

Main Idea: In Hebrews 6:13-20 we learn about the importance of living by God’s promises. We are called to promise-based living. There is no other way to please God, nor experience stability in our lives apart from living in light of God’s promises. Yet when we do so, we discover that we have an amazing *anchor for our soul*.

- I. Ponder what God did for Abraham (13-15).
 - A. God made a promise (13a).
 - B. God confirmed His promise with an oath (13b-14).
 - C. God delivered what He promised (15).
 1. Abraham waited patiently on God.
 2. Abraham received abundantly from God.
- II. Ponder what God did for us (16-20).
 - A. God made a promise (16-17a).
 - B. God confirmed His promise with an oath (17b-18).
 1. He wants us to have certainty (17).
 2. He wants us to have courage (18).
 - a. We must make Him our refuge.
 - b. We must live in light of our future hope.
 - C. God delivered and will deliver what He promised (19-20).
 1. We have an anchor for the soul (19a).
 2. We have access into God’s presence (19b).
 3. We have a forerunner (20a).
 4. We have a high priest (20b).

Personal application: How then should we live?

1. We must refuse to live by our feelings.
2. We must choose to live by what God has said in His Word.
3. We must realize that those who are in Christ will soon be with Christ forever.

This morning’s message is entitled, “*The Soul’s Anchor: The Promises of God.*” We’re returning to Hebrews 6 and it’s here that we find this significant phrase, “anchor of the soul.” It’s in verse 19 which says, “We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul.” If there’s anything we need these days, it’s an anchor for the soul. And what is this anchor? I’m thrilled to be able to show you the answer in today’s text.

Scripture Reading: Hebrews 6:13-20

A few years ago I received some communication that had the potential to change my life in a massive way. At least, that’s what the email said. Let me read it to you.

Dear Sir: My name is Charles Forrester, executor of the estate of the late Sir William Stanley Garthwright of Nigeria. Upon orders by Sir Garthwright given prior to his death last month after a prolonged illness, I am contacting you with notification that you have been named primary benefactor of his estate, and upon acknowledgement of your acceptance of this honor you will receive the sum of Ten Million US Dollars. If you are so inclined, please hit the reply button on this email, submit the necessary personal information, including bank information, and you will receive notice within the week concerning the deposit of the above-mentioned money into your bank account. Sincerely, Charles Forrester, LLD

Have you ever received an email offer like this? How long did it take you to hit the delete key? Not long, I would presume. It’s easy to be wary of promises when the source is suspect. When the credibility of the *person* making the promise is questionable so consequently is the credibility of the *promise*.

These days it’s easy to be cynical when we hear a promise from someone. When we have reason to question the credibility of the person making the promise, we naturally question the credibility of the promise itself. And the fact that we hear broken promises so often just adds to the skepticism.

**Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

Seldom does someone go to the marriage altar intending to break the promise. But for every ten couples that say “I do,” about five of the couples *don't* these days, according to statistics.

And it's not just in marriages. It's in the workplace too, where employers make and then break promises to their employees, and employees to their employers. Broken promises hit us from all sides, it seems, with coaches breaking promises to their teams, athletes breaking promises to their fans, politicians breaking promises to their constituents, and even preachers violating the trust of their parishioners.

Quite frankly, we're living in a day when we just don't know whose promises we can trust. Which causes a Bible verse like the following to grab our attention, the final words of last week's text in Hebrews 6:12 (NIV), “We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.”

Notice the charge. We're supposed to *imitate* those who *through faith* inherit what *has been promised*. That's interesting. It indicates that Christ-followers are called to a *promise-based life*. Whose promises does the writer have in mind? God's promises.

The Bible teaches us that if we want to go to heaven, we must believe a promise made by God. “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved (Acts 16:31).” And we learn in the book of Hebrews that if we want to live presently in a God-pleasing way, we must embrace and live in light of God's *promise*. Specifically, the writer says to “imitate” people who *inherit the promises*.

That raises some questions, doesn't it? What specific people are we supposed to imitate? What promises has God made that we're supposed to believe? What makes God's promises different from the broken promises of man, specifically, what makes God's promises *trustworthy*? We'll find the answers to these important questions in the passage before us.

Allow me to state the big idea, and then we'll explore the particulars. In Hebrews 6:13-20 we learn that there is no other way to please God, nor experience stability in our lives apart from *living in light of His promises*. I'll repeat, we are called to *promise-based living*. When we do so, we begin to experience one of the most wonderful, life-transforming benefits God has given us, an *anchor for our soul*. That's the big idea.

Now the particulars. Our text invites us to ponder what God did for two parties. First, according to verses 13-15, we need to ponder the example of a person who lived a promise-based life many years ago and is someone we ought to imitate. The second is more personal. According to verses 16-20, we need to ponder what God did *for us*.

I. Ponder what God did for Abraham (13-15).

Notice verses 13-15, “For when God made a promise to Abraham, 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.”

In many ways it all started with Abraham. Two thousand years before Christ, God did three things in the life of a man named Abraham. Note the pattern carefully, for we'll see it again in a few verses.

A. God made a promise (13a).

B. God confirmed His promise with an oath (13b-14).

C. God delivered what He promised (15).

Verse 13 says, “For when God made a promise to Abraham.” God is the initiator. Abraham wasn't seeking God. He was a polytheist. But God sought him and made a promise to him.

What was the promise? Literally, our text says, “Blessing indeed I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you.” There's two parts. There's the promise of blessing and multiplication. I will bless you. And I will multiply you.

When did God say that? Actually, God made a series of promises to Abraham in Genesis. We actually find seven promise-texts in Genesis (12:1-3; 12:7; 13:14-17; 15:4-5; 17:1-2; 18:10; and 22:15-18). These promises are then summed up in the final promise-text, which is the one the writer of Hebrews cites here. He says that God told Abraham, “I will surely bless you and give you many descendants (NIV).”

It’s significant *when* God said that. The writer of Hebrews is quoting from Genesis 22:17. Do you remember what happened in Genesis 22? One you’ve seen it, it’s hard to forget. That’s the chapter that records the greatest test Abraham ever faced in his life, when God told him to sacrifice his own son, Isaac, on an altar. That instruction made no logical sense to Abraham. He no doubt thought back to the decades of childlessness and the promise that God first gave him.

He was known as Abram at the time, and he and his wife Sarai were childless when God announced in Genesis 12:2, “I will make you into a great nation.” But how could he become a great nation when at present he didn’t even have a son?

So Abram left Ur and traveled to the land of Canaan. Then God announced in Genesis 12:7, “To your offspring I will give this land.” But there was no offspring, not yet. God elaborated on the promise once again in Genesis 13:16, “I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth.” But still there was no son, no potential for an offspring to inherit the land.

One night some time later God took Abraham outside and pointed his attention to the stars and declared these words in Genesis 15:5. “Count the stars...so shall your offspring be.” But still, no son.

When Abraham was ninety-nine years old, the LORD repeated His promise and said in Genesis 17:7-8, “I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you. The whole land of Canaan, where you are now an alien, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you; and I will be their God.” Another staggering promise. Still no son.

Finally, the following year, when Abraham was one hundred years old and Sarah was ninety, God fulfilled His promise and gave the couple the son of promise. Abraham named him Isaac, meaning “he laughs”. Indeed, there was much laughter! Promise fulfilled! They have the promised son!

When God gives us a good gift, He often tests us to make sure we love Him more than the gift. One day God told Abraham to take his son, Isaac, go to Moriah, and sacrifice him as a burnt offering. The instructions surely made no sense to Abraham. Isaac was the son of promise and through him God said He was going to have descendants as numerous as the stars. But how would that happen if he killed Isaac? As William Lane surmises, “When he was commanded to sacrifice Isaac it must have seemed that he was turning his back upon his entire future.”¹

Yet because he believed God, Abraham obeyed God. He raised the knife, convinced that “God was able even to raise him from the dead,” as Hebrews 11:19 says. But God intervened. “Do not lay a hand on the boy,” said Yahweh in Genesis 22:12. “Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son.”

“Against all hope,” says Paul in Romans 4:18, “Abraham in hope believed...”²

¹ William Lane, p. 97.

