

An Anchored Hope
Hebrews 6:13-15
Part One

There are many in this room this morning who have placed their faith and trust in Jesus Christ alone for their salvation and in doing so have become followers of Christ.

And how do I know this? I know this because their faith is continually proving itself to be genuine as it continues to endure even in the midst of their constant testing, which in turn will result in their heavenly hope, based on the promise of God to them in Christ Jesus, not becoming less real to them but even more real.

In fact, their heavenly hope can become so real it can make them feel as if they are at very entrance of heaven listening to the heavenly choir singing praises to God, even while they are being tested.

Now of course they are not actually at the entrance of heaven nor are they actually listening to the heavenly choir, but as the Spirit of God manifests himself to them, in the midst of their trials, it will make it seem to them as if they are. Or in other words, it will make it seem to them that God's promise to them in Christ Jesus has already on some real level been obtained. And this brings us back to our study.

We are presently studying the Book of Hebrews. This book was written by an unknown author to a group of struggling Hebrew Christians living in Rome, who under a great persecution were considering leaving the Christian faith in order to return to Judaism. The author in response to this struggle wrote this particular book in order to strengthen their faith so that they, in having their faith strengthened, might be able to persevere.

In seeking to accomplish this goal he sought to focus his reader's attention on the superiority of Christ. So, what have we seen so far in our ongoing study of this epistle and therefore in our ongoing study of Christ's superiority?

We have seen that Christ is superior to the Old Testament prophets. We have seen that Christ is superior to the angels. We have seen that Christ is

superior to Moses. And now we are seeing that Christ's priesthood is superior to all other priesthoods (Hebrews 4:14-10:18). This section began in **Hebrews 4:14** and will continue all the way down through **Hebrews 10:18**.

So how did the author begin this section? The author began this section by focusing his readers attention on Christ's heavenly high priestly ministry in **Hebrews 4:14-16**. After this the author then pointed out to his readers that Christ's appointment to His heavenly high priestly ministry was according to the order Melchizedek. He did this in **Hebrews 5:1-10**. So then what did the author do?

The author, after having introduced the Son's divine appointment according to the order of Melchizedek, then took a strategic detour in order to warn his readers in Hebrews 5:11-6:20. And this is the section we are presently in. We are in this warning section.

So how did the author begin this warning section? The author began this warning section with an exhortation (Hebrews 5:11-6:3). This exhortation can be found in **Hebrews 5:11-6:3**. And what was his exhortation? It was to "**pursue maturity**." And why did he give them this exhortation? He gave them this exhortation because they, in having become "**dull of hearing**," had spiritually regressed to the point that they were having difficulty distinguishing between good and evil, which obviously left them extremely vulnerable. And what was the cure for their present spiritual condition?

Pursuing maturity was the cure. Or in other words, if they wanted to be cured of their problem they needed to be far more energetic toward pursuing the truths of God's Word and seeking to apply those truths to their lives.

So if they failed to heed this exhortation and continued to be as lethargic as they were toward the word of God, could there have been dire consequences for them? Absolutely! And this led us to the next part of our text.

After the author exhorted his readers, he then presented a harsh warning (Hebrews 6:4-8). He presented this harsh warning in **Hebrews 6:4-8**.

And how did this harsh warning begin? It began in **Hebrews 6:4-6** with an assertion, that it is impossible to renew to **repentance** those who fall away after they had enjoyed certain spiritual blessings.

This assertion was obviously a warning. But to whom among this congregation was this warning being directed? Was it being directed toward those within the congregation who had truly exercised genuine living saving faith or was it being directed to those within the congregation, who though professing faith and blessed in various ways by their attachment to that congregation, had never truly exercised genuine living saving faith and therefore when tested might fall away?

And what was our conclusion? This warning was being directed toward those within the congregation who, though professing and blessed in various ways by their attachment to that congregation, had never truly exercised true genuine saving faith. They were like Judas. Judas had attached himself to Christ and to Christ's disciples. He had been blessed in various ways because of that attachment but even in spite of all that he enjoyed in the way of blessings he had never truly exercised genuine living saving faith or in other words he never had become a true disciple of Christ. And what was the proof of that? He fell away.

