
The Patient Waiting that Inherits Promises

Hebrews 6:12-20

Introduction We live in a day and time when there are many discouraging things. We can become discouraged and depressed so easily.

- There is the discouragement of our cultural and political situation. We watch moral decay set in at all levels of life. Common decency and integrity are rare.
- There can be the discouragement of our financial pressures. Too much work with too little return on the time invested. Too much debt to live at the material level we expected or wanted.
- There can be the discouragement of seeing life's plans and goals and expectations thwarted or destroyed. What you have lived for and hoped for has been slowly eroded or suddenly taken. Maybe your children didn't turn out like you hoped. Maybe your retirement wasn't what you thought it would be. Maybe your marriage has gone stale. Maybe a relationship you prized has been broken.
- There can be the discouragement of failure and futility. You have lost a sense of meaning and purpose for living. It seems that you are just going around and around without accomplishing much.
- There can be the discouragement of losing the battle with sin and guilt. We know what the Bible expects of us and see ourselves falling short over and over. Sometimes ministry is frustrating. Sometimes Christian friends aren't all that they ought to be.

We all face discouragements. So did the believers to whom Hebrews was written. The paragraph we studied last time was written to stir up diligence in the face of being sluggish. This paragraph is written to encourage in the face of overwhelming discouragement (v.18). But the two paragraphs are connected – the author desires that they will have a *to the end* kind of assurance, that they will then be diligent and not falter because of what he is going to say about two important and connected ideas – we have a God who promises and we have a need for patience.

My prayer is that God by His Holy Spirit will lift up your spirit with encouragement so that you will be diligent to hold on to your hope and arrive safely at heaven's home.

A Pattern that Models**(v.13-15)**

For our encouragement, the author presents an *example* of how faithful God is to fulfill His promises. He takes us back to Genesis 22:15-17 and the promise God made to Abraham

The Scriptural Illustration**(v.13-14)**

Recall that Genesis 22 is the story of Abraham being tested by God in the offering up of Isaac as a sacrifice. God had promised Abraham a son and a land. He waited for years for that son to come. Now that Isaac had been born and was grown into a young man, God tested to see if Abraham loved God more than his son. Abraham passed the test, doing all that God required. In the very act of raising the knife to slay Isaac, God stopped Abraham and pointed him to the substitute ram and promised him great blessing. In doing so God, pointed Israel to substitute sacrifices until the true Son came as a sacrifice.

In this story, the Author homes in on the fact that God underwrote His promise with an oath. God swore. God swore that He would surely bless Abraham. And God swore by Himself.

Now why does God swear by Himself? Because there is no one greater to swear by. There is nothing more sacred, more hallowed, more honored, more treasured than God Himself. Just as we place our hand on the Bible to promise to tell the truth, God places His hand on His very eternal essence and promises to bless.

The Practical Observation**(v.15)**

Now don't misread this verse. Abraham's patient waiting actually brought the promise. Do you see it? He had the commands of God and the initial covenants that God had given. He had left his home, wandered through land promised him and after long many years, fathered his promised heir. Now, he is tested by God to see if God's promised blessing would not become an idol – will Abraham love what God gives more than he loves God, the giver?

And he obeys. He is earnest and diligent in careful, yes even, radical obedience. He is called "patient" in this. He is not merely resigned. He is not passive. He is actively engaged in obeying God, even if it means that he will kill and God will then raise his son. So Abraham is being tested and tried. Make no mistake, this is hard but he is full of faith. Genesis 22:16-17, the Angel of the Lord says that *since* Abraham has not withheld his only son, *then* God will surely bless him and through him all his offspring.

Well, with that promise in hand, is it no wonder that Abraham patiently waited? He understood that the very nature and character and reputation and fame of God was at stake in this and ultimately, in all of God's promises. And having staked his future and his hope on those promises, God brought him through this test. "Do you love Me more? Do you believe My promises so much that you are willing to put an end to your hopes and dreams and paternal joys, just on my word?"

Now listen to me loved ones, I do not know how much you have staked on God. I have everything. My eternal future, my present joys, my hopes, dreams are banking

on the surety of God's promises. But will I patiently believe and obey *even through the most difficult of trials?*

So we are encouraged to see that God will do what He says and we just need to be patient. But how can this be an encouragement?

A Principle that Shows (v.16-17)

So we have an *explanation* of how God encourages us by His promises. He develops this idea of an oath from things we are familiar with.

The Power of Human Oath (v.16)

We can understand quite simply what he is saying. When we want to guarantee our word, we swear by someone or something greater than ourselves. When we make this solemn oath, we are confirming what we have said and that ought to bring an end to any question or discussion about whether we are going to keep our word.

(It is a sad commentary today that the only word and oath that is accepted today is something signed that will hold up in court.)

The Purpose of Divine Confirmation (v.17)

So God did the same. He used what Abraham and what each of us is familiar with because He wanted us to be very clear about His promise. Further, He wanted and desired that we would see with startling clarity that God has an unchanging purpose towards those to whom the promise comes.

So here is the Divine logic: “My purpose towards you will not change, so my promises to you will not fail. You can be just as sure of this as I God, I do not change. I will stake all that I am on this, my word to you.”

Now, is it clear to us? If not, it is our fault and not God's! Just because the window is dirty doesn't mean the sun isn't shining! Why did God do this? What does He expect to come from it?

A Purpose that Encourages (v.18)

An *exhortation* that encourages us in our hope. “God did this”, the author says on purpose. He expects that this will impart real encouragement.

The Powerful Reason

God cannot lie

God cannot lie. God is truth. God cannot act contrary to His own holy nature. He cannot change and He cannot lie. Now notice this. It is not that He won't just because God has set His mind to it. This not an act of God's determination; it is an outcome of His very nature. God CANNOT lie. To say, "if God could lie, He would no longer be God", is to make an absurd statement. So God cannot change and will always keep His promises and carry through His purposes because He cannot lie. What God has said, He will do.

The Previous Requirement***taken refuge***

For whom is this true? Who are the recipients of this unchanging purpose and sure promises? We who have fled to take hold of the hope offered to us. So there is a condition. This encouragement is not just for anyone. It is for those who have banked their lives, present and future, on God. We are looking constantly for His sovereign provision of sustaining and enabling grace. We have already fled to Christ. We have already sought refuge in the God of our salvation. In other words, this encouragement is to those who have embraced Christ and bowed to Him and hid themselves in Him.

The Personal Responsibility***take hold***

But even further. We have not only fled to Christ and taken refuge in Him, but we have also taken hold of the hope offered to us. We have understood the preciousness of Christ and have banked everything on His promises and have committed everything about our future to His care and provision.

Maybe this is why discouragement and depression are so prevalent, even in Christian circles. We have not taken hold of the hope offered to us. We have staked our hope and our joy and our fulfillment in things present. And to our dismay, we find that them fleeting and frustrating and failing. You see, there is not such a thing as being hopeless for everyone has their hope in something or someone. Discouragement and depression and even despair come when that on which we have rested our hope fails.

So may I exhort you this morning: to flee from the allurement of hoping in this world and its pleasures and to pursue your hope and purpose in God and His promises. Why? Because we have the sure anchor of a heavenly hope.

A Privilege that Anchors**(v.19-20)**

How does the Bible describe people's hope? There are those who have:

- No hope – Ephesians 2:12-13 As the condition of the lost.
- Wrong hope – 2 Timothy 6:17 Those who placed their future confidence in temporal and passing things.
- Inadequate hope — 1 Corinthians 15:19 Many who placed their confidence and desire, even in Christian truth, as being for this world only.

We see the consequences around us of all three of these.

- Men and women who have come to the point of hopelessness. They have lost everything and are scrabbling for bare sustenance on the streets of many American cities. We have all seen the photos of children and men and women suffering the ravages of starvation and deprivation throughout the world. That they have no hope is engraved with a tool of suffering on their faces. Their eyes are pools of hopelessness.
- All around us we see men and women who have placed their desire and confidence of future happiness and blessing on wealth and power and position. These things may give immediate pleasure, but they fail and rust and decay and leave us with ashes in our mouths.

- So many Christians have placed their hope and trust in Christ *for the blessings and health and wealth* that will come to them now. They, unlike Job, are truly serving God for what it will get them now. “What a pity”, Paul says of them.

So what about us? Will we hear from this text an encouraging word that will show us our hope and cause us to lay hold of that hope?

Our Anchoring Hope

(v.19)

In the midst of the turbulence and winds and drifting tides that pull at us, we have an anchor.

IT IS A FIRM AND SECURE ANCHOR. That means there can be not drift. It means that I can rest assured that the passing pleasure of earth’s pursuits will not cause me to drift. The anchor of our soul is a good one. It is firm and strong and reliable. It is sturdy and capable. The anchor is crafted and designed to be big enough and strong enough for the task.

Imagine the anchor that you may have in your boat. They come in all sorts of designs. We are familiar with the traditional anchor and there are newer designs. But an anchor that will keep a 17 foot fishing boat safe from drifting would be wholly inadequate for a battleship or an ocean liner. We would be horribly risking our lives to cast over this anchor in the midst of the storm if we are in a large vessel.

So your hope is sufficient for anchoring your souls. It is not a small and puny and insufficient anchor. It is magnificently capable of securing your soul against eternal destruction and spiritual drift. Our anchor is crafted by God to be more than sufficient for the worst and the greatest of our sinning need. But more than that, our anchor is secure. It has been firmly grounded so that it can never be removed.

IT IS AN ANCHOR FOR THE SOUL. Its primary stabilizing effect is inward. It is meant to bring stability, security and safety to our inner man, to our thoughts and wants. This future and upward confidence in God’s person, purposes and promises so holds sway over our thoughts and wants that we diligently and obediently believe and obey, no matter what.

IT IS A HEAVENLY ANCHOR. This anchor is cast, not downward into the water to the bottom, but upward to the heavens. Now think of a boat. You come to the cleat and going away from it out into the water and down to the anchor is a rope. It connects the boat to the anchor. You can follow the rope right down to the anchor. Just so, we can follow the rope of verses 19b-20 right up to our anchor. It winds to heaven and into the throne room and enters behind the veil and runs right up to the mercy seat and is tied to the Lord Jesus Christ.

A Greek stoic philosopher once wrote, “One must not tie a ship to a single anchor, nor life to a single hope.” Such is the world’s wisdom. We have tied ourselves to a single anchor and our lives to a single hope. The hope of a Christian: our desire and expectation, the one in whom we have a confident expectation, the one on whom our confident expectation is grounded and the one who gives us a confident expectation of eternal good and heavenly blessing is Jesus.

Our Advancing Help

(v.20)

INTO HEAVEN – The imagery here is drawn from the Old Testament tabernacle. The inner Holy of Holies was hidden by an immense curtain that blocked access. No one except the High Priest and he only once a year on the Day of Atonement, could enter. But Jesus has died as our substitute and has been raised and has ascended into heaven and entered into the real in heaven of which those things were mere copies on earth. In the act of His sacrificial death, the curtain has been removed showing that we can now come to God. Here is our saving hope.

BEFORE US – He has pioneered the way. He has blazed the trail. Again, even when the deepest water we pass through is death, Jesus has gone this way before we do.

FOR US – Jesus is our High Priest. He is our mediator. He is there in the presence of God interceding for us. He is doing so as the One in whom God has invested all of His purposes and promises. He is in heaven to help us. He has gone there on our behalf. He helps us from His throne of grace by showing us His mercy and giving us His grace.

But most of all, He is there as the never changing one whose purposes and promises towards us are utterly sure.

We all are encouraged by different things:

- We are encouraged by words of fellowship and friendship. People with their kindness and their loving truth, encourage us.
- We are encouraged by prayers from supplicating saints. I tell you, nothing lifts me up more than to know that people pray for me.
- We are encouraged by the fruit of our life's ministry. We begin to see all that we have worked for come about in God's timing and God's way.

I pray that we will be encouraged by this: God has an unchanging purpose that He shows us in His promises. That He will do what He has said is as sure as that He cannot change and He cannot lie. Do you believe this in an obeying way that encourages your hope?

- Conclusion**
- Three principles emerge which encourage me while I am patiently waiting for fulfilled promises:
 - There is a patient faith that sees promises fulfilled.
 - There is a kind of promising that encourages our hope.
 - There is a hope that anchors souls in heaven.
 - Am I so sure that God's promises will be fulfilled that I am willing to hope them even to the point of death?
 - Where is the anchor of our hope? What are you hoping in? Have you laid hold of the hope that is offered to you? Is your hope in Jesus? Is your desire and confident expectation in Jesus a soul anchoring hope that saves and sanctifies and will one day, glorify when Jesus comes?
 - May we battle the discouragements of life with the encouragement of hope: I will patiently wait for what God has promised.
 - For trembling, discouraged saints whose hope is fading:
 - **Cast your anchor upward.** Set your mind and your affections on Jesus and on those heavenly realities and sure promises and unchanging purposes.
 - **Keep your focus forward.** Deal with the past, yes. But keep your hope and expectation and excitement for what God is going to do.
 - **Make your progress onward.** With all the diligence God's enabling grace gives, lay hold and hold fast to your hope. Read about it, Think about it. Share it. Embrace it. Be passionate about it. Press forward with all the disciplines and means of grace to see it fulfilled.

2 Thessalonians
2:16-17

May our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who loved us and by His grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word.

