

**Text:** Hebrews 6:13-20

**Title:** God Keeps His Promises, So We Can Have a Steadfast Hope

**Date/Location:** February 20, 2011 at FBC

## Introduction

In the rest of chapter 6, we will see an example of one who inherited some promises. We will see many more examples in chapter 11 of this kind of faithful people. We will also see why we can be so sure about God's promises to us, and how that gives us a great amount of encouragement to keep on believing and being long-suffering while we await the fulfillment of God's promises.

For you to get a bit of the flavor of the confident atmosphere of the text, do a little exercise: highlight at all the words that have to do with promises and oaths and consolation and steadfast and so on.

## I. Example of Obtaining a Divine Promise, v. 13-15

A. God made a promise to Abraham.

What is the promise? According to Genesis 12:1-3, the promise consisted of three major parts:

1. National part. Abraham's offspring would become a great nation.
2. Personal part. Abraham himself would be blessed.
3. International part. In Abraham, all the families of the earth would be blessed.

We call this promise the *Abrahamic covenant*.

B. A lot of this divine promise was wrapped up in the son we know as Isaac. Not all of the promises were fulfilled in the birth of Isaac, but he was certainly a key player in their fulfillment.

C. God confirmed the promise with an oath.

1. The full statement of the promise in Genesis 22:17-18 restates the personal part, the national part, and the international part of the covenant. Hebrews 6 only quotes first two parts.

The translation is a little strange, isn't it? "Surely blessing I will bless" and "multiplying I will multiply" is redundant, it seems. The reason it is this way is that it literally renders the Hebrew text. In Hebrew there is what is called an infinitive absolute. The grammar uses a verb twice, once in one form and the second time in a different form.

The effect is to add emphasis and reinforce the main verb. Here, the idea is a reinforcement of both the blessing and the multiplying, so that it is like God is saying, “Without a question or doubt, I will definitely bless and multiply you.”

2. The oath is also recorded in Genesis 22:16. God said, “By Myself I have sworn.” That makes a double guarantee on the already firm statement of God’s word above.

D. Abraham obtained the promise.

11:12 agrees that the promised son was given, and the offspring began to be a great nation.

This verse finishes the illustration of verse 6:12—Abraham was such a person who through faith and patience inherited the promises.

1. One difficulty with this verse is that later on in Hebrews, 11:13 says that Abraham died in faith, *not* having received the promises.
2. The best explanation is that Abraham was indeed the recipient of the promises (God gave them to him initially); and that Abraham had received the first and significant installment through the birth of Isaac, but that he did not see the fulfillment of the whole scope of the Abrahamic covenant while he was alive.
3. The patient endurance for Abraham lasted a long time before he saw the promises starting to be fulfilled.

E. **Application:** We want to be like Abraham, who believed God and God’s promises. Then we will be an imitator of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises. This will help us keep from being sluggish and have a full assurance of salvation.

## II. Unchangeableness of the Divine Promise, v. 16-18a

The promises we are talking about were not and are not hanging out as a carrot that can be taken away. We are talking about unilateral and unconditional promises. The next verses show just how strong God’s promises are.

A. General Statement About Oaths

1. **Swear by the greater.** The idea is that you cannot swear by an insect or some dirt and have it strengthen your promise. But if you put your hand on a Bible, that is a symbol of promising by someone higher than yourself that you will tell the truth.

2. **End of all dispute.** Exodus 22:11. When men sign a binding contract or make a solemn promise with whatever ritual is used in their culture, that completes the discussion.

#### B. God Made an Oath

1. God gave the oath, not for His benefit, but for our benefit. He made the oath to **show more abundantly** to the heirs of promise how unchangeable His promise really was.
2. Prov 19:21, Psal 110:4 are examples of how firm God's promises are.
3. The words **immutability of counsel** mean "unchangeableness of purpose." God's decree is unalterable.
4. **Confirmed** means guaranteed.

#### C. God's Oath Provides a Double Guarantee

1. What are the two things? The promise itself, and then the oath.
2. God does not need an oath to uphold what He says as true. We ought to take God at His un-adorned word. What He says is just true.
3. He made an immutable thing doubly immutable by giving an oath on top of his word. For in neither of them can God lie. Titus 1:2 – God cannot lie, Num 23:19 – God is not a man who lies.

### III. Certainty of the Divine Promise, v. 18b-20

The certainty of God's salvation promises is conveyed in the next verses by three figures. They are:

#### A. Refuge.

1. Like the OT city of refuge described in Numbers 35 and Deuteronomy 19, Christ is the refuge to whom we flee to grab hold of the hope that is offered in the gospel—the hope of forgiveness, justification, and eternal life. This refuge is a shelter from divine wrath—from the penalty of death for those who are outside of the city of refuge.
2. This yields a great encouragement for those of us who are saved.
3. Hope – Heb. 3:6, 7:19 and throughout Scripture we see this certain expectation of God's promises being fulfilled. Our hope is in the Lord (Psalm 39:7 and many other Bible texts); our hope is in the resurrection (Acts 23:6); in the coming of Christ (Titus 2:13); Christ in us, the hope of glory (Col. 1:27); and we have a living hope through resurrection (1 Peter 1:3).

## B. Anchor.

1. Such hope we have gives us a sure **anchor** to have as the foundation of our life. It is certain, definite, secure, and confirmed.
2. This hope takes us right into close contact with God, **behind the veil**. This is so close to God that no OT saint could have imagined doing so, except for the high priest once per year on the Day of Atonement (Heb. 9:7, Lev 16:2).

## C. Forerunner.

1. Since our hope is in the Lord Jesus Christ, He is the one actually who has **entered** behind the veil **for us**. Verse 20 says as much, using the figure of a **forerunner**. Here the idea is that He is a precursor or one who comes in before.
2. This verse marks the end of the digression from 5:11-6:20, as you can see if you compare 5:10 with 6:20. In the former verse, Hebrews mentioned the high priesthood according to the order of Melchizedek, and 6:20 ends with the same words. Chapter 7 will pick up where 5:10 left off.

## Conclusion

Note the significance of the promise to Abraham. Not only is it important because it is an example of God's faithfulness and the inheriting of promises by those were faithful, but it is important in its own right as a foundational element of the plan of salvation. If we cut off Abraham or say that the Abrahamic covenant is abrogated, we end up cutting off the support of our own faith!

So what is our relationship to this promise? For Christians, we come in under the international part of the promise to Abraham. Recall in that part of the promise, God said that in Abraham all the nations of the earth would be blessed. That is fulfilled in Jesus Christ, according to Galatians 3:8, in that we are justified by faith through the gospel.

Can you count on that promise? Well, you can always count on God's promise. If you, like Abraham, believe God...if you believe in Jesus Christ...then you have great assurance that God is going to keep His word *toward you*.

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