So after this harsh warning in **Hebrews 6:4-8** then what did the author do? After the author's harsh warning he then softened it in Hebrews 6:9-12. He initially softened it by addressing them as "**beloved**" and then he further softened it by telling them that even in spite of their present struggles that he was convinced of "**better things**" concerning them or in other words he was convinced that they rather than falling away when tested would continue to persevere until that day when their earthly life ended and their heavenly life began.

And why was he so confident of this? He was confident of this because he saw their ongoing ministry to one another in the midst of all that they were suffering to be actual evidence of their genuine faith and love toward God that he believed, based on God's promises, would result not only in their perseverance but in their salvation.

This was the conviction of the author but that was not enough for him. He also wanted it to be the conviction of his readers as well. And this desire on the part of this author now brings us to the next portion of our text.

After the author had softened his harsh warning, he then closed out his warning section by explaining to his readers why they should be as

convinced as he was that they would in fact not fall away but would persevere (Hebrews 6:13-20). And not only this but they would be blessed in a very special way in their persevering.

So now let me read for you **Hebrews 6:13-20** and see if this is not so. **“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.”** So based on these verses did the author close out his warning section by explaining to his readers why they should be just as convinced as he was, that they would not fall away but would persevere. And not only this but they would be blessed in a very special way in their persevering. Yes, I believe these verses do exactly that.

So, what was the first reason the author provided his readers to support his contention? The first reason was the example of Abraham (Hebrews 6:13-15). Let me now read for you **Hebrews 6:13-15** and see if this is not so. **“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.”** So, based on these verses, did the author use Abraham’s example to support his contention? Yes, he did.

So why was this author able to use the example of Abraham to support his contention? This author was able to use the example of Abraham because the author saw both his readers and Abraham as united by saving faith (Hebrews 6:13-15).

So what is the big deal about this author seeing both his readers and Abraham united by saving faith and representing them as such within these verses?

The big deal about seeing these readers and Abraham united by saving faith is that those who are united by saving faith will continue to build their lives on the promises of God in spite of difficulties thus guaranteeing their perseverance and also the subsequent blessings that come with that perseverance.

This is why the author of this letter chose to use the example of Abraham to them of what he himself was convinced of which was this: They would not fall away but persevere and in that perseverance be blessed.

So now let us look at these verses more carefully. So let us begin with **verse 13. “For when God made the promise to Abraham.”**

So now what is the obvious question. What was the promise? The promise that God made to Abraham according to **Hebrews 6:14** was that he would surely bless him and surely multiply Him. Isn't that exactly what **verse 14** tells us? Absolutely!

So on what occasion was this promise to Abraham made? God's promise to Abraham that was recorded in Hebrews 6:14 was in essence communicated by God to Abraham on numerous occasions (Genesis 12:1-3; 13:14-17; 15:4-5; 17:1-8; 22:16-18).

So, what was the first occasion? The first occasion was when God spoke to Abram when he was 75 years old and living in Haran. It was at that time that God came to him and instructed him to leave his country, to leave his relatives and to leave his father's house to go forth to a land that God told Abram He would show him and then God gave Abram this promise, a promise that is now known as the Abrahamic Covenant. And what was God's promise to Abram? This was God's promise, as recorded for us in **Genesis 12:2-3, “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; (3) and I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in all the families of the earth will be blessed.”**

So did God within this promise in essence say to Abram that He would surely bless him and surely multiply him? Yes! God did within this promise in essence clearly say that!

But that was not the only occasion when God in essence stated this promise to Abraham. As Abraham continued to build his life upon this promise and to live his life according to this promise, even in spite of difficulties and various challenges to his faith, God would periodically in essence restate His promise to Abraham.

God did it again in **Genesis 13:14-17** after Abram's nephew, Lot, and his family chose to separate from him and his family after a dispute broke out between the shepherds of Lot and his shepherds.

God did it again approximately ten years later after he had defended the land that he had been promised from four kings. And this victory that God gave him was certainly a wonderful thing. But as of yet, even at his advanced age, he still did not have any descendants. And this obviously would have been unsettling to him in light of God's earlier promise.

