

Sure And Steadfast Anchor For The Soul

We live in an age where some people's word really does not mean much. We live in the age of loopholes, where words no longer mean what they mean and broken promises are common. Contracts are regularly broken; it is just the way of business. Between unfulfilled wedding vows and unfulfilled political agendas our age is an age where human words are really worth very little. With divorce rampant, the words for better or for worse must not really mean for better or for worse. They must mean for better me or for best me or for what is convenient to me. The promises of politicians for the most part - are worthless. There is always a reason their promises remain unfulfilled. I wonder how people are actually taken in by these political promises that cannot possibly be kept. Promises like; balanced national budget, healthcare for everyone, jobs for everyone who wants one, voting and elections are above reproach, etc.

We are so used to not believing promises of people and the world - that we may be tempted to not believe God's promises. We are so skeptical when those on the television make dogmatic statements that it may carry over into our spiritual life. It is not just the news stations and politicians that are unreliable, the world has lost trust of religious leaders because they see the hypocritical lifestyle of the TV evangelists and mega-church businesses lead by pastors that occasionally are exposed for their corruption and re-interpreting God's Word into their own words.

I remember when I was about 10 or 11 and I did something wrong, I cannot remember what I did, but I do remember how my father handled it. I thought I had

a spanking coming, but he sat me down and told me he did not have a lot of value he could give me, but he valued his name and told me he had worked hard to make our name, a name that was respected. Then he told me the value of our name in the future would be determined by how I lived my life. That I had not only disappointed him but I had hurt the value of our name. I was crushed and would rather have had the spanking. I never forgot that talk. Later my father told me a contract was a document made for lawyers to break, but if a man gave his word by his name and shook hands it was much better than a contract and more trustworthy, if the man had a respected name. I have strived to become a man whose word is trusted and who elevates the name of Jesus Christ. What is the value of your name? What do people think of you and your name – are you true and trustworthy? As Christians what is the value of the names Christ and Christian because of how people see you?

There is a difference between a man-made promise and a promise made by God. While man's promises have many different reasons for not coming true, God's has the number of galaxies and stars that He created that testify to the guarantee of His promises and His name if the only name consistently and forever true. Man, at best makes a promise and hopes it comes true. God makes a promise already knowing His decreed future. He knows that it is as good as fulfilled. God's promises and His name are eternally true.

My beloved, may we, **hold fast to the promises of God for they are the sure and steadfast anchor of the soul!**

The world is broken on many levels but let me give one simple illustration of failure of leadership; picture yourself hanging over the edge of a cliff with the rocks that you are holding onto crumbling in your hands and under your feet and it

is hundreds of feet to the bottom. The average politician comes the edge above you and says take my rope, you will safe, it is tied to my latest proposal and promise. I do not know about you, but I would not trust my life, either mortal or eternal, to the latest ‘whatever’ the world is promoting. Polls are taken of opinions that change with the wind, so to stay in power, the politician tries to be whatever the changing polls tell them. On the other hand, there is God who says look I have given you my Son and He will carry you when you are weak and give a solid foundation on which to stand today, tomorrow and for eternity. I want you to see the difference between man’s promises and a sovereign God’s promises. Man’s promises are like flipping a coin and change with the winds of people’s self-serving desires. God’s promises are consistent and have an unmovable foundation as deep as the universe is vast.

Can you think of any reason not to trust God? I cannot. I pray that as we explore these verses and consider what they mean to our souls, we will be even more convinced that God is a sure anchor for our souls and our faith is deepened.

He Swore By Himself (v.13-17)

For those who read chapter 6 beginning at verse 1 with it cautions and warnings and if these created doubts here in verses 13 to 17, the writer removes them. Now as I begin in Hebrews this morning and as you know one of my spiritual gifts is I can make a mess of any language in any country, God has a great sense of humor, we are going to have some fun with names and their meaning this morning, as well. So, open your Bibles to Hebrews chapter 6 and verse 13. Reading at verse 13, “**For when God** (el-o·heem, unique word – a singular word with a plural meaning giving us insight to the Trinity. The name used in Genesis 1:1 or thay **os** – Greek) **made a promise to Abraham** (ab-raw·hawm - *father of a multitude*), **since he had no one**

greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself, ¹⁴ saying, ‘Surely I will bless you and multiply you.’ ¹⁵ And thus Abraham, having patiently waited, obtained the promise. ¹⁶ For people swear by something greater than themselves, and in all their disputes an oath is final for confirmation. ¹⁷ So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath ...” The writer is showing us that unlike man’s futile and often failing promises, God’s promises are different. We can believe God because He is unchanging. The same God who made this promise to Abraham tells us through Christ even more great and awesome truths and promises that we must hold tight to.

