

THE WORD OF THE OATH

Hebrews 6:16–20 — *"For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec."*

The promise that God made to Abraham is as sure as God is sure. By sure, we mean we can have the utmost confidence that it will be made good. God will be true to His word.

Back in verse 13, We read that "He sware by Himself".

This takes us back to Genesis 22:15-18:

Genesis 22:15–18 — *"And the angel of the LORD called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice."*

"By myself I have sworn" is the way that we read this. The God of Heaven put His own Name on the line to rest the sureness of what He just confirmed to Abraham. The promise is as good as God's own Name. If the promise is to fail, then God has failed. That is what is said here, and it is a clear promise.

We make promises and we often invoke something or someone higher than us to provide assurance that what we are saying is the truth, or that we will be true to the promise that we just made.

"I swear to God" is one way it is said. In courts of law, secular and godless as they often are, the witness is sworn in with "so help me God". Presidents are sworn into office with a hand on the Bible, saying in effect "I will be as true as this Book". I realize that there are few that truly follow through, but the oath is a binding oath, and it is done as an indication that the oath-taker has every intention in following through with what he just promised. Lying is bad. Lying under oath is criminal.

Now anything that God could swear by would be lower than Himself. So He swore by Himself, to as high as He could go. He had every intention when He said it, and has every intention of carrying out what He promised. That is how sure God's promise to Abraham was when He made it, and He will not repent.

Galatians 3:15–18 — *"Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; Though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto. Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise."*

In Galatians 3, Paul goes back to Abraham, again speaking of the sureness of God's word, His covenant with Abraham. When we, as sinful human beings, make a promise and bind it with an oath, sign our name to it, put it in writing, or however we want to say it, we all recognize it as a sin — as a black mark on our own name if we don't follow through, with or go back on our word. In Galatians Paul is saying that to address that the law does not void out God's promises before it, especially this that was bound by an oath on His own name. God will make good on that oath. We see as we go on in Galatians that it cannot be through the Law given by Moses. That "Old Covenant" as it is now called only showed mankind, represented by Israel coming out of Egypt, that no flesh will be justified by it, because by the law is the knowledge of sin, Romans 3:19-20.

For Israel, the Nation on which God put His Name, a new covenant would be needed that was not like the old covenant. We will talk much more about the new covenant is lessons further ahead. I'll leave it with this much here, that it is the covenant by which all of the other covenants can be fulfilled. It is the new covenant in the blood of Jesus Christ, "shed for many for the remission of sins".

We read in verse 18 about two immutable things. First, it is enough that God said it. For God to say something will happen or that He will do something is enough. We should be able to take God at His word and that to be enough. We read here about it being impossible for God to lie. That should be enough. In fact, in Titus, the Apostle Paul speaks about eternal life in this wise:

Titus 1:2-3 — "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began; But hath in due times manifested his word through preaching, which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our Saviour;"

In Paul's last epistle he opens saying "*according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus*", said in the epistle where the Apostle is certain that he will soon be facing his own death.

The fact that God told Abraham something is enough. That He confirmed it by an oath is a double stamp on the sureness. God is true, what He said is sure. It is two immutable things.

In Matthew chapter 5, in "the Sermon on the Mount", the Lord said to not swear by anything, but to let your word be your bond, as we would say today. A "yes" out of your mouth should be as good as a contracted yes and the same with a "no". If this be true as what God expects from men, how much truer can we expect God to be. Yet He adds to this "I swear by myself". It is in writing and has been for thousands of years. God will be true to all of His words.

Again, as we go back to verse 18, we have a strong consolation. "God, which cannot lie, promised". God also bound Himself with an oath, and this oath was the basis by which Israel would come to the LORD. Even Moses, when the people had made the golden calf, interceded on the behalf of the sinful people saying this:

Exodus 32:13 — "Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever."

Those who lay hold on the promises of God have, as it says in our text, a strong consolation. We have a hope set before us. We must be clear here too, that even the promises of God to Abraham can only be accomplished because of the atoning work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Even the promise in the Abrahamic

covenant requires sin to be dealt with — that God might be “the just and the justifier”. Romans 3:25 says how God can justly remit the past sins of sinful people. Those under the law could not come to God by the law, although there was a means made to approach. The one under the law had to come to plead for God’s mercy. That is Psalm 51. That is Luke 18:9-14.

But God’s mercy is not without cost. It is by the blood of Jesus Christ that God can be merciful and just. Jesus Christ is God’s provided propitiation to Himself on our behalf for our sins. But those that lay hold on Him have that anchor for the soul. That anchor keeps us settled. It is “sure and steadfast”.

We also have more here. Throughout the period of the Old Testament, the people nearest to God could not even enter within the veil. Only the high priest could, and that only once a year. But now we see that Jesus, our great high priest, has entered within the veil for us, as “the forerunner”. This is the idea of a pioneer, or a scout soldier. One who goes ahead and the rest are to follow. In verse 20 it says that He entered within the veil “for us”. It goes on to say again, which will carry us into the next chapter, that He is a high priest forever after the order of Melchisedec. Just one thing to say regarding this priesthood for now. It says of Melchisedec that he was priest of the Most High God. Throughout the Old Testament, that is a term that is never limited to the Israelites, but is a universal term. Read Daniel chapter 4 this week, noticing that it is the name by which Nebuchadnezzar knew “the King of heaven”.

If you are saved, then you are safe and He is holding on to you. Our security is in the sureness of His strength and in His faithfulness. There is also a time in which we need to hold on to Him. “Lay hold on eternal life”, 1 Timothy 6:19, is the instruction to the saved. There is a time when we need to stop laying hold on everything else while He is holding us, and simply lay hold on Christ.

“Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith”