.'

It's so important for all of us to see ourselves as ones who have, as an anchor, Jesus Christ the faithful one, the One in whom we find all of our hope. David put it this way in PSA 130:7 "O Israel, put your hope in the LORD, for with the LORD is unfailing love and with him is full redemption."

They had gone in a way where their hope was misplaced. But the answer is always the same. "Put your hope in the LORD, for with the LORD is unfailing love and with him is full redemption."

Jesus is our High Priest forever. Forever for you and me in Christ starts today. Our hope will never end, but our Lord wants us to take this hope to the end of this world so that this world may see us as ones who have trusted Him, and in so doing, see us as lights set on a hill to draw all men unto Himself as he lives in and through us.

Abraham believed God and it was reckoned to Him as righteousness. But Abraham's faith and hope followed God and

trusted Him for all things. This is what the writer of Hebrews wants us to do as well.

Abraham knew where his strength came from and he knew wherever God lead him was okay. The apostle Paul also knew this same hope and he can encourage us with these words found in ROM 15:13 "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."