Here in verses 13 to 17 what promise made to Abraham was the writer referring to? The writer is referring to God’s specific promise recorded in Genesis chapter 12 beginning in verse 1 “Now the LORD (*Yâhovah* yeh·ho·vaw - meaning “the eternal existing One”) said to Abram (ab·rawm - meaning “exalted father”), ‘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.’ ” The key point, the writer’s is making - is Abraham did not immediately receive what God promised, as verse 15 indicates, “thus Abraham, having patiently waited, obtained the promise.” Years passed before Abraham actually began to receive the promise. One aspect for us to remember is that we can hold fast to God’s promises because they are sure, even though they have not come to pass yet. The promise of Jesus’ return and the resurrection is an example case in point. Paul wrote, ¹⁴ “For since we believe that Jesus (Jesus is Greek for the Hebrew name Joshua or (*Yâhowshu’a* -yeh·ho·shoo·ah, meaning “Jehovah is salvation” in the Greek it is

pronounced yea zous) died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁵ For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ (Greek meaning the anointed One) will rise first.” (1 Thessalonians 4:14-16) As God’s people, He calls us to believe future promise of Christ’s return. Not only must we believe in our head but also live lives that prove we believe God. Just as Abraham lived, brother Patrick please stand and read Genesis 22:1 to 14, “After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, ‘Abraham!’ And he said, ‘Here I am.’ ² He said, ‘Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.’ ³ So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac. And he cut the wood for the burnt offering and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. ⁴ On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place from afar. ⁵ Then Abraham said to his young men, Stay here with the donkey; I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you.’ ⁶ And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son. And he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So they went both of them together. ⁷ And Isaac said to his father Abraham, ‘My father!’ And he said, ‘Here I am, my son.’ He said, ‘Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?’ ⁸ Abraham said, ‘God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son.’ So they went both of them together. ⁹ When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built the altar there and laid the wood in order and bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. ¹⁰ Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son.

¹¹ But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, ‘Abraham, Abraham!’ And he said, ‘Here I am.’ ¹² He said, ‘Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me.’ ¹³ And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son. ¹⁴ So Abraham called the name of that place, ‘The LORD will provide’; as it is said to this day, ‘On the mount of the LORD it shall be provided.’ ” Amen! (I declare it is true) God’s promise is unchanging, namely, that through Abraham all the nations would be blessed. All the peoples or families of the earth will have representatives who will experience salvation and the resurrection. Abraham believed this promise God made to him.

Try to place yourself in Abraham’s shoes for a moment. God promises an offspring that will be famous and bless the nations. We know exactly what God was talking about from the scriptures. We know that Jesus was the seed of Abraham who was to be this blessing. Jesus had to come through the line of Abraham, which He does both by His mother and adopted father, Joseph. Even though Abraham had his doubts, he was faithful, it took years for Abraham’s son, Isaac to be born. Isaac’s name in Hebrew is (*Yitschaq*, *yits-khawk*, meaning one who laughs) The line of Abraham hinged on him and Sarah having a baby. This was a miracle in and of itself, thus Isaac’s name. Both Abraham and Sarah were way up in years and way past the age of having babies. Physically it could not be done. Nevertheless, the day came when infant cries were heard. Can you see the neighbors shaking their heads in amazement? Young Isaac, the son of promise, as he is called, begins to grow. He is now in his early teens and Abraham hears from God again. This time the Lord commands Abraham to take Isaac up on top a

mountain and sacrifice him? Even though this may not have made sense to Abraham, he is obedient and we observe his trust in God in an amazing way.

Abraham did not know exactly what was going on but he knew that the covenant God had made with him was unchanging and would come to pass. Again, the covenant promise was that through you, Abraham, will come a descendant that will be a blessing to the nations. Abraham knew that this covenant hinged on Isaac remaining alive in order to have children. What is even more amazing is that Abraham saw Jesus Christ in this promise. He did not know everything about Christ but I truly think he knew much more than we might think. Speaking to the Jews who questioned who He was, Jesus said, **“Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad.”** (John 8:56)

When Isaac was born Abraham saw the promise being fulfilled. Step one of God’s great promise had taken place right before his eyes. How did Abraham live in light of the promises of God, even when he did not fully understand? He immediately obeyed God’s Words. Reading from Genesis chapter 22 and continuing from where Patrick left off, ¹⁵“**And the angel** (*mal’ak* /mal-awk meaning messenger or in the Greek - ángelos) **of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven** ¹⁶**and said, ‘By myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son,** ¹⁷**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,** ¹⁸**and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice.’ ”** He proved his faith was genuine by acting on what God said. He obeyed God and so showed the world that his allegiance was to the Lord.

Not only did God make a covenant with Abraham which was proof number one that Isaac would be the beginning of many called by God, but also Jesus, the Messiah would come later. God swore an oath to Abraham that it would happen and as we read in verse 17 of Hebrews 6, “So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath ...” God swore upon Himself because there is nothing greater by which to make an oath, just as we read in Genesis 22, “By myself I have sworn, declares the LORD”. (v.16) Just as Abraham held fast to the promises of God, we too must hold fast.

