

Sermon 32, God Swears to God, Hebrews 6:13-20

Proposition: Because of God’s character, His oath, His track record, you can and should have a sure and certain hope in His promises.

- I. Why You Can Have Hope’s Full Assurance, vv. 13-18
 - A. God’s Promise, v. 13a
 - B. God’s Oath, vv. 13b-14
 - C. God’s Track Record, v. 15
 - D. God’s Inability to Deceive, v. 18b
 - E. God’s Desire to Demonstrate His Faithfulness, vv. 16-18
 1. We Need a Refuge, v. 18d
 2. We Are Liable to Disbelieve
 3. God Reaffirms, Swears, Multiplies Testimonies, vv. 16-18
 - a) To Encourage Our Faith
 - b) To Strengthen Our Hope
- II. Hope’s Qualities, v. 19
 - A. It’s Like a Soul Anchor
 - B. It’s Sure and Certain
- III. Hope’s Place, vv. 19b-20
 - A. The Holy of Holies
 - B. Next to Jesus

Introduction

Dearly beloved congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, our sermon this morning is intended to increase your faith and hope. After the stiff warning in the early part of the chapter, a warning intended to help the Hebrews see how high the stakes are and how much spiritual experience you can have without actually being converted, the writer returns to his main mission—building the faith and hope in Jesus that his listeners need to have. I am following in his footsteps this morning. You certainly need to grow in your faith and hope. The way you do that is not by clenching your fists and saying “Believe harder!” Rather, it is by repeatedly witnessing God’s faithfulness. As I’ve told you before, when your car has started the last four hundred times you tried it, you have perfect confidence that it will start the four hundred and first time. When you have witnessed God’s faithfulness four hundred times, you will naturally have faith in it the four hundred and first time. So listen to this sermon, and believe it. The Hebrew writer wants you to know that because of God’s character, His oath, His track record, you can and should have a sure and certain hope in His promises.

I. Why You Can Have Hope’s Full Assurance, vv. 13-18

The lion’s share of this passage explains why you can have the full assurance of hope. If you’ll recall, last week we saw that your pastor, speaking as the “we” in “we desire that every one of

you . . . realize the full assurance of hope until the end”, really wants you to have the full assurance of hope. This is not something that will just drift into your mind while you watch TV and fold laundry. It requires work, diligence, to attain the full assurance of hope. So diligently listen to these five major reasons that you can and should have the full assurance of hope. You ought to be a hopeful Christian.

Just for review, the full assurance of hope is a steady expectation of gaining what God has promised — eternal life with Him and His Son and Spirit in heaven. To have the full assurance of hope is to have no doubt in your mind about this. It is to be confident, joyously certain, that your eternal future is secure through God’s gracious gift of salvation for you in His Son. I want you to have this; the New Testament wants you to have this; God wants you to have this. Here are the reasons why you can and should have it.

A. God’s Promise, v. 13a

The first is God’s promise, God promised you eternal life in Heaven with Himself. He will keep that promise just like He kept His promise to bless and multiply Abraham. In fact, of course, it is through God’s keeping of His promise to bless and multiply Abraham that you are here today worshipping Jesus. The promise that the writer quotes comes from Genesis 22, after Abraham took the knife to slay his son but the LORD’s angel called from heaven and stopped him. Seeing Abraham’s faith in God’s resurrecting power, God made this promise to bless and multiply him. That promise was a powerful promise, and one that God kept. But here’s the thing — it wasn’t just a promise.

B. God’s Oath, vv. 13b-14

It was a promise made with an oath. “By Myself I have sworn, declares the LORD.” That’s how the Genesis 22 quotation begins. God swore by God. He called Himself as the ultimate witness and judge who would guarantee the accuracy and finality of his words.

God doesn’t need to swear. Rather, He swore in order that Abraham might have the full assurance of hope — and that you might have it too.

C. God’s Track Record, v. 15

And God kept that promise. Abraham had to patiently wait for a long time — indeed, ch. 11 tells us that in another sense, he died “not having obtained the promise.” But he did obtain it in the sense that he was forgiven, cleansed, and saved by the blood of Jesus Christ, and when he died he went to heaven.

God’s track record is perfect. He has never flaked out or failed to keep His promises. He kept them to Abraham by sending Isaac and then, over the centuries, making Abraham the father of a multitude of nations.

D. God’s Inability to Deceive, v. 18b

Furthermore, it is impossible for God to lie. He can’t lie in His ordinary discourse, and He can’t lie under oath. It is metaphysically impossible, for it is contrary to His nature. Just as it is physically impossible for you to fly by flapping your arms, so it is morally impossible for God to say “I will save you from your sins through my Son” and then back out of that commitment. He always and only tells the truth.

E. God's Desire to Demonstrate His Faithfulness, vv. 16-18

The writer discloses God's overarching purpose: He wanted to show to everyone who inherited that promise to Abraham that His purpose is unchangeable. He can't and won't be turned aside.

If you wanted to show that your purpose was unchangeable, what would you do? You would probably commit as publicly and as legally as possible. You would allow the state to take everything you had if you violated your word. Well, God had that same desire to show that His purpose was unchangeable. He cannot subject Himself to the power of the state, or of human society or of angels or of anything less than Himself — but He subjected Himself to the most stable, permanent, unchangeable thing in the world: His own word. There was no better way to demonstrate His faithfulness.

1. We Need a Refuge, v. 18d

Why did He do this? Because He cared about us! He didn't have to offer us a refuge, but He saw that we needed one. In fact, the writer describes us now as refugees, people who have fled their homeland in search of a better country. The hope of heaven is all we have left. He's going to dramatize that later in the book by talking about people wandering in sheepskins and goatskins, in dens and caves of the earth. Shein has thousands of new outfits on its website each week, but I sincerely doubt that they offer sheepskins and goatskins. These are not the clothes of people who can take the time to dress well. They are the clothes of those who have nothing at all. They are clothes of those who have fled for refuge to the gospel hope held out by Christ.

2. We Are Liable to Disbelieve

But though we are "prisoners of hope" or refugees of hope, we also find ourselves extremely liable to disbelieve God's promises. He says "I will bless you." We say "I think the world, the flesh and the devil will bless me more." He says "I am all you need." We say "But I also need to overeat, overwork, overanalyze, and generally overdo my calling." He says "Fear not" and we say "Clearly you don't see how much there is to fear." He says "Don't commit adultery" and we say "*Game of Thrones* isn't adultery." On and on it goes. We have a hard time trusting that He is going to save us at some point over the horizon, past the foreseeable future.

3. God Reaffirms, Swears, Multiplies Testimonies, vv. 16-18

So how does He strengthen our faith? He reaffirms His promises. This was at least the fourth time that God had promised to bless and multiply Abraham, and this time He added a solemn oath to His words.

a) To Encourage Our Faith

His goal was to encourage our faith and strengthen our hope. God multiplies His testimonies to the seriousness of His purpose, and gives us a whole book filled with stories of how He has kept His promises, in order to feed and encourage our faith.

b) To Strengthen Our Hope

He also wants to strengthen our hope, our certainty of attaining that which He holds out before us. When you listen to God's promises, guaranteed not only by promise but also by oath, you can be certain that they are unchangeable and certain.

God did all of these things in order to beef up Abraham's faith and hope.

And the promises are still valid for us, still good for what we need. Our faith and our hope can and should be strengthened by remembering that God kept His promises to Abraham and that He will keep them to us in Christ.

II. Hope's Qualities, v. 19

So what does hope do?

A. It's Like a Soul Anchor

The author describes it as a soul anchor — a heavy weight dropped overboard that sticks to the ocean floor and keeps the ship from moving on the top of the water. Hope keeps our souls from being driven before wind and tide. Hope steadies us so we don't blow away in the storms or get swamped by the heavy waves.

B. It's Sure and Certain

And this is an anchor we aren't going to lose. It's a sure and certain anchor, one that will not break and will not be carried away by anything. God's oath guaranteeing His promise of salvation undergirds our hope's reliability.

III. Hope's Place, vv. 19b-20

But not only is hope a soul anchor that prevents us from being blown off course by the assaults of foul weather and overwhelming storms.

A. The Holy of Holies

Hope is a virtue that carries us up into Heaven, that places us in the holy of holies. Hope belongs in the most holy place.

B. Next to Jesus

That, of course, is where Jesus is. Why is our hope a soul anchor? Because it's where He is. Our hearts should be in heaven, for that's where our treasure is. We love and delight in Him; we long for the realization of what He has promised us — that we will dwell in His house forever.

That's where our hope is. It has entered the presence of God, and it will carry us there. Faith takes us to heaven and leads us to heaven, and so does hope.

Meditate this week on the faithfulness of God. Think about the size and scope and wonder of what He has promised. Don't let yourself meditate on a good meal or a tasty drink or a fun date with your spouse — or if you do think about those things, immediately compare them to your Christian hope. What's better, The Prime Rib or the marriage supper of the Lamb? Let your hope gather strength to itself; let it become the weightiest thing in your life, the mighty anchor that holds you fast, the wonderful consolation that sits in the heavenly temple right next to Jesus and His Father, whose word to you is a word of promise and salvation. Amen.