

Our Hebrews haven't "fallen away" from Jesus. But our author is concerned they might be *backing away or wandering away from Jesus*- which could have the same results.

THAT would be the epitome of tragedy- worse than falling into poverty and then losing the winning lottery ticket, worse than surviving cancer only to die in a car accident. To "be enlightened" to know the beauty of a renewed life, the goodness of God's word and the Spirit within... and then to deliberately reject it and expose Jesus to public disgrace would be a greater tragedy than the *misfortunes of Macbeth, Hamlet, and Oedipus all rolled up into one big heartbreaking ball of catastrophe*. **Everything promised to you, everything hoped for: LOST.**

And so our author seeks to encourage his people saying: [slide]

11 We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, **so that what you hope for may be fully realized.** 12 We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience **inherit what has been promised.** *Our author wants the "hope" [slide] of his congregation to be "fully realized." Parallel to this he wants them to "inherit what has been promised."*

The thing promised, the hope to be fully realized is their **SALVATION**- which is true and real in the present but will come into its completed, and intended state at Jesus' return.

The **hope** they're to "glory" in now, and the **promise** they are to wait faithfully to inherit is SALVATION –and all that it implies. [slide]

1:14 mentions those who will [slide] "inherit salvation." 2:3 warns against [slide] drifting away from this "great salvation." **Jesus** is named as the [slide] "Pioneer of this salvation" [2:10] and the [slide] "source of this salvation" for all who obey him [5:9]. And, as we saw in 6:9 [slide] our author is "convinced" of his people's "salvation."

Their track record of service to their neighbors and fellow Christians in Rome [10:32ff] make it clear to our author -and more importantly to God- that their allegiance to Jesus and thus their salvation is secure. Later on, in Heb 9, [slide] our author will state clearly that Jesus' 1st coming was about dealing with sin. But the 2nd time Jesus comes- that is His return- it will be to bring to pass complete SALVATION- for "those who eagerly await him" [9:28]. [slide] **The HOPE that remains to be fully realized is in God's PROMISE of salvation** for us and the Kosmos.

He wants to show **God's promises** are sure and certain so he points to **Abraham** as the outstanding example of faith in God's promises. God made important promises to Abraham and He swore an oath on Himself to keep them. So we're told: [slide]

5 ... after waiting patiently, Abraham received what was promised. Abraham displays faith and patience and God keeps his promise and oath. Point made.

But the promises and the oath to keep those promises weren't just for Abraham.

[slide] They were also for those our author calls "the heirs of what was promised."

In the promises made to Abraham there were future meanings way bigger than a piece of geography and a big family.

In those promises, sworn by God we read Abraham would have children as numerous as the stars in the sky or the sand on the shore. And those promises also say all the nations of the earth will be blessed by "the seed" – the children, descendants of Abraham.

Jesus, as a Jew was a seed- of Abraham. And he was the *first and only one in all human history to live a human life the way God intended it to be lived.* He dies on a cross, rises again to physical life, and ascends to the heavenly holy of holies, the throneroom of God- **so He could bless the nations in the world with the Salvation he provided.**

[slide]

And not only Jesus -you too- **everyone who has ever called Jesus Lord** is a "seed of Abraham." Scripture declares it: Gal3: 29 If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

So when YOU -belonging to Jesus- love and serve your friends, neighbors, your enemies, your community, your family in Jesus' name YOU are part of the fulfillment of God's promise that "All the nations would be blessed by Abraham's seed."

You are heirs of the promise. And you're part of the reason God made his promises and swore to keep them.

God's purpose, -which is the salvation of the world- is unchanging in its nature. [slide]

[6:17] God is not going to change His mind about doing this thing He's doing through Jesus death and resurrection. God's promises are sure and certain and his purpose is unchanging- And God's promises and His Oaths are intended to help us "get" that.

Now remember our author is setting the stage to show his people that the Jesus they accepted as Messiah and God is also **THE Great High Priest** bringing a "**better hope**" and a "**better covenant**" 7:22 Because of this oath, Jesus has become the guarantor of a better covenant. This is His Plan, and His purpose is unchanging in its nature. In this God is not faking. **This is not exaggeration or fabrication.**

We live in a world where **lying is the norm at all levels of public discourse.** And the sad thing is: we're used to it. We're so used to it we are very adept at finding ways to justify or explain away someone's fibs or falsehoods. It's so bad that even when someone's caught in a lie [policeman, politician, salesman, celebrity, whatever] the standard operating procedure is to say "I didn't say that," or "I never did that" -even when we have audio and video of the very thing being done or said. **It boggles the mind.** My point is that as a culture we expect people to lie to us, even under oath, at risk of perjury and jail.

We expect, in all our transactions, to be lied to. [Buying car]

[slide 6:18] Well the point of **God's promise and God's oath** is simply: **God CANNOT lie.** So when God promises AND swears an oath on Himself that **ALL THE NATIONS OF THE WORLD WILL BE BLESSED BY ABRAHAM'S SEED!** That word of God can be counted on to be absolutely true.

- When God promises that **Is. 25:7** ...he will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations; **8** he will swallow up death forever. That promise can be taken at face-value as absolutely true.
- When God declares **Jer. 29:11** '... I know the plans that I have for you,' ... 'plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a **future** and a **hope**. That promise can be taken at as absolutely true.
- When God says: **Psa. 34:15** The eyes of the LORD are toward the righteous And His ears are *open* to their cry. **16** The face of the LORD is against evildoers, To cut off the memory of them from the earth. It's absolutely true.
- As is: from **Heb. 13:5** "I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU," All of these and all the rest of God's words to us are absolutely to be depended on because they, all of them, are confirmed by "18 ...two unchangeable things in which is it impossible for God to lie." His promise and His Oath.

And -according to this scripture- the point of God's promises and oaths is so that [slide] 18 ... we who have fled to take hold of the hope set before us may be greatly encouraged. God's promise and oath – two unchangeable things - are given for the sake of **your comfort and reassurance**.

God knows we humans –as grand as we are- are easily tossed about by emotions and circumstances. [slide] **Jer. 17:9** The heart is deceitful above all things... We can easily be flung around and thrown off course. [slide] **Ps103:14** for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust. Even if we want to follow, unknown currents may drag us away [slide] **Mark 14:38** ...The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

Despite all those forces, God is concerned to keep you moving forward to the completion of your salvation. God sees you as *so valuable*, your company so *desirable*, that despite the fact that "his word "is settled in the Heavens" [Ps 119] He swore an oath to keep his promise **for the sake of YOUR encouragement**. God's promises and oaths are intended to *cheer us on our way*, to *inspire us by his faithfulness* and devotion, and to embolden us with powerful declarations on our behalf. [slide] He speaks His promises and takes his oaths to secure our faith because He knows we are easily tossed about, and thrown off course.

And here's another little reason for some encouragement: Our author describes himself and his people as [slide] 18 "...we who have fled to take hold of the hope set before us..." The Greek for the phrase "we who have fled" means "to flee for refuge." **To "flee for refuge" is the definition of being a refugee.**

[slide] **Our author pictures his people as refugees** fleeing the UNCERTAINTY of other ways of life: fleeing the capricious and easily offended gods of Rome; seeking refuge from the philosophies of Stoics and Gnostics and Epicureans, and certainly fleeing Judaism's unending need for blood sacrifice day in and day out by priest after priest in the failed effort of Judaism to deal with sin.

BUT they are refugees with a PROMISE to inherit, and a HOPE to be realized- the HOPE of a "once for all" salvation through Jesus, the Son of God, and Great High Priest. As I said earlier [slide]: **The HOPE that remains to be fully realized is in God's PROMISE of salvation** for us and the Kosmos.

Our Hebrews are refugees, fleeing for spiritual security. They are tossed about, flung around and in danger of drifting away. And so God's promises and oaths are intended to give WEIGHT and stability to their HOPE in HIM so that... [slide]: 19 **We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure**

[slide] Lots of first century anchors have been found. They were similar in shape to modern anchors, with a long shank and a stock across the top and two flukes for digging into the sea bottom but they were made of wood weighted with lead. Anchors were often used as a symbols of early Christianity- like the sign of the fish. Markings on the tombs of Christians from the late first century frequently display anchors alongside words of hope. *Strangely enough, v19 is the only place in the NT that an anchor is metaphor for our Hope.*

