

AM Hebrews 6:13-21 Where is your hope?

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[0 : 00] is from the Old Testament, from Genesis chapter 15. And we're going to split this in two. The first part is going to be from Genesis 15, 1-6 and then from 12 to the end of the passage.

So Genesis 15 verses 1-6 and then 12 to the end of the passage. After these things, the word of the Lord came to Abraham in a vision.

Fear not, Abraham, I am your shield. Your reward shall be great. But Abraham said, O Lord God, what will you give me? For I continue childless and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus.

And Abraham said, Behold, you have given me no offspring and a member of my household will be my heir. And behold, the word of the Lord came to him.

This man shall not be your heir. Your very own son shall be your heir. And he brought him outside and said, Look towards heaven and number the stars.

[1 : 27] If you are able to number them then he said to him so shall your offspring be. And he believed the Lord and he counted it to him as righteousness.

And from verse 12 to the end of the passage. As the sun was going down a deep sleep fell on Abraham and behold dreadful and great darkness fell upon him.

Then the Lord said to Abraham, Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in the land that is not theirs and will be servants there and they will be afflicted for four hundred years.

But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve and afterwards they shall come out with great possessions. As for you, you shall go to your fathers and peace.

You shall be buried in a good old age and they shall come back here in the fourth generation for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete. When the sun had gone down and it was dark behold the smoking fire pot and the flaming torch passed between the pieces.

[2 : 40] On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abraham saying to your offspring I give this land and from the river of Egypt to the great river the river Euphrates the land of the Kenites the Kisanites and the Kahamanites the Hittites the Persites the Rethium the Amorites the Canaanites the Gashites and the Jebusites.

The second reading is from the New Testament from the book of Hebrews from Hebrews chapter 6 verses 13 to 20.

Hebrews chapter 6 verses 13 to the end of the chapter. For when God made a promise to Abraham since he had no greater by whom to swear he swore it by himself saying surely I will bless you and multiply you and thus Abraham having patiently waited obtained the promise for people swear by something greater themselves and then all their disputes and oath is final for confirmation.

So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose he can't hear it with an oath. 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.

We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

[4 : 45] Thanks be to God for the reading of his holy word and his name we look at Hebrews 6 13 to 20 let's first just start with a word of prayer. Father we thank you for the opportunity to study your word this morning we ask that the thoughts of our minds and hearts will be acceptable in your sight and we ask this through Christ our Lord our Saviour Amen This morning I'm going to look at as I said Hebrews 6 verses 13 to 20 but first one question where is your hope?

Where is your hope? The free church played a part in my introduction to this morning's text text If I said to you can anyone think of a famous event that took place on the 4th of October can anybody think of anything?

If I said it was in 1883 could anybody think of anything? Nope If I said it was the first uniformed youth organisation could anybody think of anything?

Okay long before I or any of us were born in the 4th of October 1883 Sir William Alexander Smith founded the Boys Brigade in the Free Church Mission Hall North Woodside Road Glasgow and from the BB motto he drew on the words from Hebrews 6 19 the words sure and steadfast his aim was to promote or develop an organisation that would help promote discipline within young males and prepare young men for the life ahead but not just to physically prepare them but to give them an eternal hope that they could hold on to throughout their lives in this passage we have a clear hope in God for yesterday for today and for eternity we have

God's promise and his act of fulfilling them which root our assurance in God's unchanging purpose and that purpose is for our salvation for the salvation of man we have the ever present assurance that we are grounded in God's love that he loved us so much that he sent his son to die for us we have the assurance that Christ has gone before us and that Christ will lead us home but let's look at those three assurances individually the first assurance is God's past history his interaction with man from Adam and Eve's first sin against him when they first disobeyed the simple law that he gave them to tend the garden to eat of the fruits bar one not to eat of the fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil despite man's disobedience he still cared for

[8 : 25] Adam he still cared for Adam and Eve he clothed them and he made a covenant with their offspring with Abraham with Moses and with David in verse 13 and 14 we read that he not only makes a promise to his people but takes an oath and swears it that he will bless them and he swears it by the highest and most precious reality in the universe he swears it by himself now if you or I were to swear an oath by ourselves we would see it as presumptuous and we probably wouldn't see it as much of a guarantee given our frailties and self interest but with God it is different he is the highest authority God is unchanging he cannot lie today perhaps we are too quick to swear oaths to promise things without thinking of the consequences of our intentions but this is not the behaviour of our

God our God is truth itself he is all powerful and he is unchanging and therefore he cannot lie to lie would be for him to say one thing while his actions and intentions were something else so in verse 18 we read so there by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie we who have fled for refuge might have a strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us it is impossible for God to lie and we know that because of his past actions his past actions tell us that he fulfills his promises what he has promised he will bring to fruition in his time and in his place he bids us to be patient if we go back to verse 15 it is because

Abraham patiently waited that he obtained the blessings perhaps patience is not a virtue we often associate with Abraham and Sarah his wife after all God had promised him a son and Abraham was becoming old in his years and his wife was beyond childbearing age so they had created their own plan for a son but God has told them to be patient and in their patience their blessing is delivered Abraham has a son to Sarah and Isaac is born so God fulfills his past promises he doesn't come with a financial services warning that past performance is not a guarantee of future success we can look at his keeping of his past promises as a reassurance of his fulfilment of his future promises promises we learn if we wait upon

God his promises will be fulfilled one of our greatest encouragements in the gospel is that God's purpose is unchanging his purpose is to keep the promise of blessing to his people in Jesus Christ we've seen this in the story of Abraham in Genesis 22 and 16 and 17 God said and said I swear by myself declares the Lord that because you have done this and have not withheld your son your only son I will surely bless you and make you descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and the sands on the seashore your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies so we see the start of this fulfilment in Isaac and it culminates in Jesus Christ and this is not just of relevance to the Jews but to all

John Piper points to three things that demonstrate in scripture that has a relevance to us he says as Genesis teaches that Abraham will be the father of many nations in Genesis 17 4 God says behold my covenant is with you and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations God blessed Abraham with a son Isaac and the family prospered and from him came King David and ultimately our Lord Jesus Christ Christ the second is in Hebrews 3 19 so we see that they were unable to enter because of unbelief Paul sorry the writer of Hebrews is referring back to the time in the wilderness when those who have disobeyed

[14:10] God have not seen their eternal rest in God because of their unbelief many physical descendants are not the heirs of the promise made to Abraham they were not to be the descendants of the promise because they did not believe and the third point made by Piper is the opposite of this and it suggests that to qualify as a descendant of Abraham and an heir of the promises is not sharing the ethnicity with Abraham it's not been born part of his family but sharing the faith of Abraham and in this we can look to Ruth the Moabite the granddaughter of David sorry the great grandmother of David not the daughter the great grandmother of David who declares her faith when she exhorts to

Naomi to allow her to continue her life with her in Ruth 1 16 but Ruth said do not urge me to leave you or return from following you for where you go I will go and where you lodge I will lodge your people shall be my people and your God my God so we're not saved by birth we're not saved by being adherents to the church we're not saved by being baptized which is a symbol of our membership of a covenanted community we are saved by our choice by our acceptance of Christ as our saviour by our conscious decision making and the author is clear in Hebrews 6 12 that it is by faith and patience we inherit the promises of God and they are still offered to us today the letter to the

Hebrews was written to a people going through difficult times just as we can find ourselves in today the second assurance in verse 19 sees a change in symbolism God is not just a refuge but he provides us an anchor in Christ and we can think of the hymn by Priscilla Jane Owens we have an anchor that keeps the soul steadfast and sure while the billows roll fastened to a rock which cannot move grounded firming deep in the saviour's love perhaps a fitting symbolism for an island nation like ourselves but life is not a calm idealism it's ever changing but one time it can be still another we can feel choppy and insecure and then it can be like a storm a tempest where we are throwing about in the turmoil of life as if in the midst of a sea look at our very own recent experience if we think back to

Christmas 2019 some of us will have been celebrating our Lord Jesus Christ birth we may have been exchanging greetings with friends we may have exchanged presents and we expected life would go on as normal waiting for the so called holiday season to pass and life would go on things were calm on our TV or radio we may have heard of a new flu like virus that was affecting folks in far off provinces of China but at home everything was calm a few months go by and it started to spread across Europe and now the waves of fear start to come ashore around our islands waves of fear and apprehension were starting to affect people in the

UK and by March 23rd 2020 the storm of the pandemic had started to hit us with full force we were in lockdown and the effects were of catastrophic proportions as the death toll continued to rise as furlough increased and people were unable to work as we ended up being isolated and no longer allowed to even worship and today many are still being tossed around to and fro in life daily as we're led to believe that we're on our way out of the pandemic storm the storm has passed the waters are choppy but not yet calm people have lost loved ones people have lost jobs people have lost a focus in their life but just as Jesus

[19 : 59] Christ calmed the storm when with the disciples in the boat in the sea of Galilee so he also calms our fears and gives reassurance in the storms of life he gives reassurance he does not promise a cushy life that everything will go smoothly that everything in the garden will be rosey in fact he promises the opposite if we read our scriptures we hear the stories of his suffering of the sufferings of the apostles and of the sufferings of his church he promises that we will be tried and tested in life but he also promises that he will be with us always and that he will strengthen us and he will uphold us so in

Christ we have an anchor that has without which has already withstood the temptations of this world and the temptations of Satan the first three gospels of Matthew Mark and Luke tell us how after his baptism Christ enters the desert he goes into the wilderness for forty days and nights and fasts and during this time he is tempted by Satan and each time Matthew tells us Christ he booked him with scripture and so withstands the temptation in life he stays in God's course unwavering knowing where it will ultimately lead for him he knows it will lead him to an agonising death but remains unwavering as we read in Matthew 26 to 29 and going a little further he fell on his face and prayed saying my father if it be possible let this cup pass from me nevertheless not as I will but as you will knowing the journey he must take he remains true to the course

God has plotted for man's salvation and reconciliation to him that he the man without sin must die to redeem us who have perished in our sins and so separated from God that assurance is highlighted in the second part of verse 19 and verse 20 where it reads it enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain where our forerunner Jesus has entered on our behalf he has become a high priest forever in the order of Melchizedek the temple in Jerusalem was made up of different sections and in the main sanctuary the priests would offer sacrifices brought by the people of God on an ongoing basis day after day a curtain separated this area from the holy of holies here here was where the ark of the covenant was placed where the high priest would enter once a year to offer a blood sacrifice to God for the atonement of his people the same curtain

Luke tells us in chapter 23 verse 45 was ripped in two as Jesus died on the cross man was no longer separated from God no longer did we need a fellow human to intercede for us no need for a human to offer sacrifice for us no more would we need the human intercessor because God had sacrificed his own son and now we have a high priest who was the sacrifice for our sin a high priest who was sinless so Jesus as a high priest mediates for us his sacrifice is what provides the cleansing of our sins rather than a yearly or daily atonement Jesus sacrifice was once and for all

Jesus like the high priest of the Old Testament times stands between the gap between us and God he made the sacrifice for us the difference between Christ and the Old Testament prophets was his was a once only sacrifice in the words of Alistair Begg Jesus is once and for all sacrifice accomplished with the Old Testament priesthood could never achieve he has delivered his people from bondage to sin and declared the path to God open so that sinful men and women can approach God by faith with confidence that our sins are forgiven our sins are forgiven there is no further sacrifice required we have direct access to God but we have to accept

[25 : 37] Christ as our saviour and as we look at the wording used in this passage we have hope for now and for the future the Greek word used here for forerunner is I can never say it you can see Greek was not my strong point prodromos it does not merely mean that one goes before you or runs before you but refers to one who shows the way if Christ is showing us the way it means that at some point he is going to have to come back he is going to have to come and show us where we are going in John 14 3 we read and if I go and prepare a place for you I will come again and I will take you to myself that where I am you may be also he is now in

God's presence and he intercedes directly for us before God what an assurance that the sinless man who died once and for all now represents us before God there is no need for further sacrifice Christ has paid the ransom and redeemed us so we can have an assurance and certainty of God and his promises through faith where is your assurance where is your hope hope is it grounded firm and deep in Christ's love or is it being tossed endlessly without direction or hope the message of the gospel and assurance is clear that Christ died for our sins and if we have faith in him we can grasp that anchor secure in his promise to lead us safe to the heavenly shore if we have faith in him if we ask him to into our hearts and repent of our sins then he will see his home let's pray father we thank you that you are a

God that is unchanging a God who keeps his promises and as you promised in Genesis after the fall of Adam that you would bring about man's salvation we give you thanks that you did so through Christ your son and Lord it is only through Christ your son that we can come back into union with you we ask that for those who have not yet made a decision for you that you pour out your grace that your spirit softens their hearts that they may come to know your Christ their saviour and that salvation comes through faith alone these things we ask through

Jesus Christ our Lord and saviour Amen