I want you to think about, what would a Christian look like who lived in light of the God’s promise? A Christian who walks by faith in the promise would not be placing such a strong emphasis on the things of this world because there is a better world to come. May houses, cars, jobs, businesses not have a strong hold on us or the truth may be, that we would not have such a strong hold on material things of this world. My beloved, let us hold fast to God’s promises not our possessions. Hold fast and live a life that shows where your allegiance lies. Christ is the fulfillment of the promise. Hold fast to Him above all things. Jesus is unchanging and is the eternal promise, while we live in the world which is constantly changing and serves the evil one, we must hold firm to God’s Word.

God’s Sure and Steadfast Hope (v. 18-20)

God desires we have faith and trust in Him and His promises. He has given His unchanging and trustworthy Word. In His Word, He makes an unchanging oath swearing upon the greatest thing possible; Himself. The writer of Hebrews reminds us that God’s Word and His oath are sure because God cannot lie. Reading verses 18 to 20, “so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for

God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us. ¹⁹ We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, ²⁰ where Jesus (yea zous - Greek) has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek (mal·kee·tseh·dek – priest of the Most High God).

Here is the difference between man's promises and God's; Moses recorded the words of Balaam, a seer hired by Barak, king of Moab, to put a curse on the Israelites, but God forced him to bless rather curse Israel. This is recorded in the book known in Hebrew as "In the Wilderness" and we call the Book of Numbers, "God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it?" (Numbers 23:19) God tells us to examine the claims. See without a doubt; His great promises are supremely trustworthy and then hold fast to them.

When life seems spinning out of control, our hope is found in running to the Lord and His promises. When sickness or an unexpected hospital visit happens, run to Christ and tell Him that you are not sure what is going on, but you believe in Him and God's promises. Tell Jesus and yourself that you trust Him and His unchanging eternal Word. Think of calamity as a time to show the Lord and the world what you really believe about God. We can make very bold claims when everything is going our way but when events happen that are out of our hands, we must trust the Lord with every fiber of our being.

God, through His sovereign grace has given us these same promises. The Abrahamic Covenant continues through Christ. He reminds us just how important it is to have a sure promise to gain stability in this life. In the same way an anchor keeps a ship from drifting in a storm, so God's promises keep us from drifting

when we encounter storms and trouble in life. God's promises secure us in the deepest ocean of a world in chaos. The picture presented for us is one that we must catch. Normally, an anchor is used to keep a boat secure in its position in the ocean. Here it says that this anchor is hooked, not somewhere in the seafloor but, onto someone who has entered into the Holy of Holies on our behalf. On the cross when Jesus died, the Bible tells us that the veil of the temple was torn from top to bottom. It is Jesus, who is the secure solid rock that the Christian is anchored to, not a man-made temple.

Now the illustration goes a step further. After Jesus rose from the dead and ascended to heaven, our anchor was still hooked to Him. Through the blood of Christ, His people are forever in Christ. For all of God's people there is an eternal fixed chain that stretches, as it were, from Jesus to our souls. This chain cannot be severed or in any way broken as long as we believe in Jesus as our Lord and Savior. This is the image the writer wants us to see. Jesus is the solid unchanging rock we must be anchored to prevent us from drifting away from God with the world. As believers we are connected to Jesus, as a chain to an anchor and He goes before the Father on our behalf. His death did not simply make salvation a possibility but His death saved His people. Through the blood of Christ, we are forever secure.

The promise of God in the Old Covenant basically said, obey and you will be blessed, disobey and you will see the curse. Jesus, on the cross, purchased for us the obedience we need to secure God's eternal blessings. Jesus purchased the blessings of the New Covenant for us. At the Last Supper after eating the bread Jesus said, **"This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood."** (Luke 22:20) Jesus is the last and perfect sacrifice for sin – Jesus does not cover our sin, but when we repent, He takes it away and God remember it no more.

In the Christian life, God's elect are eternally secure on the one hand, on the other hand we are commanded to hold tight and persevere. By holding fast to Jesus Christ, the world sees where our affections lie. Unfortunately, most people, for most are unsaved, are chained to their sin or some earthly pleasure, whether it be money or a house or many other worldly distractions. I pray that as believers we are completely sold out to Christ. Our faith in God's eternal promises keep us forever. Thanks be to God that He is working in us, by His Spirit, to give us the power to hold fast to the promise which is Jesus Christ. Rather than holding fast to this world and all it has to offer, we must hold fast to Christ who is the fulfillment of God's promise. My beloved let us strive all the days we live on this earth to grow ever closer to Christ and deeper in our faith for God alone is worthy.

As the writer in closing his letter to the Hebrews gave this benediction, I now give it to you, [“Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant,²¹ equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.”](#) (Hebrews 13:20-21)