

“God’s Covenant Promise”  
Hebrews 6:13-20  
(Preached at Trinity, April 14, 2024)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

**Disclaimer:** These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citation will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As I’ve pointed out often, the context of the Book of Hebrews surrounds a church that is largely comprised of Christians converted out of Judaism. The Jewish community was hostile to these converts. They were shunned and despised. Many lost their property and their means of providing for their families.
2. In addition, the author was concerned about their immaturity, their failure to make progress in the faith. At the beginning of this chapter he reminds them of the dreadful consequences for those who fall away.  
After the stern warning, the author offers a word of encouragement and hope:  
**Hebrews 6:9 NAU** - "But, beloved, we are convinced of better things concerning you, and things that accompany salvation, though we are speaking in this way."
3. He speaks to them tenderly, pastorally. He calls them “beloved.” Although they were not making good progress in the faith, there was still evidence of fruit. There was still evidence that their salvation was genuine. They were engaged in works of faith. They were showing love and compassion towards their brethren who were suffering.
4. Last time we looked at some of the benefits of good works, benefits that increase our assurance and trust in the promises of God.  
He writes in **Verse 11:**  
**Hebrews 6:11 NAU** - "show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end,"
5. The author reminds us that our works of faith help keep us from becoming stagnant in our Christian life.  
**Hebrews 6:12 NAU** - "so that you will not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises."
  - A. Remember, one of their problems was they had become dull of hearing.  
**Hebrews 5:11 NAU** - "Concerning him we have much to say, and *it is* hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing."
  - B. The word for “sluggish” in **Verse 12** is the same word translated “dull” in Chap. 5  
Spiritual sloth results in spiritual deafness.
6. The author then reminds them of the importance of looking to the example of others who have lived the life of faith. The word for “imitators” is where we get our word “mimic.”  
**Hebrews 6:12 NAU** - "so that you will not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises."  
**Hebrews 12:1 NAU** - "Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,"

7. Particularly, the author pressed them to imitate those who through faith and patience held tenaciously to God's covenant promises.  
 "those who through faith and patience inherit the promises."  
 There is no greater example than the father of our faith, Abraham.  
**Romans 4:18-22 NAU** - "In hope against hope he believed, in order that he might become a father of many nations, according to that which had been spoken, "So shall your descendants be." <sup>19</sup> And without becoming weak in faith he contemplated his own body, now as good as dead since he was about a hundred years old, and the deadness of Sarah's womb; <sup>20</sup> yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief, but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God, <sup>21</sup> and being fully assured that what He had promised, He was able also to perform. <sup>22</sup> Therefore also it was reckoned to him as righteousness."
8. Abraham's faith is our faith. He believed the unwavering promise of God. He was the heir of God's promise, and so are we.  
**Galatians 3:29 NAU** - "And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise."
9. God's redemptive purpose has been revealed progressively through His covenants. In the eternal Covenant of Redemption God elected a people, gave them to His Son who would come to earth as their Redeemer, and the Holy Spirit would apply God's redeeming grace through the Gospel.  
 God has worked out His eternal Covenant of Redemption through a series of historical covenants, each progressively revealing His eternal purpose of redemption finding ultimate fulfillment in Christ.
10. Are you holding firmly and confidently unto the promises of God?  
 Is this the basis of your hope? Is it the anchor of your soul?  
**Hebrews 6:19 NAU** - "This hope we have as an anchor of the soul"  
 Kent Hughes writes: "No ancient or modern sailor who knows what can happen during an ocean voyage would go to sea in a ship that carried no anchor, even today and even if the ship were the greatest and most modern vessel afloat. Every sailor knows that situations might arise when the hope of the ship and all her company will depend not on the captain, the crew, the engines, the compass, or the rudder, but on the anchor. When all else fails, there is hope in the anchor."<sup>1</sup>
11. What is the basis of your hope? What is the essence of your assurance? What is the anchor of your soul? What keeps you pressing on in confident joy?  
 We read here in **Verses 13-14**  
**Hebrews 6:13-14 NAU** - "For when God made the promise to Abraham, since He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, <sup>14</sup> saying, "I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply you."  
 A. Abraham trusted the promise of God. It was the promise of God's Redeemer.  
 How much did Abraham know and understand of this promise?  
**Galatians 3:16 NAU** - "Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, "And to seeds," as *referring* to many, but *rather* to one, "And to your seed," that is, Christ."

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<sup>1</sup> R. Kent Hughes, *Hebrews: An Anchor for the Soul*, vol. 2, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1993), 33.

- B. God gave Abraham the promise of innumerable descendants and a land.  
**Genesis 12:1-3 NAU** - "Go forth from your country, And from your relatives And from your father's house, To the land which I will show you; <sup>2</sup> And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing; <sup>3</sup> And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed."  
**Genesis 13:14-16 NAU** - "The LORD said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him, "Now lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward; <sup>15</sup> for all the land which you see, I will give it to you and to your descendants forever. <sup>16</sup> "I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth, so that if anyone can number the dust of the earth, then your descendants can also be numbered."  
**Genesis 15:5-7 NAU** - "He took him outside and said, "Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be." <sup>6</sup> Then he believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness. <sup>7</sup> And He said to him, "I am the LORD who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to possess it."  
**Genesis 22:17-18 NAU** - "I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies. <sup>18</sup> "In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice."
- C. God promised Abraham an heir of promise. Isaac was that heir but he wasn't the ultimate heir. God's covenant promise would find its fulfillment in the true seed – Jesus Christ.  
 Out of Abraham's loins would come the Savior, the Deliverer – And Abraham believed this promise.  
**Genesis 15:6 NAU** - "Then he believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness."
- D. Abraham did not see it as clearly as we have seen it – but he did see it.  
 Jesus told the Jews –  
**John 8:56 NAU** - "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw *it* and was glad."
- E. Abraham saw it and believed. He believed the promise of God.  
 This is the essence of faith. Trusting in the veracity of God's Word.

