

Resting in the Promises of God

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 13 March 2023

Preacher: Tom Holland

[0 : 00] Throughout human history, God has made certain promises.

! God never violates His word, and He never violates His promises.! And we can actually rest secure! in the promises of God.

I want to read some of these promises found in the 6th chapter of Hebrews. I'm going to be reading starting in verse 13 to the end of the chapter, verse 20.

For when God made the promise to Abraham, since he could swear by no one greater, he swore by himself, saying, I will surely bless you and I will surely multiply you.

And so, having patiently waited, he obtained the promise. For men swear by one greater than themselves, and with them an oath given as confirmation is an end of every dispute.

[1 : 22] In the same way, God, desiring even more to show to the heirs of the promise, the unchangeableness of His purpose, interposed with an oath, so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have taken refuge would have strong encouragement to take hold of the hope set before us.

The hope we have as an anchor of the hope, both sure and steadfast, and one which enters within the veil where Jesus has entered as a forerunner for us, having become a high priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek.

Since the inception of our study of Hebrews, we have seen the writer urge his listeners to abandon the old covenant and embrace the new covenant.

Now, the old ways were not wrong. I've said that many times, but they were incomplete. The writer was asking the Hebrew church to leave behind the forms and rituals and ceremonies and practices covered in the Old Testament.

There was, however, a recurring theme in the Old Testament that the writer, and obviously the Holy Spirit, did not want the church to abandon.

[3 : 07] And that was the message of faith, which is found in the Old Covenant. In both covenants, old and new, faith is always paramount.

Always. And the great example of a man of faith in the Old Testament was Abraham. He's even referred to twice in the New Testament as the father of faith.

And Abraham serves as the model of faith even down to our day. And that's especially important for Christians under persecution.

They have Abraham as their father. That fact should stir the hearts of Jews. Quite frankly, it should stir the hearts of Muslims who considered Abraham a prophet, as they did Jesus and others, Isaac. Although it should stir the hearts of Muslims, it doesn't seem to, at least in our day. So just how faithful was Abraham? Well, to answer that question, we've got a supreme example.

[4 : 30] And we can reflect on back to Isaac, his son. Remember the journey up the mountain known as Moriah? God had paid a visit to Abraham and instructed him to go to the mountain, Mount Moriah, and kill his only son, Isaac.

And when Abraham made that journey, I can only imagine that each step was weighed on him and it brought Isaac closer to death.

And I'm certain that throughout the journey, Abraham turned over and over in his mind the promises of God. God had made him certain promises.

And one promise was that he would be the father of many nations through Isaac. And now he's got instructions to go up on that mountain and kill his son Isaac.

And Abraham had to have been thinking every step of that journey, how's God going to be able to fulfill his promise to Abraham if Isaac's dead?

[6 : 01] How's he going to do that? And finally, Abraham came to this conclusion. He reasoned that God was going to raise Isaac from the dead in order to keep his promise in his word that he would make Abraham a great nation through his son Isaac.

So they got up to the mountain and trusting God by faith. Abraham went so far as to raise the knife, ready to plunge it into his son.

And of course, if we've ever been to Sunday school when we were kids, we know that God stopped the process. We also know that God provided a substitute in place of Isaac.

Abraham looks up and there's a ram. And you remember what he was caught in? A thicket. That ram had on him a crown of thorns in that thicket.

And he was a marvelous portrait of Christ whom God would slay generations later. He wouldn't stay the hand of the Jewish leadership that condemned him or the Romans that carried it out.

[7 : 32] Paul was a great champion of Abraham's faith. He devoted the fourth chapter of Romans to the faith of Abraham.

And he noted that Abraham was saved, justified, and counted righteous by God based upon his faith.

So when we look at the life of Abraham, we note two things. First, we see how far he came considering his past.

And second, we see that salvation is truly of the Lord and it does not depend in any way upon ourselves.

I don't know about you, but that thrills my heart. Abraham, whose name of course was originally Abram, was raised in what is today modern day Iraq.

[8 : 36] some of it spilling over into Iran, but mostly Iraq. And he was raised in that area, Ur of the Chaldees.