And how do we know this? We know this because according to **Genesis 15:1** when God came to Abraham shortly after the battle with these four kings and spoke to Abram saying to him, **“Do not fear, Abram, I am a shield to you; Your reward shall be very great.”** Abram responded this way, **“O Lord God, what will you give me, since I am childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus.”** Then Abraham went on to say, **“Since you have given no offspring to me, one born in my house is my heir.”**

And how did God respond to these thoughts of Abram? This is how He responded in **Genesis 15:4-5**. **“Then behold, the word of the Lord came to him, saying, ‘This man will not be your heir; but one who will come forth from your own body, he shall be your heir.’ (5) And 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.’”**

So did he believe God? Yes! How do we know this? We know this because **Genesis 15:6** tells us that he believed God and God counted it as righteousness.

So was this the last occasion when God in essence declared to Abram that He would surely bless him and multiply him?

No! God did it again in **Genesis 17:1-5** when Abram was 99 years old. It was at that time that God changed Abram's name to Abraham and gave instructions concerning circumcision that would serve as a sign of the covenant.

And then God capped this all by changing the name of his wife from Sarai to Sarah and then in addition to this making it clear to Abraham that he was going to give him a son through Sarah and that it would be through this son, the son of promise, that the covenant to him would be fulfilled.

And how did Abram respond? He laughed suggesting that Ishmael, his son born to him by Hagar, might be a more reasonable solution. But God held his ground. And what happened the next year? Isaac was born.

So were there numerous occasions when this original promise made in **Genesis 12:1-3** was in essence restated? Yes!

But even though there were numerous occasions when God in essence restated His original promise to Abraham, it was His restatement of this promise in **Genesis 22:16-18** that this author specifically had on his mind. And how do we know this? We know this because this was the only time when this promise was made by God to Abraham with an oath, and therefore, based on **Hebrews 13:6**, must be the specific occasion that this author had in mind as he wrote what he wrote in **Hebrews 6:13-15**.

So, what was the occasion that prompted God to restate his promise to Abraham and to do so with an oath? God in **Genesis 22** instructed to Abraham to take Isaac, his only son, the son that he loved, up to a particular mountain, the son that had been promised to him, and there offer him up as a burnt sacrifice to God.

And the amazing thing here is that Abraham would have in fact done that if God had not stopped him. And why would Abraham have been willing to do that? Based on **Hebrews 11:19** he would have been willing to do that because he believed that God would still have fulfilled his promise to him, even if God would have had to raise his son Isaac from the dead.

And it was at this point in time that God once again in **Genesis 22:16-18** repeated the promise that He had made to him earlier, and what did He say? **“By Myself I have sworn, declares the Lord, because you have done this thing and have not withheld your son, your only son. (17) 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. (18) In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.”**

So, what was the author’s conclusion, based on what he had just presented? Let me now read for you **Hebrews 6:15**. **“And so, having patiently waited, he obtained the promise.”** So in other words, in the eyes of this author ...

Though there was much of God’s promise to Abraham that still lay in the distant future, in the eyes of Abraham, that distant future was being realized by him through his promised son, Isaac.

And this is what this author wanted these readers to understand. He wanted them to understand that there was no difference between themselves and Abraham. For just as Abraham through faith and patience had inherited God’s promise to him through Isaac, they had also, through faith and patience, inherited God’s promise to them through Christ.

He wanted them to enjoy the certainty of that reality. And to see how God through His testing of them had been proving their faith and had borne witness to the reality of their salvation.

He wanted them in spite of his warning to be as convinced of this as he was. He in a sense wanted them to be so convinced of this as if they were touching the doors of heaven and were listening to the heavenly chorus through those doors.

So can we have this same conviction? Yes, all we have to do, like Abraham and like these persecuted believers in Rome, is to make sure that when we are under testing, the promises of God to us are trumping everything else.

May God give us the grace, in spite of whatever difficulties we might encounter, to build our lives on the promises of God so that we in persevering might inherit those promises.