² According to Hebrews 11:19, “Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death.”

And then, as Genesis 22:17 indicates, God not only repeated the promise that is recorded in our text in Hebrews 6, but He confirmed the promise with an oath, declaring, “I will surely bless you and give you many descendants.”

Hebrews says that when making this promise, God *swore by Himself*. This raises two questions. First, why did God swear? And two, why did He swear by Himself? The text answers the second question explicitly, stating that He swore by Himself since there was no one greater to swear by. Think about that. There is no one greater than God. But we’re not talking about God in the generic. There’s no one greater than the God who blessed Abraham with a son, and ultimately blessed Abraham with a descendant named Jesus, who is this God’s Son in the flesh.

Now the first question. Why did God take an oath in the first place and swear by Himself? The question of oath-taking reminds me of when I was a child. Seven year old little boys love to make brash claims to impress their buddies. For example, I had a neighbor Brett who said he built a spaceship to send his monkey to the moon. And whenever one of my friends made an outlandish claim that raised eyebrows in the rest of the group, he would quickly state, “I swear on a stack of Bibles! It’s true!”

And we all knew what that meant. Taking an oath meant, “Hey guys, I may have pulled your leg before. But this time I’m telling the truth!”

Yet God doesn’t just *tell* the truth. He is truth. That’s His nature. He cannot lie. He cannot pull your leg when He speaks. So then, why would He take an oath? And the answer is this. It’s not for His sake, but ours.

Philip Hughes explains, “That God should bind himself by an oath is a reflection not on the divine credibility but on the perversion of the human situation. God’s oath...is a condescension to human frailty.”³

This is the world in which we live, where human beings don’t always follow through with what they say. We understand human frailty. I regretfully remember when the Lord blessed us with our second child, Katie, and telling Sherry, “Honey, I’ll get up with the baby tonight so you can sleep.” And when I gave her that promise (and it happened more than once) my intentions were good. Yet still I didn’t hear the crying and slept through the night.

It’s because we’re prone to make hollow promises that we add, “Oh, I swear I will this time.” That’s the kind of thing Jesus forbid us to do when He said, “Do not swear. Let your ‘yes’ be ‘yes’ and your ‘no’ be ‘no’ (Matt. 5:36).”

We must see God’s grace in this. To Abraham God made a promise. Then He confirmed His promise with an oath. He didn’t have to take an oath. But He graciously did take the oath. For our sake. And in due time He delivered what He promised.

How did Abraham respond to God’s promise? Verse 15 says, he *waited*.

1. *Abraham waited patiently on God.* How long? Abraham waited on God for twenty-five years before his son Isaac was born, long after Sarah should have born a child humanly speaking. And Abraham’s grandchildren weren’t born for another sixty years (Gen. 25:26), just fifteen years before he died at the age of 175 (Gen. 25:7).⁴ Yes, indeed, Abraham had to be patient to see the fulfillment of God’s promise.

Do you like to wait? I don’t know anyone who does. Waiting isn’t natural. But it is essential to promise-based living. And thankfully, God gives this ability to His people. It’s true. Patience is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23).

In his helpful book, *Waiting Isn’t a Waste*, Mark Vroegop explains, “Disdain for waiting is connected to a desire for control.” He’s right. The solution is to remember, as Vroegop explains, “God works as I wait.” Here’s another helpful sentence. “The aim of

³ Philip Hughes, p. 229.

⁴ Observation by Leon Morris, p. 59.

this book has been to help us wait on God by learning to live *on what we know to be true about God when we don't know what's true about our lives.*"⁵

But let's not equate waiting with passivity. While Abraham was waiting on God, he was also busy living for God, in obedience to God, all the while anticipating that God would do what He promised to do.

So Abraham waited patiently on God. Consequently, this is what happened.

2. *Abraham received abundantly from God.* Verse 15 concludes, "And thus Abraham, having patiently waited, obtained the promise." There it is. The promise. The chosen son. The link to the chosen family that would come, and the chosen nation, and ultimately the chosen Messiah and a chosen people from every nation. This was the plan of God and it all began with the promise.

Now remember the point of this. The writer is giving his readers a role model. He told them in verse 12 to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises. He just gave them Abraham as "exhibit a". Now it's time to make it personal.

II. Ponder what God did for us (16-20).

Keep in mind the pattern. *God made a promise. God confirmed His promise with an oath. At just the right time God delivered what He promised.* That's what He did with Abraham, and it's the same way He works with us, as we'll see in verses 16-20.

Beloved, the Christian life is a call to a promise-based life. In the Bible God gives us promises, many promises. And He expects us to believe His promises and live by them. Here's a sampling.

*The *promise of salvation*—1 John 5:12 "He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life."

*The *promise of victory in temptation*—1 Corinthians 10:13 "No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it."

*The *promise of wisdom*—James 1:5 "If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him."

*The *promise of forgiveness*—1 John 1:9

*The *promise of answered prayer*—1 John 5:14-15

*The *promise of power* for witnessing—Acts 1:8

*The *promise of conviction*—John 16:8-11

*The *promise of illumination*—John 16:13

*The *promise of sufficiency*—2 Peter 1:3

*The *promise of hardship*—2 Timothy 3:12

*The *promise that Christ will build His church*—Matthew 16:18

*The *promise that Christ will return*—Revelation 22:20

Yes indeed, the Bible is filled with divine promises! Now how does the promise-based life work for us? The same way it worked with Abraham, says the writer.

A. God made a promise (16-17a). Notice verse 16, "For people swear by something greater than themselves, and in all their disputes an oath is final for confirmation."⁶ As I mentioned earlier, this is why we use oaths. To establish the veracity of our words, we swear by an authority greater than ourselves.⁷

In a court of law the question is asked, "Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?" When a person says, "I do," he or she

⁵ Mark Vroegop, *Waiting Isn't a Waste*, pp. 105-9.

⁶ The NIV reads, "And the oath confirms what is said and puts an end to all argument."

⁷ Verse 16 in the *Young's Literal* states, "an end of all controversy to them for confirmation is the oath."

is confirming the validity of the statements that will be uttered in that courtroom. That's the purpose of an oath.

According to verse 17, this is what God did. "So when God," says the writer. God not only *made* a promise, but in addition *confirmed* His promise. How? With an oath.

B. God confirmed His promise with an oath (17b-18). Verse 17 again, "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." Yes, said God. It's the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Again, God didn't have to take an oath, for His words are true *period*. But He did take an oath, and He did so for our sake.

How so? How is it for our sake? In this way. He used the oath to provide us with two outcomes. He wants us to have *certainty* and *courage*.

1. *He wants us to have certainty (17).* Verse 17 says that God *wanted* something. The NIV says, "God *wanted* to make the unchanging nature of his purpose *very clear* to the heirs of what was promised."⁸ The Greek language has two words that can be translated 'wanted' (ESV 'desired'). The writer here uses the stronger word (*boulomenos*) rather than the weaker (*thelein*) to emphasize that this is not merely a whim nor wish for God, but a determined resolve.⁹

And what is it that God wanted? He wanted to show something to His people (who are called His "heirs" here). He wanted to show His heirs the unchanging nature of His purpose, and He wanted to make it very clear for them ("more convincingly" says the ESV). That's why He made promises to them, and it's also why He confirmed those promises with an oath.

Stop and chew on that for a moment. God wants His people to trust His Word, to have certainty that what He says is true. Here's the problem. The world around us says that's impossible. We can't have truth, nor certainty. This is the battle that's raging these days. It's a battle that's affecting all of us and it's being fed by the mysticism, relativism, and skepticism of post-modern thinking. People are questioning the certainty of all propositional statements. We're told that absolute truth cannot be known, not with certainty. And that belief produces a disastrous outcome. It fractures relationships, with God and each other.

Friends, look carefully at the strong language in Hebrews 6:17. This revelation of God says that God is truthful and that He has taken steps to make truth known to His heirs. He has given His heirs (His people, His children) promises. Certain promises. Reliable promises. Where are these promises? They are recorded in the book He instructed His prophets and apostles and their associates to write.

Furthermore, He took an oath to confirm the validity of His promises. Again, His word by itself is enough, but His oath makes it doubly sure *for our sake*. He did this so that we, His people, might have *certainty*.

My friends, God wants you and me to have certainty. That's why He gave us the Scriptures, His self-revelation, and more specifically, it's why He gave us the promises recorded in His Word. Ultimately, it's why He sent His Son into the world, the One who is the main character in the Scriptures and the focal point of the promises therein, the One who said clearly, "I am the way, the *truth*, and the life (John 14:6)."

He wants us to have certainty. But not just certainty. A second outcome too.

2. *He wants us to have courage (18).* We see this in verse 18, "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."

⁸ Proverbs 19:21 "Many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is the LORD's purpose that prevails."

⁹ Observation by Donald Guthrie, p. 151.

Put on your thinking caps and follow the line of reasoning here. *God did this*, says the NIV. Did what? What we were just told in verse 17, that God gave promises to His heirs and confirmed His promises with an oath. God did this *so that, by two unchangeable things*. What two unchangeable things? God's promise and God's oath. These two things cannot change.

By these two unchangeable things *in which it is impossible for God to lie*. God is omnipotent, yes, but here's something He *cannot* do. It is impossible for Him to lie.¹⁰ Therefore, it is impossible for Him to break either His promise or His oath.

God did this so that the following would occur. *We who have fled to take hold of the hope offered to us may be greatly encouraged*. There's the intended outcome, the purpose God had in mind when He gave us His promises and confirmed them by His oath. He wants His people to be *greatly encouraged*. To have *strong encouragement*, says the ESV. That we might have *a strong consolation*, says the AV.

We've seen this word before in Hebrews, haven't we? To encourage is to "put courage into" someone. That's God's intent. It's why He gave His promises to His people. He wants His heirs to have courage.

Remember, this is exactly what the first readers of Hebrews needed. They were facing strong opposition to their faith, and some were considering walking away from Christ and His church. What they needed was courage. And so, the writer reminds them of the very thing that could put courage into their hearts. The promises of God.

This doesn't happen automatically. There are two steps we must take, according to this verse, if we want to experience courage in our own battles.

a. We must make Him our refuge. I love the description of a Christian that the writer gives us in verse 18. In the ESV, he says Christ-followers are people who have "fled for refuge...to hold fast to the hope." In the NIV, we are those who have "fled to take hold of the hope offered to us". That's who we are.

Yet this raises some questions, starting with this one. Why did we flee? The answer? Because we were in danger. Why were we in danger? The answer? Because of sin, inherited sin, our sin, and perhaps the sins of others committed against us. Where did we flee? The answer? To the One who offered hope to us, the Savior Himself, Jesus Christ.

Ponder the implication of those words. A Christian is a person who has *fled*. He has run *from* something, but also *to* something. He has fled from hopelessness to the God of hope. Commenting on the writer's choice of this verb John Calvin writes, "By this he means that we do not really trust God except when we are stripped of all other defense and take refuge in His firm promise, finding there our only asylum."¹¹

My friend, to become a Christian, we must run from something to something. Has that happened in your life? Have you fled from your own sinful way of living and run into the arms of the One who offers forgiveness and life eternal? Is this running from and running to continuing to happen in your life? This is the where the experience of courage begins, according to our text. We must flee to Christ and make Him our refuge.

b. We must live in light of our future hope. We fled, verse 18 says, *to take hold of the hope* offered to us (NIV), *to hold fast to the hope set before us* (ESV), *to lay hold upon the hope set before us* (AV). This word *hope* is so significant. We're talking about something that's in the future, but the assurance of it affects how we live now.

Think of a farmer. He knows what living in light of a future hope is all about. He knows that if he puts seed in the ground in the spring there will be a harvest in the fall, should God permit. And the proof that he truly believes that hope? It's not that he looks

¹⁰ See also Titus 1:1

¹¹ John Calvin, p. 85.

out at the field in April and merely *says*, “Yes, I believe there will be a harvest in the fall.” If he truly believes what he is saying, he will get to work and plant his seed.

This is the Christian life, brothers and sisters. We choose to live in light of a future hope. This is the essence of promise-based living. We live not for what we can *see*, but for what we can’t see but know to be reality.

And why do we know it’s reality? Because as was the case with Abraham, so with us. God made a promise. God confirmed His promise with an oath. God delivered and *will deliver* what He promised.

C. God delivered and will deliver what He promised (19-20). Both are true. God *has* delivered (past tense) and *will* deliver (future tense) what He promised. It must be true. He cannot lie.

Now watch how the writer ties all this together in verses 19-20. In the ESV. “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 has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.”

This is life-changing truth, dear friends. This will fortify the anxious heart, embolden the fearful soul, energize the weary mind. When we choose to live by God’s promises, we experience four hope-giving benefits.

1. *We have an anchor for the soul (19a).* “We have *this* as a sure and steadfast anchor.” In the immediate context “this” refers to “this hope”. In the broader context, “this” refers to everything he has just said about God and His promises.

We have *this* as an anchor. The verse says our anchor is both ‘firm’ and ‘secure.’ “Westcott takes ‘firm’ (*asphales*) to mean that hope is ‘undisturbed by outward influences’ and ‘secure’ (*bebaia*) as ‘firm in its inherent character.’”¹²

The anchor (like the fish) was a popular symbol for the early Christians. I’ve read that at least sixty-six pictures of anchors have been found in the catacombs.¹³ Why were they fascinated by the anchor?

My earliest experience with an anchor was on a lake where my grandparents lived. I was a little boy and when we visited my grandparents in the summer, I loved to go out in their little red rowboat. I quickly learned that the boat didn’t stay where you stopped rowing. It drifted. Yet there was one thing I had in the boat that could remedy the problem. An anchor. So when you go fishing, you drop your anchor in the water to keep the boat from drifting from your desired site.

No wonder our forefathers loved the anchor symbol. We are so vulnerable, beloved. Left to ourselves we’d never make it in this storm-filled world. But God has given us exactly what we need, an anchor.

And not just any anchor. It’s an anchor *of the soul*. Your soul is where you’re vulnerable, and so am I. The problem isn’t out there. It’s in here. And what we need, we have. An anchor for the soul in the promises of God.

“This spiritual anchor is different from material anchors on ships,” explains Warren Wiersbe. “For one thing, we are anchored *upward*—to heaven—not downward. We are anchored, not to stand still, but to *move ahead!*”¹⁴

So how do we utilize this anchor? It’s not complicated. We use this anchor by learning and leaning into the promises of God. Day by day. Moment by moment.

We are saved that way. We learn God’s promise. “Whoever believes in My Son will have eternal life.” We put our weight into that promise, and He gives us eternal life. Every other promise works the same way. By learning and leaning into them.

¹² Quote taken from Leon Morris, p. 61.

¹³ In W. Wiersbe, p. 298.

¹⁴ W. Wiersbe, p. 298.

Listen to John Calvin's description of the promise-based life: "The devil never ceases from stirring up countless tempests which would at once capsize and submerge our ship if we do not cast our anchor far down in the depths. There is no haven anywhere apparent to our sight, but to whatever direction we turn our gaze, the only thing in view is water, and indeed waves which mount up and threaten us. But just as an anchor is let down through the midst of the water to a dark, hidden place, and while it remains there it holds the ship that is exposed to the waves safely in its station so that it is not swept away, so our hope is fixed on the unseen God. There is difference, that an anchor is cast down on the sea because there is solid ground at the bottom, but our hope rises and flies aloft because it finds nothing to stand on in this world. It cannot rely on created things, but finds rest in God alone."¹⁵

Yes! And this brings us to our second benefit.

2. *We have access into God's presence (19b)*. According to verse 19, the hope we possess "enters into the inner place behind the curtain." What inner place and what curtain is he talking about? Remember our Good Friday woodworking project, and on Easter Sunday morning message? We marveled together at the torn curtain. Sing with me the words of Mark 15:38, "*And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from the top to bottom, from the top to bottom. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two.*"

The picture here is of the tabernacle, and in the tabernacle was the little room called the Holy of Holies. Only the high priest had access to that special room that represented the very presence of God Himself (see Heb. 9:7).

But now, we have a hope that enters this inner sanctuary. This hope is a person, and this person has gone past the curtain into the Holy of Holies. And He invites us to come with Him. Through Christ we can enter that holy place in the very presence of God.

Dr. Harry Ironside suggested that the two phrases, "within the veil" (here in 6:19) and "without the camp" (in 13:13) summarize the book of Hebrews. Wiersbe explains, "Jesus Christ is 'within the veil' as our High Priest. We can therefore come boldly to His throne and receive all the help that we need. But we must not be 'secret saints.' We must be willing to identify with Christ in His rejection and go 'without the camp, bearing His reproach (Heb. 13:13).' The Hebrew believers who received this letter were tempted to compromise to avoid that reproach. However, if we live 'within the veil,' we shall have no trouble going 'without the camp.'"¹⁶

This brings us to our third benefit. We have an anchor, and access, and a forerunner.

3. *We have a forerunner (20a)*. The text states, "Where Jesus has gone as a forerunner." In the first century a "forerunner" was a term used to describe an advance team of soldiers that scouted out the destination and prepared the scene for the arrival of an army. That's what Christ is. He is a *prodromos*, the forerunner who has gone ahead of us, to open the way.

But Christ didn't just open the way. The text says He is a forerunner "on our behalf." He went ahead of us and entered the Holy of Holies for our benefit.

He talked about this when He made this amazing announcement. "In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and take you to myself that where I am you may be also (John 14:2-3)."

An anchor. Access. A forerunner. And one more benefit. What's Christ doing behind the curtain? The end of verse 20 tells us, "Having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek."

¹⁵ John Calvin, p. 86.

¹⁶ W. Wiersbe, p. 298-9.

4. *We have a high priest (20b)*. The writer now returns to a truth he began to expound back in chapter five but tabled momentarily to address the problem of his readers' spiritual immaturity. Now that he has addressed the problem, they're ready to hear what he has to say about Melchizedek and what he teaches us about our great high priest Jesus. To this subject he will turn in chapter seven.

And so shall we, the Lord willing, in September. But for the summer, we're going to take a break from our Hebrews series and return to series we launched in January. It's our 2026 theme at WBC. "Redeemed People Pray the Word." We're going to continue to learn how to pray by looking at the prayers of Paul one per week.

These are the four hope-giving benefits that God has given us. An anchor for the soul. Access into His presence. A forerunner who has gone before us. And a high priest who represents us in the holy presence of God even now. These benefits are ours and they are as certain as the promises of the One who cannot lie.

Personal Application: How then should we live?

Let's embrace three responses.

1. *We must refuse to live by our feelings*. When it comes to promised-based living, our feelings are not our friend. Our emotions take us up one day and down the next. People who live by their feelings lack stability. Life is hard when we live by our feelings, hard for us, and hard for those around us. So let us refuse to live by them.

2. *We must choose to live by what God has said in His Word*. To do so, we must study His Word and find His promises. Every day personally. Every time the church gathers. Go mining for the golden nuggets which are the promises of God! Be intentional about learning what He has said He will do in His Word.

Learn His promises. And live by them. And always go back and rehearse the first promise. He sent His Son into the world who died on the cross for sinners. He raised His Son from the dead on the third day, and today God offers abundant and eternal life to all who will repent and believe in Him. That is His promise. We are His because we believed that promise. Now let's believe His other promises too.

Like this one. "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean to your own understandings. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct your path (Prov 3:5-6)."

3. *We must realize that those who are in Christ will soon be with Christ forever*.

Closing Song: #271 "Standing on the Promises of God" (all four verses)

*Standing on the promises of Christ, my King!
Through eternal ages let His praises ring.
"Glory in the highest!" I will shout and sing,
standing on the promises of God.*

*Standing on the promises that cannot fail!
When the howling storms of doubt and fear assail,
by the living Word of God I shall prevail,
standing on the promises of God.*

This evening: VBS begins and goes through Thursday! On Wednesday evening, we'll be hearing our brother Rusty Pruitt share his story of salvation out of Hinduism.