

God's Unchangeable Promise

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[0 : 0 0] page 1004 end of hebrew 6 we're gonna look at verses 13 through 20 this morning one of the things that we talk a lot about here at trinity if you've been around for a while is the way in which the gospel uh gathers us together to god's self and into god's family and then sends us out uh and isn't it awesome that this morning we got to see both of those things on display that in membership god gathering us together and then giving us a heart for people who are on the other side of the world just as god went out from himself to redeem a people for himself that were far away so we then are sent out um so there it was the gospel on display before you i don't even feel like i have to give a sermon this morning because you saw it already in membership and admissions but anyway uh no we're going to preach this morning hebrew 6 13 through 20 let me read this passage for us the writer of the hebrew says 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 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's pray together father indeed we do pray that even now as we come to this word of comfort that you would come by your spirit and show us more deeply the promise of our savior lord jesus so that we might be strengthened and encouraged to hold fast in these days lord we ask all this in christ's name amen uh so you probably didn't notice this uh but just last month shell oil the big sort of oil conglomerate announced that they had completed the construction of the hull of what is going to be the world's largest floating vessel uh it's they're going to call it the prelude i don't know why they picked that name but when it's completed this thing is going to be 1600 feet long that's actually longer than the empire state building is tall it's huge this thing is massive uh and it's actually not a ship in the traditional sense it's actually like a giant floating natural gas facility uh but the the anchorage and the moorage on this thing is apparently so strong that the prelude can withstand a category five cyclone which is the way they sort of rank tropical storms in australia that's where this thing is going to be imagine a system of anchors and moors that could keep a 1600 foot 600 000 ton floating vessel firm and secure in the midst of the strongest kind of hurricane that there is incredible

uh now before shell oil decided to build this monstrosity uh the biggest vessel the longest vessel before that was something appropriately called sea wise giant that was the name of the longest boat before they built the prelude uh 430 plus meters long and it too had a massive anchor it's actually on display in the hong kong maritime museum this anchor for this ship weighed 36 tons that's 72 000 pounds or by my calculations about 900 middle school boys the size of this anchor huh now it's obvious why a ship needs an anchor right anchors are there for stability for security so that when the currents pick up and the tide shift or the winds start to rise you don't drift out to sea or you don't crash into the rocks on the shore so that you can stay firm in the midst of the dangerous seas and verse 19 of our passage today speaks about an anchor that is sure and steadfast but this isn't an anchor for a ship it's an anchor for the soul and that very idea raises an incredibly important question for each one of us as we come to our passage this morning and the question it causes us to ask is this what exactly is it that anchors my life after all your soul is just that it's the central part of your personality it's it's your identity it's you it's your life your soul and when the storms rise and when the winds blow and when the currents move what keeps you from drifting and what keeps you from going under because make no mistake you will try and i will try to anchor my life on something it's unavoidable we will always more our sense of self our identity our purpose to something so it causes us to think what have i tried to use to anchor my life what's the thing i think will keep me secure and resilient and strong when the storms come for some of us we've tried to make our career our anchor we think as long as i'm successful and respected in my field as long as things are going well in my professional life then i'll be safe and strong in the storms but of course we know that the problem is what if you're no longer able to be successful what if through a turn of events you can no longer do your work through a disability or through a change in the markets or through a change in intellectual fads what if your work is no longer seen as relevant what if the storms of life end your career what then will happen to your soul so then for some of us we've tried making a relationship an anchor as long as i have this person in my life we think then i'll be steadfast haven't you heard it said sometimes this person's my rock but again what if the storms take that person away what if the relationship ends what then becomes of our soul what then keeps us from drifting or sinking beneath the waves so some of us not wanting to anchor our lives in anything external and changing outside of us have tried to make personal integrity our anchor something inside of us we think as long as i'm a person of values of principles as long as i do what is right and live a moral life

