

The Trustworthiness of God to Save Eternally

By David Harrell

Bible Text: Hebrews 6:13-20
Preached on: Sunday, February 12, 2017

It is once again my great joy to open up the word of God to you this morning and I hope that you will never take it for granted what we are about to do is something that millions of people around the world would long to be able to do. I hope you realize that there are underground churches around the world that would crave the opportunity to hear the word of God taught to them. There are millions of people that would give anything if they could have just one page of the Bible. For many people, the Bible is their most treasured possession. In fact, the church is growing in North Korea where people would be tortured and killed if they were caught with the Bible. I am told that little groups of three sometimes four will hide together in places where nobody can see them and they will whisper as they sing songs to the Lord. So, folks, let's don't take what we're doing now for granted.

Take your Bibles and turn to Hebrews 6 as we continue to make our way through this amazing epistle and this morning I've entitled my discourse to you "The Trustworthiness of God." Let me give you some background here so that you understand what is going on here in this particular section of Scripture. The text before us is really a continuation of a very specific argument concerning the trustworthiness of God in Christ to perfectly save and protect all who place their trust in Christ as Savior and Lord and this was a very difficult thing for the Jewish people of that day to do. In fact, it's a very difficult thing for them to do today.

The idea of trusting in the finished work of the son of a Nazarene carpenter who claimed to be the Son of God was just inconceivable to them. He was not what they pictured as their Messiah. Despite the signs and wonders that they witnessed from his hands which were beyond dispute, despite all of that they could not imagine their Messiah dying some ignominious death on a Roman cross. That was just not part of their narrative. They expected a conquering King, not a suffering Savior. And as the writer indicated earlier in chapter 6, many of them had personally benefited from Jesus' earthly ministry, their minds had been enlightened to the truth of their sin in the Savior, and the blessings of the new covenant promises in Christ; they were given the privilege of being in the company of the Holy Spirit as they witnessed all the miracles and signs and wonders; they were able to, at some level, taste some of the heavenly gifts that had been made available to them; some of them, no doubt, literally tasted some of the fish and the bread that Jesus had created; some of them may have even been healed by Jesus or their family members or friends healed by Jesus. They had a taste of the magnificent blessings of the messianic kingdom but many of them simply could not bring themselves to trust God exclusively

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with his provision of grace in Christ. Instead they wanted to hang on to Judaism. They foolishly believed that somehow they in themselves could contribute to their salvation by keeping the law, so they kept clinging to the old covenant of works instead of embracing the new covenant of grace. And of course, this would also help them in their struggle against persecution that they were experiencing from family members and friends simply because they were even entertaining the idea of breaking from Judaism and going to Christianity.

So bottom line, they simply would not trust God and from the outset, I might say that perhaps some of you struggle with a similar crisis of faith. Some of you probably just don't take God at his word with respect to what he says about your sin and the Savior. Some of you don't believe him when he says that your depravity is so radical that you stand condemned before his holy bar of justice; that all that you are and all that you do is fundamentally offensive to a holy God. You say, "You know, I'm just not that bad." So as a result, you are indifferent to the Gospel, maybe even hostile to it. Like those early Hebrew people, you simply did not believe God. You just don't find him to be trustworthy so you live for yourself or you try to impress God with good works and religious activities, but in the middle of the night when all is quiet, your conscience is nagging you with a horrifying thought and that thought is, "What if God isn't all that impressed? What if I don't make the cut? What if he is far more holy than I can ever imagine and I am far more sinful than I could ever imagine? What if I am guilty and condemned, a rejecter of God's provision of salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone?"

Well, dear friends, this was precisely the kind of struggle that was going on in the hearts and minds of some of those dear Jewish people, some of whom had superficially attached themselves to the church but they had not fully committed themselves to Christ. It is for this reason they were unable, as the writer stated in verse 11, to realize the full assurance of hope until the end. Obviously that's impossible when you're trusting in yourself. So the inspired writer is dealing with both saving grace and sustaining grace, if you will, God's ability to keep us internally secure because of his unchangeable purposes.

