

## PRESSING ON/TAKING FLIGHT

Week 14 – Hebrews 6:13-20 – God Swore By Himself

Postscript from week 13: re: a believer wandering so far afield who does not heed warnings from fellow believers - there are times when God intervenes, i.e. I Tim. 1:18ff, I Cor. 5:4-5, I Cor. 11:27-30, and James 5:19-20.

Re: I Tim. 1:18 – when Hymeneus and Alexander were delivered to Satan by Paul – MacArthur writes this: “Paul put both men out of the church, thus ending their influence and removing them from the protection and insulation of God’s people. They were no longer in the environment of God’s blessing but under Satan’s control. (CW’s comment for consideration: non-believers would already be under Satan’s control based on Eph. 2:2 – Satan is the prince of the power of the air – the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience) MacArthur goes on to state :In some instances God has turned believers over to Satan for positive purposes such as revealing the genuineness of saving faith, keeping them humble and dependent on Him. . . (Job 1:1-22; Matt. 4:1-11; Luke 22:31-33; II Cor. 12:1-10; Rev. 7:9-15).”

I Cor. 5:4-5 – MacArthur – “deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus” – ‘Deliver’ is a strong term used of judicial sentencing. This is equal to excommunicating the professed believer. It amounts to putting that person out of the blessing of Christian worship and fellowship by thrusting him into Satan’s realm, the world system.”

“Destruction of the flesh” – divine chastening for sin that can result in illness and even death.

Whatever your view is of Hebrews 6:4-6, we note that the author tells the readers, whom I’m suggesting are Jewish believers, that they are beloved and that he is confident of better things of them – that he believes they won’t fall aside and bring shame and dishonor to Jesus. They have NOT reached that point. Yes – they’ve drifted, and doubted but they’re not at the hardened/calloused state (said of the children of Israel in the wilderness – and because of that state – physical death happened to the generation that left Egypt.)

Another comment re: Heb. 6:4-6 as we seek to understand:

The idea is not that “if you fall away, you can’t come back to Jesus ever,” but that “if you turn your back on Jesus, don’t expect to find salvation anywhere else, especially in the foundations of Judaism apart from the fullness of Jesus.”

This difficult passage is best understood in the context of [Hebrews 6:1-2](#). The writer to the Hebrews is telling the readers that if they do go back to Judaism, all the religious “repentance” in the world will do them no good. Their forsaking of Jesus is tantamount to crucifying Him all over again, especially if they were to express their repentance in traditional Jewish forms: especially animal sacrifice, which denies the total work of Jesus for them on the cross.

The impact falls on Christ – because they would be shaming His Name!

Would these Jewish readers know about producing fruit? Would the illustration in Hebrews 6:7-8 impact them?

- Isaiah 5:1-7
  - There's no doubt that the reference to fruitfulness in Hebrews immediately brought this passage to the minds of Jews steeped in the OT (and they were as seen in Heb. 6:1-3)
- John 15:1-8
  - When Hebrews was written, the apostle John hadn't yet recorded this teaching of Jesus. Yet, it's likely that Christ's words about fruitfulness were known by many Jerusalem Jews. Here, again the implications are clear: stay close to Jesus and you will bear fruit that glorifies God. If you don't abide in Jesus, you'll be purged! An unfruitful life will reflect no glory on God.
- I Cor. 3:12-15

An unfruitful life is NOT rewarded with divine blessing. It goes against God's character.

Author tells them that he is confident of their maturing – of things ACCOMPANYING salvation.

They've demonstrated their earnestness as they have and are continuing to minister to fellow believers.

It doesn't appear that there's a calculated rebellion on the part of the readers. They're depressed and discouraged due to the persecution.

God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love: When we are discouraged, we often think God has forgotten all we have done for Him and His people. But God would cease to be God (He would be unjust) if He forgot such things. God sees and remembers.

The author tells them to show that same diligence in pressing on to maturity. The readers can “through faith and patience” actually “inherit the promises” (Heb. 6:12).

The reason for assurance of hope: God's unconditional/unilateral promise! The author points to Abraham – revered patriarch of the Jews.

### Hebrews 6:13-20

<sup>13</sup> For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, <sup>14</sup> saying, “Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you.”<sup>[d]</sup> <sup>15</sup> And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. <sup>16</sup> For men indeed swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is for them an end of all dispute. <sup>17</sup> Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath, <sup>18</sup> that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might<sup>[e]</sup> have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us.

Refuge: We can think of this refuge of hope are like the cities of refuge commanded by the Law of Moses, as described in [Numbers 35](#).

- Both Jesus and the cities of refuge are within easy reach of the needy person. They were of no use unless someone could get to the place of refuge.
- Both Jesus and the cities of refuge are open to all – not just the children of Israel! Num. 35: 15 – “These six cities shall be for refuge for the children of Israel, for the stranger, and for the sojourner among them, that anyone who kills a person accidentally may flee there.” (stranger/sojourner – Gentiles; if not of the children of Israel – then Gentiles)
- Both Jesus and the cities of refuge became a place where the one in need would *live* (Num. 35:25b); you didn’t come to a city of refuge in time of need just to look around.
- Both Jesus and the cities of refuge are the *only alternative* for the one in need; without this specific protection, they will be destroyed.
- Both Jesus and the cities of refuge provide protection *only within their boundaries*; to go outside meant death.
- With both Jesus and the cities of refuge, full freedom comes with the *death of the High Priest*. The death of the High Priest marked the end of an old era and the beginning of a new one for the manslayer.
- However, there is *a crucial distinction* between Jesus and the cities of refuge. The cities of refuge only helped the *innocent*; the *guilty* can come to Jesus and find refuge.

And, what of Abraham? Why is the Holy Spirit inspiring the author to write to the readers of Abraham? God promised Abraham a son when he was 75 years old. How old was Abraham when Isaac was born? 100!!!

<sup>19</sup> *This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil,* <sup>20</sup> *where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.*

This hope we have as believers in the Messiah. “Hope” in Scripture is never merely a wish or a dream. Hope in Scripture is a **SETTLED CONFIDENCE – A SETTLED ASSURANCE** that comes to the child of God who rests by faith in the promises of the Word of God!

The author points to a pivotal event.

In Gen. 12:2 God promised Abram, when he was 75 (Gen. 12:4), that he would have a son through whom a great nation would arise. That promise was reaffirmed in 12:7 and again in 13:15-16, 15:2-5, 17:6-7, and 17:16-19. But it was not until years later, as recorded in Genesis 21:2, that the expected child of promise was born. The promise, which included a son, was given to Abram when he was 75 years old (Gen. 12:1-4). However, for decade after decade, Abram and Sarah were childless. During these years the promise was repeated, the last time when Abraham was 99 years old (Gen. 17:1).

Through it all, Abraham continued to believe the God Who had promised him a child. Finally, at age 100, the promised son was born (Gen. 21:1-5).

Abraham had exercised faith in God (Gen. 15:6); and he also was called upon to exercise patient endurance while he waited for that promise to be fulfilled.

Heb. 6:15 – “. . . after Abraham had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.”

Heb. 6:13-15 - *For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself,<sup>14</sup> saying, “Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you.”<sup>[d] 15</sup>*

Even though God’s promises may be delayed so that patience is necessary, they are sure!

Abram was declared righteous by God. Gen. 15:6 – Abram -- believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.

While the readers had come to faith in Jesus, they found it difficult to be patient. Therefore the writer uses Abraham as an example of the relationship between faith and patience.

In Gen. 15:1-3 we read that Abram was becoming impatient because of the long delay in God’s fulfillment of the promised son. Abram offered God an alternative – here’s my servant – Eliezer – his servant. Gen. 15:4-5 – God’s answer to Abram’s offer of help! Abram’s response – Gen. 15:6 – he believed! And God accounted it to him for righteousness – God gave Abram His righteousness! Salvation is by grace alone through faith alone throughout Scripture.

The Abrahamic Covenant – binding agreement between parties (Gen. 15). This was a ritual with which Abram was very familiar. Two people entering into a blood covenant would place divided pieces of animals on either side of a ditch – and the blood would run into the ditch. The members entering into the covenant would walk in the ditch between the cut animals – as the animal blood ran into the ditch. The parties recited the provisions/terms of the covenant and bound themselves to each other by blood. If either party failed to fulfill his part of the covenant, his blood would be poured out like the blood of the slain animals that bound them in the covenant. It was a covenant, then, that carried the death penalty for failure to fulfill its terms.

To show that this covenant with Abram was **DEPENDENT ON GOD ALONE**, God rendered Abram incapable of participating in the ritual of ratification. While Abram slept (15:12), he saw the Shekinah of God pass between the pieces of the sacrificed animals (15:17). God showed Abram – and us down through the ages – that He was binding Himself in a unilateral (one party), unchangeable, irrevocable covenant. The covenant as first noted in Gen. 12 promises Abram: land, seed blessing.

The writer of Hebrews, referring to this covenant, points out that Abram's faith rested on two aspects: the PROMISE of God and the OATH of God.

KEY: both the promise of God and the covenant of God are IMMUTABLE – they cannot change; and their fulfillment rests entirely upon the CHARACTER OF GOD (unifying principle of the Bible).

The application the writer of Hebrews makes is that we not only believe God, but we can exercise patient endurance while we wait for the fulfillment of His promises. Why? Because God cannot lie – PERIOD! Rom. 11:29 – the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. God doesn't take back what He has promised.

Our understanding of the Biblical covenants in the Hebrew Scriptures is crucial. Covenant – a contract or agreement which spells out how a relationship between two or more parties is to work. The covenant is considered a legally binding document. It is the basis for the relationship it covers and typically spells out the rights and duties of each party, as well as spelling out the consequences of keeping or breaking the agreement. Biblical covenants define relationships between God and human beings.

What are the Biblical covenants? Adamic, Edenic, Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, Land, Davidic, and New Covenant.

For purposes of this study, we'll look at the Abrahamic, Mosaic, Land, Davidic, and New Covenants.

Four of the Biblical covenants noted above are unconditional – based on God and God alone.

One of the covenants is conditional – based on the obedience of one of the two parties.

The Abrahamic Covenant is a unilateral, unconditional covenant. Its fulfillment is based on God's faithfulness alone. Israel's obedience is NOT required.

The Abrahamic Covenant promises:

Land – physical land

Seed - Messiah on His throne during Millennial Kingdom

Blessing – salvation for Jew and Gentile

The Abrahamic Covenant works itself out in:

Land Covenant – Deut. 29:1-29 & Deut. 30:1-10

Davidic Covenant – II Sam. 7

New Covenant – Jer. 31:31ff

### **Provisions of the New Covenant**

- The new covenant is an unconditional, grace covenant resting on the "I will" of God (Jer. 31:31-34, Ezek 16:60-62)
- The new covenant is an everlasting covenant (Isa 61:2, Ezek 37:26, Jer 31:35-37)
- The new covenant promises a renewed mind and heart. (Isa.59:21, Jer 31:33)

- The new covenant provides for restoration to the favor and blessing of God. (Hos 2:19-20, Isa 61:9)
- Forgiveness of sin is also included in the covenant. (Jer 31:34b)
- The indwelling of the Holy Spirit is in the new covenant. (Jeremiah 31:33, Ezekiel 36:27)
- The teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit will be manifested, and the will of God will be known by obedient hearts. (Jer 31:34)
- Israel will be in the land and be materially blessed. Jer. 32:41, Isa. 61:8, Ezek 34:25-27)
- The sanctuary will be rebuilt in Jerusalem, Ezek 37:26-27a.
- War shall cease and peace shall reign according to Hosea 2:18, Isa 2:4
- The Blood of Jesus is the foundation of the New Covenant.