- I. Are you believing and trusting the promise of God?
- A. Faith has substance.
1. Too many professing Christians claim to have faith but they don't know what they are trusting in. They say they believe in Jesus but there is no substance to their belief.
  2. Faith has substance.  
**Hebrews 11:1 NAU** - "Now faith is the assurance of *things* hoped for, the conviction of things not seen."  
**KJV** – "Now faith is the substance of things hope for. . . ."  
 ὑπόστασις – "a support, substance"
- a. It is the same word used in **Chapter 1**  
**Hebrews 1:3 NAU** - "And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power."  
 "substantial nature, essence, actual being, reality"
  - b. Faith is based upon the substance of God's promises. This is the anchor of our soul.
- B. Abraham had nothing tangible upon which to place his confidence.
1. God promised him that he would be the father of a great multitude. He couldn't look to the fruitfulness of his offspring – At that time he was childless. He was seventy-five years old when he received the promise. He was 86 years old when Ishmael was born, but Ishmael was not the fulfillment of the covenant of promise. Abraham was 100 years old when Isaac was born.
  2. Abraham's confidence was in God alone even though it took 25 years for God to fulfill the promise.
    - a. It was another 60 years before Jacob and Esau were born. They were 15 years old when Abraham died at the age of 175. At the time of his death Abraham had one son of the covenant (Isaac) and one grandson of the covenant (Jacob).
    - b. God tested Abraham on Mount Moriah telling him to sacrifice his son. God rewarded Abraham's faith by reiterating the promise and confirming it by oath.  
**Genesis 22:17-18 NAU** - "indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies. <sup>18</sup> "In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice."
  3. Abraham knew that no matter what, God would be true to His promise. He knew that God would still be able to fulfill His promise even if it meant raising Isaac from the dead.  
**Hebrews 11:17-19 NAU** - "By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac; and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten *son*; <sup>18</sup> *it was he* to whom it was said, "In Isaac your descendants shall be called." <sup>19</sup> He considered that God is able to raise *men* even from the dead; from which he also received him back as a type."

II. God has given His promise to us. He has sworn by Himself.

A. God has given an oath bound promise

**Hebrews 6:17 NAU** - "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,"

1. **Verse 18** describes it as two unchangeable things.

God has given His unchanging promise and confirmed it with His unchanging oath. This was a great condescending grace from God.

2. God does not need to make an oath to validate the surety of His promise. That is, to testify to its truth.

God IS truth. God's nature is truth. God has sworn by Himself.

3. There are some things God cannot do. God cannot deny Himself. He cannot cease to be God.

He cannot lie. His promises are absolute. They are sure. They are an infallible anchor.

**Numbers 23:19 NAU** - "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?"

4. When we make an oath today, we seal it with our signature and have it properly witnessed and notarized and filed in record.

a. God seals His oath with His own Word and by His own name. It is fixed and unchangeable. It is a definite surety that can be rested upon.

b. God told Abraham:

**Genesis 22:16 NAU** - "By Myself I have sworn, declares the LORD"

B. The author describes this as our infallible hope.

1. Not the hope that's mere optimism, but the hope that has substance. He calls hope our anchor. The ship's anchor holds securely and provides security during turbulent winds and tossing seas.

2. Our hope is anchored upon Jesus Christ. He has sealed the Covenant with His own blood. We know that in Christ we will prevail. We will pass through the turbulent waters of this life. We will enter into our heavenly rest.

**Hebrews 6:19 NAU** - "This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a *hope* both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil,"

3. The author returns to the place he began at the end of **Chapter 5**.

Jesus Christ is our High Priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

Jesus is the High Priest forever. He didn't *become* High Priest when He entered into heaven. He took His place at the right hand of God because He *was* our High Priest. He had already accomplished His atoning sacrifice entering the Heavenly Tabernacle.

4. The author is encouraging these beleaguered saints to press on in the hope of God's promise. Their hope was anchored upon Jesus Christ. Apart from Him there is no hope.

### Conclusion:

1. These Christians were to look to Abraham as their example. And so must we. Abraham believed. He trusted, even though he did not see. The Book of Hebrews describes faith as taking hold of the unseen.  
**Hebrews 11:1 NAU** - "Now faith is the assurance of *things* hoped for, the conviction of things not seen."
2. By faith Abraham received God's promise. He believed it. But the writer of Hebrews will reveal to us that Abraham never saw the ultimate fulfillment of God's covenant promise. The point is he saw it from afar, and he believed. Through Isaac Abraham looked forward to Christ.  
**Hebrews 11:13 NAU** - "All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth."
3. God gave His promise to Abraham of an heir – and that promised heir is Christ. God gave His promise to Abraham, but we are the objects of God's promise. Jesus Christ has delivered US.  
And we are the innumerable descendants God promised to Abraham.
4. This puts our life in proper perspective. The author is exhorting these Hebrew Christians to persevere in the faith even in the face of severe hardship. As we live our life we will face many times of adversity, many trials, many tribulations. But God's promises will never fail. He cannot lie. He will do what He has promised.
5. Paul admonishes us, look up, look beyond, keep your eyes on the promise. Never let your gaze drift away from Jesus. Through Christ Jesus our Lord we have assurance that He will preserve us and bring us into glory  
**Colossians 3:1-2 NAU** - "keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup> Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth."