

## ***The Superiority of the New Covenant – Hebrews 6:13-20***

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*[What follows is the transcript of a sermon. It was originally intended to be heard, not read, so the tone is more conversational than academic. It has only been loosely edited, so forgive any grammatical, syntactical, or spelling errors. If you have questions, please get in touch with Pastor Derek at [dberry@calvarybaptistsc.church](mailto:dberry@calvarybaptistsc.church).]*

Take your copy of God's Word and meet me in Hebrews 8:10-12...

There used to be a game show on television that was called Who do you trust? Now this was way before my time, but I want to point to the importance of that question. It is no mystery that we live in an age of cynicism and skepticism. Many have developed a kind of psychosis of distrust, where they believe everyone has some type of ulterior motive.

In this age, people are taught to trust no one but instead learn everything by experience. Promises rarely hold any weight whatsoever due to the rampant lying in our society. The world is full of liars. Who can we trust? Without a sense of pessimism or cynicism? I think if many of us were honest, we struggle with applying this same spirit of doubt unto God himself. We assume, many times without saying, that God cannot be trusted. His Word is not reliable, His promises are not trustworthy, and His assurances are not true. Our anxieties exist because we don't fully trust God. We are not much different from the original audience that this letter was written. This Jewish audience was in danger of falling victim to believing the lie that God's promises cannot be trusted due to the situation they were in. These professing believers were tempted to return to Judaism due to the severe persecution that they were receiving from their own! The decision to turn from Jesus and return to Judaism would speak loud and clear, "God is not and will not deliver on his promises."

But I have good news for you this morning. I have good news because the author of Hebrews had good news for his audience. You can trust God. His Word is reliable, His promises are trustworthy, and His assurances are true. The author gives us three reasons why we can trust God and His promises. He points to the Predecessor, the Pledge, and the Person. Our Predecessor, Abraham. Let's read verses 13-15

In verse 12, he says, "be imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises," and then the author proceeds to provide an example of one who trusted in God's promise and received the inheritance, Father Abraham. He is our example. In verse 13, the author brings up the fact that God swears on Himself, but we're going to hit the pause button on addressing that due to the fact that he revisits this issue in more detail in the latter verses.

First, we'll just focus on the person of Abraham.

This Old Testament Patriarch is most known for his faith in God's promises, which makes him a pivotal figure in Scripture. It was to Abraham that God made the promises in which we

Christians find our hope. Paul refers to him as our father in the faith in Romans 4:11. He also says in *Galatians 3:29*, *"If you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise."*

So it makes sense for the author of Hebrews to use Abraham as our model, especially writing to Jewish Christians. We're talking about a man who had great faith from the jump. Abraham was raised a pagan in a family that worshipped false gods in Mesopotamia. For His own purposes, God spoke to Abraham and commanded him to pack all his things and take his family to Canaan.

The initial call and promise of God to Abraham can be found in *Genesis 12:1-3*. *"Now the Lord said to Abram, 'Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. 2 And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.'"*

And the response of Abraham is what blows me away. The beginning of verse 4 states, "So Abram went, as the Lord had told him..." We find out in Hebrews 11:8 that *"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."* This story absolutely amazes me. Abraham grounded his hope and faith in the promise of God so much so his life was completely transformed at the point of faith. (There's always a going and a sending connected to faith. Jesus not only says have faith, but follow me. Not only to become believers but disciples. Faith in who God is and His promises fundamentally transforms life as it did with Abraham.)

So patiently waiting is not the equivalent of pacifism. It actually denotes a continual pressing on into God's promises. There's action connected to patiently waiting for the fulfillment of God's promises. Oh, but this doesn't mean that it was easy, don't mistake my words, Beloved. Abraham's life was anything but effortless. Abraham had to trust God in the midst of adversity. It would have been easy to trust God in a world that wasn't fallen. But since the fall of man 9 chapters earlier, earthly circumstances don't always seem to align with the promises of God. He would have definitely felt the temptation to believe no longer that God could be trusted. We know that because he made mistakes! He wasn't perfect by any stretch of the imagination. He and his wife began to doubt that they would be able to have a child due to their old age, so he laid with her servant. When passing through Egypt, he deceives the Pharaoh by telling him that his wife is really his sister. He acted this way out of fear for his life, although God had already promised him that he would make him a great nation.

So to say that Abraham is our model of faith is not to say that Abraham always had it together. Rather, he never allowed his doubt to overcome him to the point of rejecting God and turning back to paganism.

The same is true today, beloved. Having faith in God's promise that he will one day set all things right does not mean that there will never be doubts or mistakes. I wish I could say I never had a suspicion of God's promise or that I have always made the right decision, but that's simply false.

And I'm speaking about after my conversion. But the difference between the true believer and those spoken of in verses 4-6 is the fact that the true believer will continue to follow God and press into him amidst the fallenness around them.

One of the key characteristics of the believer's faith in God's promises is perseverance. Again, this can be seen in the life of Abraham. He promises this hundred-year-old man that he will have a son with his ninety-year-old wife. And yet, Abraham believes God, and it is counted to him as righteousness. Despite many obstacles and causes for doubt and unbelief, Abraham did receive his promise through Isaac, as the author points out in verse 15.

This is the encouragement that the persecuted Jewish believers needed to hear to keep them from going back to Judaism and, in turn, reject God. He's saying, "I know you're suffering, I know things seem bleak, I know you're losing your jobs and facing severe persecution for the case of Christ, but continue to persevere in patience because God will fulfill His promise to grant you eternal rest."

Some of you need to hear this same encouragement today. You may have reason to doubt, And you may be tired of trusting God in the season that you're in, but look to the example of Abraham as an encouragement to press onward in faith toward God because just as Abraham obtained the promise through his Son, you too will obtain the promise of eternal salvation, granted you press on! There's always a cross before a crown. (Consider Jesus' temptation)

So, the real theme here is God's integrity and His faithfulness; Abraham is just the example the author uses to highlight these themes. But he doesn't stop with the predecessor; he goes on to tell his audience that we can trust God because of His pledge. Let's reread verses 16-18. The Pledge.

The significance of God taking up an oath is revisited in these verses. The specific text that the author is referencing can be found in Genesis 22:15-17 which occurs directly after the almost sacrifice of Isaac.

*"And the angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time from heaven and said, "By myself I have sworn, declares the Lord, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies..."*

I like this, I want to redirect your attention back to verse 16. This reminds me of my friends and I making oaths to one another as youths.

Well similarly, in New Testament times, when a person makes an oath on something greater than himself, such as the altar or God himself, this would usually end an argument. It was assumed that no one would make such an oath unless he were determined to keep it. But since there is no one greater than God, He swears the oath on Himself. The author is encouraging his

audience to trust in God's promises because his name is on the line. In swearing an oath on Himself, He willingly places His own dignity and character on the line. And God may play about a lot of things, but He does not play about His name.

*Isaiah 48:9-11 says "For my name's sake I defer my anger; for the sake of my praise I restrain it for you, that I may not cut you off. Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tried you in the furnace of affliction. For my own sake, I do it, for how should my name be profaned? My glory I will not give to another."*

He doesn't play about His name because His name is connected to His glory. And God is most concerned about His glory. So, He's saying, "This is how you can trust my promise; you know I'm all about getting glory, and you know I get glory through the spreading of my name throughout the nations, so I'm going to put what most important to me on the line, my glory so that you will be inclined to trust me."

You know what that means; that means you and I can't screw it up. This reaffirms the eternal security of the believer. Why would he place the determination on whether or not he's going to get glory in the hands of sinful people like us? Jesus says that it is the will of the Father that He loses none that He gave Him. So, God is going to fulfill His promise not because of who we are but because of who He is. That is reassuring.

If the promise were based on the behavior of Abraham or anyone else, we would all be in bad shape. However, that doesn't answer one question. Why swear an oath, God? Isn't your word sure enough? Indeed it is. God made an oath not because His word could not be trusted but rather because Abraham was weak in faith. Earlier, we talked about the times when Abraham doubted, and his weaknesses were evident. There are actually multiple instances where God reiterates the covenant that He established with Abraham back in Genesis 12. This was done to encourage Abraham, not for any benefit to God.

As verse 18 says, God cannot lie because He is completely infallible. Aren't you glad God meets you where you're at? He could have created the heavens and the earth and stepped back and waited for us to seek Him. Ultimately, He meets us where we're in the flesh by sending the Lord Jesus. This leads us to our last reason why we can trust God, because of the Person of Jesus. Let's reread verses 18-20. The Person

This last reason to trust God trumps the first two. An oath is cool, but a Son is greater. I mean, giving someone your word and even making a promise so that they believe you are one thing; giving your one and only son as proof that you are faithful is another. Now once again, the author reminds us that not everyone can partake in the promises that God has to offer—only those who have fled for refuge.

He's probably referring to the Old Testament cities of refuge. These were specific cities in which one who was guilty of unintentionally killing someone could flee for safety so that they would not have to receive God's wrath at the hands of a family member. Similarly, we flee and find our refuge in the Lord Jesus and His gospel. God provides promises that Abraham didn't deserve,

nor could he bring about on his own, but they were to be received by faith. God gave the child of promise through a barren womb to demonstrate that salvation is by grace alone, by God's power, and not by the will or ability of man. Those who surrender to Jesus now have Him as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul.

Anchors from a ship are usually thrown into the sea beneath the waves, and those on the ship are trusting in that which is unseen to hold them secure. Our anchor goes up to heaven whereby faith; we will one day see. So although the troubles and temptations of this world throw our souls around far too often, we have a sure and steadfast anchor that stabilizes our souls amidst the waves of this world. This anchor is held by the Lord Jesus, who is our forerunner. This term, forerunner, was used in Greek literature to describe the function of a small party of soldiers sent fully to explore the way ahead prior to the advance of the army. Christ has gone before us, and He said that He is preparing a room for us. He's qualified to do so because He is our Great High Priest.

The question is, Do you trust Him? If not, who's lied to you to keep you from trusting him? Maybe you've been hurt and lied to by a spouse, maybe a parent, or another family member. Maybe you've been lied to by the very person who was supposed to keep their promises and shower you with love. Beloved, God is not like man. He is a loving Father who keeps His promises. Trust in him today.

Let's pray.