And it was a culture of pagan moon worshipers. That's how they worshiped. Abraham. And Abraham was part of that.

Can you imagine little Abram, he goes out in the desert, probably with his mother or father, probably his father, and he bows down and chants as the moon rises.

And can you imagine little Abram and his family offering sacrifices to the full moon? That's what Abram did as a child and as a young man.

And it's little doubt that there were other false gods in their pantheon of worship. And for reasons that are known but to our righteous God, God looked down and graced Abram with salvation.

[10 : 04] Why did he do that? Well, the short answer is no one knows. Not even Abram.

Until he, I guess, got to glory. The longer answer is nobody knows. And every now and then someone will come along and they say, well, I can tell you why God saved Abraham or I can tell you why he saved Saul of Tarsus.

Mark it down. They don't know. They don't know. But we can bring that a little closer to home. I can bring it very close to home.

Why did God look down on you and me with favor? Speaking for myself, I have not the slightest clue why God chose to save me other than to say it was not because He saw something good in me.

I can assure you of that. without going into details. God spoke to Abram and told him to leave his country, to leave his family group, travel first to Haran and then on to the land of Canaan.

[11 : 34] The only guarantee that Abram had was God's word, so by faith he obeyed. The Lord promised that He would give the land of Canaan to Abram and his descendants forever.

He also promised that through Abraham all of the families of the earth would be blessed. So we have this picture of Abraham trusting God.

Now, there's a lot of philosophers that have written and commented on this. One such was a Christian philosopher. We think he was a believer by the name of Kierkegaard.

But he coined a phrase. He said, Abraham responded to all this by blind faith. We have probably all heard that phrase, a blind leap of faith.

that comes from the story concerning Abraham. But did Abraham exercise blind faith and just take this leap off the cliff hoping that God would save him?

[12 : 54] I remember the writings of Francis Schaeffer that I deeply respected. Dr. Schaeffer wrote and said, there was nothing blind about it. Abraham had talked to God. Abraham had met God.

God had given him certain promises and God had fulfilled them. He said, there wasn't anything blind at all. He knew he was a promise keeping God.

Our passage today gives four reasons why Abraham and every believer should trust God. We trust God because of His person, His purpose, His pledge, and His priest.

All four start with P's. That's the first year of seminary right there. And first we're going to look at His person. Again in Hebrews 6, 13 to 15.

For when God made the promise to Abraham, since He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself saying, I will surely bless you and I will surely multiply you.

[14 : 04] And so having patiently waited, He obtained the promise. God cannot lie. God invented truth.

God has no capacity to lie. So whatever God says, it is absolute truth. Absolute truth.

There's no mixture of error. There's not even a word or a phrase that's been uttered by God that He didn't intend to utter. And when God gives a promise, He fulfills it based upon who He is.

Whatever God does is right. Whatever He says is true. When God, mark this thought down, fellas, when God gives a promise, He will not only keep it, He must keep it.

He must keep it. If God ever violates a promise, that is quite a Pandora's box that has just opened.

The people in this Hebrew church who are now reading this letter recognize the truth of the gospel, but some of them are still afraid to let go of their 1600-year-old traditions in Judaism.

[15 : 36] Can Jesus, the Messiah, really save them or do we need to have some level of input in the process? And it's the same dilemma we deal with today.

It's the same thing. But the bottom line is this. God is trustworthy. Paul reminded Titus the hope of eternal life which God who cannot lie promised long ages ago.

That's in the second chapter verse 1 of Titus. James spoke of the utter dependability of God and the fact that God never deviates from either His will or from His promises.

And not only does He not do that, it would be impossible for Him to do that. He can't do that and remain God. James 1 17 says, Every good thing bestowed and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.

The message to the Hebrew church and the message to Highland Park Baptist Church is that God has promised that all who come to Him through His Son will be saved.

[17 : 14] Therefore, it is impossible for anyone who trusts in Christ not to be saved or to lose his or her salvation once it is attained. Because it's based on a promise of God.

It's based on His promise, His faithfulness. But as many as received Him, to them gave He the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name.

