

THIS HOPE IS YOUR ANCHOR  
Hebrews 6:13-19

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Hebrews 6:19 *We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure.*

Hebrews 6:13-19 *When God made his promise to Abraham, since there was no one greater for him to swear by, he swore by himself,<sup>14</sup> saying, "I will surely bless you and give you many descendants."<sup>15</sup> And so after waiting patiently, Abraham received what was promised.<sup>16</sup> Men swear by someone greater than themselves, and the oath confirms what is said and puts an end to all argument.<sup>17</sup> Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath.<sup>18</sup> God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope offered to us may be greatly encouraged.<sup>19</sup> *We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure.**

Brothers and sisters in our living hope,

For thousands of years, goods and people have been moved by ship in the Mediterranean Sea. Surrounded by land and influenced by the temperatures of the wind blowing over that land, ancient sailors quickly learned to sail during the warm, mild summers, and avoid the rainy, cooler winters. Because of the depth of the water, storms would blow up quite quickly and harshly. Most often ships would sail along the land from one harbor to the next to avoid some of these storms. If they saw a storm coming, they could anchor their ships in a safe and secure harbor.

We also have storms that rise up quickly in our lives. How often haven't we all had a perfectly mild day, only to have the next day filled with difficulties, danger, or even disaster? So how do we find a safe and secure harbor in which to anchor?

Abram was a man who understood how quickly life could change. There he was in what we might call modern day Iran or Iraq, leading his life just the way he had envisioned it. He was 75 years old, when the Lord suggested that he pack up everything and go to a place he had never been before. Talk about the storms of life? But he did that. Why? Because the Lord also made a promise to Abraham. That promise was, (Gn 12:2-3), *I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.*

A man with a 65 year old wife and no children believed in that promise and followed where the Lord would have him go. For the next 25 years, Abraham traveled by foot to Palestine to Egypt and back. He suffered through family jealousies. With just his servants, he rescued his nephew and others from the armies of five kings who had taken them hostage. He saw the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. He sinned against his wife and against the Lord repeatedly.

At what point would you and I have finally given up hope? At what point would we have said, "we need some proof?" Perhaps we would have even thought we had wasted our time, waiting and waiting and waiting, and all the time not having it turn out the way we wanted, the way we had hoped. I wonder if we wouldn't have been like the two kids in the backseat who have been promised that they get to go to Disneyland. It's a long drive to Disneyland. How long before they start asking, "Are we there yet?"

Abraham persevered in all of this because God continually appeared to him to remind him that he meant the promise that he had given. Maybe it was at those times when his family life seemed to be going through a great deal of drama. Or maybe it was when his business was struggling. Perhaps things were going so well that Abraham might have been tempted to forget all about God's promise. Whatever it was, God appeared to him and reaffirmed his promise to Abraham.

God was so serious about this that he even swore an oath. I realize that doesn't mean as much today as it has in other cultures and times. Oaths are important. An oath is a way to call on someone of higher authority than we have all by ourselves to be a witness to the truth of our words. Just like, "Do you promise to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help me God?" or, "Mom says!"

In this instance God swore by himself, because there is no one greater by which he could swear. Since God cannot lie, this is really powerful!

God wanted Abraham to be sure of this promise. He didn't want him to doubt. Even though God did not fulfill that promise for a long time according to our way of measuring time, he wanted Abraham to know and believe that he was just as committed to carrying out his promises on the 10<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> year of that promise as he was on the first year.

Despite all that time, Abraham continued to believe in the Lord's promise and no matter what was going on in his life, he could rely on God's promise.

When Abraham was 100 and Sarah, his wife, was 90. They finally had the child God had promised to them. One would think that was the end of their need for the promise. But nothing could be further from the truth. Abraham was tempted many more times in his life, but he continued to put his faith in this promise because he knew that Isaac, his son, was not the complete fulfillment of the promise. That complete fulfillment was in Jesus some 2000 years later. As Jesus won our salvation through his perfect life, through his death and resurrection, he finally fulfilled the promise God had made to Abraham. Abraham's faith in that promise was his anchor in the safe and secure harbor of God's love. He knew and believed and was saved.

I dare say all of you have heard about Jesus and what he has done for us. I'm sure you also have had your difficulties, dangers, or disasters. The storms of life will continue to surprise us and catch us unawares. There will be times when we will feel that we are hanging on to a life preserver all by ourselves in the middle of huge waves which threaten to wash down upon us and drown us. How can we weather such storms?

It is the same promise which lifted Abraham which has been made to us. Even though we do not see its fulfillment, we know that it is true, and we put our hope in that promise just like Abraham did.

This is why we put such a strong emphasis on Christian Education for our Sunday School, our VBS, our Lutheran Elementary School, all of our adult Bible Classes, and every other form it takes here. We know that it isn't enough to hear this promise once. We need to hear that God swore by himself that he would keep this promise. We need to be reminded, whether times are good or bad, that the love of God has been promised to us by one who cannot lie. So, we come back day after day and insist that this be the center of all we do.

Why? Because it's about God's promise. Because it's about our salvation in Jesus. Because this hope, and this alone, is our anchor in the storm. Amen.

Read Hebrews 6:13-19.