

Encouraged to Hope

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Heb. 6:13 For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he **swore by himself**,

Heb. 6:14 Saying, **Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee.**

Heb. 6:15 And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.

Heb. 6:16 For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation *is* to them an end of all strife.

Heb. 6:17 Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed *it* by an oath:

Heb. 6:18 That by two immutable things, in which *it was* impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:

Heb. 6:19 Which *hope* we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil;

Heb. 6:20 Whither the forerunner is for us entered, *even* Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

I'm not sure how clearly believers understand the scriptural idea of hope. In the so-called "Christian community" we have come to realize that hope is defined in more than one way. Because of that, I think teaching about hope has been treated like a book that is out of date, or a pair of shoes that have grown old and a little scuffed. Teachers may tend to set hope in the back of the spiritual closet and let it collect dust. But, if we do that, it is a terrible mistake, because hope is one of the three great spiritual markers we read about in scripture. More than that, hope is one of the principle possessions of true children of God and we cannot do without it. So, when we begin to declare the whole counsel of God, hope will be set forth alongside faith and love, and its character, power, and usefulness described and applauded.

Here in Hebrews we have a great message about hope that, because of the heavy and sometimes almost cryptic language of this great letter to the Hebrews, we may not hear much about it, or we preachers may not try to delve too deeply into what is here. Now, while I admit that much of the book of Hebrews sometimes makes it difficult for us to preach a plain message, I think some of the deepest truths of God are contained in this book. Knowing that, I am going to attempt to bring forth the

truths about hope we find in our text today. I trust that the Lord who commissioned this great letter, which is now a book of the bible, will assist us to understand the huge message about hope that is here.

I. To get started, let me say first that in our text God has sworn by Himself, as the unchangeable God, (I am the Lord, I change not" [**Mal. 3:6**]) and has promised a blessing for the children of promise - **vv. 17-18** (these are the two immutable [unchangeable] things in **v. 18**):

- He has shown us this in scripture for a reason. It is to show us how unchangeable His counsels and how sure His promises are
 - ▶ If I were to tell you folks that I had a thousand dollars, how could I really verify that? It would be to take a thousand dollars out of my pocket and show it to you. When I did that, the thousand dollars would vouch for itself. It would validate my claim that I had it, but it would stand alone if I made no claim that I had it, if I simply showed it to you. The claim of God stands alone because God makes the claim by swearing by God that it is true. There doesn't need to be any further validation of this claim of God. Only God can verify something as unchangeable truth by swearing by Himself.
 - ▶ Men everywhere since time immemorial have tried to verify what they said was truth by swearing by God that it was. But since God Himself warns us and tells us that men can swear by God falsely, we know that men can do it and still be lying. But God, who cannot lie, cannot swear by Himself and tell a lie. But here, He swears by Himself about His unchangeableness and about the certainty of His promises.
- Why does this message about hope begin in our text with a record that God swore by Himself and made a promise of blessing? It is because, for a person to have fullness of hope, it is essential to know that what God has determined cannot be changed, and that what He has promised cannot be broken.
- Now that we have established the Lord does not change and His decrees cannot be broken, what purpose does this serve toward building and strengthening hope in each of us? Well, He has highlighted this for the purpose of giving us His own strong argument or exhortation to encourage us to take possession of the confidence we can have in Him as God...as the all powerful...as the dependable Father (That...we might have a strong consolation (= strong exhortation or strong encouragement), who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us).
 - ▶ Have you ever watched the locker room scene in a football game. That coach hypes those players to go out there and take control of that game. Here in our text, we are being told that the Lord has given us that locker room pep talk

with His reminder that He does not change, and His promises can't be countered or stopped...and because of that we are to go forth with hope...and win!

II. The encouragement is only available to those who have fled for refuge to the True City of Refuge (Jesus Christ) - (who have fled for refuge)

- In **Eph. 2:12**, Paul describes how we were when we were without Christ. One characteristic he mentions is that we were “without hope.”
- The Jewish cities of refuge give a witness of Jesus Christ
 - ▶ First, a person guilty of killing someone accidentally must either flee to a city of refuge or be killed on the outside. A person who is guilty before God must flee to Jesus Christ, the true City of Refuge or be killed with spiritual death on the outside.
 - ▶ Second, there were 6 cities of refuge: Kedesh, Shechem, Hebron, Bezer, Ramoth, and Golan - These 6 cities of refuge had names which witnessed of the attributes of Christ: Kedesh = holy; Shechem = the shoulder; Hebron = fellowship or “seat of association;” Bezer = fortified place; Ramoth = exaltations; Golan = manifested

III. Now, looking at our text again in **v.19**, we see that this hope which God extends to us by this process is an anchor of the soul (Which *hope* we have as an anchor of the soul)

- We have a word picture here of a ship moored solidly in a harbor with an anchor set on the bottom and stabilizing that ship so it will not drift
- The soul needs something to anchor it to Christ. We can see the importance of this by looking at the negative side:
 - ▶ If a person believes in a Christ who they believe might change His mind about them, how can that person have any lasting or sound confidence in this Christ
 - ▶ If a person believes in a Christ who they see as having flaws what kind of sustained confidence can they have in Him (remember that hope is steadfast confidence in something; and remember that the entire message of faith is about believing that Christ is both able to save us and able to keep us saved).
- Note next that this God-given hope is both “sure and steadfast” - in our language today, we might say it will not break and it will remain solidly anchored.
 - ▶ I have a couple of small anchors in my fishing boat. They are tied to an eye on the side of the boat by some fiber rope. With enough force, I could break that rope. Also, I have seen the wind strong enough on the lake to move my

boat even though I had the anchors out.

▶ In the navy, I was stationed on the aircraft carrier Constellation, last of the conventional aircraft carriers. It was huge. I remember being close to its anchors and the anchor chains at one time. Those anchors weight 20 tons each and were like two 18 wheelers hanging off the bow. Those anchor chains were over a thousand feet long and each eye of the chain weighed 360 lbs - they were half the size of a man. When the Connie dropped anchor, that ship stayed!

▶ These two descriptions are a contrast between “not sure and not steadfast” and “sure and steadfast.”

- Hope connects us to Christ as surely as faith does (it works as one of the great three, “faith, hope, and love), and it is hope that keeps us anchored to Christ during all kinds of spiritual weather.
- While we don’t showcase hope in our explanation of salvation (we showcase grace and faith), hope is one of the essential elements of true salvation: **Rom. 8:24** For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?

IV. Hope is that element from God which has the capacity to circumvent earthly and fleshly constraints, to overcome our own sense of unworthiness.

- It has the power to take us to where God is...inside the holy of holies (**v.19** - which (hope) entereth into that within the veil).
- Faith tells us that God is trustworthy, that He is a merciful and gracious God, that He is a Father who loves His children and hears them when they cry. But **hope gives us the confidence and boldness** to step into the presence of God and tell Him that.
 - ▶ Hope proves man deathless. It is the struggle of the soul, breaking loose from what is perishable, and attesting her eternity. — Henry Melvill
 - ▶ Do you remember that **Heb. 4:16** tells us, “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.” Do you know what element from God enables us to do that? It is hope...the steadfast confidence in God as a faithful Father, as a provider, as a sympathetic listener.
 - ▶ When I think of the effect of hope on a person who gets hold of it, I am reminded of the growth cycle of a cicada. When it first comes out of the ground it is an ugly brownish thing, but it crawls up a tree, breaks open the back of its shell comes out on the tree, sits in the sunlight and after a few minutes in the sun becomes a beautiful multicolored creature and lifts up and flies away!

V. Here in **v. 20** we find the most convincing reason for really seizing on great confidence in God, and great boldness because of it: “Whither the forerunner is for us entered, *even* Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.”

- Someone has gone before us into the holy of holies; someone who has gotten an open invitation for each of us who trust Him to enter with confidence.
- There is more here than just the fact the Christ is there in the presence of God. That more lies in the writer’s use of the word “forerunner.”
 - ▶ Jesus Christ went back into the presence of God as the first fruits of victory over sin; as the first of the overcomers (Jesus Christ had to overcome sin, death and grave as substitute for the elect, having carried all His people’s sins to the cross, having been judged for our sins, having wrestled with death and won).
 - ▶ In this office, or role, He was the forerunner for all of us that are saved (the forerunner is for us entered)
 - When I was a little kid, my older brothers cut a big grapevine back in the woods on the side of a hill. You could jump on that grapevine where they kept it tied uphill, swing out over a huge hole and be what looked lie 20 feet in the air at the highest point. I couldn’t bring myself to jump on that grapevine until I saw my older brother do it. His ride out there and back gave me the boost of confidence I needed to do the same thing.
 - ▶ Christ’s presence before God should be an encouragement and assurance that it is OK for us to enter in beyond the veil that is a barrier to unregenerate man because of sin. If it was OK for Him to go into the presence of God as our substitute, it is now OK for us to go into the presence of God as His children.
- Note last, that Jesus is **our High Priest forever**.