

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

Hebrews 6: 13-18

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the bible again. Today, we will continue reading Hebrews chapter 6, verses 13 to 18.

Among the Hebrew believers, some had abandoned the true way and returned to Judaism; the author of the Book of Hebrews spoke harshly to them. Then, he spoke words of comfort and encouragement to those Hebrew believers who held fast to the truth, exhorting them to continue serving diligently and to persevere in faith and patience, so that they would inherit God's promises. Next, from verses 13 to 18, the author cited examples from the Scriptures to prove that God never lies and that His promises will certainly be fulfilled for those who maintain faith and patience.

The author first used Abraham as an example because Abraham was the first Hebrew and the ancestor of all Hebrews. The promise God gave to Abraham had already been fulfilled in the Hebrews, something well known and unquestionable in their history. The author used an example familiar to the Hebrews to encourage them to hold fast to their hope, to patiently wait in faith for God's promises, which He would surely fulfill. Abraham was the ancestor of the Hebrews, and his life events are recorded in great detail in the first book of the Pentateuch, Genesis.

From Genesis chapters 11 to 25, there is abundant information about Abraham. He was the first person to be called by God and the first to follow the calling in faith; he became the father of faith for all who are called. From the events of his life, we can clearly trace the trajectory of faith growth—he is a model for us to learn from and imitate. The author of Hebrews, in a very brief passage, highlighted the essence of the lessons of Abraham's lifelong faith. This is not an easy task, so we must follow the author's arguments in Hebrews and then look back at Abraham's life.

Verses 13-14: “For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, saying, ‘Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you.’”

When God first called Abraham, Abraham responded to God's calling and brought his wife Sarah and his nephew Lot across the Euphrates River to the good land of Canaan; thus began Abraham's journey of faith. During this journey, God repeatedly reaffirmed His promise to Abraham. However, God swore by Himself only once, saying, "Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you."

Therefore, the author is quoting from Genesis 22:16-18: “By Myself I have sworn, says the Lord, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son—blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.” God swearing by Himself to give Abraham a promise happened when Abraham offered up Isaac—this was the pinnacle of Abraham's faith.

God used an oath to confirm His promise—not only would Abraham's descendants multiply, but they would be as numerous as the stars of the sky and the sand of the seashore. Moreover, they would possess the gate of their enemies, and all nations would be blessed through Abraham's offspring. The Bible does not tell us Isaac's exact age at the time, and biblical scholars have different opinions. However, in general, Isaac was likely between 15 and 30 years old. If he were 15, Abraham would have been 115 years old. Abraham entered Canaan at the age of 75, meaning he had walked the path of faith for 40 years. During these 40 years, God repeatedly reaffirmed His promise to Abraham, especially the promise that his descendants would be exceedingly numerous.

When Abraham entered the land at 75, he had no children, so he brought his nephew Lot along, regarding him as his own son. The first promise God gave to Abraham is recorded in Genesis 12:1-3, stating that he would become a great

nation and that all the families of the earth would be blessed through him. Abraham initially thought this promise would be fulfilled through Lot. However, in Genesis 13, Lot separated from Abraham due to the abundance of their possessions and went to dwell in Sodom.

At that moment, God gave Abraham a second promise, recorded in Genesis 13:16, “And I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth; so that if a man could number the dust of the earth, then your descendants also could be numbered.” Although God promised that his descendants would be as numerous as the dust of the earth, Abraham still had no children. At that time, he had a capable servant, Eliezer of Damascus, and he thought that God’s promise might be fulfilled through Eliezer.

As a result, God gave Abraham a third promise, recorded in Genesis 15:4-6: “And behold, the word of the Lord came to him, saying, ‘This one shall not be your heir, but one who will come from your own body shall be your heir.’ Then He brought him outside and said, ‘Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them.’ And He said to him, ‘So shall your descendants be.’ And he believed in the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.” In this passage, God clearly told Abraham that only a son born from his own body could be his heir and promised that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars in the sky. Abraham believed God, and God accounted it to him for righteousness—this is the origin of justification by faith.

