

**HEBREWS – LEVITICUS**  
**“A Secure Promise”**  
**Hebrews 6:13-20**  
**June 25, 2023**

**Hebrews 6:13-20**

<sup>13</sup> For when **God made a promise** to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself, <sup>14</sup> saying, “Surely I will bless you and multiply you.” <sup>15</sup> And thus Abraham, having patiently waited, obtained the promise. <sup>16</sup> For people swear by something greater than themselves, and in all their disputes an oath is final for confirmation. <sup>17</sup> 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, <sup>18</sup> 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. <sup>19</sup> **We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain,** <sup>20</sup> **where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.**

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**“This is the Word of God” – “Thanks be to God.”**

To the Hebrews believers who received this letter, the encouragement, history lessons, reviews of that which should be known, and the clear and dire warnings of false conversions and apostate living make it challenging to even read the next portion of the letter. But they did. They must. And we must as well.

For these persecuted and questioning church members, who have lost much the clear theological fencing is taking place in this letter. What I mean by the word *fencing* is that lines of truth are being drawn by God through the writer so that the listeners understand what is correct and

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<sup>1</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Heb 6:13–20). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

true and right. It suggests the fence around a yard. The fence may be there to keep your dog from running away and at the same time to keep things which may harm your pet out. It's a fence. So, when fencing the teaching, the pastor/elder/overseer is verbally building walls of protection and doctrinal fidelity. Otherwise, churches drift into theological liberalism. That may sound like a political term, but it's much worse than that. Theological liberalism eventually removes the capital "T" truth which is manifest in Christ and replaces it with a pluralistic, postmodern truthiness which is grounded in nothing.

The Hebrews receiving this letter are not there...yet. But they are wavering. They are settling. They are fearful. They are persecuted. And some who seemed saved have abandoned the faith only to create even more questions for the truly redeemed who now may wonder if their salvation is revocable. Take a listen to last week's sermon from Pastor Mike for more on that. It was excellent.

But as we look at this portion of the letter, we can find inspiration. Hope is revealed. History is recounted and surety is provided.

It does mean that first, we need to look back at verses 11-12. These verses were the culmination of last Sunday's message, but they become the transition to this week's.

### **Hebrews 6:11-12**

**And we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness to have the full assurance of hope until the end,<sup>12</sup> so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.<sup>2</sup>**

Three things to remember today.

1. The inherited promises.
2. The certain promises.

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<sup>2</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Heb 6:11–12). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

### 3. The unchanging promises.

#### **INHERITED PROMISES**

The writer speaks of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

What promises?

The promises of the one who is beautiful, grand, and faithful. The promises of life, abundant and full. The promises that were revealed in Christ but given to those who came thousands of years prior. The Old Testament promises, also known as covenants, between God and his people are incredible. The one that is referenced here to the Hebrews is the Abrahamic Covenant – the promise to Abraham.

In the first book of the Bible, Genesis, we see that after Abram set out from the pagan city of Ur to the land of Canaan by God's instruction, he was delayed for a number of years in a city called Haran. He stayed there until his father Terah died. Abram and his wife Sarai had been married for many years, but remained childless. Abram was seventy-five when he left Haran with his wife and servants. They were still childless. This must be remembered when we hear of God's promise, his covenant with Abraham. God promised he would make Abram the father of a great nation of descendants and would bless all peoples on the earth through this nation. This great promise was made to a man who had no children.<sup>3</sup>

Later God reiterates the promise when Abram and his nephew Lot separated. God said...

#### **Genesis 13:14-17**

**<sup>14</sup>The LORD said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him, "Lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are, northward and**

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<sup>3</sup> Hughes, R. Kent. *Hebrews: An Anchor for the Soul* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 175-176.

southward and eastward and westward, <sup>15</sup> for all the land that you see I will give to you and to your offspring forever. <sup>16</sup> **I will make your offspring as the dust of the earth, so that if one can count the dust of the earth, your offspring also can be counted.** <sup>17</sup> Arise, walk through the length and the breadth of the land, for I will give it to you.”<sup>4</sup>

Still, he’s childless.

The Hebrews receiving this reminder know this story. They likely know this story better than they know of all that Jesus did. It is their heritage and nation’s history.

Following this, there are more reiterations. Genesis 15, following a great battle, God awakens the fatigued man to say once more...

#### **Genesis 15:4-5**

**<sup>4</sup> 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.” <sup>5</sup> And he brought him outside and said, “Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your offspring be.”<sup>5</sup>**

The promise was made. It was reiterated and over and over again it seemed like a pipe dream. This old man and his old wife were quickly losing hope in the fact a child would come. She was beyond child-bearing age. He and she were just accumulating orbits around the sun.

But God...made a promise. And that promise was fulfilled.

#### **Hebrews 6:13-15**

**<sup>13</sup> For when God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself, <sup>14</sup> saying, “Surely I**

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<sup>4</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Ge 13:14–17). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

<sup>5</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Ge 15:4–5). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

**will bless you and multiply you.”<sup>15</sup> And thus Abraham, having patiently waited, obtained the promise.<sup>6</sup>**

The imagery of a courtroom comes to mind when I hear of oaths being taken. The bailiff makes those being brought before the court to raise their right hand and made a pledge, to swear that everything they state will be the truth – the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

There was a day when people would place their other hand on a Bible to do this.

The Bible is used, for the most part, in the offices of state when presidents, members of congress and senators are sworn in. Though this is not always the case. For example...

- President John Quincy Adams swore upon a book of law called the “Volume of Laws”
- President Theodore Roosevelt was sworn in quickly following the assassination of President McKinley with no book at all.
- Lyndon Johnson was sworn in with a Catholic Book of Prayers.
- Congressman Keith Ellison used a Qur’an.
- Congresswoman Tulsi Gabbard, a Hindu, used a copy of the Bhagavad Gita.
- The US Ambassador to Switzerland and Liechtenstein, Suzi LeVine swore upon her oath upon a Kindle reader with the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment of the Constitution on it.
- Senator Jon Ossoff took his oath upon a book of Hebrew Scripture.
- Congressman Robert Garcia used a copy of a Superman comic book.

There are more, but suffice to say, not everyone holds to the inerrancy and viability of the Bible. Even when taking oaths. Thus, in many cases,

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<sup>6</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Heb 6:13–15). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

the concept of the oath has been watered down and for many, has become meaningless.

The list is seemingly growing of things that should be, and for many decades were taken for granted, but now are questionable.

The saying by one of my professors at seminary in the 1990s rings true “He has his feet grounded firmly in mid-air.”<sup>7</sup> That uncertainty seems rampant now...more than ever.

And yet, we have solid footing here from which to gain hope. A truth that resounds throughout the ages. That which is right, good, and true for all people, in all cultures, throughout the world and across time.

These promises of God were made to Abraham and the Hebrew believers were reminded that they were to inherit these as rightful heirs. Through faith, the promises of a great nation, a people surrendered, a God-glorifying Kingdom would come. For the Gentile believers the great, graceful gift is that through Christ we are grafted branches into the family tree and therefore, we receive the same inheritance based on the same promise, secured by the same name.

## **CERTAIN PROMISES**

The certain promises of God are fulfilled in heaven. Heaven is accessible through faith, by grace. The narrow doorway into the heavenly realm is wide enough for one person at a time. That’s why the door is a person. It is Christ himself. Jesus is the Way. This the condition of faith to inherit this certain promise is clear. This is the key which opens the door to salvation to every one of us.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> A statement made often by Dr. Phill Briggs, professor at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

<sup>8</sup> Nicoll, W. Robertson, ed. *The Sermon Outline Bible: Colossians-James* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1958), 217.

God's promises are sure. They are certain. Okay. That sounds like something a pastor would say.

It is and I believe it. But...we (people) are a forgetful bunch. And sometimes we can be sure about something and be wrong. It's called the <sup>9</sup>certainty principle. Scientific American ran an article about this years ago. The certainty principle and hypercorrection from a cognitive nature suggests this, "Suppose I ask 'What is the capital of Canada?' and you answer 'Toronto.'" I ask, "Are you sure?" and you say you are. You are super confident that this is right. Then I reveal to you that Ottawa is the capital. According to cognitive psychologist Janet Metcalfe of Columbia University, you will likely remember the capital of Canada now for weeks, if not much, much longer.

So...God is smarter than any of our scientists and when it comes to cognitive research, he knows more. Thus, the writer of the book reminds the readers of that which they knew and corrects that which they thought they knew. Why? For God's glory and our mental retention of truth.

The learners need reminding of the certainty principle in regards to God's promises.

## **Hebrews 6:17**

**<sup>17</sup> 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,<sup>10</sup>**

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<sup>9</sup> Choi, Charles Q. "Certainty Principle: People Who Hold False Convictions Are Better at Retaining Corrected Information." *Scientific American*, 27 Apr. 2012, [www.scientificamerican.com/article/certainty-principle-people-who-hold-false-convictions-are-better-at-retaining-corrected-information/#:~:text=Mind%20%26%20Brain-Certainty%20Principle%3A%20People%20Who%20Hold%20False%20Convictions,Better%20at%20Retainin%20Corrected%20Information.](http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/certainty-principle-people-who-hold-false-convictions-are-better-at-retaining-corrected-information/#:~:text=Mind%20%26%20Brain-Certainty%20Principle%3A%20People%20Who%20Hold%20False%20Convictions,Better%20at%20Retainin%20Corrected%20Information.)

<sup>10</sup> [\*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version\*](#). (2016). (Heb 6:17). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

His promises are certain.

## **UNCHANGING PROMISES**

### **Hebrews 6:18-20**

**<sup>18</sup> 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. <sup>19</sup> We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, <sup>20</sup> where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek<sup>11</sup>**

If you search online for broken promises, you'll find initial listings related to US Presidents. Then, you will see other political promises. Finally, you get lists of marital promises broken by spouses. Ultimately, the pages of broken promises seem to continue into infinity.

People make promises. People break promises. People change the conditions of their promises. People justify the broken promises. People are broken...thus they break.

And when we seek to understand the divine's promises, it is super challenging to realize that the unchanging God is just that and that his promises are unchanging as well. But they are.

It is impossible for God to lie, the writer states. This hearkens back to Numbers 23:19.

### **Numbers 23:19**

**<sup>19</sup> God is not man, that he should lie,  
or a son of man, that he should change his mind.**

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<sup>11</sup> [\*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version\*](#). (2016). (Heb 6:18–20). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.



**Has he said, and will he not do it?**

**Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it? <sup>12</sup>**

Hear this friend – God does not break his promises. Every single promise of God is fulfilled. To the child of God needing certainty, this is gold. To the one far from God desiring life, hope, answers, this is the treasure you seek. God is not man, nor made in our image. He is sovereign, holy, secure, infinite, and available through the Son.

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<sup>12</sup> [\*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version\*](#). (2016). (Nu 23:19). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.