Let us briefly look at one promise God gave Abraham. He told Abraham he would multiply his descendants. There's a legitimate question concerning that.

Has God kept that promise? On earth today, there are some 14 million physical descendants of Abraham.

In other words, they have Abraham's DNA. They have His blood flowing through their veins.

Additionally, there are millions of spiritual descendants of Abraham.

[18 : 24] That's the Gentiles that were grafted in to Abraham. Abraham is our spiritual father. And I haven't even included the Arabic descendants of Abraham through his son Ishmael that he had with the handmaiden Hagar.

I'm sorry, never marry a woman named Hagar. That's just personal. God has kept His promise.

When it comes to the promises of God, we have nothing to fear because we can trust the person of God.

As you read the Word, you find those promises He's made to you. And if you say, well, I never really considered that, well, consider it. It's important.

Next, we have His purpose. What is the purpose of God? God's will be to redeem a lost world.

Hebrews 6.14, I will surely bless you and shall multiply you.

And like Abraham, we find our security not only in the promises of God, but also in His purpose.

God's God's God called Abraham, or Abraham, later Abraham, out of His home country, it was to fulfill a divine plan.

[19 : 56] God saved us, and that was to fulfill a divine plan. In some of our cases, it may still be unfolding. And God established a covenant with Abraham.

A covenant is a relationship based upon a promise. And sometimes covenants are two-sided. I'll give you an example.

The Mosaic covenant is a two-sided covenant. God said, if you obey, I will bless you.

If you disobey, I will curse you. Two sides. That's a two-sided covenant. The Abrahamic covenant was one-sided.

In other words, it was an unconditional covenant, a promise with no conditions attached.

[21 : 03] Now, the way covenants were made in Abraham's day was for the two parties that were going to enter into the covenant would kill some innocent animals.

The death of innocent animals are always a portrait of Christ because he was innocent. But they would go and kill some innocent animals and then they would take those and cut them into pieces and they would spread them out.

And it was very bloody. Some of the animals were large, some small. They'd spread them out. And then both parties passed together between the parts.

In effect, they were saying, we make this covenant together by the promise of blood. But when God made the covenant with Abraham, animals were killed, they were cut into pieces, and then when it was time to pass through, God caused a deep sleep to come over Abraham.

And when Abraham went to sleep, or passed out, we don't know, God alone walked among the pieces.

[22 : 44] Why? Because God's promises did not depend upon Abraham. God's promises to every believer in this room doesn't depend on you.

It depends on God's faithfulness. God's is he a truth-speaking God, and he is. Abraham, God didn't depend on Abraham to keep the promise, but Abraham was the beneficiary of the promises, not the keeper of them.

God's love. When the Lord Jesus Christ had his flesh cut to pieces from the Roman whip and he was crucified on the cross where his blood ran down, we didn't pass through the pieces.

we weren't even born yet. But God saw it all and he passed through declaring that it pleased him, God the Father, to put Jesus to death for our sakes.

By the way, that's Isaiah 53.10 if you want to look that up. the point of all this is the meaning of Hebrews 6.13-20.

[24 : 21] God's promise does not depend on anyone's faithfulness but his own. God's reputation for truthfulness was at stake in keeping his pledge to Abraham and to his physical and spiritual descendants and that includes us beloved.

And then we can trust God because of his pledge. We trust him because he made a pledge.

This is Hebrews 13, the second part, and then 16-17. Since he could swear by no one greater, he swore by himself. Can you imagine God saying, I swear by God?

That's essentially what it means. For men swear by one greater than themselves and with them an oath given as confirmation is an end of every dispute.

In the same way, God desiring even more to show the heirs of the promise, the unchangeableness of his purpose interposed with an oath. We are secure in the promises of God God because he has given it to us as a pledge.

[25 : 44] During the time of the New Testament, it was common to make an oath. Once an oath was made, it guided the future aspects of that relationship.

There was no arguing and no disputing. the oath trumped everything. The oath was made to be kept. I was thinking something happened to the police department.

I don't know if it even fits here. I had an officer one time. He finally quit in frustration, but he was mad he hadn't been promoted.

He'd been there three years. I had guys that were 27 years and never been promoted. He was a good officer, but he said, I just don't think I'm going to work that hard because the city's not backing us up with pay raises or anything.

I mean, if someone would tell me why we should go out here and work so hard, I said, you want me to answer that or are you just talking? No, I want an answer. I said, okay, you took an oath. You raised your hand and you took an oath.

[27 : 02] He said, you sure are. I sure did. You're right. God did not need to make an oath. His spoken word is his oath.

Everything he says is true. But to be an example to men weak of faith, God swore a promise and he swore it by and to himself.

God could not make an oath to anyone or anything greater than himself for the simple reason that nothing greater than God exists. So he swore to himself and when he did so, he bound himself to keep his word.

And guys, I'm not directing this at anybody here because I don't know, but if you're struggling over some of the promises of God as a believer of his, is he really going to keep that?

Wrap your head around these words. God could not make an oath to anyone greater than himself because there is no one greater than God.

[28 : 12] So he swore to himself and when he did so, he bound himself to keep his word absolutely. God has made a pledge to every believer and that pledge is the Holy Spirit.

Paul spoke of the pledge of the Holy Spirit three times in his inspired writings. He did that in 2 Corinthians chapter 1 and in Ephesians chapter 1 and in 2 Corinthians chapter 5.

Now in Greek, the word for pledge is the same word used for an engagement ring. That is the deposit you give a woman pledging to marry her.

God swears to us an oath and then he sends the Holy Spirit as the engagement ring or promise to keep his oath.

The Holy Spirit's an engagement ring. Hebrews 6 18, in order that by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have taken refuge would have strong encouragement to take hold of the hope set before us.

[29 : 32] The two unchangeable things are God's promise and God's pledge. They're immutable which means unchangeable.

God has promised to send his son to be the savior and he did so. he kept his promise. He promised that his son was going to die for the atoning sins of his people and he did.

He promised the sun would rise in three days and he did. God also made a pledge that all who come to him will be saved and no one who comes to him will be cast out.

And he'll keep that pledge. People always say wait a minute what about Judas? Judas wasn't a believer. He was never a believer. He gave ample evidence of that. And he speaks in this very passage of the hope set before us.

What's the hope he set before us? His son God has a priest. Jesus Christ and the gospel, the good news that Jesus brought when he came to this earth.

[30 : 57] And then finally, his priest. We can trust God because of his person, his purpose, his pledge, and finally his priest.

God has a priest? Yeah. Hebrews 6, 19 to 20. This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast, and one which enters within the veil where Jesus has entered as a forerunner for us, having become a high priest.

Who became the high priest? Jesus. Forever, according to the order of Melchizedek. God has given us a high priest.

I always differentiate that when I type it out. I use a capital H, capital P to differentiate from the thousands of human high priests that all failed and sinned. But it is essential that God provide for us a high priest.

Our high priest is the very anchor of our souls and is the one that prevents us from drifting away from God and drifting into danger. Jesus, when He was crucified and He ascended, He entered the Holy of Holies where the sacrifice is made.

[32 : 27] He did it once for all because the sacrifice was sufficient for all time. He's not offering the same sacrifice over and over.

we are now secure within the veil, and that's the heavenly veil, where we dwell in the mind of God in the eternal Holy of Holies.

That is the place where God the Father dwells with His Son. It is there that Jesus stands guard over us. There is an accuser of the brethren, and we know that Satan, and we have Jesus, our advocate, and that's the Greek word for defense attorney, who intercedes for us day and night.

He never sleeps, He never slumbers. People ask me when you wake up at three in the morning, you never say, I wonder what Jesus is doing, He's interceding. He's interceding.

And all of this was from the order of Melchizedek. Boy, that's interesting.

[33 : 43] Who was Melchizedek, and what is the order that Melchizedek was a member of? Well, it's very interesting.

And in fact, it's so interesting, that's where we're going to pick it up next time. We're not going to get into that, but He is one of my favorite persons, so we'll lead off with Him next time.

Let's close with a word of prayer, brothers.