Now, think with me before we go into the text: what would it be like if we had a God that changed his mind? Have you ever thought about that? What if we had a God that didn't keep his promises and he would whimsically decide to do things differently? You know, if that were the case, his revelation to us in Scripture would be nothing more than fake news and, boy, we're all familiar with fake news these days, aren't we? It would be worthless. The Gospel of Jesus Christ would be the greatest fraud ever perpetrated upon humanity because we couldn't trust God. But what we have before us in our text this morning is the Holy Spirit providing a clear demonstration of the unchanging nature and purpose of God and the guarantee that he has given us. And folks, I have to say this is one

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of the most reassuring, comforting, encouraging passages in all of Scripture. This is an opportunity where we can see more clearly God's faithfulness.

Now, let me give you the context here because this is real important and sometimes we lose the flow when we come Sunday after Sunday, and unfortunately I wasn't able to be with you last Sunday, but the whole argument of the epistle to the Hebrews is to present the supremacy of Christ and the superiority of the new covenant which, according to God's perfect and eternal plan, superseded the old covenant, and that was the hard pill that the Jews had to swallow. So the writer here presents a very clear and compelling series of arguments concerning these matters, all the way up to chapter 5 and verse 10, and he puts on the brakes at that point. There, you remember, he started to explain the high priestly nature of Christ, verse 10, "being designated by God as a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek. Concerning him," that is, concerning the glorious truths of the regal office and priesthood of Melchizedek and how all of that is pictured now of being completely fulfilled in Christ, "Concerning him we have much to say, and it is hard to explain," and here's why, "since you have become dull of hearing." And he goes on to explain, or I should say expose, how they refused to leave the foundational doctrines of Judaism: repentance from dead works, faith toward God at the exclusion of Jesus Christ, instructions about washings, the laying on of hands so you could be identified with your sacrifice and so forth, and how they neglected all of the opportunities to embrace a Christ and he listed five of them in verses 4 through 6 of chapter 6.

So what we have from chapter 5 in verse 10 all the way through the end of chapter 6 where we are today, is frankly a digression. A digression where the writer confronts these borderline unbelievers concerning their refusal to wholeheartedly embrace Christ and leave Judaism once and for all. And now in verses 13 through 20 that we are going to look at here in a moment, he sets the stage for returning to his original argument as it relates to Christ fulfilling the regal office and priesthood of Melchizedek and he's going to go on to explain that in great detail in chapter 7 through 10.

So you can think of it this way: you could go back to chapter 5 and verse 10 and jump immediately to verse 1 of chapter 7 and go all the way through chapter 10 and you would see how all of that fits together. All of the things between that was a digression and that's a fascinating journey that we will embark upon, Lord willing, beginning next week, especially details pertaining to the ancient tabernacle and the priestly functions, all of the Old Testament symbols and types that pointed to Christ. And he's going to do all of this for a fundamental reason that I want you to remember: he wants to explain to them why Jesus had to die. That's where he's going and therefore why you must trust God in order to be saved. I can't wait to take you on that journey.

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But first the writer gives the reader a preview of coming attractions here in verses 13 through 20. So let me read the text this morning beginning in verse 13 of Hebrews 6.

13 For when God made the promise to Abraham, since He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, 14 saying, "I will surely bless you and I will surely multiply you." 15 And so, having patiently waited, he obtained the promise. 16 For men swear by one greater than themselves, and with them an oath given as confirmation is an end of every dispute. 17 In the same way God, desiring even more to show to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His purpose, interposed with an oath, 18 so that by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have taken refuge would have strong encouragement to take hold of the hope set before us. 19 This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil, 20 where Jesus has entered as a forerunner for us, having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

Now, I wish to examine this passage under four headings, four reasons why they should trust in God's ability to perfectly and eternally save all who put their faith in the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. They should do so because of four things. 1. Because of the integrity of his holy character; secondly, the inevitability of his eternal plan; thirdly, the infallibility of his solemn word; and finally, the intermediation of his beloved Son. And I pray that each of you, especially you dear young people, I pray that you will pay very close attention to what the Holy Spirit has to say because the truths that you are about to hear unpacked for you are of eternal significance, the greatest truths in all of the world. And the reason for that is because these are the words of our eternal, omnipotent, sovereign and holy God given to all who have ears to hear, and I hope you have ears to hear this morning.

So, why should we trust God to perfectly save us and sustain us? 1. Because of the integrity of his holy character. Verses 13 through 15, let me read that for you again, "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.' And so, having patiently waited, he obtained the promise." Now, if you can bear with me for a moment, I want to give you some important historical background that will help you see the flow of what the Holy Spirit is communicating here.

