Hebrews 6:13-20

> (13) For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he sware by himself, (14) Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. (15) And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. (16) For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. (17) Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: (18) 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: (19) Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; (20) Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.
> ***King James Version***

It has been said that the quality of a person's hope is the measure of any man. Abraham's hope is the illustration here. By this estimation, he was a great man because one cannot possibly hope in anything greater! In Romans 4:18, Paul says of Abraham, ". . . who, contrary to hope, in hope believed, so that he became the father of many nations." His hope was so strong that, in spite of having no physical reason to hope for descendants through Sarah because she was beyond childbearing years, he nonetheless hoped to the end. When Isaac was born, his hope was vindicated because he had placed his hope in God.

The writer's hope for the Hebrews is for the better things that accompany salvation. Better than what? The context of the chapter shows he feared they were falling away. He desires them to have the full assurance of hope to the end or, put another way, the full development of hope. Why? So that they will overcome the lassitude he detects in them and begin carrying out their Christian responsibilities.

He wanted them to be diligent and in earnest about their responsibilities to God in

heaven all the way to the end—tobe fully, spiritually, enthusiastically energized in going about their Father's business. They were on the verge of aimlessly drifting away. No longer were they thinking much about the hope that once burned in their minds and drove them on. Other interests and concerns had pushed the thrilling excitement of our great hope aside in mundane pursuits. Our minds must be systematically refreshed with study and meditation on our hope, or we will fall into the same spiritual torpor the Hebrews did. A movement, ideal, or visionary dream that does not inspire hope will not grip the hearts of people to give themselves in sacrifice and accomplishment.

The Hebrews were going through a hardship that is never fully explained. Whatever it was, through it they had regressed from a higher spiritual level. Oftentimes, we can do little but endure our hardships patiently. We simply cannot change much in this world, and it does us well to accept what we cannot change with hopeful resignation (Ecclesiastes 7:13-14). Patient endurance is in itself a worthy work because it is at least an exercise of self-control.

In America, government officials are sworn into their positions, promising to uphold the office and the laws of the land. We become dismayed because over time so many of them break their vows. Governments promise that their money is good; banks, that their customers' savings are safe, stockbrokers, that their counsel is sound; and insurance companies, that their policyholders will receive their due. These assurances fail all too often in bankruptcy or fraud. After enduring a number of these failures or observing others experience them, we become skeptical, perhaps even cynical.

Our hope, however, is in a Being and a government whose promises are absolutely faithful because it is impossible for Him to lie. Our hopes do not lie in our courage, intelligence, or even the finest of human qualities but in God's promises. He assures us in Hebrews 13:5, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

The danger the Hebrews faced is unknown, but whether or not we consciously recognize it, we, like the Hebrews, are in danger. We may not be in a physical danger—threatened by religious martyrdom, imprisonment, disease, or great loss of income—butwe face spiritual dangers. With its manifold temptations and distractions, the world is constantly pressing in on us to turn us out of the way. Our human nature inclines us not to see things from God's perspective. Our pride seduces us. Our passions, tempers, and other weaknesses trip us up, causing failure and despair. What does a person do when he realizes he is in danger? Does he not make for safety as quickly as he can?

That is precisely the advice of Hebrews 6:18: ". . . 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 that is set before us." The author may have had the Israelite cities of refuge in mind as he wrote this (Numbers 35). They were places of safety for those who killed another accidentally. Yet, the killer's only hope was to get to a city of refuge before the avenger of blood got to him! The refuge for those in the Hebrews' spiritual condition involves hope. The Greek word translated "set before" pictures hope lying before us like some inviting treat for us to take.

These people were in danger of falling away through their lethargic, lukewarm, careless, and lazy reaction to life and what it dealt them, yet they possessed the greatest hope a human could possibly entertain! As time passed, it had blurred in their minds almost to non-existence. They were forgetting it!

The author then describes hope as an anchor for our lives. Even as an anchor keeps a ship from drifting onto the rocks, hope keeps us from idly drifting to our spiritual destruction. Hope keeps us safe. It is a major stabilizing force for the whole of life because it has hold of something that does not move despite the tempests around us. Our hope is anchored in Jesus Christ, who as High Priest has entered in our behalf into the heavenly Holy of Holies beyond the veil. Though His blood justifies us, His life saves us. Because He lives, intercedes for us, and watches over our lives to bring us into the Father's Kingdom, we have hope.

Hope motivates, and its primary function is to enable us to endure. We know that our wonderful goal is sure because our hope is in God, who is absolute and all-powerful. If we are to be saved, the means to fulfill this must come from God. The relationship established through God's calling, Christ's sacrifice, and our making of the New Covenant with Him provides that means. Now we must do all we can to fulfill our part of the relationship.

— John W. Ritenbaugh

To learn more, see:
The Elements of Motivation (Part Three): Hope

Related Topics:
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