Yet, Abraham still had no children. His wife, Sarah, knowing she was barren, came up with an idea—she gave her maidservant Hagar to Abraham, and Hagar bore Ishmael. At that time, Abraham was 86 years old. This act of having a child through Hagar greatly offended God, and as a result, God did not appear to Abraham for 13 years. It was not until Abraham was 99 years old that God appeared to him again and established the covenant of circumcision, requiring Abraham to put away the flesh. This covenant was to be observed by Abraham’s descendants for all generations.

At this time, God gave Abraham a fourth promise, clearly telling him that his heir must come from Sarah. In Genesis 17:19: "Then God said: 'No, Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his descendants after him.'" God explicitly told Abraham that not only would his heir come from Sarah, but his name would be Isaac. The name "Isaac" means "laughter." Why laughter? Because when Abraham first heard this, he could hardly believe it—he fell on his face and laughed. Even Sarah herself did not believe it, as she was past childbearing age. When Sarah overheard it from inside the tent, she laughed to herself.

A year later, when Abraham was 100 years old, what seemed impossible became a reality—Sarah bore Isaac. She joyfully said, "God has made me laugh, and all who hear will laugh with me." In an utterly impossible situation, Abraham and Sarah received a child named "Laughter." Their lives were now filled with joy. This was faith refined through trials—though they had failures, they endured on the path of following the Lord and eventually saw the fulfillment of God's promise, bringing them great joy.

Yet even at this point, the author of Hebrews had not reached the passage he was quoting, nor had Abraham reached the pinnacle of his faith. That moment came when Isaac had grown—at least 15 years old—when God commanded Abraham to offer him as a sacrifice. This was the greatest test of Abraham's faith. But by then, Abraham had matured—he did not hesitate, he did not bargain with God, nor did he question how God's promise would be fulfilled after offering Isaac. That was God's concern, not his. He only needed to act in faith on what God commanded, leaving the rest to God, believing that God would fulfill His promise. How it would be fulfilled was not his concern. It was in this context that God gave Abraham His fifth promise, and this time, He swore by Himself.

Verse 15: "And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise."

"And so" refers to the promise that God swore in His fifth oath. Because Abraham patiently endured for at least 40 years, he finally received the promised offspring,

Isaac. Abraham not only had faith but also learned the lesson of long endurance. Through Isaac, Abraham first experienced the creation of something from nothing—the birth of Isaac from an impossible situation. Later, he experienced resurrection from the dead, as Isaac, who was to be offered on the altar, was given back to him alive through God's provision. Therefore, Paul concluded in Romans 4:17 that Abraham's faith was in "God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did." With faith and long endurance, Abraham obtained the promised Isaac.

Why did God need to swear an oath to promise Abraham that he would have offspring? In fact, God's will was not merely for Abraham to bear Isaac at that time. Rather, in God's eternal purpose, He intended to obtain both an earthly and a heavenly lineage through Abraham, and to bless all nations on earth through his offspring.

Let us examine how this was fulfilled. In God's eternal purpose, the first Hebrew called by God was Abraham. Abraham begot Isaac, Isaac begot Jacob, and Jacob begot twelve sons, who became the twelve tribes of Israel, forming the nation of Israel. They became God's chosen people in the Old Testament. This fulfilled God's promise that Abraham's descendants would be as numerous as the sand on the seashore because they were God's earthly people. However, the Israelites had not yet become a blessing to all nations, for they constantly warred with neighboring nations, and eventually, Israel was destroyed, and God's Old Testament chosen people were taken captive among the Gentiles.

It was not until the New Testament that the offspring of Abraham, from the tribe of Judah and the house of David, the virgin Mary, conceived by the Holy Spirit and gave birth to Jesus, the incarnate Word. Isaac was a type of Jesus, especially in the aspect of death and resurrection. After Jesus rose from the dead, a new creation came into being. All who believe in Jesus Christ became Abraham's offspring by faith. They are the ones whom God promised would be as numerous as the stars in the sky. They became the children of God, His heavenly people. All nations on earth, by believing in Jesus Christ, can receive salvation. In this way, all nations on earth have indeed been blessed through Abraham's offspring.

God's word is established by His command, and whatever He speaks will come to pass. He does not need to swear an oath. However, for the sake of humanity, God humbled Himself to do what He did not need to do, so that people would understand that His promise is unchangeable and will surely be fulfilled. Therefore, God confirmed His promise with an oath. Since God is the greatest, He could not swear by anyone greater than Himself, so He swore by Himself to make it clear that His promise would never fail. Today, God's promise to Abraham—that his descendants would be as numerous as the sand on the seashore—has been fulfilled. The Jewish people are scattered worldwide and have even reestablished the nation of Israel in Canaan. This promise has been fulfilled.

God also promised that Abraham's descendants would be as numerous as the stars in the sky. Today, the gospel of Jesus Christ has spread throughout the world, and Christians have established churches everywhere to worship and praise God. This second promise has also been fulfilled. The nations of the earth have indeed been blessed through Abraham's heavenly descendants, fulfilling God's third promise.

However, today, most Jewish people still do not believe in the salvation of Jesus Christ, and the nation of Israel continues to have conflicts with neighboring countries. The nations of the earth have not yet been blessed through Abraham's earthly descendants. Therefore, this promise has not yet been fulfilled. This will happen when Christ returns, and then all Israel will be saved.

At that time, the prophecy in Zechariah 8:22-23 will be fulfilled: "Yes, many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the Lord. Thus says the Lord of hosts: 'In those days ten men from every language of the nations shall grasp the sleeve of a Jewish man, saying, "Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you."'" Here it is recorded that the nations of the earth will indeed be blessed through the physical descendants of Abraham. At that time, God's promise to Abraham will be completely fulfilled.

Looking at the current state of the world, it may be difficult to believe that such a day will come. Yet God truly understands our weak faith. This is why He confirmed His promise to Abraham with an oath—not only for the sake of the Hebrew

believers but also for the sake of the New Testament believers. May we all have full confidence in God's promises, whether they are heavenly or earthly.

Verse 16: "For men indeed swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is for them an end of all dispute."

When people have disputes and lose the foundation of trust, they must first establish a reliable basis for mediation. Typically, this is done through an oath to affirm the truth. To make an oath effective, people usually swear by someone greater than themselves. The Law of Moses required oaths to be made in God's name. In Exodus 22:10-11, it is stated that if a man gives his livestock to his neighbor for safekeeping and the animal is harmed, dies, or is lost, and there are no witnesses, how should the matter be resolved? The keeper must swear by the Lord, and the owner must accept his oath. Swearing by God was a way to resolve disputes.

Verse 17: "Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath."

God did not need to use an oath to prove that His promise would never fail. Yet He willingly humbled Himself and adopted a human practice—swearing an oath—to show the immutability of His purpose to those who would inherit His promise. In verses 13-15, the author used the example of Abraham: God swore an oath that Abraham's descendants would surely multiply, and that all nations would be blessed through them. In this verse, God extends His oath to all heirs of the promise, proving that His purpose will never change.

Verse 18: "that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie,"

What are these two immutable things? Scholars have different interpretations. Some believe they refer to God's promise and His oath. Others believe they refer

to God's oath to Abraham and His oath to all the heirs of the promise, showing His unchangeable will. Regardless of the interpretation, the author's emphasis remains unchanged: God's promises will surely be fulfilled, and His purpose will never change. In other words, it is impossible for God to lie.

Dear brothers and sisters, do you ever doubt God's word? God truly understands us and, for our sake, confirmed His promise with an oath. Therefore, we should trust in His promise and patiently wait for its fulfillment.

Let us pray together: Lord, thank You for speaking to us! Your word will surely be fulfilled, and Your promises will come to pass. Yet You were willing to humble Yourself and confirm Your promise with an oath. We are the offspring of Abraham by faith, and all nations have already received the blessing of salvation through the gospel of Jesus Christ. But we also believe that when You return, the whole earth will be united, and all nations, even those who do not believe, will bow before Your authority.

Even though the world is still in chaos today, we believe Your promises will surely come to pass. Help us to have patience in faith, knowing that the course of world events is in Your hands. We only need to wait with endurance and we will see Your promises fulfilled. Help us to follow the example of Abraham and walk in his footsteps. We do not need to know how things will happen; we only need to follow Your guidance in faith. Bless our daily lives. We pray in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.