After the fall of man in the garden in Genesis 3:15, we read about a deliverer that was promised to descend from the seed of Eve, one that would someday defeat the serpent and all who belonged to him. Then you move on according to Genesis 5, we see that

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Adam lived 930 years. Can you imagine living that long, watching all of the sin and the wickedness? That would not have necessarily been a blessing. And one of his descendants was a man named Enoch. In fact, he lived when Adam was still alive into the seventh generation. So Enoch would have had a firsthand account of creation, of the garden, of Cain and Abel and so forth, and he would have passed it on to his son whose name was Methuselah. And Methuselah would have passed it on to Noah. In fact, Methuselah overlapped Adam by 200 years and Noah for 600 years therefore there would be one man that bridges Adam all the way to Noah. And Noah overlapped his son Shem for 400 years. And Abraham then comes along and he died before Shem so Shem would have given Abraham a firsthand account, for example, of the flood. In fact, Shem even lived through Isaac and Jacob. But Abraham, whose original name was Abram, was raised as a pagan idol worshiper in Ur, an ancient Chaldean city of Mesopotamia, probably in the region today that we know as Kuwait. And little did Abram know at that time that God had a plan for him, a plan that was decreed in eternity past, a plan that could never be thwarted. God had a predetermined plan to give Abraham the gift of faith and through him bring the blessing of salvation to countless millions.

Now, why did he choose Abraham? Why did he set his special covenantal love upon Abraham's descendants, the Jewish people? Because he wanted to. It's as simple as that. Not through any merit of their own. They were chosen solely on the basis of his un-influenced sovereign will. In fact, in Deuteronomy 7, beginning in verse 7, we read, "The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but because the LORD loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers." So God spoke to Abram and commanded him first to go to Haran and then later to Canaan. Imagine if you came in, guys, and told your wife, "Honey, let's pack up everything," and by the way, Abraham had a lot. He had a big family, lots of things, "Honey, pack up. God has told me we're going somewhere." "Where are we going?" "I don't know but I'm going to trust him." Well, that's what happened. Hebrews 11:8, the Spirit of God says, "By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going."

Then around 2100 BC, which would be a little over 4,000 years ago, God made an unconditional, irreversible and unilateral covenant with Abraham. We read about it in Genesis 12 and Genesis 15. And these were promises that did not depend upon the faithfulness of Abraham or his descendants but upon God himself. God made a promise to bless his family, to be his witness people. He promised that he would give him a seed, that from his loins a Savior would eventually come. He promised to give him a land, a specific geographic territory that would be set apart by God for his people where he would eventually dwell with them in Edenic splendor in the millennial reign. He

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promised them a great nation, that they would become a great nation, a witness nation where the world would be blessed by them. And also a promise of divine blessing and protection. And in Genesis 15:6 we read, "Then he believed in the LORD; and [God] reckoned it to him as righteousness."

But what is fascinating is what happened when God made that actual covenant with Abraham. We read about it in Genesis 15. Let me just read the story to you briefly here, beginning in verse 8. "He said, 'O Lord GOD, how may I know that I will possess it?' So He said to him, 'Bring Me a three year old heifer, and a three year old female goat, and a three year old ram, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon.' ... The birds of prey came down upon the carcasses, and Abram drove them away... Then he brought all these to Him and cut them in two, and laid each half opposite the other; but he did not cut the birds. Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and behold, terror and great darkness fell upon him. God said to Abram, 'Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years. But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve, and afterward they will come out with many possessions. As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you will be buried at a good old age. Then in the fourth generation they will return here, for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete.'" By the way, all of that previewed the Egyptian bondage, the exodus and the conquest later on. Verse 17, "It came about when the sun had set, that it was very dark, and behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a flaming torch which passed between these pieces. On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, 'To your descendants I have given this land, From the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates.'"

Now, normally when such a covenant was made in those days, both parties would walk between the severed animals, symbolic of the twofold nature of the covenant. Two parties would walk between one sacrifice, typifying their pledge to unity, and perhaps even symbolizing what should happen to one of them were they to violate the promise. But here God alone passed between the pieces. It's amazing, isn't it, to think that here the Lord of glory himself descended and entered into a covenant with Abram and he wasn't even allowed to pass between the sacrifices, therefore he was not bound to anything. There was no mutual obligation to fulfill the conditions of the covenant. In fact, Abraham had no input in determining or fulfilling those conditions. Interestingly enough, he wasn't even a witness to it. All of it was determined, all of it was fulfilled and sealed by God alone. So all of the obligations fell on God because the covenant was made not between God and Abraham, but between God and himself. So what we see is that God himself, I should say God bound himself to his promise that through Abraham the entire world would be blessed and so forth. And what a magnificent reminder this must have been to those Jewish people, that Jewish audience, when they first heard this epistle read to them,

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that God had an internal plan that he had set into motion. They could look back and see how he had fulfilled it perfectly all the way back to Abraham.

Now, back to the argument here in Hebrews 6. Remember now, to the Jews Abraham was the greatest example of faith. He was the father of faith, the model of faith. In fact, Paul elaborates upon this in Romans 4, as you may recall. In fact, Abraham trusted God so much that he was willing to sacrifice his son which would have, humanly speaking, destroyed an opportunity for the fulfillment of the covenant blessings that God had given him. So the writer of Hebrews is arguing that, "You too should have faith like Abraham had; that you too should patiently wait for the fulfillment of all of God's promises made available to you through faith in his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ." Moreover he is saying, "Even as God secured the promise to Abraham by the integrity of his own character, likewise God himself secures the promises of eternal life to everyone who trusts in his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ."

So you should trust him because of the integrity of his character, but also the inevitability, number 2, of his eternal plan. Notice in verse 14, he promised, "I will surely bless you and I will surely multiply you." And my, how they multiplied into the millions. You will recall later on, and it would have been about 1445 BC, God made that family into a nation, the Israelites, and he gave them his law through Moses to demonstrate the righteous standard of God and help them understand why they would need a Savior. And as his plan unfolded in history, about 1000 BC, a little bit later, he made another promise to one of Abraham's descendants, to David, and he promised him that there would be an eternal kingdom whereby David's throne would ultimately belong to his descendant, the greater son of David, the Lord Jesus. Then about 600 BC, he gave Abraham's descendants a fourth promise, that of a new covenant that was to come, a new covenant of redemption. We read about it in Jeremiah 31 whereby through Israel God's very Son would purchase their redemption and restore them to their land and so forth. And as promised, the Messiah came in the person of Christ, but when he came, they rejected him, so God temporarily set them aside as a nation. He judged them severely and all of this was according to his plan. None of this surprised God. Then God created a mystical body, the bride of Christ, the New Testament church made up predominantly by Gentiles, and he commissioned the church then to become the new custodians of divine truth, and we now live in that dispensation of history.

Let me digress for a moment. At the end of the church age, we know that God is going to remove his bridal church from the earth and, once again, he is going to turn his attention to national ethnic Israel, those branches that have been broken off, and then he is going to save them en masse, a remnant of Israel. So God's elected purposes for his covenant people found in the Old Testament will be fulfilled in the salvation of many individual

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Jews, but also in national and territorial terms in the messianic age. So you must understand, at least I believe on the basis of Scripture, that the Jewish rejection of their Messiah did not nullify the unilateral, unconditional, irreversible covenants that God made to Abraham and David concerning the establishment of his messianic kingdom. Their rejection of their Messiah only postponed it.

So to be sure, the church shares in the promises of Israel but not in her identity as a chosen nation whom Paul described in Romans 11:16-24 as the natural branches from a "cultivated olive tree," some of which have now been broken off for the present time due to a "hardening of heart," and there you will recall that Paul reminds us that the Gentile church, that we as Gentiles, we are the wild olive branches that have been grafted into the rich root of Abrahamic covenantal blessing, the covenant privileges originally promised to Abraham. And indeed, the church shares in the promises with Israel but never takes her place as a nation. And despite their rebellion, we see that God has never abandoned his chosen people, even though many of them today hate him, because God does not change his mind. God is faithful to his covenant promises.

So indeed, back to our text in verse 14, he is fulfilling what he promised, "I will surely bless you and I will surely multiply you." And of course, the ultimate fulfillment of that promise can be seen in the person and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ who ultimately came from the loins of Abraham and Jesus himself said, "Salvation is from the Jews," John 4:22. By the way, is it any wonder why historically the Jewish people have been the most hated people on the planet? And as Gentiles, we have been grafted into the rich root of Abrahamic covenantal blessing through faith in Christ. Romans 11 is filled with all of those truths. So all of the promises of the kingdom on earth and in heaven belong to the redeemed and now when we compare God's promises with what has happened over the course of history, only a fool could deny the inevitability of God's plan of redemption, a plan to create an eternity past that God might bring glory unto himself in eternity future. And the promise to all who place their trust in Christ as Savior is therefore as secure as God himself. Isaiah says in chapter 14, verse 24, "Surely, just as I have intended so it has happened, and just as I have planned so it will stand."

This is so profoundly comforting to me. Let me back away from the text for just a moment. You know, we live in a world where we just can't trust anything, unless it's on the internet, right? I mean, I hear people say the most absurd things. "Where did you hear that?" "Oh, I read it on the internet." "Oh, really." And of course, we can't trust the media anymore. We get all this fake news and they twist and distort things and lead you to believe things that are a lie. We can't trust our elected officials for the most part. We can't trust our judges to uphold the laws of the land. And most preachers today are unwitting purveyors of false doctrine. In fact, much of what you see on Christian television is little

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more than a religious version of world wrestling, the only difference is the charlatans make a whole lot more money and they draw far bigger crowds. But folks, we can trust God who, according to James 1:17, "with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow." He goes on to say, "In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we might be, as it were, the first fruits among His creatures." In other words, the first installment of God's new creation that is to come.

So isn't it comforting to know that God will never say, "You now, I need to make some adjustments to my plan because my plan just isn't working very well"? Aren't you glad he will never say that? No. According to the Psalmist in Psalm 33:11, "The counsel of the LORD stands forever." God has a predetermined plan. He has a purpose. It is for this reason God has never said nor will he ever say, "You know, I need to make my will subject to the will of man." Boy, that would be a horrific mistake, wouldn't it? We are told that, "salvation does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs," in other words, it doesn't depend upon human effort, "but on God who has mercy," Romans 9:16. Ephesians 1:11, "we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to," here it is, "His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will." Not our will.

So the writer is arguing here that you must trust in God's provision of this new covenant because of the integrity of his holy character, because of the inevitability of his eternal plan but, thirdly, because of the infallibility of his solemn word. Notice verse 16, he says, "For men," human beings, "swear by one greater than themselves, and with them an oath given as confirmation is an end of every dispute." Let me explain this. It was customary in those days among the ancient Jewish people to make an oath. I may even add that many people do that today even in our culture. They would make an oath, a promise that they would never violate the covenant that they were making. And they would do this by swearing upon something greater than themselves, maybe swearing on Abraham, "I swear on Moses or I swear on the altar, or ultimately, I swear on God himself." In other words, God is asked to be their witness to the commitment and be the one who would presumably punish them were they to violate that commitment and therefore misuse his name. And once a person had made such a solemn promise, that was the end of the dispute. That was like, "Okay. Good. Done."

In verse 17 then with that background, we understand what he goes on to say, "In the same way God, desiring even more to show to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His purpose, interposed with an oath." And of course, what is his purpose? His purpose is his sovereign will of decree as it relates to his plan of redemption to save sinners.

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Now, it wasn't necessary for God to make an oath because his word and his will are synonymous, but he did this to demonstrate to Abraham and to all of us in ways that we could understand, that he would indeed fulfill the obligations of his promise. And I might add that there is every reason to believe that God's oath, in other words his pledge of guarantee, includes a reference to the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. The reason I would say that, we read in 2 Corinthians 1, beginning in verse 21, "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." He says essentially the same thing in chapter 5, verse 5. In fact, in modern Greek, the term "arrabon," translated "pledge," means "engagement ring" or "a promise to marry." Similarly in Ephesians 1, beginning in verse 13, Paul says, "In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation - having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory."

Now back to our text in Hebrews 6:17. The writer is saying essentially this, "Folks, in order to prove to you that your salvation is perfect, it is eternally secure, God made an oath unto himself." Verse 18, "so that by two unchangeable things," and of course, the two unchangeable things would be 1, his promise; and number 2, his oath which is his guarantee, "so that by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have taken refuge would have strong encouragement to take hold of the hope set before us." It's interesting, the Greek term translated "unchangeable" was used to describe a legal will that could not be changed by anyone except the person who made it originally. So the point is simply this: God who cannot lie has made a promise and an oath so that the heirs of promise, those of us saved by his grace, can be assured that he will never change his mind about them.

Folks, our salvation is eternally secure. All through Scripture we read about this. We know that he will never even allow our own sin or stupidity to cause us to apostatize. You see, he is the one that caused us to be born again, right? You didn't contribute to that. I didn't contribute to that. He is the one that caused that to happen and he is the one who will preserve us in that state forever because salvation is never up to us. It is solely and eternally up to the one who is unchangeable in his purpose. Child of God, don't miss this. In fact, it baffles me to see how so many people miss this. We are heirs of the promise and God has promised to save and secure us eternally, and in order to show us the unchangeableness of his purpose, he made an oath unto himself, a pledge that is so real, it is so powerful, that it actually dwells within us in the person of the Holy Spirit, an ever present supernatural seal that helps us realize that we belong to him forever.

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So folks, to say that a man who is genuinely born again could lose his salvation, literally impugns the very character of God and the securing work of the Holy Spirit. How sad it is to see believers who take these incredible truths for granted, who deny the sovereignty of God in salvation and somehow believe that they are heirs of themselves rather than heirs of the promise and pledge of God who cannot lie. And what I have discovered is when they believe these types of things, they are ultimately trusting in themselves. And as I have dealt with them over the years, they tend to view God in a very distorted way. They view God the Father as kind of a harsh Father who is standing in the doorway and he's kind of got a scowl on his face, shaking his head, tapping his toe, just disgusted because of their sin, because they're just not living up to what they need to live up to. As if God is always on the verge of saying, "I have had it with you! You are not keeping your end of the bargain." Right? "You have violated the covenant. Get outta here." That's how they live their life, many people, and then they say to themselves, "Oh no, please God, I promise I'll never do it again! I'll do better!" Then they go out looking for some more religious hoops to jump through that will impress God enough so that he won't change his mind about them.

Dear Christian, if you have ever truly placed your faith in Christ, God has saved you and he will never change his mind about you. Can't you see this here? In fact, his mind was made up before the foundations of the world when he wrote your name in the Lamb's book of life. And to prove to you that your salvation is secure in him, he made an oath to himself. What more can he do? How can people miss this?

Verse 18, "so that by two unchangeable things," again, his promise and his pledge, "in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have taken refuge would have strong encouragement to take hold of the hope set before us." And what had those early Hebrew Christians taken refuge from? Well, the answer would be the same things from which we have fled, right? We have fled from the wrath of a holy God because of our sin. We have fled from the wickedness of Satan's world system that is in opposition to God and all who belong to him. We have fled from the heartbreaking pain and persecution that can rob us of our joy and even life itself. We have run to God, away from the slavery of sin and the power of the flesh to be seduced by it. He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, Colossians 1:13.

Therefore we who are heirs of promise, that would be everybody that knows Christ, you simply must know this: because of God's unalterable unchangeable promise and his personal pledge, we who have taken refuge in his saving grace have, back to verse 18, strong, what? Encouragement. We have strong encouragement to take hold of the hope set before us. Can't you see how the writer is longing for them to experience this kind of assurance as I long for it for each of you.

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The Trustworthiness of God to Save Eternally

By David Harrell

Bible Text: Hebrews 6:13-20
Preached on: Sunday, February 12, 2017

Then he says this, "This hope we have as an anchor of the soul." And of course, the hope is a reference here to the finished work of Christ. In fact, Paul speaks of his Savior as Christ Jesus who is our hope, 1 Timothy 1:1. So in other words, Christ is 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." And then that fascinating concept he is going on to explain through chapter 7 through 10.

So he's saying this: like Abraham, God wants you and he wants all of us, to trust in him because of the integrity of his holy character, because of the inevitability of his eternal plan, the infallibility of his solemn word, and finally, because of the intermediation of his beloved Son. Intermediation means the act of coming between or intervening for the purpose of bringing about a settlement.

And folks, verses 19 and 20 really should be highlighted in every Bible and inscribed on the heart of every believer. What precious words, "This hope we have as an anchor of the soul." An anchor is such a powerful metaphor, isn't it? We've all seen anchors used by small boats up to large ships where they would have heavy iron weights often with large hooks attached to a vessel with a heavy chain in order to prevent that vessel from drifting. Rock climbers use anchors. They drive them into the side of a cliff in order to hold their carabiners and their robes and so forth to hold him fast, keep them from falling.