or as long as i follow my heart and do what i know to be true for me a different kind of principal living isn't it as long as i do these things then i'll be steadfast in the storms then whatever happens outside of me the winds won't rock me the waves won't overturn me but you know this turns out to be just as insecure doesn't it because even then what if you find that your best version of you still doesn't live up to your standards no matter how hard you try what if the storms of life start to show you that you can't always be the thoughtful creative caring person you wish you were or the moral upright person you know you should be it turns out even that anchor is not enough for the soul and the list could go on and on as we consider all the faulty things that simply that simply can't keep us secure all the anchors that can't possibly keep our souls firm but as we think about these things doesn't verse not verse 19 of our passage come ringing out with incredibly good news we have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul there is an anchor that holds there is something that can keep our soul secure when the storms come and verse 18 tells us what the this is it's the hope set before us of course at first it seems like that can't be right how could hope be an anchor i mean in our common way of thinking doesn't hope seem like one of the most ephemeral and fleeting things that there is isn't hope just wishful thinking isn't hope the word that you use when you're just not sure whether something's going to be the case but you really like it to be anyway like i really hope i get a parking spot downtown next to the restaurant we're going to because it's really cold and rainy and snowy outside you don't know you're gonna find a parking spot you probably won't it's new haven right you've got no guarantee so okay so how could any mere hope be an anchor for my soul well friends that's where we have to see that the hope that we're speaking of here is completely different that hope in the new testament isn't something we merely wish will happen no the language of hope is what describes the certain future the certain future of those who place their trust in christ in fact the word hope nine times out of ten in the new testament is almost never used as our sort of act of hoping our subjective hoping it's almost always used as the concrete objective reality and you see it here the hope set before us it's the thing that's there that is for us in the future that we look forward to friends you see the book of hebrews was written to christians who needed an anchor for their souls they were a fledgling community for whom storms and winds have come along and they rocked their boat and they were almost feeling like they were lost at sea where do we go what do we do and in this section of the book the thing that this section we've been looking at at the last two weeks if you kind of think back if you've been with us the writer of hebrews has been telling them press on to spiritual maturity that was two weeks ago and last week what greg showed us keep on showing your love for the name of god in service to the saints don't let these things flag press on in other

words he's been emphasizing their responsibility but now in this passage he's going to show us god's provision so that we might do those things the divine enablement so that we might press on so that we might keep loving and show that steadfast zeal and faithful endurance and patience and what we see here is that god has given us a sure and steadfast anchor of hope that will sustain us and to the extent that we realize how certain that hope is that is how resilient and secure we will be in the storms of this life in other words a life without hope is like a ship without an anchor but when we have a robust sense of the hope set before us in christ then our lives will be enabled and strengthened and fueled to hold fast and press on no matter what comes in other words certain hope is the anchor that allows us to faithfully persevere and what the writer of the hebrews is doing in this section is showing us how utterly and absolutely rock solid certain our hope it truly is and we need to know that don't we because we doubt when circumstances take a turn for the worse we question god's promises and we start to wonder whether the hope will really play out in the end we start to question whether god will do what he promises he will do but hebrews is pointing us to something that will give us as he says strong encouragement to hold fast and they're big basically this passage falls into two halves and this is how we're going to look at it this morning in verses 13 through 18 we see that our hope is utterly certain because god has sworn it and then in verses 19 through 20 we see that our hope is utterly certain because christ has accomplished it so that's where we're headed so first let's consider this first half that god has sworn it as you look through the first part the first number of verses of our section you have to admit that it's a little strange isn't it for god to be taking an oath i mean why do human beings typically swear oaths you know you imagine the guy with a boston accent i swear my mother's grave why because the guy's probably not that trustworthy right he's probably not telling the truth most of the time but now he really wants to know let you know that he's telling the truth we swear oaths because we're not completely truthful and reliable if everyone always kept their word we wouldn't make oaths but we aren't reliable so we make vows that bind us to keeping our word but god is in a totally different position friends we're told here in this passage that it is impossible for god to lie when god makes a promise or gives his word that settles it he doesn't need to make an oath over and above that he's perfectly faithful and truthful and yet here we see that god does swear an oath and he swore an oath to abraham and we're told why god does this in verse 18 to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose you see it wasn't any weakness or unreliability in god that made him to swear this oath but it was a weakness in us god swore this oath because we are often too

