

That You Might Have Strong Consolation

Hebrew 6:13-20

Halifax: 22 January 2023

Introduction:

Last week, we resumed our sermon series in Hebrews after a hiatus, but it was with the introduction of Psalm 110 as our new Psalm of Focus.

- Today, we are picking up again where we left off in Hebrews 6 before the holidays.
 - You may remember that at the end of chapter 5, the author was rebuking the Hebrews for becoming dull of hearing so that he could not tell them the things he wanted to tell them about Christ and His glorious priesthood.
 - Some of them were wavering about following Christ, and they were not therefore in position to learn of His glory.
 - The author told them that he was not going to try to lay the foundation all over again of basic repentance and faith in Christ.
 - He warned of the terrible danger of turning against Christ after benefitting from the blessings that lead to salvation, even being convinced by the Holy Spirit that Jesus was the Christ, without ever actually receiving Him.
 - He said that such persons can end up in a state in which it is impossible to renew them again to repentance.
- But then we saw how, after the necessary warning, he encouraged them that he was confident of better things concerning them.
 - He had seen the true fruits of salvation in their willingness to suffer for Christ and minister to those who were being persecuted.
 - He expressed his great desire that all of them would show the same diligence in serving Christ to the full assurance of hope—that they would all imitate those who by faith and patience inherit the promises!

Brothers and sisters, it is very important to have hope when it comes to going on for Christ through trials and testing.

- Without hope, you will have no expectation of God working in your life and it will make it difficult for you to go on for Him when things are hard—
 - when you are rejected, when walking with God seems too hard, when sin seems to have an iron grip on you...
 - It is difficult to even worship God and go forward unless your hope is restored.

Today, we are going to see one of the things that God has done to give us hope—to give us strong consolation if we have come to Christ.

- Please give me your attention now as I read the passage to you.
- It is Hebrews 6:13-20.
- This is the word of God.

Hebrews 6:13-20: For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, ¹⁴ saying, “Surely blessing I will

bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you.” ¹⁵ And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. ¹⁶ For men indeed swear by the greater, and an

oath for confirmation is for them an end of all dispute. ¹⁷ Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed *it* by an oath, ¹⁸ that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay

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

Thanks be to God for His precious word.

I would draw your attention especially to 18 and the words,

- “that we might have strong consolation.”

I. We learn from this that our gracious Father’s intent is that might have strong consolation.

A. He loves us and wants us to be consoled as we face necessary trials in this world.

1. You know how Jesus told His disciples that He had spoken words of consolation to them **“that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33)**

- This is an emphasis of His apostles as well.
- We are told in Acts 14:21 of how Paul returned to the cities in which he had ministered and his message was, “We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.”
 - It was a major aspect of his ministry that he often speaks about.

2. Both Jesus and His apostles speak of the necessity of these tribulations.

- They are needed that we might glorify God in this world, for we show the people around us that we are willing to suffer for our Lord.
 - This is a striking message in a world that is bent against God and does not want to serve Him even if it did not involve suffering.
 - The apostles’ willingness to suffer on account of the message they preached made everyone know that they were sincere. Why would you say that Jesus rose from the dead if you knew it was not true and that saying it would land you in prison?
 - Suffering for Christ brings glory to God.
- We also need tribulations to grow.
 - We are still very weak, and without tribulation, we would not seek the Lord as we ought.
 - We would not grow stronger in our faith and in our delight in the Lord.
 - When we are tried, we have to look upon Him and the things that He has promised to fortify us to go on.
 - To put it bluntly, we have to look harder at Him to decide whether we think it is worth it to go on with Him.
 - It is then that we need consolation and assurance that He will bless us.