Funny thing I've noticed: only certain things come with anchors. My bicycle does not come with an anchor; neither does my lawn mower. I notice the neighbors trailer has some chains on it but no anchor. Our now-deceased ugly brown suburban doesn't have an anchor, shoot it could be an anchor. Our dining table doesn't have one and neither does the couch- *unless you count me on Sunday afternoon.*

None of those have anchors because all those things sit solidly on land- which we can generally expect not to move around too much. **The very fact that a boat needs something like an anchor seems to indicate that instability will be part of its every day existence.** You can't put the boat in one place in the bay and expect it to be there later. There are tradewinds and tides and the general movement of fluid- and then there are choppy seas and giant waves and gales and hurricanes – none of which allow for a boat to remain stationary. Instability is the norm for boats, so the anchor is a necessity.

Likewise the norm for our lives is instability. The rise and fall of life's tides continually pull at us. Metaphorical squalls crashes into us, sending us reeling. Waves rise up and crash down on us and we can't seem to breath. Gales and storms and the heaving of life keep us sick below deck worrying if our ship will even hold together. **How much worse might it be without an anchor for the soul?**

Fortunately [slide]: 19 We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure.

The hope that Jesus Christ, the son of God, the exact representation of His being, lived a perfect and truly human life, and by his own death broke the power of death so that we might enter his rest, and approach God's throne of Grace with confidence. **That Hope - built from the composite of God's promise and oath- is the anchor for our souls firm and secure.** And you know where that anchor is set? Not in any muddy seabed. In fact nowhere on earth. [slide]:19 We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain,...

In the Queen Mother of all mixed metaphors our author tells us **our Hope in Christ anchors us behind the curtain, in inner sanctuary- that's the holy of holies.** This innermost room of the tabernacle [or temple] was separated from the rest by a curtain, skillfully woven of blue and purple and scarlet and embroidered with forms of cherubim, the angelic guardians of God's throne, meaning that to go beyond the curtain was to go into the heavenly throne room of God.

This holiest place held the ark of the covenant- understood to be the footstool of God's throne. The Holy of Holies was understood to be so full of God's presence that it was too dangerous for Human occupation. It was entered only once a year by the High Priest to offer the blood of animals for his sin and the sin of the people [ch5].

[slide] In the picture our author is painting, this HOPE we've been talking about anchors each of us who claims it -firm and secure- to the Holy of Holies. And as will be made clearer in future chapters we're NOT talking about being anchored to some place in the earthly version of the tabernacle or Temple. Our author is telling his people this Hope anchors us to the heavenly version of the Most Holy Place; what we generally call the throne room of God. [slide] It's there that...20 ...our forerunner, Jesus, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.

Do you remember from ch1: After he had provided purification for sins he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in Heaven... So ultimately what this passage is telling us is [slide] that Jesus, whom God has sworn is a Great High Priest forever in the order of Melchizedek, has entered the Heavenly throne room of God, the True Holy of Holies.

And so HE is our Hope. Jesus is in fact our anchor, firm and secure.

Greek writers often referenced anchors as metaphors for hope. Heliodorus says: "Every hope is an anchor." "Epectetus: "We ought neither to fasten our ship to one small anchor nor our life to a single hope..." Our author would strongly disagree with them both. Jesus, the Son of God, our Great High Priest is our anchor beyond the veil and the only Hope for the world's salvation.

Paraphrasing NT wright on this: We are attached to him- to Jesus- as if by a mighty anchor chain reaching into Heaven. As long as we don't let go of the cable we are anchored to the presence of God. The winds, tides, storms, the insecurities of life, our status as refugees, fleeing from this or that, the sorrows, the labor, the difficulties that will come cannot shift us because our anchor holds firm and secure.

FF Bruce commenting on this passage sums it up saying [slide]: "We are refugees from the sinking ship of this present world order, so soon to disappear; our hope is fixed in the eternal order where the promises of God are made good to His people in perpetuity."

We've never been promised a storm free anchorage. That's why we have an anchor. The promise is that if we will hold tight to the Anchor chain, and not fall away, and keep moving forward then---as Paul says NOTHING... 8:39 will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. [slide]
He is the HOPE that is your anchor.

