



VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS

Settle Down — Everything Is Going To Be Okay

Hebrews 6:13–20

Tim Badal | December 27, 2020

We just finished a series titled “Good News,” and we’re picking up again with the book of Hebrews under the heading “Jesus: Greatest of All Time.” The reason I’m back in Hebrews before the end of the year is that the passage we’re looking at today is such a great way to end a year like we’ve had. It helps us take stock of all that has transpired. As we all realize, 2020 has not been the best of years. In fact, in my 44 years on this earth, 2020 has got to be one of the worst, but by God’s grace we’ve made it through another year. We’re through it now, even though our problems and trials don’t seem to be over yet.



In the midst of struggles and difficulties, we’ve been able to find ways to glorify and give thanks to God. We’ve also served God in ways we never would have thought possible prior to COVID and all that has resulted from it. When we look back at a year like 2020, it’s easy to think God perhaps reneged on one of His promises or maybe He isn’t as powerful as we thought He was.

I was getting ready for church this morning and was watching a documentary on the song “Silent Night.” I’m not all the way through it, but the first part of it was talking about the days surrounding the writing of this song. It was written in Salzburg, Austria, during what they called the “dark year.” During that time, Europe was undergoing a drought and people were struggling economically because of it. There was a war going on and rumors of greater wars coming. There was a sickness that had impacted much of Eastern Europe. There was very little to be joyful about. Amidst all the turmoil and difficulties, the writer of this song wanted to write something that would remind us we could find wholeness and salvation because of what had transpired in Bethlehem 2,000 years earlier.

It dawned on me that the opening words of “Silent Night” have a special meaning when considered against this backdrop of when it was written. “Silent night, holy night, all is calm, all is bright.” That was not the case. It wasn’t silent when that song was written. Things weren’t bright. It was the “dark year.” There’s something about the promises of God in the middle of difficulty and sorrow that makes those promises seem even brighter. I want the passage we’re looking at today to be an encouragement, as we consider the goodness of God in His promises. His promises are intended to be a solace to our souls and balm for the hurts we feel.

When difficulties are all around us, we begin to forget God’s promises and wonder if God isn’t able to keep what He promises. But as we’ll see today, God’s promises stand true in the best of times and in the worst of times. My gift to you for the coming year is to remind you of what God promises to give us. What are those promises? The author of Hebrews talked about them earlier in the book. Turn in your Bible to Hebrews 6. We ended in November with a stern warning that people should not walk away from the faith. They shouldn’t give up or apostatize. At the end of that passage, Hebrews 6:9, the writer said this: *“Though we speak in this way”—with this stern warning—“yet in your case, beloved, we feel sure of better things—things that belong to salvation.”* The world says the better things are what we found under the tree. The world says the better things are more money or more pleasures. But the Bible tells us that for the Christ follower, the better things are centered on our salvation. Our salvation transcends all our troubles and trials in life.

So to merge our two series—"Good News" and "Jesus: Greatest of All Time"—we live in a perpetual state of good news because Jesus is the greatest of all time. No matter the difficulties, we always have good news, even when we also have personal bad news, because we trust and believe and have hope and faith in Jesus, Who is the greatest of all time. He has promised us salvation and all the things that pertain to salvation.

Before we go to our passage, I want to do something we don't normally do and I'm doing this with a bit of fear and trepidation. I'm going to let you talk. We're going to have some men walk around with a microphone. We did this in the first service and it was really a sweet time. The question I asked them was this: "What better things are you hoping for in 2021? What are you trusting God for?" A word of caution first. The Bible isn't talking about earthly things. I'm not looking for you to say, "Lord, give me this or give me that." Some of the things that were mentioned in the first service included the return of a prodigal son. A mother cried out, "I want to see my son come back." Another asked that God would use COVID to grow the church and make us more like Jesus. Others drew out the idea of trusting God with their personal circumstances. So what things are you hoping for in this new year that you believe God has promised us?

First person: This past year I have witnessed several times to a close friend of mine and his response is that he has his own religion and thinks he's going to be all right in the end. No matter what I say to him, he responds, "I just don't believe it." My prayer is that this year he will believe.

Second person: Like he mentioned, I want to see souls saved. I work with a bunch of technicians who also need salvation. My prayer is that God would show up and change the hearts of those who don't see Him as being God. I pray that they would come to the Lord and build a relationship with Jesus. I look forward to that day when Jesus comes again to take us home, to give us new bodies, and when we will be able to glorify His name forever and ever.

Tim: That's powerful. You're going through a lot of trials right now and to think that your focus is on other people and their relationship with Jesus Christ—praise God for you.

Third person: My hope is that as we prepare to get into the empty nest part of life that God would bless my wife and me during this next season. I pray that He would draw us closer together and closer to Him; also that He would draw our two oldest children back to Himself.

Tim: Aren't you glad that when we ask, God gives wisdom generously without finding fault? That's a promise He gives us. Who can use some wisdom right now? Let's hear from one or two more people.

Fourth person: I'd like to see revival in our nation in 2021, especially in our leadership. I want to see us come together in a loving, caring way and get rid of this corruption.

Fifth person: My prayer for 2021 is that our marriage would continue to grow and that we would continue to glorify Jesus in our relationship. I also pray that our children will grow closer to the Lord.

Tim: I want to encourage you that God has great things in store for us if we will remain faithful to what He has recorded in His Scriptures. Throughout the letter of Hebrews, the writer has been whetting the appetite of the people. Why? Because he's wanted to remind them to persevere because there's light at the end of the tunnel. If they will endure, good things will come. As we'll learn later in the book, these people were being beaten down and abused. They were losing their property. They were being thrown in jail. They were losing family relationships because of their relationship with Jesus Christ. The writer has said a couple different times, "It's worth it. It is all worth. Just endure. Just persevere. God's promises will come true."

The problem for the people this letter was written to—and for us today—is that faith begins to wane when we're waiting for a long time for the promises to come to fruition. To give you an idea of what sort of promises I'm talking about, look back at Hebrews 1:13. Here Jesus promised to do something because He is the greatest of all time: *"And to which of the angels has he ever said, 'Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet?'"* This is God the Father speaking to God the Son, talking about a time when He promises the Son, "I'm going to make Your enemies a footstool." The people of Hebrews were wondering if that would ever happen? It seemed to them that they were the footstool of their enemies. Where was Jesus in this?

Then look at Hebrews 2:8: *"...putting everything in subjection under his feet. Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control. At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him."* He goes on to explain how for a time Jesus

was made a little lower than the angels. The people were looking for a Messiah Who was overseeing everything and Who was in complete control, but they hadn't seen that yet. They were longing for the time when Jesus would be victorious, but it wasn't happening yet.

How about Hebrews 4:11? It's speaking about a rest the children of Israel had not entered into. But then in Hebrews 5:11 we read, "Let us therefore strive to enter that rest." We want that rest. We long for the time when we can live outside the presence of sin and hardship, but we're still striving. We're still dealing with our sinful nature, longing for that time of rest. This is what the Hebrews were looking forward to.

Next look at Hebrews 5:9: "*And being made perfect*"—speaking of Jesus—"*he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him.*" Where's our salvation? When will we reach the place where we're once and for all saved? When do we get to enjoy the coming joys of eternal salvation?

These were four statements of better things the writer of Hebrews says we have nothing to show for them yet, from an earthly perspective. But from a heavenly perspective, God has a plan and is going to bring them about in His time.

Here's the problem. In the hearts of the Hebrews—and in each of our hearts as well—anxiety kicks in because we're living in this place of tension between the promises of God being given and the promises of God being fulfilled. The world looks at us and wonders why we're serving a God Who has promised so much, yet those promises have never come to fruition.

That's why we loved last week's story of Simeon and Anna. They knew what God had promised them and they actually saw with their own eyes the fulfillment of what He had promised when they saw the baby Jesus. But for us, what do we do while we wait? What do we do while we're living in the dark years of our lives? We hope in God. We believe in a God Who has better things for us.

Look at Hebrews 6:10-12:

¹⁰ For God is not so unjust as to overlook your work and the love that you showed for his sake in serving the saints, as you still do. ¹¹ And we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness to have the full assurance of hope until the end, ¹² so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

How do we get from God promising us something to seeing its fruition? We are imitators of those who have gone before us, so we very deliberately, consistently and faithfully trust God to fulfill them. Here are three things that help us in this effort:

- We keep serving.
- We keep loving
- We keep going.

I was talking with someone in between services today who said, "When we are idle, that's when we start to complain. But when we're moving and active in our faith, then the complaining is set aside." But what happens when we're serving and loving? When we keep going, but then we get tired? When a year like 2020 comes, what do we do? We begin to doubt.

The writer of Hebrews knew that doubt was present in the people. Look at Hebrews 6:13, where it says, "*...when God made a promise...*" The people knew what God had promised—and we do as well. But in the here and now, we're not seeing those promises come about. So what do we do? I want to remind you that God is at work and He gives us three assurances of that.

Don't lose heart even if it's taking too much time.

First, we must remember God is at work, even when it seems as though He's taking too much time. God made this promise to Abraham. Talk about someone who had to wait! Abraham is a perfect example of that. We know the story. We did a series on his life last year—and what a life it was. God promised him something great, but it took decades for that promise to take place. He was promised that God would make a great nation from him. Then God gave him a son, then his son had sons and they had sons until they produced actually many nations, eventually outnumbering the stars in the sky. When things didn't go as he thought they would, Abraham doubted and took things into his own hands. In spite of Abraham's bad decisions, God was faithful to him. Then in Abraham's greatest trial, when he was asked to put his son Isaac on an altar, Abraham had faith that God had a plan.

When it seems as though God is taking too much time, we too are called to believe. Verse 15 says, *“And thus Abraham, having patiently waited, obtained the promise.”*

So often we miss out on the good things of God because we’re unwilling to wait. We think we have to take things into our own hands. God wants us to patiently wait; something we hate to do and are really bad at. The Bible tells us waiting does three things.

Waiting forces us to relinquish control.

You and I actually control nothing. Waiting reminds us that no matter what we try to do, it won’t bring about what we hope it will.

My boys and I were watching a movie last night—one of those “end of the world” movies. When the asteroid was about to hit the world, one of my sons commented, “Well, at least they’ve got it worse than we do.” So that’s what we do. We watch catastrophic movies just to feel better in 2020.

Here’s what I saw. People were running for their lives in great fear. Why? Because the director knew what the Bible has already taught us—that we are small and frail. We’re little in the grand scheme of things. We control so little of our lives.

This realization should cause us to let go of things, giving up on things we hold to tightly. In 2020, we’ve had to give up on many things we thought were so important to our lives. We had to admit our true lack of control.

Waiting forces refinement.

We see that waiting also forces refinement in the lives of so many of the Old Testament saints. I think of Abraham, who had to wait. I think of Noah, who had to wait. I think of Moses and Joseph. All of these great men had to wait. The nation of Israel had to wait.

One of the great themes in Scripture is that of God’s people waiting. Why? Because holiness takes time in sinful people. God works changes into people little by little, moment by moment, day by day. The Bible tells us God is patient and longsuffering, giving you and me time to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ. As we wait on Him, we renew our strength. We become more Spirit led than we are led by our flesh.

Waiting forces us to rely on Him.

Finally, waiting forces us to rely on God because we have no control and we have to look to the One Who is in complete control. We turn to God, saying, “I can’t change these circumstances, but You can. I can’t save my lost friends, neighbors and coworkers, but You can. So I’m going to pray and share, knowing You have a plan I can trust.”

All of this waiting increases our appreciation for those things we’re waiting for. These better things are worth the wait. Even though we might think God is taking too much time, God says, “I have a plan. Just as I worked in Abraham’s life, so I am working in your life as well.”

Don’t lose heart even if you think God has thrown in the towel.

In the example of Abraham in our text, we’re told that God made an oath. Look at verses 13-17:

“Since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself, saying, “Surely I will bless you and multiply you.’ ...For people swear by something greater than themselves, and in all their disputes an oath is final for confirmation. So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath.”

God told His people, “I have great plans for you. I will watch over you and protect you. I will guide and lead you. I will never forsake you. Even as I have begun a good work in you, I will be faithful to see it to completion. I swear to this on My own name and reputation.”

In Old Testament days, people would make transactions swearing upon themselves. Two farmers would be trading animals, but maybe one animal had not yet been born. The owner would say, “As sure as I live, as sure as I am who I am, when that calf is born, it’s yours.” That was his oath and the other farmer could believe it.

When a person made an oath, there were all kinds of variables. What happened if that person died? What if that person was lying when they made the oath? But when God makes an oath, He doesn't die and He doesn't lie (verse 18). So the sweetener to the deal of what God has promised us are two truths: "I don't change and I don't lie." The first thing—"I don't change"—is important because we live in a time when things do change.

On a trip a couple years ago I was in an uber ride and was talking with the driver. He was of African descent and was talking about his time now in America. I said, "Well, what do you love about America?" He gushed about America. Then I asked, "Is there anything you don't like?" That was kind of an awkward question. I mean, why would you bad-mouth a place you've found so much good in? He said, "I've never been asked that before." I responded, "Well, what can we do better?" He said, "One thing. You guys have elections too often." I thought that was strange. I asked him, "What do you mean by that?" He said, "The world gets afraid when you guys have elections. You're the center of the universe for the world and with each election, you change your minds. One time you're going this way; the next time you're going that way. We never know what the foreign policy of the United States is going to be, because every four years it changes—and that's scary."

Aren't you glad God doesn't change administrations? Aren't you glad God doesn't say, "You know what, people? My policy has changed. I was all about love and joy and mercy. That's done. We've got a new secretary of state who says, 'Kill them all.'" Aren't you glad the One Who promised has this unchangeable character and that His purposes haven't changed? Joy to the world—why? Because the earth has received her King. That's not going to change. We can have joy and peace on this earth because the God Who promised is faithful to see those promises through.

Then He says to us, "If you've been around some swindlers in your life and you're wondering about Me, I don't tell lies. This stuff is going to happen." The author uses Abraham as a reminder to us that even though it takes too long, even though something may seem too difficult for us, even though we want to throw in the towel, nothing is impossible for God. We have hope that God will see His promises fulfilled. We must not allow ourselves to look at our circumstances, but rather look to Christ and what He has promised us.

Don't lose heart even if you are tossed around by trials.

Finally, don't doubt when you're being tossed around by trials. The author finishes this passage by saying in verse 18, "*...we who have fled for refuge...*" That doesn't sound like things are going too well, does it? "We have run for our lives, looking for safety." That's literally what is being said here. But the writer goes on to tell us these promises have been given as a "*strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us.*" Listen, the promises of God are sitting right in front of us. They're here and God tells us to take hold of them. Our problem comes when we're running for our lives, seeking some place of refuge, forgetting about that which is hopeful.

So the question is what can we grab hold of? There are a lot of unknowns. I get it; I'm living where you are. I'm a father of kids whose lives have been changed because of this pandemic. I'm a business person whose business has changed because of this. I'm a pastor and I've seen how God's people have been affected through this. What in the world are we supposed to do, as we turn the page from one bad year, but it doesn't seem like things are going to get any better anytime soon? While the world reaches out and grabs nothing, we can reach out our arms to something real. Look at verse 19: "*We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul...*" There's something for us as Christians to hold on to. It's the anchor that keeps the boat afloat during the storms.

What is this anchor made out of? How heavy is it? Verse 20 tells us the anchor is Jesus Himself. Jesus is our "*anchor of the soul.*" He has gone before us and addresses all our issues. He now serves as our great High Priest forever Who intercedes for us, Who cares for us, Who has made sacrifice for us. He Who accomplished our salvation is now taking care of all the other facets of our lives. The Anchor for our soul is Jesus.

So, my friends, what are you grabbing hold of as the calendar page turns to 2021? Are you putting your hope and trust in your job? Are you putting your hope and trust in a bright tomorrow? Are you putting your hope and trust in what happens in Washington? Are you putting your hope and trust in your will power or ability? Brothers and sisters, all of that will be for naught. We must put our hope and trust in the Anchor that is safe and secure for the soul—Jesus Christ—the greatest of all time. My

encouragement to us as a church is that we would grab hold of that Anchor and not let go of it. When trouble comes, when disease comes our way, when problems come, we are holding fast to the One Who has promised, the One Who never lies and never changes.

Why do we hold on to Him? Because not only will He save us in the present, but He has great promises of things to come for our future. Amen? So let's grab hold of that this week. Let's grab hold of that this year. Let us devote ourselves to the Word of God, reading these promises each and every day. Do not doubt or be quick to give up and give in, as the Hebrews were tempted to do, but to hold fast, running the race marked out before us with perseverance. When we do, brothers and sisters, we will see the better things God has for us. Grab hold of them and trust God every step of the way, then we will by faith make it to the end.

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All Scriptures quoted directly from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

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