As I was thinking about Christ being an anchor, it's funny how sometimes vivid memories come to your mind when you are meditating upon the word, and I remember the first time I went repelling over a 200 foot cliff. That was probably not the wisest thing to do to start with one that big. In fact, the last 100 feet, the cliff went in and it was just a sheer freefall. Well, I thought, you know, I'm a tough guy. I can do this. I was probably in my early twenties. Of course, you're invincible at that age, right? And I remember getting all harnessed up and finally backing off and leaning back on the rope over the cliff and suddenly everything in me said, "What are you doing?" And I remember kind of looking between my legs and it was just a blur. And there was just sheer panic there for a moment and I had not experienced that I don't think in my life, and the first thing I thought is, "Can I trust this rope? And is it anchored securely?" And a friend of mine who was an older old Marine that was teaching me, he said, "Dave, the rope is wrapped around that giant oak tree right over there. It is anchored securely, and if it was going to break, it would have already done so." And with that, I took off and went over the cliff.

Dear friend, the only anchor we can count on to keep us eternally safe and secure is our hope in the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul described this in Colossians 1:23

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saying that our faith is "firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel." Isn't that a great verse? Now, wouldn't this have been just so profoundly encouraging to those Jewish people? Again, think of all the persecution they were experiencing, like gale force winds trying to rip them from their moorings, the moorings of their faith. They are filled with doubt and discouragement, maybe even despair. And it's so important for us to realize that if we think for one moment that we are capable of preventing the forces of this world and even our own flesh from moving us away from the object of our faith, we are sorely mistaken. You see, God has made it clear that he alone is the one who provides the sure and steadfast anchor of the soul in the person and the work of Christ and the pledge of the indwelling work of the Holy Spirit.

And notice he says, "a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil." This is a reference they would have so clearly understood. Let me give you just a little background as we begin to wrap it up this morning. Down through the centuries, the Jewish people watched the high priest go behind the veil into the holy place once a year on the day of atonement, go behind the veil to make a sacrifice for the sins of the people. But now under the new covenant, the sacrifice of our great high priest, the Lord Jesus Christ, is the perfect and final sacrifice. Notice it says he is our forerunner, that means one who enters into a place on someone else's behalf. He is our forerunner and, folks, he not only entered into the most holy place, remember the high priest could only go in for a short period of time and then he had to get out, he not only entered into the most holy place, he remains there today.

Verse 20, "Jesus has entered as a forerunner for us, having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek." You see, folks, Christ has entered into the heavenly Holy of Holies and he has now sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, and what does he do there for us? He intercedes on our behalf, on behalf of all that the Father has given him. In fact, later on the writer of Hebrews will say in chapter 9, verse 15, "He is the mediator of a new covenant, so that, since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were committed under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance."

Oh, child of God, our salvation is eternally secure because of the intermediation of our blessed Savior. He is our guarantee, the mediator of a better covenant, a concept that the writer is going to go on to explain in chapter 7 through 10.

So this brings us to the end of chapter 6. Lots of information. And I find it so ironic, maybe you do too, to think that so many people will use a couple of passages out of this great chapter to argue against God's ability to save perfectly and eternally when, in fact,

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this chapter teaches just the opposite. Aren't you thankful that we have a sure and steadfast hope? What a profound encouragement.

Can I challenge you with this as we leave this morning, something that I hope will be practical for you: remember these great truths when you feel as though God for whatever reason has kind of abandoned you, where you feel distance from him, when you wonder maybe even if you've lost your salvation, when temptation is strong, when personal sin drives you to maybe legitimate guilt but illegitimate despair because, dear friends, our hope is the antithesis of despair. Remember because of God's promise, because of his pledge, you have a hope that is steadfast and sure. Our hope is not in ourselves, it is in Jesus who has entered behind the veil on our behalf. Amen. Great truths.

Let's pray together.

Father, thank you for your word that brings such clarity, it brings conviction, it brings encouragement but, Lord, how it brings hope to our hearts. I pray that by the power of your Spirit what we have examined here this morning may fortify the faith that is ours by your grace. For it is in Christ's name that I pray. Amen.