### **The Church and the New Covenant**

According to Romans the church has the benefits of this new covenant. The Gentiles are grafted into the blessings aspect of the Abrahamic Covenant (Gal. 3:14) of Israel. The Church does NOT replace the position of Israel in their covenant. God's promises to Israel through the Abrahamic Covenant are not fulfilled in the Church. God will deliver on His promises to Israel: land, seed, blessing. Israel will receive the land promised to them - in the Millennial Kingdom (Ezekiel 48); the Seed, the Messiah, will be seated on the throne of David in the Millennial Kingdom (II Sam. 7; Psalm 2; Zech. 14; Isaiah 2); Israel will be saved (the one third remaining at the end of the Tribulation) (Zech. 12:10ff).

The foundation of the new covenant was the sacrifice of Christ on the cross.

The Mosaic Covenant is a conditional covenant. The two parties: God and Israel. Israel's obedience was required. Consequences: blessings for obedience on Israel's part and curses for disobedience on Israel's part (Deut. 28).

The Abrahamic Covenant was essential in carrying out God's plan of redemption for mankind because of Gen. 12:3 – “. . . through you all the families of the earth will be blessed.”

The Abrahamic Covenant promises salvation for both Jews & Gentiles. Since salvation is promised through the Abrahamic Covenant, it must be an unconditional covenant which is solely based on God. Salvation is totally of God.

The Abrahamic covenant is the constitution of our salvation!

The “hope set before us” – “hope” in Scripture is never merely a wish or a dream. Hope in Scripture is a SETTLED CONFIDENCE/ASSURANCE that comes to the child of God who rests by faith in the promises of the Word of God!

In the book of Hebrews, in Scripture, we read of our responsibility in light of God's promises – always REMEMBERING that we are dependent upon God alone. We are called upon to TRUST in what God has promised and to patiently endure.

AND, we in the body of Christ, are told to come alongside each other and encourage one another to patiently endure!

v. 19 – this hope, this settled confidence is to us what an anchor is to a ship. The harbors around the Mediterranean Sea were small and very shallow and could not provide a safe haven for more than a few vessels at a time.

To add to that difficult situation, the floor of the Mediterranean was sand and could not hold an anchor to keep a ship from drifting in a storm.

To secure a vessel, its anchor would be placed in a small boat and carried into the harbor where it would be then secured to a safe mooring.

Outside the harbor, the ship might be battered by storms, but because its anchor had been placed securely within the harbor, it remained safe.

In the same way, even though we might be battered by storms as we progress on the path toward maturity, Jesus' promises are to us what the anchor was to its ship.

The institution of Israel's priesthood was in itself a promise; a promise of access to God.

Ex. 19:6 - And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These *are* the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel."

Yet that access was denied by a thick curtain or veil that cut everyone off from the Holy of Holies where God's presence rested – everyone aside from the High Priest who could enter into the Holy of Holies once a year! The Holy of Holies is where God's presence resided (between the cherubim on top of the ark of the covenant).

**WE HAVE A HIGH PRIEST!** In Christ, God has kept His promise, for Jesus has entered "the Presence behind the veil" (Heb. 6:19) where He serves as our High Priest forever. He is our forerunner. In the Roman army, the word forerunner signified the troops sent ahead to explore the terrain and the strength of the adversary before the army advanced. They prepared the way for the army to follow.

The truth that Jesus has identified Himself with us as our High Priest and has gone into the presence of God, signifies that all those whom He represents will be brought into God's presence as well. This is the **SETTLED ASSURANCE** of the believer. Because of this assurance we can exercise patient endurance in spite of conflicts as we progress toward spiritual maturity.

Through Jesus we now have guaranteed access to God the Father, and are free to "come boldly to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:16).

God's promise has been made – and kept! And we have this hope, this settled confidence in our present access to God through Jesus as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast.