

A Most Certain Promise  
Hebrews 6:13-20

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<sup>A</sup> Luke 1:34; John 3:4, 9, 20:27

<sup>B</sup> Genesis 12:1-3, 22:2, 12, 16-18

<sup>C</sup> Hebrews 11:13; John 8:56-58

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<sup>A</sup> Colossians 1:27

<sup>B</sup> Isaiah 40:8

A. Introduction

1. You Wouldn't Believe It!

- a. A father asked his son what he had learned in Sunday School. The boy replied, "We learned about how Moses went behind enemy lines to rescue the Jews from the Egyptians. Moses ordered the engineers to build a pontoon bridge. After the people had crossed, he sent bombers back to blow up the bridge and the Egyptian tanks that were following them. And then..."
- b. "Did your teacher really tell it like that?" the father inquired.
- c. The son answered, "No, Dad, but if I told you what he said, you would never believe it!" –{2}.

2. The Reality of Doubt

- a. Are you troubled by doubts?
  - (A) that's not surprising
  - (B) the questions that arise in us are fairly universal
    - (1) Is there really a God?
    - (2) Does God care about me?
    - (3) Why does God allow suffering?
  - (C) it's all very well to say that these and such doubts are the result of temptation by Satan and we just need to resist them
  - (D) in having such doubts, we are not alone – we fall so far short
  - (E) John Wesley, at age 63, despite having such a great ministry, wrote to his brother and questioned his own love for God, and thus the reality of his faith, and whether he was only an honest heathen. –{3}.
- b. doubts just as deeply troubled men and women in Scripture
- c. sometimes our experience is inadequate to receive the truth in faith, as when "Mary said to the angel, 'How can this be, since I am a virgin?'" (Luke 1:34)
- d. sometimes our mind cannot encompass God's revelation as in the case of Nicodemus who asked, "... 'How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?' ... 'How can these things be?'" (John 3:4, 9)
- e. sometimes it is when life gives us an emotional kick in the teeth, an event for which, despite all warnings, we are unprepared that shatters all our expectations. Perhaps this was the case with Thomas – yet listen to Jesus

kindly and encouraging words: "Reach here with your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand and put it into My side; and do not be unbelieving, but believing." (John 20:27)

- f. and the message of our passage today, is that in the midst of our doubts, our very real doubts, God desires that we overcome them

## B. Abraham, Our Example . . . . . 6:13-15

### 1. Abraham's Situation

- a. Abram was 75 years old, when God called him to resume his journey to the land of Canaan, with these promises: "2 ... I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing; 3 ... And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed." (Genesis 12:1-3) ... so Abraham went, along with Sarai his wife, and Lot his nephew; living as an alien in Canaan
- b. but he had no child, so that in their desperation, at age 86, when Sarah was 77, he took Sarah's maid-servant, Hagar, as wife and she gave birth to his son, Ishmael; but not to be the promised son
- c. then at 99, God appeared to Abram again, repeated the promise and added that Sarah and he, now renamed Abraham – father of many – would have the promised son in the next year
- d. now, that son, Isaac, has grown to be a youth, when God said, "... Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you." (Genesis 22:2)
- e. this was Isaac; the son of promise; through whom God's promises were to be fulfilled – sacrificed! What would happen? But Abraham obeyed
- f. but at just the critical moment, when Abraham was about to sacrifice Isaac, the Angel of God intervened, saying "... Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me." (Genesis 22:12) ... then Angel of God spoke again to Abraham:
- g. "16 ... 'By Myself I have sworn,' declares the Lord, 'because you have done this thing and have not withheld your son, your only son, 17 indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply ...' (or, putting it into the familiar Hebrew idiom, 'blessing I will bless you, multiplying I will multiply') '... your seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies. 18 In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.'" (Genesis 22:16-18)

### 2. God's Promise and Oath (verses 13-14)

- a. '13 For when God made the promise to Abraham, since He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, 14 saying, "I will surely bless you and I will surely multiply you.", or, putting it into the familiar Hebrew idiom, 'blessing I will bless you, multiplying I will multiply you'
- b. It is these two actions of God upon which the teaching of this passage is built – that God made a promise to Abraham – that God sealed that promise with an oath based upon all that God is, as only He knows

3. Obtaining the Promise (verse 15)

- a. verse 15: "And so, having patiently waited, he obtained the promise."
- b. in verse 12, the writer of Hebrews has encouraged us, the reader, that we "... will not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises." – Abraham showed such patient faith
- c. 25 years it took from his leaving Haran until Isaac was born
- d. perhaps a dozen years, until Isaac's life was spared on Mount Moriah
- e. but there was not multiplying yet of the seed to be like the stars
- f. indeed, when Abraham died at age 175, Jacob, already identified as the line to the promised seed, was but a young boy of 15
- g. so in what sense could it be said that Abraham obtained or succeeded to the promise? ... it still lay 430 years away from the time when Isaac was born that the descendants of Jacob-Israel would be formed into a nation by God through the Exodus
- h. yet, in this Isaac – and later in Jacob – Abraham was privileged to foresee the promised seed who would bless all nations
- i. the writer explains this later in Hebrews 11:13, that Abraham among others "... died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, ..."
- j. and Jesus Himself describes that prophetic sight: "56 Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad." 57 So the Jews said to Him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?" 58 Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I AM." (John 8:56-58)
- k. the obtaining of the promise that Abraham experienced was in some wondrous fashion his foreseeing of Jesus, blessed Saviour of the world.

C. God's Kindly Desire . . . . . 6:16-18a

1. The Nature of an Oath (verse 16)

- a. "For men swear by one greater than themselves, and with them an oath given as confirmation is an end of every

dispute.”

- b. the basis on which an oath is stated is always upon some thing or some person greater than those making the statement or entering into the agreement – and the implication is that if someone fails to live up to that oath, that thing or person has the power to enforce it
- c. an oath is a means of guaranteeing a statement or an agreement – that is the technical meaning behind that word ‘confirmation’

## 2. God’s Deliberate Intention (verse 17)

- a. “In the same way God, desiring even more to show to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His purpose, interposed with an oath,”
- b. God did not have to make an oath: His word is ‘yea, and amen’
- c. this was condescension on God’s part, His stooping down in grace and love to give the ultimate in assurance to this Abraham, His friend
- d. that word, ‘desiring’ is a much stronger word than mere inclination or wanting: it reflects a deliberate exercise of God’s will and purpose
- e. that this promise would never, ever be set aside
- f. that nothing whatsoever would ever thwart this promise
- g. here God the Creator, in His grace, and for His own purposes, makes a promise to one of His Creation, the man, Abraham – calling upon His own Self to be the guarantor and pledge of fulfilment

## 3. God’s Purpose and Method (verse 18a)

- a. here is verse 18 in a version altered for improved clarity: “in order that by two unchangeable deeds, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we would have strong encouragement; we, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us.”
- b. now the central part of this verse states an intended result or purpose of what God has done: ‘in order that ... we would have strong encouragement ...’
  - (A) you have heard the name “Paraklete”, given to the Holy Spirit; that name encompasses the ideas of comfort, encourage, help, console – the Holy Spirit is the one who stands by us to minister that way – that is what ‘encouragement’ includes here
  - (B) not just a patting on the back kind of encouragement; not mere cheering from the stands; but a mighty encouragement; one that strengthens us, giving us the wherewithal to overcome doubts
  - (C) that is God’s stated purpose in what is related in this passage

- c. the method that God has used to put His purpose into effect is found in two unchangeable deeds, two inalterable actions – the very actions of which we have just read in God’s relationship to Abraham
  - (A) the first of these is God’s word of promise – of his having many descendants, of giving them a land, of protecting them, and from his seed to bring blessing upon all the earth
  - (B) the second is God’s pledge by an oath – guaranteeing by reason of His own just and true nature what He has promised
- d. because Abraham was just one step in God’s plan and purpose to provide salvation from sin through Jesus Christ, Abraham’s seed

D. Seizing onto Hope ..... 6:18b-20

1. Faith and Hope (verse 18b)

- a. faith and hope are clearly distinguished in the Bible; they are different
- b. faith is the agreement of our mind and our will – in Scriptural terms, our heart – with truth making it our basis of life, and is founded upon a trust relationship with the Triune God: Father, Son, Holy Spirit
- c. hope is the present anticipation and expectation of a future possession or benefit, and, in the Bible, one that is warranted by a covenant; in some cases, the word hope means that possession or benefit itself
- d. but faith and hope are alike in this sense, that they attach our current physical existence to our eternal spiritual reality
  - (A) faith is exercised to laying hold of the Object of our trust
  - (B) hope is exercised in laying hold of the object of our expectation
- e. so verse 18 concludes, “... [who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us.](#)” (NKJV)
- f. fleeing for refuge operates in two directions
  - (A) it is fleeing FROM the hopelessness of this sinful world
  - (B) it is fleeing TO the hope of God’s righteous kingdom

2. Seizing the Hope Is to Seize Christ (verses 19-20)

- a. “[19 This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil, 20 where Jesus has entered as a forerunner for us, having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.](#)”
- b. our hope is to be found not only in Jesus Christ, but it is Jesus Christ
- c. union with Christ is the important fact to us, “[to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory](#)

of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.” (Colossians 1:27)

- d. and, Lord willing, to these verse we shall return next Lord’s day, with a message entitled, ‘The Anchor of the Soul’.

## E. Conclusion

### 1. Doubt Because of Man’s Expertise

- a. Satan uses the so-call experts of this world to sow doubt in the mind of the Christian – they say God’s word is out of date, unreliable, myth
- b. scientific theories are given as information; expert opinions, as facts
- c. but listen to what these experts had to say:
- d. 1840: Anyone travelling at the speed of 30 mph would surely suffocate
- e. 1878 - Electric lights are unworthy of serious attention.
- f. 1901 - No possible combination can be united into a practical machine by which men shall fly., and the next two made by qualified scientists:
- g. 1926 - This foolish idea of shooting at the moon is basically impossible
- h. 1930 - To harness the energy locked up in matter is impossible. <sup>-(4)}</sup> – today in Ontario, 52% of our hydro power comes in that very way!
- i. that shows the extent of man’s expertise, but

### 2. God’s Word Is True

- a. “The grass withers, the flower fades,” – that’s man and his ideas – “But the word of our God stands forever.” (Isaiah 40:8)
- b. so, in the midst of these doubts, consider to what great extent God has gone to make known His love and His care for you in Jesus Christ – even as we have seen in this passage in Hebrews
- c. so that in a world that has been rendered dismal by doubting, God lays before a promise, the only hope of the world, Jesus Christ
- d. as doubt comes, let us respond: “God said it; I believe it; that settles it”

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ASV	American Standard Version of 1901
AV	Authorized (King James) Version of 1769
NAS	New American Standard version © 1960, 1995 The Lockman Foundation (usually the 1995 edition)
NIV	New International Version © 1984 by the International Bible Society
NKJV	New King James Version © 1979 Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers
WEY	The New Testament in Modern Speech © 1902, 1912 R. F. Weymouth

Some of the commentaries and resources used in the preparation of this message are identified as follow:

Barnes	– <i>Notes on the New Testament, et alia</i> , by Rev Albert Barnes, Gall & Inglis, Edinburgh
BM	– <i>Biblical Museum</i> , Editor James Comper Gray, ca 1870
EBC	– <i>The Expositor's Bible Commentary</i> , © 1986 Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 49530, Michigan <i>Hebrews</i> , by Leon Morris
EGT	– <i>The Expositor's Greek Testament</i> , Hodder & Stoughton <i>Hebrews</i> , by Marcus Dods
Gill	– <i>Exposition of the Old Testament, Exposition of the New Testament</i> , by John Gill, D.D.
Kerux	– The sermon & illustration data base compiled by Rev. David Holwick at the web-site, <a href="http://www.holwick.com">www.holwick.com</a> .
NICNT	– <i>The New International Commentary on the New Testament</i> <i>The Epistle to the Hebrew</i> , by F. F. Bruce
RWP	– <i>Robertson's Word Pictures of the New Testament</i> , by Dr. A. T. Robertson
TYN	– <i>The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries</i> <i>Hebrews</i> , by Donald Guthrie

2. From the '*Succasunna Presbyterian Newsletter*,' – Kerux illustration #1464
3. Source '*John Wesley: A Biography*,' by Stephen Tomkins – Kerux illustration #12524
4. From '*Fredericksburg Bible Illustrator Supplements*,' – Kerux illustration #12863