

THE MARK CHURCH • BIBLE STUDY

WHEN GOD DOESN'T MAKE SENSE

Trusting God's Character When His Activity is Difficult to Understand!

HEBREWS 6:17–18

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.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.

WHY THIS TEXT, TONIGHT

This has been a tough year for most people. I've noticed something worth naming: when life is going well, we're quick to hand God the glory. He gets extra credit. He gets easy praise. But when things are hard, and we don't understand what He's doing or why He's taking so long to do it, He doesn't get that same credit, the same worship, the same trust. Hebrews 6:17–18 was written for exactly this gap. Tonight's aim: when it looks like God is doing nothing, learn to see that He is actually doing something.

1 THE SETTING

Hebrews 6 is written to weary believers dangerously close to drifting back to what was familiar and comfortable rather than continuing to trust a promise not yet seen. The writer points them to Abraham, who waited decades and received the promise “through faith and patience” (v. 15). Verses 17–18 explain why that promise was so trustworthy in the first place, and why ours is too.

2 THE NATURE OF OUR GOD

“It is impossible for God to lie,” not unlikely, not out of character, impossible. Lying isn't a temptation God resists; it isn't even in the category of things He's capable of, because it would require Him to act against His own nature. His Word doesn't fluctuate with how our situation looks. He is the same God in the waiting room that He is in the delivery room.

- His purposes don't change when the timeline gets long or the outcome gets confusing.
- When we don't understand His methods, we can still trust His nature because it never shifts to match our circumstances.

3 THE NATURE OF MANKIND

Hebrews wouldn't have needed to write this if we were naturally steady people. We are wired to need reassurance. We doubt not because we're wicked, but because we're human: limited information, limited timelines, and limited patience. God knew this about Abraham, and He knows it about us. That's part of the reason the oath exists at all.

4 OUR TENDENCIES IN LIFE'S TOUGHEST MOMENTS

In our hardest seasons, we tend to do a few predictable things, not because we're bad believers, but because we're human beings who need this text read to us again:

- Shrink our view of God down to the size of our current problem.
- Measure His faithfulness by whether our prayer was answered based on our timetable.
- Quietly withhold worship until we get relief because of how we feel.
- Interpret His silence as absence, instead of restraint, patience, or unseen work.

5 THE VISION ADJUSTMENT WE NEED

Natural vision looks at circumstances and draws conclusions about God from what it sees. Revelation looks at God's unchangeable character and draws conclusions about circumstances from what it knows. Most of our spiritual frustration comes from running that equation backwards, starting with our pain and working toward doubting His goodness, instead of starting with His goodness and working through the pain with confidence intact.

Verse 18 pictures this as “fleeing for refuge”, someone in danger running hard toward the one safe place, not casually strolling toward it when they feel like it. Applying this text means we stop waiting for our feelings to settle before we trust, and we run toward His character on purpose, especially while things are still unresolved. Stop reading God through your circumstances. Start reading your circumstances through God.

6 WHY WOULD A GOOD FATHER ADD AN OATH TO AN ALREADY-GOOD PROMISE?

God's word alone was already fully trustworthy. He didn't need to swear on anything to make it truer. So why did He? The text says: “to show more convincingly.” The oath wasn't added for God's benefit; it was added for ours. That is the heart of a good Father: He doesn't just tell the truth and leave us to manage our own doubt. He meets us in our doubt and gives reassurance we didn't even have the right to ask for.

A lesser father says, “I already told you – why do you keep asking?” Our Father instead doubles down on comfort, so that people like us – worn out, waiting, wondering – would have “strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us.”

TONIGHT'S TAKEAWAY

Hebrews 6 doesn't ask us to pretend we understand what God is doing. It asks us to trust who God is while we don't understand what He's doing — because His nature hasn't moved, His promise hasn't expired, and His oath still stands over every one of us who has fled to Him for refuge.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

- Where in your life right now does it feel like God is “doing nothing”? What would it look like to trust His nature there, apart from evidence?
- Which of the four tendencies in Section 4 do you find yourself leaning toward most in hard seasons?
- What is one circumstance you've been reading God through, that you need to start reading through God instead?
- How does knowing God added the oath “for our benefit, not His” change how you receive His reassurance?

Tonight I want us to sit in Hebrews 6:17–18, but before we get to the verses themselves, I want you to know why I picked them. This has been a tough year for me — personally and pastorally — and I've noticed something in myself that I suspect some of you have noticed in yourselves too. When life is going well, we are quick to hand God the glory. We testify. We post the praise report. God gets extra credit. But when things are hard, and we don't understand what He's doing or why He's taking so long to do it, He doesn't get that same credit. He doesn't get the same worship, the same trust, the same benefit of the doubt. And I think that's a gap in our theology worth closing tonight, because the truth is, even when it looks like God is doing nothing, He is actually doing something.

Hebrews 6 is written to people who were tired. They had believed for a long time, they had suffered for their faith, and some of them were dangerously close to giving up and drifting back to what was familiar and comfortable rather than continuing to trust what was promised but not yet seen. The writer doesn't scold them into staying. He reminds them of Abraham — a man who waited decades for a promise to come true, and who received it "through faith and patience." Then, in verses 17 and 18, the writer explains exactly why that promise was so trustworthy in the first place: "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, so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us." That single sentence is loaded with everything we need for a season like the one many of us are in.

Let's start with the nature of our God, because everything else depends on getting this right. The text says it is "impossible for God to lie." Not unlikely. Not out of character. Impossible. Lying isn't a temptation God resists — it's not even in the category of things He's capable of, because it would require Him to act against His own nature. That means God's Word doesn't fluctuate based on how our situation looks. His purposes don't change when the timeline gets long or the outcome gets confusing. He is the same God in the waiting room that He is in the delivery room. When we don't understand His methods, we can still trust His nature, because His nature never shifts to match our circumstances — it stays fixed, and it's that fixedness that holds us.

Now let's be honest about the nature of mankind, because Hebrews wouldn't have needed to write this if we were naturally steady people. We are wired to need reassurance. We doubt not because we're wicked, but because we're human — we live inside limited information, limited timelines, and limited patience. God knew this about Abraham, and He knows it about us. That's actually the reason the oath exists at all, which we'll come back to. But first we need to name our tendencies, because if we don't name them, we'll keep repeating them. In life's toughest moments, we tend to do a few predictable things: we shrink our view of God down to the size of our current problem, we start measuring His faithfulness by whether our prayer got answered on our timetable, we quietly withhold worship until we get relief, and we interpret His silence as absence instead of interpreting it as restraint, patience, or work happening beneath the surface. None of that makes us bad believers. It makes us people who need Hebrews 6 read to us again.

This is where our vision — or better, our revelation — has to be adjusted if we're going to actually apply this text instead of just admiring it. Natural vision looks at circumstances and draws conclusions about God from what it sees. Revelation looks at God's unchangeable character and draws conclusions about circumstances from what it knows. Those are two completely different starting points, and most of our spiritual frustration comes from running the equation backward — starting with our pain and working our way to doubting His goodness, instead of starting with His goodness and working our way through the pain with confidence

intact. Verse 18 calls this "fleeing for refuge" — which is the picture of someone in danger running hard toward the one safe place, not casually strolling toward it whenever they feel like it. Applying this text means we stop waiting for our feelings to calm down before we trust, and instead we run toward His character on purpose, especially while things still feel unresolved. That's the adjustment: stop reading God through your circumstances, and start reading your circumstances through God.

Which brings us to the question I really want us to sit with tonight — why would a good Father add an oath to a promise that was already good? God's word alone was already fully trustworthy. He didn't need to swear on anything to make it more true. So why did He? The text says He did it "to show more convincingly" — meaning the oath wasn't added for God's benefit, it was added for ours. That is the heart of a good Father: He doesn't just tell the truth and leave us to manage our own doubt. He meets us in our doubt and gives us extra reassurance we didn't even have the right to ask for. Think about how a patient parent will sometimes repeat a promise to an anxious child not because the first promise was weak, but because the child is still scared. That is what God is doing here. The oath is evidence of His patience with our weakness, not evidence of any weakness in His word. A lesser father would say, "I already told you, why do you keep asking." Our Father, instead, doubles down on comfort so that people like us — worn out, waiting, wondering — would have, as the text says, "strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us."

So here's where I want to land it with you tonight: this has been a hard year for me, and maybe for some of you too. But Hebrews 6 isn't asking us to pretend we understand what God is doing. It's asking us to trust who God is while we don't understand what He's doing — because His nature hasn't moved, His promise hasn't expired, and His oath still stands over every one of us who has fled to Him for refuge.