

# Christ Is Superior to the Levitical Priesthood

## "An Anchor of the Soul"

### Hebrews 6:13-20

As we saw last week in our study of verses 9-12, these verses are part of the context that begins in verse nine. In those verses, we found that in order to grow in our faith and build upon those foundational principles spoken of in verse one, we need to be fervent in our love for the Lord and service for others; faithful in our diligence of a complete understanding of the Word and will of God; and fruitful in our fervency and faithfulness.

The text before us will help us understand how to be fervent, faithful, and fruitful - it will give us the motivation and the "why" and maybe the "how" of building up our faith. The latter part of verse 13 makes the connection - we are to be "followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." What follows that verse is that example we are to follow, and why.

In the ancient world, an anchor symbolized safety and steadiness during storms at sea. Similarly, this imagery suggests that the believer's hope in God's promises and in Christ acts as an anchor, giving stability amidst life's uncertainties and trials.

"Just as a naval anchor does not stick in the waters, but enters the land hidden under the waters, and is fixed to it; so the anchor of our soul's hope is not satisfied with having reached the vestibule, that is, it is not content with earthly and visible goods; but it penetrates even to those things which are within the veil, namely, into the Holy of Holies itself; that is, it apprehends God Himself and heavenly goods, and is fixed in them." (Estius quoted by Alford)

**I. ANCHORED BECAUSE OF HIS UNCOMPROMISING WORD  
- vs. 13-15**

- A. By the phrase “uncompromising Word” is meant a statement or promise that is absolutely firm, unwavering, and resolute. It conveys the idea that the word given is steadfast and will not be altered or diluted under any circumstances. It's a powerful way of emphasizing the certainty and trustworthiness of what's been said.**

In relation to the promise made to Abraham and the example that set for us to follow (vs. 13), it shows that God will not ever fail to keep His promises. As He fulfilled them with Abraham's descendants (the Jewish nation), He will fulfill all those He has made to us as well.

- B. The example given here is the promise God made to Abraham that he would be a great nation. The reference here is that given to Abraham following his obedience in being willing to offer his son, Isaac, as recorded in Genesis 22.**

[Genesis 22:15-18](#)

<sup>15</sup> And the angel of the LORD called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, <sup>16</sup> 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: <sup>17</sup> 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; <sup>18</sup> And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.

1. “Because he could swear by no greater, he sware by himself” (this is the oath spoken of in

verse 16) - this is an amazing truth about the Word of God. Bear in mind that this is true of all God's promises, not just this one to Abraham. As verse 13 shows, this is an example for us to understand.

"[I]t was somehow conveyed to the mind of Abraham that the fulfilment of this promise was bound up with the life of God; that it was so implicated with His purposes that God could as soon cease to be, as neglect the fulfilment of it. Lying as it did at the root of all further development, and marking out as it did the true end for which the world exists, it seemed to be bound up with the very being of God" (Nicoll, Exp-GR).

The point is since God is self-existent and eternal, He cannot cease to be and if He cannot cease to be, His promises cannot cease to be fulfilled.

2. Verse 14 is the promise - it's not an exact quote but the context makes it clear it is referencing Genesis 22:16-17.
3. Verse 15 shows the promise fulfilled.
  - a) "And so, after he had patiently endured" - this shows that it wasn't going to be easy to wait. There would be trials and struggles along the way, and the book of Genesis record those for us.

The term "patiently endured" (μακροθυμέω) is a compound word that literally translates as "long anger" - long suffering. In its use here, it means to patiently endure as opposed to losing faith or

giving up. It's used in this way in James 5:7-8.

James 5:7-8

<sup>7</sup> Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. <sup>8</sup> Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.

- b) "He obtained the promise" - Isaac was what Abraham saw as the fulfillment of the promise, but he had to see the complete fulfillment through the eyes of faith because it didn't come to pass until long after he was gone.

That's true for us today. God promises but things don't always work in our time frame, and it will take "patient endurance" for us to see them come to pass, and that might be through the eyes of faith (Rom. 4:17-25).

## II. ANCHORED BECAUSE OF HIS UNCHANGEABLE WILL - VS. 16-18

### A. This is seen in the phrase, "immutability of his counsel."

The following is from Charles Hodge, Systematic Theology:

Change of purpose arises either from the want of wisdom or from the want of power. As God is infinite in wisdom and power, there can be with Him no unforeseen emergency and no inadequacy of means, and nothing can resist the execution of his original intention. To Him, therefore, the causes of change have no existence. With God there is, as the Scriptures

teach, "no variableness, neither shadow of turning." (James 1:17.) "The counsel of the LORD standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations." (Ps. 33:11.) "The LORD of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand." (Is. 14:24.) "I am God ... declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." (Is. 46:9, 10.) The uniformity of the laws of nature is a constant revelation of the immutability of God. They are now what they were at the beginning of time, and they are the same in every part of the universe. No less stable are the laws which regulate the operations of the reason and conscience. The whole government of God, as the God of nature and as moral governor, rests on the immutability of his counsels.

As applied to our study here and the promises of God, His unchangeable will highlights the reliability, faithfulness, and steadfastness of God's purposes, assuring believers that what He has promised will indeed come to pass.

#### **B. Verse 16 - "men verily swear by the greater..."**

This verse highlights how, in human practice, people swear oaths to provide certainty and end disputes (strife, arguments). When someone swears an oath, especially invoking a higher authority or greater power, it serves as a strong assurance to others that what they are saying is truthful and reliable. This practice is used to confirm promises or statements, leaving no room for doubt.

**C. Verse 17 points back to verse 14 and the fact that there is nothing greater to swear by than Himself, and because cannot change, once the oath is made by His name in Himself, there is nothing that can change the promise made under that oath.**

1. "Wherein God" - with the principle of verse 16 in mind
2. "Willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise" - speaking specifically of the descendants of Abraham (the Jewish nation), but according to the context here includes the believers today as those following the example set forth by God's promise and oath to Abraham and his seed.
3. "The immutability of His counsel" - God cannot change.
4. "He confirmed it by an oath" - He confirmed the promise to Abraham (and all other promises for all time because of His immutability) by His Word.

**D. Verse 18 confirms the point with emphatic language.**

1. "That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie" - His promise His oath.
2. "We might have a strong consolation" - "The strongest of which the mind can conceive. The consolation of a Christian is not in his own strength; his hope of heaven is not in any reliance on his own powers. His comfort is, that

God has “promised” eternal life to his people, and that He cannot prove false to his word” (Barnes).

Titus 1:2

<sup>2</sup> In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began;

3. “Who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us”

a) This would have taken the reader or hearer of this letter to the Hebrews back to the Old Testament cities of refuge which provided a safe haven for those who accidentally killed someone. The purpose was to protect them from the avenger of blood until they received a fair trial. The cities symbolized God’s provision of mercy and justice. (see Numbers 35:6-34; Deuteronomy 4:41-43; 19:1-13; Joshua 20:1-9).

Scofield makes the note on Num. 35:6 that “the cities of refuge are types of Christ sheltering the sinner from judgment.” Just as the cities were accessible to all, Christ provides salvation to all who seek Him.

b) What a wonderful picture this is for the believer today (and for the lost seeking salvation) – that we can “flee for refuge” to Christ and His work of redemption; that we can “lay hold upon the hope set before us.”

### **III. ANCHORED BECAUSE OF HIS UNCONDITIONAL WORK - vs. 19-20**

**A. His work on the cross, satisfying all the requirements of the Law, entered into the Holy of Holies (“within the veil”) as the final sacrifice for**

**sin for all and forever. This is the ultimate example of unconditional work. Our salvation is not contingent upon anything we can do or did, but entirely upon His work on the cross.**

**B. "Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul"**

1. The anchor spoken of in the previous verse that we can lay hold upon - that we can set our anchor to and hold us fast.
2. The word "hope" here (ἐλπίς), and in other texts of the Bible, is a guaranteed expectation of something that hasn't happened yet. Our hope in Christ is the anchor that we have - His uncompromising Word, unchangeable will, and unconditional work all guarantee us the fulfillment of the promise of eternal life with Him in heaven - we just aren't there yet.

Romans 15:13

<sup>13</sup> Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.

1 Peter 1:3

<sup>3</sup> Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

Colossians 1:27

<sup>27</sup> To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:

**C. "Both sure and steadfast"**

1. "Sure" - ἀσφαλής - the alpha privative (without

the possibility - an absolute negative) with a word that means to throw down or supplant. Literally, that which cannot be thrown down.

Speaking of the anchor of our soul, it is something that is absolutely impossible to move. "Secure against all attempts to break the hold" (Vincent).

2. "Steadfast" - βέβαιος - from a word that means "to go," and used figuratively, it means that upon which one may build, rely, or trust (Zodhiates). "Not breaking down under what steps upon it" (Vincent).

Together, they form a complete picture of our hope in Christ. "This anchor of hope will not slip ("sure") or lose its grip ("steadfast")" (Robertson).

**D. The latter part of verse 19 and the first part of verse 20 show that our anchor can be sure and steadfast because "the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus" into the Holy of Holies ("within the veil") as that final and complete sacrifice.**

1. "The forerunner" - only time this Greek word is used in the New Testament (πρόδρομος) - means the one running before.

Jesus went before us - not as a representative for us but in our place. The Levitical high priest went behind the veil as a representative, but when Jesus paid our sin debt, that veil was rent in two, demonstrating He took our sins upon Himself, permanently.

### Hebrews 2:10

<sup>10</sup> For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.

### John 14:2-3

<sup>2</sup> In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. <sup>3</sup> And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.

### 1 Corinthians 15:20

<sup>20</sup> But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.

2. "Is for us entered" - what a truth!
3. In the final portion of verse 20, we are brought back to the overall subject matter that we began studying in Heb. 4:14 that extends to Heb. 8:5 - the subject of Christ being superior to ("better than") the Levitical Priesthood (Aaronic Priesthood as some call it).

The term "for ever" shows that permanent aspect of our salvation.

4. Melchisedec is now back into view - first brought up in Heb. 5:6. It is the teaching on Melchisedec that the author of Hebrews was referencing when he said there were "many things to say, and hard to be uttered" (5:11) that began the parenthetical that we have been studying for several weeks.

Conclusion: "We have...an anchor of the soul" - because of this, we need not fear the coming trials nor be discouraged when things don't go the way we would like them to. Our anchor is cast "within the veil" where Christ is forever seated and attached to Him where no evil or trouble can unmoor it, we can stand fast and sure in the guaranteed promise that He will never leave us nor forsake us (Heb. 13:5).

Did you ever hear of a captain of a vessel driven about by rough winds who wanted anchorage and tried to find it on board his vessel? He desires to place his anchor somewhere on board the ship where it will prove a hold fast. He hangs it at the prow, but still the ship drives; he exhibits the anchor upon deck, but that does not hold the vessel; at last he puts it down into the hold; but with no better success.

Anchors do not hold as long as they are on board a ship. They must be thrown into the deep, and then they will get a grip of the sea bottom and hold the vessel against wind and tide. As long as ever you have confidence in yourselves, you are like a man who keeps his anchor on board his boat, and you will never come to a resting place. Over with your faith into the great deeps of eternal love and power of God. Trust in the infinitely faithful One. Then shall you be glad, because your heart is quiet. (Charles Spurgeon)