

Assurance In The Promises Of God

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Preacher: Pastor Ken

[0 : 00] There are a few passages that we will be turning to this morning, so don't get too comfortable in Hebrews 6.

Don't get too distracted from the text or the sermon. Do the best you can to stay awake and follow along. I would like you to think about the question, what is trust?

When you think of that word trust, what is it that comes to mind? I'll give you an opportunity even to raise your hand and answer.

Out loud. In an orderly fashion with your hands raised. Not all at once. Knowing for sure something will happen or be done.

So believing that when someone says they'll do something, they'll follow through. Tony? I'm sorry, I missed that. Confident assurance.

[1 : 15] That's a scholar of the answer. Good. Yes. So I think, you know, the idea along the lines of that it's a belief that another person is honest and reliable.

That's a feeling that you can depend on that person because they offer safety and security. It can be described as a firm belief in the ability, strength, reliability, and truth of someone or something.

And as you are aware, trust is a critical part of any relationship. Without it, it's difficult to have a healthy, long-lasting one.

And when it's broken, it can cause someone to develop trust issues that affect other relationships in addition to the one where the trust was broken.

And being created as relational beings, trust is a very important matter to us. And it should be. Political diatribes and debates take place all the time in just about every environment.

[2 : 24] And as overwhelmingly frustrating that it can be, it reveals two truths that cannot be ignored. First is that we are quite passionate about what we believe is right. Okay?

We are willing to stand up and make an argument and take a stand, and we believe it's right, and we're going to be passionate about that. And the second thing is that we are very untrusting of political figures or even other individuals who do not hold the same line that we do.

Marriages are ended because trust is lost in one or both parties. Three of the top reasons people seek a divorce. Lack of commitment by one or both individuals to the marriage.

They argue too much. Or infidelity. They're not faithful to the other individual. Interesting fact.

Pornography addiction is cited as being a contributing factor in over 50% of divorces. I put pornography under the title infidelity.

[3 : 35] Promises are often made lightly with little intention of their being kept. A person's word today can seldom be his bond. Lying is all but become the norm in much of society, and the world is full of liars.

You don't have to go far to find one. Just look in the nearest mirror. And sure enough, there you'll find one. So with that being true, the question must be answered, who can we trust?

Who can we really believe? Well, the Christian knows that the only one who can be trusted without reservation is God. Over and over throughout the pages of the Bible, we're told to trust in the Lord with all our hearts.

In Psalm 37, verses 3 and 4, Trust in the Lord and do good. Dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness. Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart.

Proverbs 3, verses 5 through 8, Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him and he will make straight your paths.

[4 : 50] Be not wise in your own eyes. Fear the Lord and turn away from evil. It will be healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones. In Psalm 118, verse 8, It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in man.

With that foundation being laid, I'd like to dive back into the text of Hebrews 6. A few weeks ago, we looked at the warning to those who have turned their back on the faith that there's no hope for them apart from the cross of Christ.

And last week, we saw the confidence in the salvation of those the author was writing to, which was established in their love for the saints and their love for the name and reputation of God.

Now as we close up chapter 6, we see the assurance that can be experienced in the promises of God. Hebrews 6, I'd like to read verses 13 through 20.

For when God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself, saying, Surely I will bless you and multiply you.

[6 : 09] And thus Abraham, having patiently waited, obtained the promise. For people swear by something greater than themselves, And in all their disputes, an 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 guaranteed 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.

Let us pray. Father, I thank you for your word. I thank you, Lord, that we have this time to study, and I pray that you'd give guidance and understanding. In Jesus' name, amen.

Here are verses 13 through 15. I've broken this down, as any good pastor does, into three points, even though it may or may not be a pure good break. But I think those are good points to make.

[7 : 31] First, here in verses 13 through 15, God promised and delivered to Abraham. He promised and delivered to Abraham. You've heard that name, Abraham.

He serves as an important figure in both the Old and the New Testament. The Abrahamic narrative makes up a sizable volume in the book of Genesis, from Genesis 12 through chapter 25, so about 13, 14 chapters dedicated to Abraham and his life and God's dealing with him.

And he's regarded as the major patriarch in Jewish history due to God's important covenant with him. You could probably make the argument Moses might be a little more important to them, but Abraham's up there, right?

He's referred to throughout Old Testament history in Deuteronomy, Joshua, 1 Kings, 1 Chronicles, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Micah, Psalms, and Nehemiah.

He's also referred in the New Testament. He plays an important role, especially in Pauline letters. So if you're reading Paul, good chance you're going to come across a reference to Abraham. He references him in Romans 4, Galatians 3 and 4, 2 Corinthians 11.

[8 : 42] But Abe's also mentioned frequently in the Gospels, Matthew 1, 3, 8, 22, Mark 12, Luke 1, 3, 13, 16, 19, and 20, and John 8. And he's mentioned several times in Acts 3, 7, 13, in Hebrews 6, 7, and 11, as well as in the book of James 2, and once in 1 Peter 3.

So it goes without saying that Abraham's a pretty important dude, at least in the eyes of the Scripture writers. God's dealings with Abraham are frequently used to emphasize or explain how he deals with his covenant people.

Please turn to Genesis chapter 22. Keep a finger here in Hebrews 6. We'll come back. Genesis chapter 22.

We get to the section here that the writer of Hebrews is alluding to as he talks about God's promise to Abraham. Genesis 22, verses 15 through 18.

And the angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time from heaven and said, By myself I have sworn, declares the Lord, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son.

[10 : 09] I will surely bless you and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven as the sand that is on the seashore, and your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies.

And in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice. So you know this is taking place at the end after Abraham has offered Isaac up on the altar, that God makes a promise to him to bless him.

And he says, By myself I have sworn. See, no one in the universe is greater than God. And the reason he cannot lie is that he invented truth.

And so he is truth, and by definition, whatever he says is true. So by the very nature of his person, he cannot lie. He has no capacity to lie.

His promises then are first of all secured by his person. Whatever he does has to be right. Whatever he says has to be true. If God makes a promise, therefore he not only will keep it, he must keep it.

[11 : 23] So he's saying, By myself I have promised. But has he kept his promise to Abraham?

The promise to bless and multiply him? Well, consider the almost 15 million physical descendants of Abraham that are in the world today. We refer to them as Jews or Jewish people.

And the many more millions around the world who are Abraham's spiritual descendants. So do you think he's kept his promise to bless and multiply him? Abundantly so.

Millions and millions of times. He's kept his promise. So God's promises, God promised and delivered to Abraham.

It's an example for us to see and follow and understand who God is, who his character is. And what we can take from that. Now verses 16 through 18, God's promises are more sure than man's word.

[12 : 33] God's promises are more sure than man's word. You can turn to Matthew 5. We're going to go there here in a second. Give you a head start. It was a common thing in New Testament times for people to make an oath on something greater than themselves, such as the altar, the high priest, or even heaven.

oaths were considered the way in which you ended a debate or a tension between people. For people swear by something greater than themselves, Hebrews 6.16, and in all their disputes, an oath is final for confirmation.

Oaths were common. It was common enough practice, and there's probably one that was not taken very seriously, as our Lord Jesus addresses it in Matthew 5.

But I was just thinking of in the book of Judges. Who's the judge that makes the oath to God? Come again?

Jephthah. Thank you. Jephthah made the oath to God that if he gave him victory over his enemies, when he came back, the first thing he saw, he would sacrifice to God on the altar.

[13 : 55] The first thing he saw was his daughter coming out to meet him. We're not given anything more beyond that.

But given the severity and the importance of an oath to God and to Israel, he had to conclude that he probably followed through with that.

Because the not to keep an oath is a huge deal. Punishable by death even. So the Lord Jesus addresses this issue in Matthew 5.

Because there are people making oaths all the time, probably not taking it very seriously. In Matthew 5, verses 33 through 37, he says, Again, you have heard that it was said to those of old, you shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn.

But I say to you, do not take an oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great king.

[15 : 05] And do not take an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. Let what you say be simply yes or no. Anything more than this comes from evil.

It's interesting, Jesus addressing this issue of oath. You know, and people might think of themselves as a worthy, trustworthy individual. Well, I swear I can do this, or by heaven, or by God, or by the altar, or whatever.

And he's saying, uh-uh. Let your yes be yes, and your no be no. Be known as a trustworthy person. Be known as somebody who lives by their word.

So that an oath does not need to happen. Let your yes be yes, and your no be no. And as you know, an oath is, you know, it's that solemn promise.

It can be before an institutional authority. It can be with other individuals, and typically it invokes a divine being. God. And it's more than just making a promise to yourself or to another person.

[16 : 13] A person's expected to comply with an oath they take regarding their future behavior. That's why it was such a big deal in the book of Judges with Jephthah. And that's why Jesus is saying, don't do that.

Don't put yourself in that position. And there are different types of oaths that we're familiar with, right? I mean, there's the Hippocratic oath. That's a good oath to have, right?

Physicians who swear to practice, medicine honestly. You have an oath of allegiance, where a subject or a citizen acknowledges the duty of allegiance and swears loyalty to a monarch or a country.

Oath of citizenship, that officially naturalizes immigrants into citizens. An oath of enlistment, delivered on enlistment into the military service.

And we have all these kinds of oaths, right? But more commonly today, people use strong wording of an oath to persuade the truthfulness of a matter. I'm going to ask a question real quick.

[17 : 13] Is anybody hot? Okay. Because it is hot up here. All right. Anyway, sorry.

Back to it. So, people use the strong wording of an oath to persuade the truthfulness of a matter. In order to convince the individual being addressed, a person will make an appeal that exaggerates their point.

You know, may God strike me dead if I am lying. Or, I swear to God this is true. Or, I swear on my mother's grave.

Or, my dog's grave. Somebody's eyes. I mean, you get the point, right? There's always this strong language of swearing an oath. But people don't take that.

I mean, people really aren't serious about that. They're just trying to persuade somebody to believe the truthfulness of a matter. Or, to deceive them that a matter is truthful.

[18 : 15] So, oath-making, to one degree or another, is common practice among men and women. Thus, God chose to act in a similar fashion with His promise. Now, He did not need to make an oath because His word is every bit as good without it as ours ought to be.

And that's what Jesus was making His point in Matthew 5. You shouldn't have to make an oath. Your word should be your bond. Your word should be honest and truthful and trustworthy. And we know God's word is honest and truthful and trustworthy.

It's interesting here in Hebrews 6, it mentions in verse 18 that by two unchangeable things God is, God made this oath.

Right? So, God's oath includes two unchangeable things that His people can cling to. First is His promise and second is His oath. Because His promise is unchangeable because it is impossible for God to lie.

He's the inventor of truth. He is the great truth teller. And His oath is unchangeable because He swore it by Himself and God's character is unchangeable. So, the whole point is this.

[19 : 31] If God says it, it's true. If God says it, you can take it to the bank. It's going to happen. As if we needed any more assurance, the writer of Hebrews continues to show that God's promises are anchored in Christ.

And this was the heart of what we were talking about in Sunday school. The grace of God through Christ extended to us. We have forgiveness because it's given to us in Christ.

So, we have a firm basis for our hope because Jesus finished His work on earth and He continues to work in heaven as our high priest, carrying us into God's very presence.

The writer of Hebrews alludes to Him to Jesus as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul. A sure and steadfast anchor of the soul.

That's verse 19. Spurgeon comments on that verse. The design of an anchor of course is to hold the vessel firmly to one place when winds and currents would otherwise remove it.

[20 : 47] God has given us certain truths which are intended to hold our minds fast to truth, holiness, perseverance in a word to hold us to Himself.

as our high priest forever, Jesus serves as the anchor of our souls.

He's the one who will forever keep us from drifting away from God. The takeaway point of Hebrews 6 verses 13 through 20 is that God's promise did not depend on anyone's faithfulness but His own.

Abraham, His descendants, all the world through them would be blessed. God made a promise and He will see it through.

He makes promises and sees it through. His word can be trusted. So God owed Himself the fulfillment of His plan.

[21 : 51] In the summer of 1996, electric power outages twice hit the western United States when high demand and unfortunate accidents combined to trigger massive blackouts.

The first failure affected 2 million customers in 14 states on July 2nd. The second blackout affected 4 million homes in 10 states. One spokesman for the power industry said, under no circumstance should these blackouts have happened, let alone twice in one summer.

Under no circumstance should a blackout happen, let alone twice in one summer. But it did happen and as a result customers wondered if they could trust their power suppliers where they could not provide uninterrupted service of such a luxury as electricity.

But that's not the point. See, Jesus provides uninterrupted access to God's presence for His children. We'll never have an outage of divine power.

We will always have access to God. As we're told in verse 20, Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

[23 : 03] And then Melchizedek, who was introduced to us in chapter 5, is going to be expounded on in chapter 7. Jesus' presence before God fills us with hope, encouragement, stamina, staying power.

And with the strength we receive from Him, we can find the staying power to endure in our Christian commitment. We focused a few months back in James, the book of James, in trials.

Count it all joy when you encounter various trials, knowing the testing of your faith produces endurance. It produces maturity. but ultimately it is through, it is in the trials that we can come to Christ.

I mean, we can go to Christ anytime, right? But it's in those trials, those hardships that drives us to God through Christ. We can always go to Him. Sometimes we need the reminder that He's there.

So God's made a promise. He's made a promise of our salvation. Anyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. He makes a promise of our sanctification in Romans 8.

[24 : 17] Those who are justified will also be glorified. And we're also given the promise of being able to, or having the high priest, Jesus, ministering on our behalf before God.

He has applied His blood that He shed on the cross in the heavenly holy of holies on the altar for the forgiveness of sins.

That all we need to do is place our faith and trust in Him completely for that salvation. Let's pray. Lord, I thank You for Your Word.

I thank You for what You give us in Christ. I thank You for the promises You make that we can indeed take to the bank and know are true. Lord, we know we can trust You.

And I thank You for that. Help us, Lord, to not waver. Help us, Lord, not to turn and walk away, but to stand firm.

[25 : 27] Lord, may our questions, our doubts be erased in Christ, knowing that He stands before You as our High Priest ministering on our behalf.

He's the one whose blood grants the forgiveness of our sin. He's the one who is praying for us before Your throne.

Lord, I just thank You for the promises that we can trust. We have assurance in Your promises, Lord, even when the world around us is full of deception and deceit.

We can't trust people. We can't trust governments. We can't maybe even trust ourselves sometimes. We can trust You. Help us to have this confidence and this firm assurance.

In Jesus' name, Amen.