- B. He knows that we need consolation to go on.
1. Without it, we would quickly despair and we would not continue to serve Him—we would not continue in patience and hope, but would turn to idols or lusts.
 - Uncertainty of God’s blessing is what causes many people to turn away—it is what often causes you to fall into your go-to sins, even when you are a believer who will afterward repent and return to Him.
 2. So God goes out of His way to make sure we that have the consolation that we need to go on.
 - He has acted in such a way “that we might have strong consolation.”
- C. He also knows that we need it to maintain our joy.
1. He wants us to be glad simply because He loves us.
 - Certainly, we want the people we love to have joy.
 - So the Lord wants those He has so dearly loved to have joy.
 2. He knows that the best way to make us truly glad is to try us in this world while simultaneously showing us Himself, and assuring us that we will see His glory and share in the glorious kingdom that He is preparing for us.
 - In this way, He weans us from the world and turns our eyes to His glory—something we do not notice in our present state apart from trials.
 - Without them we would just go on in our merry way without even thinking about Him.
 - Those who have trials and still do not seek the Lord—if they are His—will likely have even more trials.
 - It is always painful to see believers who keep on neglecting the means of grace in their trials. It is the worst thing you can do!
 - God has sent them to get your attention.
 - In Isaiah 1, He asked His people how long He will have to keep on striking them with His rod?
 3. But you see, in these trials it is consolation that sustains us and even gives us joy.
 - It is the confidence we have that God will bless us as He has promised.
 - It is the hope of glory that keeps us clinging to Him and going on for Him with joy in the face of all opposition.

II. Now let’s look specifically at what our text tells us God did to give us consolation!

- A. He took an oath—God did!—declaring that He would bless Abraham.
1. Surely, it was hard for Abraham to believe that God would bless Him.
 - It had not been that long since the flood, and even less time since the tower of Babel, when God separated the nations.
 - Like us, Abraham knew that we are estranged from God by our sin, and that we have suffering and death as a consequence.
 - That makes it hard to believe that God is going to bless us.

- It is even harder to conceive that He will when He convicts us of our sin and we begin to see how holy He is and how much we deserve to be punished—how it is not right that we not be punished.
 - Add to that that God was deliberately delaying giving Abraham the son that He had promised—the Son through whom the blessing would come.
 - God was testing him.
 - As Abraham and his wife grew older, even past the age to have a child, Abraham concluded that God was perhaps going to give the blessing to the son of one of his chief servants.
 - It was then that God swore an oath that He would give Abraham a son from his own body—and that He would surely bless him in that way.
 - What we read in Genesis 15 was the oath that God took.
 - He had Abraham divide animals in two and set the pieces on either side of a pathway.
 - Then, the LORD appeared as a burning torch and passed between the divided animals, essentially taking an oath of malediction...
 - Saying in effect, “let me be torn apart like these animals if I do not do what I have promised—if I do not bless you.”
 - That is the way that people made solemn vows in those days.
 - It was called “cutting a covenant.”
2. What is remarkable is that God is the one who passes between the pieces.
- When men take vows, they ask God to judge them if they do not keep what they have promised.
 - They say, “I am so serious about this that I am asking the LORD to tear me in pieces if I do not do what I have spoken.”
 - God has no one that can hold Him to His promise or bring the penalty upon Him that would be required...
 - So verse 13 says, **because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself,** ¹⁴ **saying, “Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you.”**
 - God took an oath of self-malediction, promising to destroy Himself if He did not bless Abraham.
3. It is hard to believe that God would take such measures.
- God has no need to confirm His promises with an oath because God does not lie.
 - We need oaths because we are prone to lie, but God is not like that.
 - As verse 16 says, an oath of confirmation puts an end to a dispute between men because it assures the one that the other is willing to be held criminally responsible if he is not telling the truth.
 - And, as said already, he is actually asking God to judge him if he doesn’t keep his word.

- But for God to take an oath like this is to do what is a great condescension on His part, putting Himself in the place of one who needs to confirm what He has said as if He might not do it!
- We are told why He did it.

B. He did this to make His promise certain to us!

1. We are told that in verse 17-18: **“Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed *it* by an oath, ¹⁸ that by two immutable things, in which it *is* impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before *us*.”**

- Of course it is not that God took an oath because He is unreliable—which is the reason we swear.
- He did it because He knows that we have a hard time believing that He really will bless us—
 - His blessing includes forgiveness, acceptance, eternal life, perfection in holiness, resurrection—when God blesses, it is no light thing!
 - And He knows that it is hard for us to believe when we have to wait for the blessing—so He swore to make it doubly certain to us... as it says, “by two immutable [or unchangeable] things.”
 - First that we have the promise of God who cannot lie... that is the first thing that makes it absolutely immutable and certain.
 - Second, that He has sworn by His own life—making the promise doubly certain for our sake—
 - All this to accommodate our weakness and slowness to believe!
 - What kindness! What tender mercy!

2. Notice here that it says that He did this not only to make the promise of blessing certain to Abraham, but also to all the heirs of the promise!

- Verse 17 says that He was determined “to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel confirmed it with an oath.”
- He swore not only for the sake of Abraham, but for all who would inherit the blessing of forgiveness and eternal life in Christ!
- God knows that all those who have the promise of His blessing need to be certain of it if they are to go on for Him with faith and patience.
 - The Hebrews needed this consolation and so do we.

➤ Are you of the heirs of God’s promised blessing?

C. At the end of verse 18, we are told who this consolation is for. It is for those **“who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us.”**

1. The heirs of God’s blessing are those who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope of blessing.
- This is strong language.
 - You flee to a refuge when you are in great danger.

- If you are saved, it means that you saw from God’s word that you were dead in your sin and that you were condemned.
 - You saw that God is a holy God and cannot accept sinners.
 - His justice (which is right and just) demands that every sin be punished according to its demerits—and because sin is against God, even the least sin calls for eternal punishment.
 - If you are a Christian, once you learned that there was a place of refuge in Jesus Christ...
 - Once you learned that He came to offer Himself as a sacrifice to atone for our sin—to take our punishment upon Himself—
 - Once you saw that He was a refuge for a sinner like you...
 - You fled to Him as your refuge.
 - You threw yourself upon Him for forgiveness and eternal life.
 - You said, “Have mercy on me,” and you took Him as your refuge from the penalty of sin and the wrath of God against it.
2. Be sure that you *have* fled to Christ as your refuge.
- It is not enough to just know about Him—to know the story.
 - You must come flee to Him as your refuge.
 - If you haven’t, there is no true consolation for you.
 - Oh yes, you might find ways to console yourself—you surely will—but all of your consolations without Christ are empty and false.
 - They are like a person dying of cancer who consoles himself by denying that he has cancer.
 - Or like a person who expects to go to heaven because you are as good as the next person, but who will find that your hope was false.
 - Unless you trust in Jesus for salvation, you have no real refuge.
 - No solid refuge that is truly safe and secure.
 - You are instead taking refuge in lies and you will perish if you do not repent.
 - But why don’t you repent and flee to Jesus as your refuge?
 - Then, and only then, will this consolation from the Lord belong to you.

III. What a consolation this is!

A. God’s promised oath of blessing is an anchor for our soul.

1. It is sure and steadfast.
 - It holds you securely to the certainty that God will indeed bless you.
 - It will not let you separate from the hope of His blessing who has sworn to bless you if indeed you have fled to Him for refuge.
2. It holds when you have failed—when you find that sin is present with you.

- a. It enables you to keep looking to God—to look to Him even more for the mercy and forgiveness that He promises in Christ.
 - to look to Him so that you won't give up on account of your sin.
 - The anchor holds you to your hope that He will deal with your sin.
 - b. This anchor also enables you to hold on to your hope when you are weak.
 - When you feel like you can't do what He has called you to do. That you cannot go on for Him—the anchor holds to Him as your hope.
 - It reminds you that you can do all things through Christ who strengthens you.
 - c. This anchor enables you to hold on to the hope of the blessing when life has got you down...
 - When everything seems to go wrong.
 - We were corresponding with a couple whose father was a missionary that committed suicide, and whose two children have both utterly rejected Christ, their son becoming a trans woman, and their daughter is leaving what is natural to burn with lust for other women.
 - This couple was held by the anchor of God's promised blessing.
 - They are going on with God even though everything around them is going wrong.
 - This anchor holds when you have sickness that will not go away, when you are rejected for following Christ, when you have terrible conflict with your spouse or your parents or your children or a friend.
 - The anchor keeps you looking to the Lord for His promised blessing.
 - You are consoled so that you are able to go on with Him and for Him.
3. You say, "But my hope often wavers!"
- It is true that you may waver, but if you have fled to Christ, your hope remains as secure as ever—both sure and steadfast—because God's promise is secure.
 - God has promised to bless you and He will bring you through—He will bring you to the inheritance that He has promised you.
 - We see this illustrated with Abraham.
 - His hope did not seem so sure and steadfast when he took Hagar to try to get the son that God had promised.
 - But what we see with Abraham is that through all of those trials, his anchor held firm.
 - He did not give up on God, as some of the Hebrews were tempted to do.
 - He did not turn to idols because God was not coming through for him.
 - No, he kept on with the LORD as his refuge until he obtained the promise.
 - As verse 15 says, "after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise."

- God used the testing to strengthen him.
 - He grew stronger and stronger through the testing until at last his hope was so strong that he was ready to offer the son of promise that God had given him because he knew that somehow God would work it out—He'd raise him from the dead if He needed to.
 - Abraham's anchor held.
- B. This anchor, this certainty you have from God's sworn promise holds you to Jesus.
- It did this for Abraham. It does this even more for us not that Jesus has come.
1. Verse 19 tells us that our anchor has gone "behind the veil, where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus."
 - God's avowed promise to bless us has attached us to Christ—we are tethered to Him by God's promise of blessing in Him—and He has entered heaven for us—He has taken hold of heaven for us.
 - You might say that Jesus has laid hold of heaven for us the way an anchor lays hold of the bottom of the sea.
 - We are held by the promise of acceptance with God behind the veil, where God is and where Jesus has gone as our forerunner.
 2. Calling Him our forerunner is quite significant.
 - a. Unlike Levi, who went into the ritual holy place in the tabernacle on earth once per year to make atonement,
 - Jesus has gone to the Father's right hand to stay.
 - He is our priest forever which means He will continue to secure our forgiveness through the sacrifice that He offered.
 - He does not have a term of service that will end.
 - Neither will He ever die.
 - Nor can He be led away into sin.
 - b. But there is more to a forerunner than that.
 - A forerunner is one who goes to prepare a place for those who will come there after Him. He gets everything ready.
 - As Jesus said in John 14—"I go to prepare a place for you that where I am there you may be also."
 - He is making all the arrangements for us to live in God's house, and soon He will come to take us there.
 3. Having Him as our forerunner gives us even more certainty that we really will inherit God's promised blessing if we have fled to Jesus as our refuge.
 - Our forerunner is making all the arrangements, and He will not fail.
 - If we have cast ourselves on Him, He will see that we get there—even to the very presence of God behind the veil.
 - He has shown His willingness to do whatever it takes in that He has humbled Himself and gone to the cross for us.

- Now He is there behind the veil, in the presence of His holy Father, seated at His right hand until He makes all His enemies His footstool and restores us to the Father.
- God has sworn that He will bless us and now His own Son is making all the arrangements.

Conclusion:

Christian, do not lose heart!

- If you have come to Christ, your hope is secure because it is rooted not in what you do but in what God has promised and in what His Son is fulfilling.
- The LORD graciously gives you this consolation so that you can go on with full assurance of hope until the end, no matter what you may face in this world.
- You may be weak and reeling under your trials, but the LORD will see you through.