

## **Anchor Down to Hope**

*Christ is Enough Series*

**Hebrews 6:9-20**

Pastor Bryan Clark

So as technology increases, I would suggest our patience decreases. Things that used to take days... weeks...months...now happen in seconds, and we come to expect that—life on demand! We're annoyed when it takes two days for something to be shipped from California to arrive on our porch. But most of the important things in life do not work that way. They are not instantaneous; they are not on demand. It's a process. It's diligence; it's discipline; it's time. Certainly that's true of the Christian faith. While it's true we are saved in a moment, it is a process that takes a lifetime to grow and mature in our walk. But it's actually more than that. One of the most common themes in the New Testament is *the hope of the gospel*. The hope of the gospel is not a promise that this will be your best life now. The hope of the gospel is not a life of health and wealth and prosperity; it's not. As a matter of fact, the hope of the gospel is that there is a promise of something more magnificent than you can possibly even imagine—but it won't happen in this life. You're going to get to the finish line, and all you can do is believe by faith that God tells the truth, and that the fulfillment of that promise is yet to come. That's what we want to talk about this morning. If you have a Bible, turn with us to Hebrews 6.

The writer of Hebrews has issued a pretty strong warning concerning Christians that don't seem to grow up. They just remain immature. He's even wondering, “Is it possible you don't really believe?” But then starting in chapter 6, verse 9, the tone changes dramatically. It goes from this stern, almost harsh warning, to much more pastoral. He says, verse 9, **But beloved...** This is the only time in Hebrews the writer uses the term **beloved**—dear friends—it's a real shift in emotion here.

**But, beloved, we are convinced of better things concerning you, and things that accompany salvation, though we are speaking in this way.** (\*NASB, Hebrews 6:9)

So even though he's offered this warning, he does have a concern. In speaking to these people he says, “But for most of you, we do believe you truly believe; you have been changed by the power of Jesus, though we are wanting you to experience more of that which goes with your salvation,” what we would call the hope of the gospel. Why does he believe that? Verse 10:

**For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward His name, in having ministered and in still ministering to the saints.**

What he's saying is the evidence in your life makes it clear that you do believe; you are a person of faith. God is changing you. Most scholars think that the reference **to the saints** is a reference to the early stages of persecution. People are being marginalized; perhaps some are being imprisoned, awaiting execution. In the ancient world often times the only way someone in prison had the necessities of life is if someone brought them adequate food, water and care. So imagine this: these people are marginalized, even imprisoned, and their fellow brothers and sisters in Christ actually out themselves as fellow Christians just in order to minister to these people—to serve them, to take care of them. They put their own lives at risk! How much faith and courage does that take? And so the writer of Hebrews is saying, “You've clearly demonstrated that you're in, that you believe, that this

matters to you; you're committed to it. It's this idea that they need to take great security in the reality of their salvation.

Coming out of the early part of Hebrews 6, it's easy for people to get their insecurities all stirred up again. Think of it this way: if this morning someone gave you ten compliments but one person criticized you, what would you stew about all afternoon? It's the criticism. So you come across ten passages that clearly teach your security in Christ, and then you bump into Hebrews 6, and suddenly people are tormented by the thought that, "Maybe that's me; maybe I'll fall away; maybe I won't get in." At some point we must recognize we do believe! Some people say you can't really know for sure. Yes you can! First John 5 says: "*These things are written that you may know (emphatic) that you have eternal life.*" You know that; you know what you believe; you know your life; you know the outflow of your life, the ways God is growing and changing you. At some point you settle the issue, and you begin to grow and mature. There is no reason to spend the next ten years wondering, "Am I in or out?"

To use the agricultural illustration at the end of our text last week in verses 7 and 8: It's true, the farmer plants the seed and there is a waiting period to see what's going to grow. Is it a crop or is it weeds? But when a farmer gets to July, he's not still guessing; he's not still wondering. It's Corn! Look at it. It's corn, and the implication of that is, "Get busy; there's a harvest coming." So it's wrestling and it's looking in the mirror and realizing, "I do believe; I know I believe, and I'm in; I see the evidence of Christ all over my life. So let's work through our insecurities; let's settle the issue and let's move on. There's a lot we need to learn. We've got to grow; we've got to get stronger. Life can get very, very hard. That's the concern of the writer. These people are headed into severe persecution. There is much more to learn and to grow and to understand. And so he identifies, really what James says: "*A faith that saves is a faith that works,*" and all you have to do is look at your own life and realize, "I can see all the ways God is at work in me; I know I'm in, so let's move on!" Verse 11:

**And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as to realize (experience) the full assurance of hope until the end...**

**The same diligence**—how much faith, how much belief, how much courage did it take for these people to take care of their fellow brothers and sisters in a very dangerous culture? He says. "*Apply that same diligence to believing the truth, to holding on to it, to experiencing this hope of the gospel to the end.*" Now that is an interesting phrase. Basically what he just said is not, "This is your best life now." It's not, "Hang in there; it's a life of prosperity." "It's "Hang in there; embrace this hope all the way to the finish line." What's implied there is, "You're not going to see the fulfillment of the promise; you're not going to experience everything that your soul longs for in this life. That is why you **hope** all the way to the finish life, believing that God tells that the truth and that He will fulfill His promise in the life to come. That's the hope of the gospel. Verse 12:

**...so that you will not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.**

This word **sluggish** is the same word used in chapter 5, verse 11, translated *dull of hearing*. It's the idea of being lazy, of being unmotivated. So don't be sluggish about this; don't be lazy or unmotivated but be **imitators of those who through faith** (that's belief) **and patience** (literally patience is *longsuffering*). So it's this idea of longsuffering, of patience over time. It's not instantaneous; it's not life on demand; it's long and it's hard! So you believe, and you hang in there.

**Through faith and patience inherit...** meaning basically to *experience the promise*. So he is reminding us that the hope of the gospel is ultimately in the life to come. This life can get hard; it can get confusing; it can get painful; it can break your heart again and again. So what do you offer people that are headed into severe persecution? You offer them hope, that no matter what happens, what lies ahead for you is glorious! So he says, "*Imitate the great heroes of the faith* who demonstrated belief and longsuffering all the way to the finish line. Verse 13:

**For when God made the promise to Abraham, since He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself...**

So **Abraham** is the prime illustration. Abraham would have been a hero of faith to these people, so he is the example of one to imitate. God made a promise to Abraham when he was living in a relatively modern, safe city to pack your bags and to move, "Move to a place I will tell you later, and just trust Me. But here's what I tell you, I will be your God; you will be My people. I will multiply you and make you a great nation and out of your seed will come One who will bless the nations of the world. Abraham, with remarkable faith, agrees...he agrees!

The idea of God swearing **by Himself** picks up the idea that in the ancient world they didn't sign contracts but rather two people got together and made an oath, an agreement. But part of the agreement was that you would pledge an oath by someone of greater authority or rank than yourself. The idea was, "If I fail to make the commitment, someone with more power or authority than me can hold me accountable and make me keep the agreement." So when God made a promise to Abraham, "Who is higher than God?" Answer: "No one!" So the only option God had is that He made an oath by Himself...that He would hold Himself accountable to keep the promise. Verse 14:

**... saying, "I WILL SURELY BLESS YOU AND I WILL SURELY MULTIPLY YOU."**

So the promise was made to Abraham in Genesis 12 and re-upped in Genesis 15. Abraham goes ten years and nothing has happened. God promised but...no children...nothing, and then Abraham's wife comes up with the idea that he should sleep with her handmaid and then they would count that child. God shows up and says, "We're not going to do this that way. I made a promise; I'll keep the promise; just trust Me." So Abraham waited fifteen more years. Now just stop and think about this. This is not instantaneous; this is not life on demand. God made a promise, and you wait without a child for twenty-five years until, humanly speaking, it was virtually impossible for the promise to be fulfilled. But eventually God keeps His promise and Abraham has a son who they name Isaac. You get to Genesis 22 and God asks Abraham to take his one and only son up on the mountain and to sacrifice him for God. With unbelievably remarkable faith, Abraham agrees; he obeys. The text is clear that he was fully willing to go through with it and God stops him and says, "Abraham, now I know you trust Me and you won't hold anything back." We also understand that was but a picture—and if you're horrified by that picture—don't forget that is only a shadow of what actually did happen when God Himself would offer His own Son on that same mountain in order to provide our salvation. But for Abraham, God uttered the words that are quoted in our text in verse 14, and God once again re-upped His promise. "Abraham, I made a promise to you and I swear by Myself I will keep it." Verse 15:

**And so, having patiently waited, he obtained the promise.**

So what does that mean? Well, it means that after patiently waiting twenty-five years, he finally had a son. But in order for him to become a great nation, for the promise to be fulfilled, he needed lots

of grandchildren. So how long did he wait for the first grandchild? Sixty more years! Twenty-five for his first son, another sixty more years for a grandchild! Shortly before his death, Abraham has a grandson but he never saw the fulfillment of the promise. He just saw little glimpses. He would go to his grave believing, by faith, God tells the truth. “He’ll do it!” But he did not see it in his lifetime. Did he become a great nation? Yes he did! Through his seed did the Messiah come and provide a salvation that would change the nations of the world? Yes! Did God keep His word? Yes, He did! Did Abraham see it? No, he didn't. He only saw it with eyes of faith; he just believed that God tells the truth. Verse 16:

**For men swear by one greater *than themselves*, and with them an oath given as confirmation is an end of every dispute.** (That’s what I mentioned before.) Verse 17:

**In the same way God, desiring even more to show to the heirs of the promise...**

Who are the heirs of the promise? We learned this earlier in Hebrews. You are!

What the text just said is in order for you to have even more to believe.

**...to show the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His purpose, interposed (which means *guaranteed*) with an oath so that by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible (not difficult...impossible) for God to lie...**

What are the two things? God made a **promise**. When God makes a promise, He keeps His promise. God also made an **oath**. He swore by Himself. Now stop and think about that. There’s no reason God had to make an oath; He’s God! He’s not accountable to anybody else. But the text tells us that He did it for our sake in order to say, “I made a promise and I swore an oath, **two unchangeable things in order to convince you it is impossible for Me to lie** and I made a promise and I’m asking you to believe the promise all the way to the finish line, because you’re not going to see it in this lifetime. You’re going to take your last breath still believing that the fulfillment of the promise is yet to come.”

**...so that by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have taken refuge would have strong encouragement [we would probably say *every reason to believe*] to take hold of [to grab hold of, to hang on to]the hope set before us.**  
(Vs. 18)

That phrase **taken refuge** is an interesting phrase. It is the Greek used in the Septuagint—the Greek translation of the Old Testament—to refer to what they called in the Old Testament *the Cities of Refuge*. The Cities of Refuge were cities required by Old Covenant Law so that if someone accidentally killed someone else, they could flee into one of these cities of refuge and there be protected from the family of the victim. These people are headed into persecution. They are going to be hunted down, imprisoned, some executed. So this imagery is really powerful—that in this life we don’t expect our best life now; we don’t expect prosperity; this is going to be hard. You flee to the city of refuge—in this case it is our salvation—understanding that we need this now and there is a promise for the world to come.

Now for us this morning, it is unlikely that someone is hunting you down to kill you, but we have our own stuff that breaks our heart, that gives us pain, that causes us struggle and despair. Life can be really, really hard, and there can be a lot of things that just make no sense to us. The promise is not if you trust Jesus, those things are all going to work out. The promise is a place of refuge where you go, believing at the end of the story the promise will be fulfilled and it will be magnificent! But for now, you just have to trust Me. “I don’t lie; I tell the truth,” is what God is saying. “We have

taken refuge,” would have strong encouragement, every reason to take hold, grab hold of this hope set before us.

**This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a *hope* both sure and steadfast...**

What is it that keeps us from drifting? He talked about this in chapter 2—that we understand and believe the truth. We’ve learned that we have to practice it; we have to train in it and get better at it; we keep learning and we keep growing and getting stronger. It doesn’t happen overnight; it’s not instantaneous; it’s not an app on your phone. It takes time and practice and training. But you become stronger and stronger in your faith and your belief; you find refuge in your salvation today, but you anchor down to this hope of a promise that one day it will be everything your soul longs for today—but not now, not today.

**...and one which enters within the veil, where Jesus has entered as a forerunner for us, having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek. (Vs. 19-20)**

This whole idea of **the veil** and *behind the veil* is very difficult for us to understand. It would have been extremely powerful for them. Imagine as a child growing up and being taught that the very presence of God existed in the Holy of Holies, a compartment in the temple that was separated by a thick, heavy veil from the Holy Place, and understanding if any one went behind the veil they would be struck dead, with the exception of the high priest, one day per year, on the day of atonement. The absolute terror in their hearts at the very thought of going behind that veil was powerful for them and suddenly along comes Jesus, the ultimate High Priest, who makes propitiation for sin, who offers atonement for sin, and the veil is torn and through Jesus we have access directly into the presence of God—something that was previously unimaginable. And what the writer is saying is even today we have this confidence that we go boldly right into the presence of God through Jesus. He has already accomplished that and is seated at the right hand of God. We live in the *not yet*—the best is yet to come—but even now we’ve been granted unimaginable privileges to enter directly, boldly, confidently into the presence of God, to be there for us in our hour of need. Then he shifts the discussion back to **Melchizedek**, a rather puzzling figure we will talk about in a couple of weeks.

So for this morning, as we process this text, we need to settle this: Do we believe or don’t we? What I would say is, for the vast majority of you, just look at your life and look at all the ways God has changed you and manifested His presence through you. At some point our own insecurities need to get set aside and we simply believe God tells the truth. “I know what I believe; I’m in.” We can’t spend the rest of our lives wrestling with our own insecurities. Settle it and grow...learn...practice...train...move on! This is a hard world; it’s going to break your heart. There is a lot more you need to learn and understand, a lot more strength you need; let’s move on, let’s grow; let’s get ready. But it takes time. It takes learning and growing, practicing and training. But we also have to understand the hope of the gospel is that everything you long for will be realized, but not in this life.

One of the things that really messes us up in this life is we are determined to embrace what I refer to as this, “Let’s make a deal theology”. Most people say they don’t believe that until something drops out of their world, and suddenly you hear it. “I thought we had a deal, God. I thought the deal was that if I’m a good boy, if I’m a good girl, then you make everything work out. I thought this was our best life now. I thought the promise was a life of health and wealth and prosperity. I’ve been a really good boy and now the bottom drops out of my world and I feel ripped off. I feel like I kept my end of the deal and God didn’t keep His end of the deal,” to which God says, “I didn’t make that deal.

Just read the Book. There is nowhere where I promise that deal.” We’re just setting ourselves up for heartache.

The Scriptures couldn't be clearer: This is a sin-cursed world; this is a battleship. It gets really hard; it gets confusing; it gets heartbreaking, and part of what we have to understand is the ultimate hope of the gospel is not here and now. We will make it to the finish line, holding on with all of our strength to the belief that God made a promise and He will keep the promise—but we will not see it realized in this life.

What do you tell a group of people that are heading into severe persecution? “Hey, have faith; this is your best life now; let's smile more.” Or do you tell them, “Hey, this is a life of health, wealth and prosperity; you should have more faith.” Or do you remind them that this is going to get really hard. Jesus told you it would. So you need to have the strength, the discipline, the diligence, the faith to believe that God promised, and it's impossible for God to lie! To make it to the finish line, hang on with all your strength, hanging onto the promise that God will do what He said He will do, but you won't see that realized until the life to come. For now we find our refuge in Him, and in the hardest moments of life, we just have to believe that *Christ is enough!*

*Our Father, we are thankful that You tell us the truth. But, God, we're sobered; we'd kind of like to hear a message that if we trust You, everything's going to work out; it's going to be smooth-sailing. But, God, that's not what You tell us. This is a sin-cursed world and this is a cosmic battle. The hope of the gospel is our belief that You tell the truth, that You would not lie to us, and right to the finish line we will cling to that and we will believe that what lies ahead is more magnificent than what we could even begin to comprehend! God, until that day, we find our refuge in You! We want to say with all of our hearts, we do believe today that Christ is enough! In His name we pray, Amen.*

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## **Anchoring Down to Hope**

*Christ is Enough*

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### **Opening Discussion**

1. Where do people in our culture today search for hope? What is the result when there seems to be no hope?
2. What are the things in our culture today that create more despair than hope?

### **Bible Study**

1. Do a quick review and summary of Hebrews 5:11-6:8. Summarize the warning.
2. Read Hebrews 6:9-12. What convinces the writer that most of these people are truly believers? Compare James 2:14-26.
3. Read I John 5:13. What can help us move from continually doubting or questioning our salvation to realizing “the full assurance of hope” the writer of Hebrews talks about? How does 5:14 help inform the answer to this question?
4. Read Hebrews 6:13-20. Abraham is used to illustrate a hero of the faith who through faith and patience inherited the promises. Review Abraham’s story. The key chapters would be Genesis 12, 15 and 22. How long did Abraham have to wait for even the beginnings of the fulfillment of the promise? What did he see before he died? What did he believe about God and His promise?
5. According to this text, what do we need to know and believe about God in order to “take hold of the hope set before us?” What does that mean for you?
6. What does the writer mean by hope being an “anchor of your soul?” Compare that with what he said in 2:1. Does this mean things will work out and make sense in this life? Is there really a need for an anchor if the seas are calm? Then what does this imply?