slow to believe god's promises and to take him at his word aren't we often so much quicker to believe the things that we feel rather than the things that god has said we are programmed in our post-romantic individualistic culture to just believe our feelings that for us is the standard of truth isn't it how much more quickly do we believe those things than what god has said and yet god knowing our weakness in utter kindness and condescension stoops and swears an oath swearing on himself because there's no one greater by whom to swear just so we will realize and get it that he means what he says think about that the one that than which nothing greater can be thought as anselm said the one who no one is greater the most majestic perfect utterly holy god compared to which everything else is less than nothing and dust has sworn an oath to you and me on the basis of his own righteous character and so now there are two unchangeable things hebrews says god's promise and god's oath and if human oaths are sufficient for confirmation as verse 16 says how much more confirmation is it when god himself takes an oath answer infinitely so now verses 13 through 15 the beginning of our section tell us exactly what promise and which oath we're talking about here hebrews takes us back all the way to abraham in genesis chapters 12 through 25 we're told abraham's story how god chose abraham to be the one through whom god's blessing would come to the world god meets abraham calls him out of his pagan past and says abraham i'm going to bless you and make your name great and give you an offspring and cause your offspring to inherit the land and through your offspring the entire world will be blessed but as we learn abraham's faith in god's promise is almost immediately put to the test and the first test if you remember the abraham story is that abraham and sarah are old and childless and they remain that way for some years even after god has given them this wonderful promise and at one point abraham even cries out to god and says oh lord what will you give me for i continue childless and the heir of my house is eliezer of damascus but even in abraham's wrestling to trust god's promises god continues to confirm his promises to him in chapter 15 god tells abraham that his descendants will be like the number of the stars and again in 17 god says to abraham your offspring will come and will inherit the land and though he's not perfect through all this abraham patiently waits and at last receives a son isaac he endures and finally obtains what was promised but then a second test comes

[20:11] and this one seemingly unthinkable isaac has been born and god tells abraham to sacrifice his one and only son that he loves and abraham in us in a way that seems utterly incomprehensible in faith takes god at his word believing as hebrews will later said that god can still keep his promise even if it means raising isaac from the dead but as soon as abraham raises the knife an angel stops him and provides a ram instead and it's at that point the climax of the abraham story in the bible that god issues the oath that we read here in hebrews 6:14 by myself i have sworn declares the lord that's how this section starts that was quoted here by myself i have sworn declares the lord i will surely bless you and i will surely multiply you so what are we to make of all this this going back to abraham now on the one hand i think it's this hebrews hebrews here is telling us the story of abraham to encourage us that with god's promises it is possible to faithfully persevere even through the most trying circumstances you see even when old age and infertility come crashing in like storms into abraham's life and even when god threatens to take away the thing that you hold most precious even then his promises can cause us to stand firm in our trust we are not without an anchor after all verse 12 right before our section says imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises and here is abraham a great exemplar of trust if abraham can do it then by god's grace and with god's promises he will enable us to do it as well and isn't it true that knowing that others have run the race set before us that it's a great encouragement to us to persevere and to press on but you know there's more going on than just that it's more than just abraham as example hebrews is bringing us back to this promise and oath made to abraham not just so that we can see abraham's example but more importantly because this oath and because this promise were made for our sake isn't that abundantly clear from verses 17 and 18 you see when god swore on oath to bless abraham and to multiply him to make his family as numerous as the stars in the sky he was looking ahead not merely to those who would be abraham's physical descendants but ultimately to those who would be his spiritual descendants through faith you see think of it this way when god took abraham out of his tent in his moment of weakness and doubt took him out of his tent and said abraham look at the stars can you count them that is what i'm going to do through you and through your seed friends when he was pointing at those stars he was pointing at you and me and all of those who have placed their trust in christ that was the promise after all that in you all the nations will be blessed that your family will span the nations paul puts it this way in galatians he says the promises were made to abraham and to his offspring it does not say into offsprings referring to many but referring to one and to your offspring who is christ in christ jesus you

are all sons of god through faith and if you are christ's then you are abraham's offspring heirs according to the promise that sounds familiar doesn't it right here in hebrews so that the heirs of the promise might have a strong encouragement to hold fast so friends we are the recipients of this oath-bound promise as well and christ's promise is for us and what is the hope that this oath guarantees what is it that god is so deeply condescended and sworn to us that he'll give us it's that we will live eternally under god's blessing and not under his curse surely i will bless you and of course this blessing doesn't mean material prosperity or a life of comfort and ease here and now it's not that the very fact the very fact that we need an anchor presupposes that the life of faith is going to be hard no god's blessing is much more profound and much more satisfying than any material possession because you see to receive god's blessing is to be counted righteous in his sight and to be adopted into his family that when abraham believed god and it was counted to him as righteousness that the same is true for all who share the faith of abraham this hope that we have this hope of god's eternal blessing is to know that your future will be one not of god's just condemnation and judgment for your sin but one of his acceptance and one of his freedom forever and friend without that hope that god says i will bless you and nothing will remove it without that hope you won't survive the storms of this life because without that hope the hope of blessing the hope of righteousness you will always wonder in hard times when things do not go your way you will always question whether or not god is punishing you or angry at you or abandoning you and what it is that you have done to turn god's favor against you when the winds come raging you will question his fatherly love for you and you will live in guilt and doubt and uncertainty nearly all your days but here is his promise and his oath two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for god to lie his promise and his oath i will surely bless you and that is an anchor for the soul friends that his judgment has been satisfied in christ that in him you are accepted as a child verse 18 describes believers as those who have fled for refuge have fled from sin and self-righteousness and fled to god's mercy and grace in christ and if that's true of you if you have fled for refuge to the son then god's promise and oath made thousands of years ago to abraham and to everyone of faith since then is for you and he will never change his mind and he will never go back on his word he will never renege his promises or decide one day that bets are off no it's impossible for him to do so his purpose is unchangeable

so what makes our hope in christ an anchor for the soul what gives it such certainty first hebrews says the fact that god has sworn it and god cannot lie second the fact that christ has accomplished it look again at verses 19 through 20 and try to follow the metaphors here as we read picture it in your mind 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 isn't this strange and bizarre language when you first read it aren't anchors meant to be sunk into the depths of the sea and yet here hebrews is telling us that this anchor as weighty and as deep and as immovable as god's oath has been taken and driven into the heart of heaven never to be moved you see where this anchor has taken hold he says it's the inner place behind the curtain and that was a way of speaking about the temple or the tabernacle which inside was basically two rooms the holy place and the most holy place and there was a big thick curtain and veil in between them and in the holy place the first room the outer room there was some incense and there were some lamps and there was some bread and the priest went in there a bunch and prayed and did their thing but in the most holy place one person went once a year on the day of atonement that place was representational of the very presence of god friends that room was a symbol of heaven on earth of god's dwelling place in the midst and not just that but as we'll see in hebrews coming up that that room was a picture of the future when god would dwell with his people and be all in all in the new heavens and the new earth so you see figuratively hebrews is saying that in the true temple of god's presence our anchor of hope has been driven into god's presence and into his future friends don't you see that there is an unshakable and an unbreakable connection between us and the intimate fellowship and communion with god that you were created for that what christ is and offers to us is that very thing that your soul longs for to know and to be known by god in an immediate way to have the veil between you and god's presence finally opened so that your true self can emerge in the light of god's glory in verse 20 we're told how our anchor comes to be driven there and it's because of jesus because he has gone ahead of us on our behalf as our forerunner he says which is a beautiful image it's actually an image from the military or from athletics this idea of a forerunner it was the captain who went ahead of the rest blazing the way leading the way carving out the path through danger and harm so that all those who are his could come streaming in his path and follow surely behind you see friends because

christ is our forerunner on our behalf because he has gone through death and into god's presence in the resurrected life that all those who are united to him by faith are guaranteed that we too will share in that destiny that our captain that our king has gone before us securing the path that will bring us into god's presence you see he has taken it there in some sense as you read this passage isn't it clear that this anchor and this hope are they christ himself as the metaphors start to spin and turn in this passage isn't the anchor jesus who is gone and planted himself in the father's presence on our behalf as our forerunner and as our high priest and because christ is there i too will be there that it's finished that it's done that he is there and so i shall be now what's what's coming up in hebrews as we look forward to the winter and spring where we're headed in this series in some sense friend this passage that we're at right now is setting the stage in verses 7 8 9 10 in some sense hebrews is saying buckle your seat belt because i'm going to show you how secure this hope actually is i'm going to show you how rock solid the work of christ is for you so that nothing will shake you it's secure and it's efficient that's where we're going but right now as we finish up this morning just think friend if you've placed your trust in christ then what your future holds according to this passage is fellowship and intimacy intimacy with god forever that those storms rage now there is perfect peace to come and depths of delight like you cannot imagine that those sorrow as the psalmist says may last for the night joy comes in the morning that when the wind and the waves finally cease our ships will be brought safely home into the harbor and if that is true what sacrifice or what hardship couldn't you face with courage now what difficulty or change in circumstances couldn't you face with courage if you knew for sure that the morning held the sunrise of god's new creation and that you would be a part of it because christ has paid for your sins and gone as a forerunner on your behalf what wouldn't you be able to withstand endure go through if you knew that was ahead of you even if your career were wrecked on the storms of life and you lost everything that you had worked for during your professional life that like so many great academic books they end up as door stops and giveaway boxes in front of people's offices and all the things that we labored for just end up being dust or even if close relationships gave way and friends betrayed you and a spouse never came and even if your self image that pristine picture of yourself that you try so hard to keep up even if that got shattered on the reality of your heart you could

endure the fiercest storms the most brutal winds because you have an anchor Jesus Christ who has taken hold of you and all your sin and selfishness and gone as a forerunner on your behalf into God's future into God's presence you know in the tomb of some of the earliest Christians in Rome you can actually go visit them one is called the catacombs of Priscilla if you go there and you see a few hundred years of Christian leaders and Christian martyrs and even just loved ones sort of buried there down in the depths underneath the earth in secrecy and you know what you find over and over again painted on those tombs one image again and again and again and again an anchor an anchor over this tomb and this tomb and this tomb of believers the anchor you see they're there as a declaration of hope as a defiant claim in the face of death in the face of Rome in the face of anything that stands against us that our hope in

[37 : 36] Christ is sure and steadfast and not even death can rock us from our destiny in Christ because our forerunner has gone before us and our place in the presence of God is secure so you see friends our hope the hope that will maintain our souls is sure because God has sworn it and because Jesus has accomplished it and if you hold fast to that no matter what storms you face you will persevere and in the morning joy let's pray father help us to see the certainty of the hope before us that our Lord and Savior shed his own blood to secure for us God that your oath your covenant your blood support us in the whelming flood that when all around our strength gives way you are all our open stay or that our anchor holds within the veil God for my brothers and sisters here this morning who are wrestling with doubts and fears and uncertainties for whom the storms of life have been raging and pounding Lord would you support them this morning help them to see the anchor of Christ in their life and

Lord for those who do not know you who've been trying to find an anchor to support them and have found it to be bankrupt God open their eyes to take hold of Christ the one anchor that will not fail we pray all this in Jesus name amen well friends we're going to sing a song that picks up all these themes of this passage and you'll hear them we're going to sing this as a great declaration of our hope in Christ so let's stand and let's celebrate what we have in him mind you you yeah you My