Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Securities of God's Promise
Scripture: Hebrews 6:13-20
Code: 1615

There used to be a television program entitled Who Do You Trust?, and that's a very profound question. In our age, we're well on the way to trusting nobody, and we've developed a kind of a psychosis of distrust in our world that is commonly known as the credibility gap. Young people are being taught to trust nobody, as well as learning it by experience. Promises are given. Word is said, and it means little or nothing; and the problem can be simply stated theologically. The whole world is full of liars. That's the basic problem. In fact, the Bible says that the whole world lies in the arms of the wicked one, and it says, in John 8, that that wicked one is the father of lies.

In the middle of this, people are looking for something they can trust, something they can bank their life on and win. Some turn to religion. They put their trust in religion. They spend their life, for example, in a particular religious system, and they never find peace, and they never find meaning, and it never quite makes it. In another religious system, they spend their life, for example, praying to a particular saint, only to be told after years of such prayer that that saint wasn't really a saint. Somebody made a mistake a long time ago. Or like the mother who took her child to the healer to straighten his crippled legs. The braces were dropped away. The mother was told never to put them on again. A few weeks of pain, later emergency surgery was done to same the two legs from having to be amputated.

Elmer Gantry style evangelists have always been around to take peoples' hearts and peoples' money. Not too many years ago in Los Angeles, one particular minister conducted on television a Bible-athon, in which he had people sending in money, ostensibly for missionary work. He took the money and left town. People go to churches which talk about Jesus Christ, and then they get there, and they don't know anything about Jesus Christ, and false teachers, wolves, wind up devouring the people. Teachers, so-called, with all the academic credentials teach lying philosophies that don't work. Who do you trust?

Whom can you really believe in? Who can you bet your life on? Jeremiah said, "Trust not in lying words." The Bible says, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart," and that's the answer. Proverbs 29:25 says, "Whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe." Safe. David gives such wonderful testimony, for example, in Psalm 31. He says, in verse 6, his own testimony, "I have hated those who regard lying vanities, but I trust in the Lord." And then in Psalm 37, he makes that wonderful statement, "Delight thyself in the Lord. He shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the Lord. Trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass."

The Bible says that you can trust God. Incidentally, the Bible also says you can always tell people who really trust God, because it says in Proverbs 28:25, "He that trusteth the Lord shall be made fat." So it's very easy to tell those who really trust the Lord. The testimony, for example, of the New Testament is given to us in 1 Timothy 4:10. It says this. "For therefore we both labor and suffer reproach because we trust in the living God."

Can you trust God? Can God really keep that which you commit to Him? Can you give your life to Jesus Christ? Can you place your hands, your life in the hands of God and be secure that God will hold onto that? Perhaps the best example of a man trusting God, especially for these Hebrews to whom this epistle is written, is the example of the father of trust, the father of faith, none other than Abraham himself.

Now, as we have been studying in the Book of Hebrews, the writer of Hebrews has been urging the Jews to completely abandon everything from the old covenant. Everything from Judaism is to be dropped away, and they're to commit themselves entirely to the new covenant and to Jesus Christ. To the Jewish Christian, he is saying, "You don't need any of the old things. You can forget the temple. You can forget the priesthood. You can forget the holy days. You can forget all of the feasts. You can forget all of these things in...in the terms of their meaningfulness. You can come all the way to Jesus Christ and drop it all; but then as we saw in chapter 5 and 6, he says to that Jew who's not yet saved, but who's intellectually convinced about the Gospel, he says, "You...you need to come all the way to Jesus Christ. You need to let go of all that you're holding onto. You can trust God. You can throw your life on this Messiah, on this new covenant and find out that God is worthy of your trust.

We've seen how, through chapter 6, he urges them to come to Christ before they fall away into apostasy and be lost forever. The only way to God is through Jesus Christ and, since chapter 5 verse 11, he's been urging this to his unsaved readers who know the truth and believe it up to a point, but who have never come fully to salvation commitment. Now, he capped off this appeal, as we saw last time, in chapter 6 verse 11 and 12, when he said, "We desire that every one of you show the same diligence or speed or haste, to the full assurance of hope unto the end. Don't be slothful or sluggish or dull of hearing, but followers of them... watch it...who through faith and patience inherit the promises." He says, "Don't stand on the edge and fall away. You follow those who have come all the way to faith in God, who have banked their destiny on God, who bank their life on the Lord Jesus Christ. You come all the way to full trust in God. Follow those who've done that.

And then he reaches back into Hebrew history and pulls out the No. 1 man who did that, Abraham, and he says, "If you want an example, if it's not enough to look at the Christians in your own local congregation there, then look back at a man from your own history, the man Abraham, and see how that man trusted God." And their biggest problem, you see, is if they come all the way to Jesus Christ, they're gonna get shot down by persecution. They're really gonna get it from the Jewish community;

and this is the thing that holds them; and Abraham a perfect illustration of a man of faith who went all the way with God, totally trusted God for everything in the midst of unbelievable kind of adversity, even to the point where he lifted a knife to slay his only son, and, therefore, kill every dream and every hope God had ever given him. That's how far he trusted God.

And so he says, "Follow those who, through faith, have gone all the way to inherit the promises, such as your own Abraham," and Abraham then becomes the theme of verses 13 to 20. This is a great illustration of the man of faith. He had said, "Mimic those who have come to God in faith, and let Abraham be your example." Now, Abraham is a classic illustration of trusting God. He trusted God against all odds.

Now, look for a moment with me at Romans chapter 4, and we'll look at several verses there that Paul writes to tell us about the same truth. Romans chapter 4 is an illustration of faith and, again, Abraham is a classic illustration; and make a mental note that whenever the New Testament writers spoke to Jews, they invariably used Abraham as the basis of faith, because so very often the Jewish mind assumed that salvation was by keeping the law. And so constantly the New Testament message is it's by faith. It's by faith. It's by faith, and what better way to illustrate it than to pull out the great character of the Old Testament to show that even he lived by faith.

So Paul does the same thing in Romans chapter 4 verse 3. "For what saith the Scripture? 'Abraham believed God.'" Now that's faith. "And it was counted unto him for righteousness." It was not his works. It was that he believed God. Look at verse 9. "Cometh this blessedness then upon the Circumcision only?" Do you get blessed by God just because you happen to be a Jew, circumcised? "Or upon the Uncircumcision also? For we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness." It doesn't matter whether you're Jew or Gentile. The issue is faith, not race. "How was it then reckoned?...verse 10...Was he when he was in circumcision or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision."

You say, "What does all that is all that saying? That's saying that Abraham wasn't circumcised when he believed God. Abraham began the Jewish race only in the sense that God called him, but he was already a fairly old man when God called him, 75 years old. He hadn't experienced circumcision. The Jew always put his stock in the fact that he was a Jew and circumcised the eighth day. Abraham wasn't. Abraham was righteous because he believed God. He believed God, and then it says in the middle of verse 11, "That he might be the father of all them that believe, through they be not circumcised, that righteousness might be imputed unto them also."

Verse 12, "And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the Circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham which he had, being yet uncircumcised." See, the Jew always put his stock in the fact that he was a Jew and went through all the Jewish formalities, and Paul is shooting this down. He's saying, "Your only way to God and to righteousness is by faith,"

Abraham being the classic illustration, and verse 13 sums it up. "For the promise that he should be the heir of the world was not to Abraham or his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith." Faith is the whole issue.

Look at verse 20. Now God said to Abraham, "Abraham, you're going to have a son." Now you know that story. Abraham said, "God, could you get over that again? Do you understand how old I am? Do you know that my wife is 90? We're going to have a son." Of course, Sarah was off in a corner laughing according to Book of Genesis; but verse 20 says, "He staggered not at the promise of God." And it was a staggering promise. "Through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully persuaded that what He had promised, He was able also to perform. Therefore, it was imputed to him for righteousness." Righteousness comes as far back as Abraham from believing God. Salvation in the Old Testament was by law; it was simply and only by faith. No other thing.

In James 2:23, it says, "And the Scripture was fulfilled which saith, 'Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness.'" James, again, calls on Abraham as the classic illustration. So Abraham was, indeed, a man of great trust. He believed God to the point of going as far as you could humanly go. He trusted God, and it worked.

Can you trust God? Who can you trust? Abraham trusted God and it paid off. Let's consider Abraham for a moment. Abraham was a pagan. Abraham lived in a city known as Ur with his father Terah. Terah was a descendent of Shem, one of the sons of Noah; and Abraham's father was a pagan, worshipping false gods. He settled in a place called Ur, which is between the Tigris and the Euphrates in that area called Mesopotamia, one of the ancient cities of the Chaldeans; and God, all of a sudden, came to him in Genesis chapter 12 and said, "All right, Abraham, pack up. You're leaving. Get everything you've got and get out. I'm gonna take you to a place where I want you to go."

Now, that's a fairly big issue. Packing up his whole tribe, of which he was chieftain, and moving 'em all out, all the way over to a place called Canaan. He finally did and settled in a place called Haran. When he got to Haran, he received another promise. The reiteration of the promise that God would bless him and multiply his seed and give him a great nation and so forth and so on. That through his seed all of the families of the earth would be blessed. This is repeated to him in Genesis 12, Genesis 13, Genesis 15, Genesis 17, Genesis 18, Genesis 22. Over and over and over and over and over, over. God says to him, "Here's My promise. Here's My promise. Here's My promise." And Abraham believed it. He really believed God.

In Hebrews 11 verse 8, it says this. "By faith...in the great faith chapter...By faith, Abraham, when he was called to go out in to a place which he should after receive for an inheritance...told to go to Canaan...obeyed; and he went out, not knowing where he went." He just took off. That, friends, is faith. That's faith. It's the evidence of things not...what?... seen. Same chapter. Verse 9, "By faith he sojourned in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the

heirs with him of the same promise." In other words, clear as far on down the line as Isaac and Jacob they're still dwelling in tents in a land that really wasn't their own. Just kinda temporary, but he believed God, and he took off, and he went the way that God told him to go.

You say, "Well, good night, what evidence did he have? What evidence? I mean what kind of a guarantee that he...that he's not gonna get out there and die in the wilderness. So that he's gonna get in that land and...and hostile tribes are gonna come over and wipe him out? What kind of a guarantee does he have? Well, how can he trust God like that?"...The answer as to how he trusts God is in these verses, because we are given here the basic securities upon which a man can base his trust in God, and they're no different today than they were then. They're even expanded, as we shall see.

Abraham had some guilt-edged securities. He could trust God for some very obvious and powerful reasons, and we'll see what they are. When the Lord promises, you see, He puts His integrity on the line. It's a matter of His character, and every promise of God is secured by His character; and this is the issue of these verses. The real overriding, general security in these verses is the person of God or the character of God. If God says, "You're safe with Me," then you better be safe with Him or His Word is worth nothing. If His Word is worth nothing, then He's worth nothing. So the character of God is at stake in the question of security.

Can you give your life to God? Take Him at His Word? Can He keep you from falling? Can He finish the work He begins in your life? Will He lose you at some point along the line? Is there real security with God? Abraham believed there was. The Bible says there is, and I'll show you what the reasons are, and there are four of 'em. No. 1, His person. No. 2, His purpose. No. 3, His pledge, and No. 4, His priest. These are the four guarantees that we find in this passage.

No. 1, our security with God is guaranteed by His person. Now, keep in context what we're talking about. He is urging people to come all the way to Christ, throw themselves on Christ. Completely abandon everything. Remember back in chapter 6 verses 1 and 2, "Leave everything, abandon it, and let's go on, and let's come to Jesus Christ." We've studied all of that; and He's saying, "Come on. You can trust God. Come all the way. You can believe Him. Abraham did against unbelievable odds, and so can you. You're looking for somebody to trust in this world, here's somebody to trust. Trust God. First of all," He says, "You can trust Him because of His person."

Look at verse 13, "For when God made promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no greater, He swore by Himself." That's a fantastic verse. That verse says there's nobody greater in the universe than God. Now, that means that whoever He is, He makes the rules; and the reason that God cannot lie is that God invented truth; and whatever He says is truth; and by the very nature of His person, He cannot lie. Look at verse 18. "That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie." The person of God, His attributes and His nature make it impossible for Him to lie. He can't do it. It is not possible. God, by the very nature of His person, has no ability to contradict Himself...His

promises, then, are secured by His person. There is no greater person. He is the source of truth. He invented truth. Whatever He does is right, and whatever He says is truth. He cannot lie. He has no capacity.

Jesus in the high priestly prayer in John 17 verse 17 said, "Sanctify them by Thy truth. Thy Word is truth." Everything that comes out of the mouth of God is absolute truth. God has no ability to say anything that isn't true. Therefore, if God makes a promise, He will keep it. Second Peter 3:9, what does that classic verse say? "The Lord is not slack concerning...what?... His promise." He can't be, and the slack means there's no gap between the promise and the fulfillment. God says it, and it happens as He says it. That's His nature. He has no capacity to lie. It is a total impossibility with His nature.

To those Hebrew readers who were unsaved, but who believed it and who had listened to it and heard the whole thing and seen some of the miracles, and they were afraid to let go of Judaism, they were afraid to cast themselves on the Messiah for fear it might not work. To them, the Holy Spirit says, "Come on, you can trust God...He says it'll work...God can't lie." In Titus, you like that one verse that says this? "In hope of eternal life...verse 2 of chapter 1...which God who cannot lie promised before the world began." God promises eternal life for those that come to Jesus. He cannot lie. He cannot lie.

Another verse comes to my mind is James 1:17, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above and cometh down from the Father of lights with whom is no variableness neither shadow of turning." He never deviates from His will. He never deviates from His promise...and God, all the way through the New Testament, through the Gospels, pleads with men, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased. Hear ye Him."

And He promises again and again that if men come to Jesus Christ, they'll know salvation, and God can't lie...The Bible says, "But as many as receive Jesus Christ, to them gave He the right to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name," and that's true. God can't lie. What was His promise to Abraham? Go back to Hebrews and look at in chapter 6 verse 14. What did He say? He said this, "Surely, Abraham, blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. I'm gonna bless you and multiply your seed." That was His promise to Abraham. Did He keep it? You wanna know that there are right now in this world today, 1972 in June, at least 14 million of the seed of Abraham still roaming the world? You better believe he kept it. Not only that, there are multiplied millions around the world who are Abraham's seed by faith...God kept His promise to Abraham. It was tough for a while, didn't look too good. He said, "You're gonna have whole great nation as numbers the sand of the sea and the stars of the heaven." And Abraham looked at Sarah and said, "Well, you gotta start with one, and we don't even have that." And it didn't look real good, but He believed God. He hung in there. Oh, he tried to help God a little bit. Got over there with Hagar and produced Ishmael, but God just used that as a punishment. Ishmael fathered the Arabs who have been nothing

but trouble for the Jews ever since...But he believed God, the Bible says, and he stayed with it.

It wasn't easy. Look at verse 15, "And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained...what?...the promise." He hung in there. He believed God. He threw his whole life on God. He said, "God, I'm just gonna trust you. Here I go," and he fell over and God caught him...and gave him the prize; and it looked like impossibility. He took old Isaac after he was born and got up on that mountain. He had that knife lifted in the air, and it was all over. Isaac dies, that's it. The promise is gone, and, yet, he raised that arm to slay Isaac, and God stayed his hand; but he went that far, because that's how much he believed God. That's faith; and on the way up the mountain, he said to Isaac - they were going with a lotta sticks and no sacrifice, he said to Isaac, "God'll provide a sacrifice." I think deep down in his heart he believed that God would; and, finally, when he was up there, he may have been going like this, and his eye landed on that ram in the thicket. God did provide. He believed God. You can trust God, friend. You may find yourself running all the way to the extremity, but you can believe God for even that. He has never failed, and he never will. So Abraham was secure, because of the person of God. He can't lie. He can't back out of His promises. You can trust God, and God will never fail, because He has no capacity for failure in His nature.

Listen to Deuteronomy 31:8. "And the Lord, He it is who doth go before thee." I love this. Listen. "He will be with thee, He will not fail thee, neither forsake thee. Fear not, neither be dismayed." That's pretty solid stuff. He can't fail. Now, He says, "Lemme take you a step further." Not only are you secure because of God's person, but you're secure because of God's purpose, and this is a fantastic point. I want you to really plug into this one. This is really good.

Now, God made a promise to Abraham, right? Just yanked Abraham right out of Ur. Abraham was a wonderful guy, I'm sure; but I mean he didn't come to God and say, "God, have You got any plans for me? I'd like to get outta this place." I mean God just reached right down and said, "Up and out, Abraham, and here's the plan." The Abrahamic covenant, or the Abrahamic promise, was a non-conditional or unconditional covenant. He didn't say, "If you do this, Abraham, I'll do this." He said, "Get up and get out, Abraham, I'm doing this." There wasn't any condition on Abraham's part. Abraham wasn't even involved. He was really a spectator, and I'll show you how I know that in a minute; but God said, "Get up and get out," because God had a plan. God had a predetermined purpose, and Abraham was a key guy in that purpose.

Now, you remember what happened in the very beginning. All of the problems. God created Adam, and then He created Eve and put them together in the Garden. They were having a great time in the Garden until Eve decided that maybe she oughta try the thing that God said, "Don't try." And they fell, Genesis chapter 3, and then everything broke loose. Everything went crazy. The whole curse of the earth and everything was messed up. Our first parents became exiled from Eden. In the first family, there was fratricide, the murder of one brother against another. City life was instituted, but it was wholly apart from God. Polygamy corrupted the line of Cain. Corruption and violence broke out

everywhere, and God reacted in wrath, by the time He got to Genesis 6, by drowning the whole world except for eight people. That's how debauched it became that fast.

And in the generations after the Flood, man continued to depart from the Lord, even though God tried to reach people through mediating His rule through various institutions and various men, it didn't really work; and men were not responding to God's rule, and it became very evident that God had to do something. The horrible sinfulness of men was reached in a climax at Babel when, in idolatrous, devilish worship, they attempted to built a ziggurat or an idol, really what it was, to their own manufactured worship, and God scattered 'em all over the world. But it became imperative to God that He had to recover man, obviously; and as the plan unfolded, God knew that He had to take drastic steps to do it. It was as if there was a flowing river, and a great landslide had blocked the river, and God had to cut a fresh channel. Now, He designed to cut that fresh channel by picking out a certain nation or a certain people and using them as His channel around the landslide of sin that had inundated the world. Now, that fresh channel was cut, first of all, through Abraham; and from Abraham's loins were to come the whole nation of Israel, which has always been God's channel, right? Jesus said in John chapter 4, "Salvation is of...what?... the Jews," and what He meant is not that the Jews were the only ones that can be saved, but the channel is Jews. Jesus came through the line of Judah, through the Jews; and so God began to cut the channel through Abraham; and Abraham really was only a spectator to the plan of God.

You say, "Well, was Abraham secure?" He was secure, watch this, because God had planned to use him, and God doesn't let His plans get messed up...Now this is a fantastic point. Stay with me. The Abrahamic covenant then was non-conditional. God designed that Abraham be the father of a nation that was an unconditional purpose in the decree of God. He said, "Abraham, I'm going to do it."

Now, turn with me in your Bible for just a minute back to Genesis, and I wanna show you something really interesting. Genesis has so many interesting things, but particularly as regards Abraham. In Genesis 18:18, I'll read this to you. It says, "Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him, for I know him." What does that mean? That means, "I have predetermined to love him, predetermined to choose him. That he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord to do righteousness and justice, that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which He has spoken of him." In other words, God picked Abraham. God predetermined the patterns of Abraham. God set His love upon Abraham to be the one through whom the channel would be cut. It was a...it was a matter of divine choice. In Deuteronomy, for example, He says, "I didn't choose you because you are so great to the people of Israel. I didn't choose you because you were more in number. I chose you because I wanted to choose you. You're the fresh channel." He had to choose somebody. The old two-liner says, "How odd of God to choose the Jews," and we would ask the question, "Well, why did He choose them?" But if He chose somebody else, we'd say, "Why did He choose them?" He had to choose somebody, and so He chose Abraham to generate the whole thing.

Now, just to show you that Abraham wasn't involved, turn to Genesis 15. I'll show you one of the most interesting passages in all the Bible. Genesis 15. Now God had given this promise to Abraham already a couple times, but Abraham wasn't really too sure about it. It's amazing how, even when we believe God, we don't believe Him. "Lord, I believe, help my unbelief." Verse 1 of chapter 15, "After these things the word of the Lord came unto Abram in a vision saying, 'Fear not, Abram.'" This is before his name is changed. "'I am thy shield and thy exceedingly great reward.' And Abram said, 'Lord God, what wilt Thou give me, seeing I go childless and the heir of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus. God, I don't even have a son." I mean His whole promise is a little far out. "And Abram said, 'Behold, to me Thou hast given no seed; and lo, one born in my house is mine... and...and lo, one born in my house is my heir.'" In other words, "I've gotta have my own."

"And behold, the word of the Lord came unto him, saying, 'This shall not be thine heir...that is Eliezer...but he that shall come forth out of thine own loins shall be thine heir.' And He brought him forth abroad and said, 'Look now toward heaven and count the stars, if thou be able to number them.'" Of course, he couldn't. "And he said unto him, 'So shall thy seed be.' And he believed in the Lord; and he accounted it to him for righteousness."

Now, that's believing, that's hoping against hope, isn't it? That's hoping when there's no way, and then Abraham wanted a sign. Verse 7, "He said unto him, 'I am the Lord who brought thee out of Ur, the Chaldeans, to give thee this land to inherit.' And he said, "Lord God, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it? How do I know all this? I mean I'd...I'd like to see something.'" Now watch this. Verse 9, "He said unto him, 'Okay, take Me a heifer of three years old, a shegoat three years old, a ram three years old, a turtledove, and a young pigeon.'" Now He tells Abram, go get a menagerie. Gather all these animals. And he gets all these animals and ropes 'em all up, hauls 'em all over there to wherever God was. Verse 10, "And he took unto Him all these, and divided them in the midst." Now that doesn't mean that he said, "Okay, let's see, shegoat over here, ram over here." That means that he whacked 'em down the middle with a sword. He cut 'em in half. "And he laid one-half over here and one-half over there," it says, "And had one piece...each piece one against another, but the birds divided he not." Obviously you divide a bird, and all you've got is a lotta feathers. So put the turtle...dead turtledove on one side and a dead pigeon on the other side, and halves of all these other three animals. You say, "What's going on?" This is kind of a messy thing. Well, it is, and then in verse 11, which is always interesting, it says, "And when the fowls came down upon the carcasses, Abram drove them away." And I can imagine he's getting impatient as he's standing there his stick beating off the birds waiting for God to do whatever He's gonna do, see. And he's got these bloody animals lying around on the ground.

You say, "Well, what...what happened then?" Well, verse 12, "When the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram." God gave him a little divine anesthetic and put him out. "And lo, a horror of great darkness fell upon him." He just blacked out, see. "And He said unto Abram, 'Know of a surety

that thy seed shall be a sojourner in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years.'" And here He prophesies the Egyptian captivity. But notice in verse 15...verse 16. "But in the fourth generation they shall come here again, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.' It shall come to pass," and so forth, so on. Well, let's read verse 17, "It come to pass that when the sun went down. It was dark, behold, a smoking furnace and a burning lamp passed between those pieces. In the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying...verse 18...'Unto thy seed have I given this land.'" Part of the Abrahamic covenant was the gift of the land, and you say, "What is going on? Here are these pieces, and all of a sudden a smoking furnace and a burning lamp go between the pieces. What is this?"

There was a very, very interesting custom in Abram's day and continued some time after Abram. Whenever two people made a covenant, they sealed it with blood; and the way they did it was they took an animal, and they cut the animal in half, laying a piece on each side, and together they walked between the bloody pieces, simply passing between the two pieces. That signified that they had made a covenant in blood to keep their promise. It could be a deal for land. It could be some kind of a trade. It could be anything, but they'd cut an animal, put one piece here, one piece there, and the two who were covenanting would go between the pieces, sealing the covenant with each other, and there would be witnesses to see it.

You wanna know something? If God and Abraham, and we believe that God is represented by the furnace and the lamp, if God and Abraham had gone through, that would've meant that God made a covenant with Abraham. Do you wanna know something? God knocked Abraham out, and He went through by Himself. You say, "What does that mean?" That means the Abrahamic covenant wasn't even made with Abraham. It was made between God and Himself. Therefore, it is an unconditional covenant. God is simply saying, "Abraham, go to sleep while I make a covenant with Myself." God promised Himself, on the basis of His own purpose, that this is what He would do, and Abraham had nothing to do with it. He just happened to be the vehicle. You see? God sealed a covenant in a human way with Himself.

And so we say then that the Abrahamic covenant wasn't made between God and Abraham. It was made between God and God. You say, "What are you driving at this for?" Because I want you to see that the whole design of God in calling Abraham really had nothing to do with Abraham. God didn't owe Abraham anything. God owed Himself the fulfillment of His own plan, you see? And so He chose to cut the fresh channel, beginning with Abraham, and He made that vow with Himself. Abraham never passed between those pieces. Now, you say, "Well, when He chose this nation, what were they supposed to do?" They were supposed to do many things, but seven basic things, and I'm just gonna speed right through these things.

But this nation, this fresh channel, cut through the landslide of sin that blocked the human stream. This fresh channel, by which God was gonna send His flowing blessings, really were given seven

purposes. No. 1, they were to proclaim the true God. Their job, in the midst of idolatry and multi-gods and polytheism and polydemonism and animism and all the other things, was to proclaim the true God. That was their job. Isaiah 43:21, "This people have I formed for Myself. They will show forth My praise." And you remember what their statement was? "The Lord our God is...what?...one Lord." They were proclaim the true God.

Secondly, they had to...they were to reveal Messiah. They were to reveal the great Savior of the world. He was to come through them. He was called Shiloh in Genesis 49. He's called Messiah throughout the Old Testament. Thirdly, they were to be God's priest nation. In Exodus 19:5 and 6, they're called the kingdom of priests, and the point is that they are to represent God to the world, you see. Their job was to represent God to the world, to dispense God's truth to the world; and that leads to the fourth reason for their existence. They were to preserve and transmit Scripture. They were God's agency to deposit His Word. You can read that in Deuteronomy 4. In fact, in Deuteronomy 6, it says they were write it all over the place. They were to hang it between their foreheads. They were to write it on the door posts of their house. They were to talk about it standing up, sitting down, lying down, and doing anything else. They were to transmit Scripture all the time.

Fifthly, they were to show the faithfulness of God. They were to be a living illustration that God was faithful, and were they? Oh, how faithful God was with Israel. Over and over and over He showed His faithfulness. Anybody who wanted to know if God was faithful would have to look at Israel...and you'll find if you read Romans 11:26 to 29 that He yet will be faithful. What does it say? "So all of Israel shall be saved." Why? Watch this one. "Because the gifts and calling of God are without...what?...repentance." God never changes His mind, and people who come along today and say that all of the promises to Israel are forfeited are impugning the faithfulness of God. They were a living illustration and still are of God's faithfulness.

Sixth, they were to show the blessedness of serving God. You know that wonderful statement, is it Psalm 144:15, "Happy is the people whose God is the Lord." They were to show that, when you were plugged into God, you were blessed. You were happy. Seventh, they were to show God's grace in dealing with sin. Their whole sacrificial system was a portrayal of how God graciously dealt with sin. So they had a very strategic purpose, and this was God's purpose. This was God's way of getting His Word and His truth into the human stream. This was His fresh channel, and it was His purpose. It had really little to do with Abraham. Now watch this one. Here it is, folks, you ready for this? God will never violate His own promise, because it would foul up His eternal purpose. Did you get that? Hang onto that one. That's worth ten cents...Did you get it? God will never violate His promise, because it fouls up His eternal purpose; and Abraham was just as secure as the plans of God, you see...

Jeremiah 51:29, listen to it, "Every purpose of the Lord shall be performed." Did God desire and design to cut a channel and that channel be Israel? Yes. Then He would do it. Listen to Isaiah 14:24, "The Lord of hosts has sworn saying, 'Surely, as I have thought, so shall it come to pass. Have I...as I

have purposed, so shall it stand." God never violates His own purpose. Listen to this one. Psalm 33:11 says, "The purpose of God stands forever."

Now, Christian friend, you wanna know why you're secure? Because God purposed before the world began to conform you to the image of Jesus Christ; and if He fouled up on that promise, He would mess up His eternal purpose; and He doesn't do that. You say, "Where do you get that?" Right out of Romans chapter 9. let's go there. We'll get back to our text in a minute. This is doctrine right now. Romans 9 verse 8...You see, Abraham was secure, friends, because God's purpose was to work through Abraham. That's just...that's just it. God said, "All right, Abraham, you're My man," and he was secure because he was His man. Listen to Romans 9 verse 8, "That is, they who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed." In other words, he's talking about Israel. Not all Israel is Israel. In other words, it's not just the people who happen to be Jewish that are the chosen of God. It's the one who are the children of promise. That is to whom God has given a promise; and he goes on to show how this happens. Look at verse 11. "For the children...that is Jacob and Esau, the two children born to Isaac...for the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand." Of the two sons, Jacob and Esau, which did God choose? He chose Jacob. Did he choose 'em because they were good? No, it says right in verse 11, they had never done any good or evil. He choose them because it was His purpose to elect 'em. God had purposed to work through Jacob, and Jacob was secure in the purpose of God before Jacob was ever born. That's a heavy thought. It's a heavy thought.

In verse 14, the obvious argument is this. "What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God?" I mean how could He do this? How could just say, "You, I love. Esau, you're out." Is that...is there unrighteousness with God? You know what Paul's answer is? "God forbid," which in the vernacular is no way. No. There...God is not unjust, and he goes on to say these powerful words. "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy. I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." In other words, it all depends on My purpose.

Then in verse 19, "You'll say to me, "Oh, well, then how can He blame me if...if I'm a sinner? I mean how can He find any fault with me if...if...if I resist His will? I mean if I'm not on the in group." You say, "That's a good question." You wanna hear the answer? The answer in the vernacular is, "Shut up, you don't have any right to ask that question." Listen to verse 20. "Nay, but, O man who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, 'Why hast thou made me thus?'"...

Now, what do you say? I'm not gonna get into the whole thing that we've covered so often in terms of predestination and man's responsibility, but I want you to understand one thing. God designs a purpose; and when God designs a purpose, beloved, God carries it out...You say, "Well, I hate to tell ya, but God's purpose with Israel failed. Look at 'em." No, it didn't. They'll be regathered in

11...Romans 11:26, it tells us. They'll be regathered. Don't you worry about that. God's purpose never fails.

Turn with me for a minute to Ephesians 1:3...and here I'll take the same thought and bring it down to us today. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestinated us unto the adoption of sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will." Now, have you done anything at all in those verses? You just been standing around. Doesn't say anything about us. It said, "God, according to His own purpose, said, 'Here's the way I'm gonna go, and here's whom I'm gonna go through.'"

Now, this is the sovereign side of God's plan; and, beloved, this is the basis of our security...Now lemme just give you the...the fantastic truths of Romans 8 that go with this; and well just go there. Then we'll go back to our text. Promise. But it's interesting anyway, isn't it? Romans 8:28, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, them are the called according to His...what?...purpose." God's got it all purposed. You're secure in His purpose.

Now, watch, this is powerful. "For whom He did foreknow," and we saw this morning that that means to foreordain. "For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son." Now watch this. Everybody that God foreordained, He also predestinated to be conformed to Jesus Christ. Hang on here. That means that everybody that comes to salvation also becomes conformed to Jesus Christ. There's nobody lost in the middle. God's purpose is, "I wanna call out a people who will someday be conformed to Jesus Christ," and that means that everyone whom He foreordained, He also someday will conform to Jesus Christ. That's why Jesus could say, "All that the Father has given Me have come to Me," and later He says, "And I have lost...how many?...none." You are just as secure as the purpose of God that everyone who ever comes to Christ would then come to conformity to Christ. Be like Him. And, for us, that will be when we see Him. That's the purpose of God; and he goes on to say this, "That he might be conformed to the image of His Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called; whom He called, He also justified; whom He justified, He also glorified." You see any slippage in there? You see anybody get lost along the way in the traffic?

Whoever He foreordained will be like Christ, will be glorified. There's nobody lost. He doesn't lose anybody. Why? Because He purposes to call together a body of believers to be conformed to Christ. That's His plan from eternity past, and that's exactly what'll happen, because God's promises never fail, or that would foul up His eternal purpose; and God doesn't have fouled up purposes. He's God. He makes no mistakes...

Now, then Paul gives more guarantees. Look at verse 31. "What shall we say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?" Somebody'll come and say, "Well, but you can pull yourself right out." Or...or, "The devil can pull you right out, and you can just fall away and lose your salvation." Listen to this. "If God is for us, who can be against us?" Do you know any higher authority than God? Anybody know any higher authority than God? If God says, "You're in," who's gonna get above Him and say, "No, wrong, God, they're out." Nobody. Nobody.

"He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him freely give us all things? Shall he not supply us with everything we need? Shall He not bring us to the fullness of every inheritance that is laid away for us, as Peter said, "Undefiled and incorruptible, it fadeth not away." It's reserved in Heaven for us, and God doesn't make reservations that won't be fulfilled. Who could do it? Verse 33, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? Shall God that justified?" If God looks at MacArthur and says, "MacArthur, you are justified," who's gonna say, "Oh, no, he's not"? Who's gonna go do...who's gonna get a higher court than God?

Verse 34, "Whose gonna condemn? Shall Christ that died, yea, who is risen again, who's at the right hand of the Father, making intercession for me."? Is Christ gonna condemn me? There's no higher authority, and if I'm a sinner, and I'm...if I've lost my righteousness, He had to do it, but He can't. And he says in verse 35, "What shall separate us from the love of Christ?...Nothing...Shall Tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword?" Uh-uh. Verse 37, "In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. I am persuaded that neither death, life, angels, principalities, powers, things present, things to come, height, depth, any other creation, none of these shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

God has purposed to love us and purposed to conform us to Christ, and nothing can violate that; and once you come into a relationship with Jesus Christ, you are secure in the eternal purpose of God...That's our security. Then he gives a third security, and we'll look at this just briefly. His third security is His pledge. Back to Hebrews. He adds to His person and His purpose, His pledge; and God doesn't have to do this, but I love the fact that He did. Look at the end of verse 13. It says, "For when God made promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no greater, He swore by Himself." In other words, He made an oath on Himself. Look at verse 16. It explains this idea of an oath. "For men verily swear by the greater." In other words, if you're gonna make an oath, you swear by somebody greater than yourself; "And an oath, for confirmation, is to them and end of all strife." In other words, to men, they might argue, but when a guy said, "I swear by the high priest," or "I swear by God," then that was confirmation. That ended the argument. When a man would swear by somebody higher than himself. That's what verse 16 means.

So verse 17 says, "God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath." So God accepted the human pattern. Now, God didn't need to make an oath. God's Word is good without it; but to accommodate the weak faith of men, God said,

"Okay, I'll also pledge that what I mean is for real. I lie not." Now, when men swear an oath, in order to underline their promise, they're pledging themselves. So God said, "If that's the human custom, I'll do it."

Many times in the Old Testament, here's what men would say. "As the Lord liveth, so..." and then they'd give their thing. "As the Lord liveth, so I will do this." The oath was commonly, "As the Lord liveth." They always appealed to somebody higher, but you know what you read in the Old Testament all over the place when God makes an oath? He says this, "As I live, so shall I do this." See? Because He couldn't swear by anybody greater. There wasn't anybody greater, so He swore by Himself. "As I live," saith the Lord.

The bare Word of God is guarantee enough, but God gave an oath just to show that He really meant business and do it in the most extreme way that men required, by His pledge. Say, "Yeah, well, God says to me, 'Come to Jesus, and I'll hold onto your life.' What's His security? What's His pledge to me? What's His oath to me?" I believe it's the presence of the Holy Spirit. I believe God's oath is the presence of the Spirit who is the first fruits or the guarantee of our future inheritance. Remember how the Spirit is called the earnest of the Spirit? That means pledge. The earnest means pledge. It's from the Greek word arabuon, which means engagement ring; and because of...of God's graciousness in giving me an engagement ring, I have no doubts about someday being married to Jesus Christ. God guarantees my marriage by giving me an engagement ring, who is the Holy Spirit. God is pledged to me. God has shown me His oath.

Now notice that He says, and I love it, verse 17, "God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel or His will, confirmed it by an oath." Do you notice that He wasn't only showing it to Abraham. He was showing it to whom? The heirs of what? Of promise. Do you know what that means? That means all those of faith though all the ages. Abraham and God's oath to Abraham stand as a testimony of God's faithfulness for all time. God's design and swearing by Himself was not only that Abraham might be fully persuaded, but that all the heirs of Abraham's promise, all the faithful of all the ages might know that God keeps His will...

Now you notice the little statement, "the immutability of His counsel"? That's interesting. It means His will can't change. His purpose can never, ever, ever change. The immutability - that means it cannot be switched. It can't be transposed. It can't be turned around. It cannot be altered. When God says it, it is so. So the counsel of God says, "I will keep My promise. You don't ever need to doubt it." God will give His oath that He will keep His Word.

Then in verse 18, he says, "There it is, two immutable things." What were they? His promise and His pledge. His promise and His oath. He stated it, and then He swore by it; and they are also unchangeable. Two immutable, unchangeable things in which it was impossible for God to lie. "You're secure," He says, "come onto Christ. There is nothing to fear. I'll hold you. I'll never let go of you."

Immutable from metatithime with a little ah at the front means God can't ever change His place. It's used to speak of a turncoat. God is no turncoat. If He gives you once salvation in Jesus Christ, He will never change it. That would foul up His eternal purpose...and then He says, and this is the wrap-up on it, verse 18, "It was impossible for God to lie; and so we might have a strong consolation." What does that mean? That means a strong encouragement, parkaleo, a strong confidence, "who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us."

Listen, my friend, there are a lotta people who question whether God can hang on. There are a lotta people who are afraid to come all the way to Jesus and throw their life on Him; and you wanna know something? You'll never know until you do. You know that? You'll never know until you flee to Him for refuge. Oh, that's a beautiful thought. In the Septuagint, the word used there to flee for refuge is used to speak of the slayer who killed his neighbor by accident, you remember, and then would run to the cities of refuge. You remember reading about him in Numbers 35, also in Deuteronomy 19, Joshua 20; and all those places where it talks about the cities of refuge, when a person killed someone accidentally, in order to save themselves from an avenger, they would run to these cities that were up on high plateaus and be secure. And he's saying, "You'll never know whether God can hold you until, in desperation, you run to Him for refuge. Come on," he says, "trust Him and see if He can't hang onto you." If you never flee to Him for refuge, you'll never be able to know if He's faithful or not; and so he says, "We, who have fled for refuge and laid hold on this hope, we have a strong confidence."

Do we know He can hold us? Do you believe that? Do you believe what Jude said when he said, "He is able to keep you from falling and to present you faultless"? Do you believe that? I have a strong consolation. I have a strong confidence. I fled to God. I gave Him my life, and He's held me, and I believe that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him; but you'll never know it until you flee to Him.

You say, "What is that hope that is set before us?" Well, listen to what I think it is, just quickly. First Timothy 1:1 says this. I love it. "The Lord Jesus Christ who is our... what?...hope." What is that hope set before us? It's none other than our Lord Jesus Christ. Then in Colossians chapter 1, it says that that hope is the Gospel and all that's involved in salvation. That's all he's saying. He's saying, "There's salvation. If you're ever gonna know if God can be trusted, if you're ever gonna know whether He's worth His Word, you're gonna have to run to Jesus Christ, embrace the Gospel, and then God'll give you that strong confidence to know He can hang on."...

You can trust God, and the only way you'll ever know if is if you flee to Him and embrace Jesus Christ. God gave Abraham the security of His person and His purpose and His pledge, and He gives it to you. One other thing. This is the glorious conclusion. His priest. To the New Testament covenant, God added yet another pledge and another security - Jesus Christ. Look at verse 19. Oh, this is beautiful language. We could spend weeks just talking about this. "Which hope that is Christ and all the salvation that's in Him, we have as an anchor of the soul." Beautiful words, "Both sure and

steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil, where the Forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus."

We'll stop there. He's saying, "That's kinda tangled up, not sure I get that." Well, lemme tell you what it's saying. He's saying we have one other security, beloved. We've got an anchor. We've got an anchor for our souls. Your soul, when you come to God, isn't drifting anymore. It's anchored. You say, "Well, where is my soul anchored?" It says right there, "The anchor is sure and steadfast, and it's inside the veil." You say "What veil? What does that mean?" You remember, if you know anything about the Old Testament, what it means. In the temple, the most sacred place was called the Holy of Holies, right? And in the Holy of Holies, the arc of the covenant, the glory of God, and only once a year on Day of Atonement, the high priest could go in there, right? And he had to get in and get out fast. He couldn't linger there. That was the place where God dwelt, and the high priest could go in there. No man could go in there. That was the stay-away thing. Nobody went near that...But our great High Priest Jesus Christ performed the perfect sacrifice, and He entered into the heavenly Holy of Holies, and when He went in there, He didn't just stand around and leave. The Bible says He went and did what? Sat down.

Jesus finished the job. The veil was ripped open, and He left, as the writer of Hebrews says, "a new and living way into the presence of God."...Oh, fantastic. Jesus opened the way, and when I put my faith in Him, I throw my anchor, and it goes clear to heaven, and it anchors to Him within the veil of the Holy of Holies. That's security, my friend. That's security. I'm tied to Jesus within the veil. Nothing can ever violate that. Oh, what a security. You think anybody can go in there and cut that rope? I'm anchored to Jesus Christ inside the veil in God's presence. That's security. Jesus, the Forerunner, went in, verse 20, and He was a new kind of high priest, like Melchizedek; and we'll get into that next time. He went in there, and when I put my faith in Him, I threw my anchor, it went in the veil, and He holds it in His hand, and He'll never let go...and I'm anchored to Jesus Christ. Oh, what a fantastic thought. You say, "Well, how long are you anchored there?" Catch it. Oh, it's good. Verse 20, "When the Fore...where the Forerunner has for us entered, even Jesus, made a high priest...for how long?...forever." Forever, there never was such a high priest like that. Forever. I'm anchored to God forever.

My dear friend, our security is in the person of God, the purpose of God, the pledge of God, and the priest of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. He loses none of His own. Read it yourself in the Gospel of John chapter 6. He loses none of His own.

Can you trust God?

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