



Hebrews 6:13-20
An anchor for the Soul

Summary: We have examples we can look to and hope we can cling to as we work out the collision of grace and grit in our daily lives.

I want to start by acknowledging something you might not know it's OK to talk about: some of you have felt disappointed by God. You felt let down. You felt like this whole Christian thing doesn't work or it doesn't work for you. Maybe you feel that way right now.

You had this need and you thought God would meet it. It even seemed like a good thing – maybe healing or help for yourself or someone you love. Maybe it was a job. Maybe it was that you could change your behaviors and stop doing that thing or to have kids and raise them well.

So you prayed, and you believed, and it didn't work. So you prayed harder or prayed again. Maybe you tried to negotiate with God, to write up a contract with Him – if You do that then I'll do this, or I promise I'll never do that. And still, it didn't work. You didn't get what you wanted, the way you wanted, when you wanted it.

So then you think there's either something wrong with you, that God doesn't like you or you're doing things wrong, or you think there's something wrong with God – He doesn't care, or He's not real, or He's real, but He's not the way you thought He was that and you're just going to have to deal with some things on your own.

And so, you're disappointed with God, or at least, you have your doubts.

Friends, it's OK to say that. In fact, if you don't say it, you're never going to really deal with it. And we need to deal with it because what we believe about God affects the way we see the world and right now one of the things we need most is a clear, honest, picture of the world and our place in it.

We've been working our way through the book of Hebrews where the Christian life is displayed as this collision between grit and grace.

The grace is found in God who we learned is real and is really there and has been speaking to human beings since the dawn of Creation, through the created world – that is, in nature – you're meant to look on the world and the way it works and be amazed, science is not an enemy of faith, it is a window of discovery that leads to informed worship; but we can't learn all we need to know through microscopes and oscilloscopes, so God sent us prophets and gave us Scripture and finally sent His own Son and the Holy Spirit who continues to speak today.

The grit is seen in the constant encouragement of Scripture to be diligent, don't grow sluggish, don't drift away, be encouraged because God is pleased with even your smallest steps of righteousness, holiness, service, and love.

So, God is calling us to grow in both grace and grit – and we're told to look around for examples we can follow, people we can imitate as they walk with God, which brings us to our passage this morning where we see both grace and grit on display in the life of Abraham, a man who dealt with his own share of disappointments with God and waited a long time to see the answer to his prayers. But look at this:

Hebrews 6:13 For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, 14 saying, *"Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you."* 15 And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.

Now, if you don't know the story of Abraham, it's kind of important – and that whole thing of *after he had patiently endured, he obtained the* promise – it's covering a lot of years and a lot of attempts.

Abraham is considered the father of the faith for Jews, Muslims, and Christians – they all hold him in very high esteem, they just disagree about the history of what happened after him. You can read about the events of his life in just the first couple pages in your Bible.

He lived thousands of years ago in a place called Ur – which is essentially modern-day Iraq. God showed up in his life, unexpectedly and told Abraham to come, follow Him to the place that God would show Him. God said, I'm going to make a great nation out of your descendants, *and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed* (Genesis 12:3).

Now, Abraham was already a well grown man when God called him – He was married to a woman named Sarah but they had no children. And as the years went on they continued to have no children. It was a heartache, one some of you know very well. It was disappointing, no doubt.

When you read the descriptions of Abraham and Sarah, almost every time the issue of children comes up, Scripture points out that they were old. Their biological clock was ticking and for all intents and purposes, had already tocked. And yet, God promised they would have kids, that one day their descendants would actually be as numerous as the sand on the seashore.

He showed up and repeated the promise again right before the whole destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Sarah was inside their tent, overheard what was said and she laughed about the impossibility of it – "Me, pregnant? Yeah, right."

So, they did something many of us do, they figured, maybe I need to take care of this myself, maybe we need to find another way. And they used one of their servants, Hagar, as a surrogate – she had a child with Abraham and they named him Ishmael. But God came back

and said no, that's not what I said. I'm going to create a nation with you Abraham, and with your wife Sarah.

Fourteen years later, the promise was finally fulfilled and Sarah, who was ridiculously, miraculously, old for such a thing, gave birth to their son Isaac and God reiterated His original promise to Abraham – I'm going to bless you and use you to establish a family that becomes a nation. I'm going to give you the land and the descendants to make it all happen, and there will be a blessing for the entire world that comes from all of this – a reference to what God would do one day through Jesus.

And today we see that He has done it. God did give Abraham a land, He did give him a family, and that family became the nation of Israel that is still in the land of Israel to this day. Jesus came from that family, lived in that land, and is a source of blessing to people from every ethnic group, language group, and national identity today.

But here's what you have to remember, Isaac wasn't born until 25 years after God called Abraham to leave his hometown. Twenty-five years.

That's a long time to wait. That's a long time to trust. To believe. To pray. To have faith. And all the difficulties made it harder and harder to believe. So, Abraham didn't always get it right. In fact, if you read the history of Abraham, you find him blowing it one way or another, almost every other chapter. And yet this is the father of our faith, a man full of flaws, who kept failing forward.

I think it's all very encouraging if you've ever been disappointed spiritually. Because, *many of our greatest grievances with God, or the church, or faith, are due to our desire for immediate results*, immediate relief from our situation, immediate change. We want things to happen now, or to happen this way. And if they don't, then we become disappointed.

But Scripture is telling us, God is telling us, *look at Abraham*. I told him what I would do, and I did it!

Yet, ninety-five percent of us look on and say, "Yeah God, but it took You a while."

That's our complaint. It's great that God promised and provided, but we're not so enthusiastic about the patience part in the middle or how long that middle lasts.

Well, *that's why all of this is brought up here in Hebrews*. The call to the Christian faith is a call to grace and grit, like we see with Abraham. Grace because of what God has promised and will provide, and grit while we wait with patient hope to discover and experience the fullness of all He has promised.

Hebrews is telling us, life will be hard at times, it will be tough and your difficulty, pain, opposition, or struggle may drag on and on. We're called to diligently endure, warned not to drift, or become hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, or grow spiritually sluggish

while we wait for God to unfold His plan in His timing in our life. It's a call to grace, but also grit.

The good news is: we're also given encouragement to keep going and trust – we're given fuel for our patience and it comes in the form of hope sent from God. Read with me:

Hebrews 6:16 For men indeed swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation *is* for them an end of all dispute. 17 Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed *it* by an oath, 18 that by two immutable things, in which it *is* impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before *us*. 19 This *hope* we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the *Presence* behind the veil, 20 where the forerunner has entered for *us*, *even* Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

Now, we'll talk about Mechizedek next week, Chapter Seven is all about him – but what you need to know from all of this is the main point – we have examples we can *look* to and an anchor of hope we can *cling* to, as we work out this collision of grace and grit navigating daily life in the gap between when we receive God's promises and when we see His provision.

Hope in God is what gets you through your disappointment with God.

If you go back to the early centuries of the church, to its very beginnings in places like Israel, Turkey, Greece, and Italy, you find archaeological evidence of the faith. One famous location is the catacombs buried under the streets of Rome which served as an early Christian cemetery. And one of the most common symbols you will find inscribed in the rock there is an anchor.



The anchor had several forms of meaning. First, you notice that an anchor looks like a cross at the top where the shaft and the stock intersect – which reminds us of the cross where Jesus died.

Anchors are also used by fishermen, and Jesus promised to make the early disciples fishers of men. And, of course, there is the connection to this idea - that we have, in Christ, a sure and steady anchor that holds us in place when the currents of life might cause us to drift or the storms of life might throw us off course.

Life is full of currents and storms, isn't it? There is a constant pull on your life that would lead you adrift and there are occasional storms of varying magnitudes that hit us – some we see coming and others that surprise us, but an anchor is meant to hold you firm through it all. Here we're told that Jesus is to be our anchor, our hope in every storm, our resistance to daily drift.

Unfortunately, many of us try to form an anchor for our lives using other things, like physical or financial health or education. Ever known someone who was seeking a degree so they could stand on their own two feet and not be so reliant on their parents or their spouse, or as insurance against a competitive job market?

Now, listen, there are good and bad ways to do that, I'm simply trying to point out that, with or without Jesus in your life it's easy to trust in other things and ask them to be your anchor, to let them become your source of hope and confidence.

What about rank, title, position, achievement or accomplishment? Either your own or that of others. Do parents ever look at the things they're doing for their child's education or activities as their source of hope for their future? Ever seen someone try to build an anchor out of youth sports, or GPA, or activities? "This will be the thing that gets you in, or gets you through."

What about building an anchor out of material things. Anyone ever used retail therapy to help build your confidence or ease your concerns? We'll be OK, we've got____. Or, I'm doing great, look at what I own, what I wear, what I drive. You reassure yourself with what you own.

You can build an anchor out of religion, especially religious experiences that get you pumped up. There are people out there who think everything spiritual is supposed to be powerful or tingly – they don't know how to weep in prayer, they don't know how to lament and mourn and pour out your complaints and frustrations to God. They think what they need is another wave of goosebumps and they'll be good to go.

One more – what about reason, rational thought? Have you ever tried to build an anchor out of that? You think, if I could just know what's going on, what's happening, and why, then I could endure this season of difficulty. I don't need some mystical experience; I just need an answer. The problem is we're not usually asking to understand what's happening we're asking to judge. Because when we're told what's happening or why it's happening this way, then we're going to have an opinion that either agrees or disagrees and if we disagree, then the issue becomes even worse, because now we have to endure it *and we think it's stupid*.

The point in talking through all these things is to point out: you can throw a rope around almost anything you like, throw it over board, and call it an anchor, and some of them will seem to work for a while. But you're also offered something that is both [sure and steadfast](#) in Christ.

This expression [sure and steadfast](#) is a common one in Greek texts dealing with ethics. What it's saying is, this anchor is both internally consistent and externally capable. It is structurally sound and mechanically effective. It's not going to break accidentally, it will hold when you need it, when life tugs against it.

And this anchor is triply confirmed to us – it made of a promise of God, an oath from God, and the evidence of His faithfulness. You can hear what He has said *and* see it play out in the lives of others in Scripture and in daily life and most clearly of all in Jesus.

Here's what all of this means for us today.

First, it's a recognition that **there is often a gap between God's promise and His provision that we have to fill with patient faith while clinging to an anchor of hope.**

That gap was 25 years long in Abraham's case. How long has it been in yours? I don't know. But I do know this – one year can feel like a long time, so can a month. In some situations, a day or an hour can feel like a very, very, long time to wait to see God provide the answer to His promise. And living in that gap is hard. It's what often leads us to doubt, depression, or despair. It's what makes us feel disappointed with God. It's what makes us go looking for another anchor, something else to help hold our life in place.

But God is telling us, as those of you who have been to London know – to 'mind the gap.' The gap refers to the space between the platform and the train. And although we're starting to mix our metaphors between boats and trains, it's a helpful piece of imagery, isn't it?



You're standing on the platform - perhaps platform 9 $\frac{3}{4}$ since this is London after all, expecting to go somewhere else, but you need the train to show up and take you there. While you're waiting 'mind the gap,' don't fall down onto the tracks. And when the train arrives, watch your step so you don't twist your ankle while boarding.

The point is – there is a gap. God's promises are rarely immediate on earth. When they are it's spectacular, it's miraculous, it's remarkable. But more often than not we're waiting for the gap to close between what is promised and what has been provided, and that's often an uncomfortable wait, *which is why we're given hope.*

Which brings us to the second thing all of this means for us today: it means **God has not forgotten you.** *He's telling you* – it may take a while, look at Abraham - but I *will* come through, I *will* deliver. If you put your trust and hope wholly in Me, you will not regret it. God makes *long* promises, but He is reliable in His timing and His techniques. He doesn't go back on His promises. If you are building on them, trusting in them, clinging to them, you will not be ignored or found foolish.

Number three – **God has given you promises, oaths, and covenants, and He did not have to.** Think about this: if God is who He says He is, what does He owe you? *Nothing*, and yet, look how at how beautifully condescending He is, how accommodating He is of our frailty and weakness, (vs 17) [desiring to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, \[He\] confirmed it with an oath.](#)

Can I put that another way for you? God, wanting to make sure you really, really understood that He would never change, swore with an oath.

But why? Have you ever felt insulted when someone asked, ‘Do you swear you’re telling the truth?’ Well, here you have God going along with that – you need some additional reassurance, here, He gives it to you. He swears an oath, but since there’s nothing greater for Him to swear by, He swears by Himself.

And what’s the content of all His promises, oaths, and covenants – it’s reconciliation, restoration, and healing for your soul. This is what He is offering to you, in Christ. It’s grace.

But, and here’s the fourth thing all of this means for us today, **you’ve got to reach out with grit and lay hold of the hope set before you (vs 18)**. You need to **flee to the refuge** that is offered to you in Christ. And when you fail, when you fall down, when you take matters into your own hands like Abraham, or come up short, you need to keep coming back for more grace.

Listen – *repent when you fail*, because, you’re going to fail. Better men and women than you have failed and fallen in worse conditions than yours. Cry out for grace, demonstrate grit, **flee for refuge** and **lay hold of the hope**. God does not expect perfection from you – He knows you can’t. That’s why He sent Jesus. He wants faith, trust, progress, persistence, and remember, as we said last week – He sees the smallest little efforts you make and is pleased.

So take the long view, sow the field today that you will not harvest tomorrow, or the day after, or the day after that. Knowing that if your work is grounded in God’s promise, the day will come, even it’s 25 years from now.

Don’t give up hope. Look to Jesus. Look to the examples God has given you, in Scripture and in daily life. Ask for help, from God and others. His mercies are new every morning. And who benefits from all of this? You do.

Life is hard, pain is real. At times, we are very tempted to be disappointed in God, but He has given us promises. He sworn to us with an oath. He has forged a covenant with us through the blood of His Son. He offers us an anchor, but we must hold fast. It’s a mixture of grace and grit but it will help you survive the gap between the promise and the provision.

Let’s pray.

Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

- Rom 15:13



Sermon Application and Discussion Questions

Hebrews 6:13-20 An anchor for the Soul

Summary: We have examples we can look to and hope we can cling to as we work out the collision of grace and grit in our daily lives.

- Has there ever been a time when you were disappointed with God? What were you disappointed about?
 - Has anything changed over time? Has the situation resolved?
- Do you lean more on grit or grace in your relationship with God?
 - How well do you balance the two?
- How does the historical example of Abraham and Sarah speak to you and the need for patient, enduring, faith in your life?
 - What's the longest you've ever waited for God to answer a prayer or promise?
 - What have you learned in the waiting?
- Many of our greatest grievances with God, or the church, or faith, are due to our desire for immediate results, immediate relief from our situation, or immediate change. How have you seen this play out?
- What is the difference between expecting God to deliver you from every difficulty and expecting Him to walk with you through every difficulty?
- Why is the imagery of an anchor helpful for our faith?
 - What other things have you used as anchor in life?
- How do you deal with the gap between God's promises and provision in your life? What practical steps do you take?
- *"Let us not be surprised when we have to face difficulties When the wind blows hard on a tree, the roots stretch and grow the stronger, let it be so with us. Let us not be weaklings, yielding to every wind that blows, but strong in spirit to resist."*
 - Amy Carmichael