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THE REASON FOR THE FAILURE OF THE JERUSALEM JEWS

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF ACTS
NUMBER 87
HEBREWS 6:11-20

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HEBREWS 6:11-20 "And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end: That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises. For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he sware by himself, Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the vail; Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec."

We are in a study of a few verses in the Book of Hebrews in order for us to understand the conditions which prevailed in Jerusalem at the time of their downfall. This was the conditions which prevailed in Jerusalem at the time of Paul's last visit to Jerusalem. Paul made the greatest mistake of his life to go back to Jerusalem and take a vow in the temple. Paul should have moved west to Italy and Spain, but he had a passionate desire to go back to the Jerusalem Jews. In many places in Scripture we are told that the Jerusalem Jews were not willing to receive witness from Paul. So Paul, in Jerusalem that last time, was out of the geographical will of God. Paul felt he had to go to Jerusalem and help deliver the big offering they had collected for the needy Christians in Jerusalem and Paul felt that the Jews would respond to his message. The offering had been collected in Corinth and Philippi and Thessalonica and now it was to be delivered to the poor saints in Jerusalem and Paul felt that he just had to have a hand in it. But Paul should have been going West instead of East. In spite of all the warnings God gave to Paul, he went on against the warnings. Paul committed a sin in his mental attitude in Jerusalem when he allowed the legalistic Christians to persuade him to take a vow, contrary to grace and the principles on which Christianity is built. This decision threw Paul out of the operational will of God, and this brought discipline from God. Paul almost lost his life in that Jerusalem mob, and had it not been for the help of the soldiers in the Mark Antony barracks who rushed out to save him, he would have been killed. He was sent under guard from Jerusalem to Caesarea and there he stayed in jail for two years, and when he finally got to Rome, he stayed there two years in jail. Since the remainder of the Book of the Acts deals with all these events in the life of Paul and the discipline which came to him, we have made a detour here into Hebrews in order to learn the background of the Jerusalem church at that time. The Jerusalem church members were ignorant of Bible doctrine. For Jewish expediency they continued to go to the Temple and offer animal sacrifices. To offer animal sacrifices after one accepted Christ was to put Christ to an open shame. This was really blasphemy. But these Jerusalem Jews were dull of hearing and they would not trust God and live by faith. In this passage before us we are going to see Abraham used as an illustration to these disobedient Jews in Jerusalem.

HEBREWS 6:11 "And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end" "We desire" is a present, active, indicative and comes from "eip-chumeo" and this is the strongest desire one can have. "That every one of you do show" and the "do show" comes from "endeiknumi" and means to give an outward proof of an inner asset. They were to show on the outside this earnest desire which they had on the inside. These inner resources were to be made clear to others. When you have inner peace and power you need to show it to others

by your speech and actions. So this is a very earnest desire for these legalistic, proud and egotistical Jews in Jerusalem to change their inner life so they could show forth true Christianity to those around them. 1 John 1:8 reminds us that even after we are converted we still have an old sin nature and 1 John 1:10 reminds us that we are going to sin many times after we are converted. But there is no place in the plan of God for human good. God is perfect and his works are perfect, therefore man's work is not good enough. Since Jesus Christ is at the right hand of God and cannot produce any works in his own person, he has given each of us his Spirit and we have made priests in our own right and on this basis we can produce good works, or divine good. So these "dull of hearing" Jerusalem Christians are crucifying the Son of God afresh by not repenting from dead works. These Jerusalem Jews went through the form of worship but there was no reality in what they did. Ritual without reality is meaningless. So when Paul walked into Jerusalem he walked into a hotbed of legalism and Paul fell into their trap and he got out of fellowship. Paul thought that this great Gentile offering would break down the Jewish opposition and he thought he might turn the tide for the Jews. But Paul forgot one thing. It would take more than his power to change Jerusalem for they had already passed the point of no return and Paul should have moved on out to the Gentile world for the task to which he had been assigned by God. Paul took a vow in the Jerusalem Temple which was a great sin for a grace man and he sponsored others who did the same thing. It was almost like asking some Christian to put his trust in some good luck charm. In due time we will study the full meaning of this sinful vow.

So the writer of Hebrews is saying to these Jerusalem Jews that he has an intense desire for them to have inner resources from which they can show forth the qualities of Christian grace.

"To the full assurance of hope" is a prepositional phrase and means to be face to face with a dogmatic attitude of hope. Hope means that we accept the promises at face value and walk out on those promises every day. But these Jerusalem Jews were ignorant of Bible doctrine and therefore, they had nothing on which they could stand. So what is this rather short time we live on this earth compared to the billions of year we are going to live in eternity? If we are well informed about eternity and its blessings we are not going to let anything confuse us during the short time we live on this earth. When you know where you are going and what God has provided for you in eternity, then you can face the present with confidence and hope and assurance. "Hope unto the end" means to the end of your physical life. We are not afraid of moving into death and on into eternity because we know the wonderful things God has prepared for us. We understand the ten essence qualities of God, we know about dying grace, and we understand the resurrection and we know how glorious life with God is going to be. When we know the Word of God concerning these things, then we face death with confidence.

We are going to study about the two immutable things. God made that promise to Abraham, and God's promises are based on who and what he is. His perfect character and perfect righteousness is behind every promise. God always stands behind his promises and will never break them. The reason his promise is immutable is his character is immutable. The Jews always liked to have an oath connected with a promise made to them. An oath is always given in the name of someone greater than the one giving the oath. The Jews liked this idea of an oath, given in the name of someone greater than the one making the promise. This was the custom in those ancient times. But this was a real dilemma for God, for God can't make an oath in the name of anyone greater than he is, for he is the greatest. So when God swore to Abraham he had to swear by himself. "Kata" is a preposition of the norm or standard of himself. There was none greater by whom he could give the oath to Abraham. So the two immutable things are the oath and the character of God which stands behind the oath. Both are perfect and both never change.

HEBREWS 6:12 "That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." This verse says that every promise of God is based on his immutability and his perfect character. The two immutable things are his promise and his oath. He will keep it on the basis of his character.

"That you be not dull of hearing" is an aorist, middle, subjunctive and means it all depends on you whether you hear or not, but it is always a possibility that is before you. A picture of the Jews in Jerusalem at that time was "dull of hearing". Now we have a contrast--"Followers of them through faith and patience". When you have faith it grows into patience. God gave us the Bible and he means for us to live by it, study it every day, saturate our minds with it and keep it before us at all times. "Inherit the promises" really means for us to possess the promises. We put them in our minds, live by them, feed upon them, and build our lives upon them. So here are 7,000 promises given to each one of us and the moment we are saved they all belong to us. The word here is "possess". This requires the faith rest technique. It reminds us of the story of the young German youth who wandered over the world looking for a fortune and then later on learned that he had a fortune back in Germany waiting for him. This is the same story of "Acres of Diamonds" as told by Dr. Conwell. A man in Africa sold his land and went all over the world to discover wealth only later to find that the land he had sold in Africa had on it the greatest diamond mines in the world.

HEBREWS 6:13 "For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself" Here is the illustration. Abraham is a perfect illustration for he is the father of the Jewish race. "When God made a promise" is an aorist, middle, participle and the action of the participle precedes the action of the main verb. "Possessing the promise" is the main verb, and one day the Jews will possess this promise. The promise to which he is referring is the giving of a Son to Abraham and the establishment of the Jewish nation through which Christ would be born. So God took the oath on the basis of himself for there was no one greater by whom he could swear. The oath doesn't mean profanity but it means the making of a promise which he will keep. God swore "kata" and this means by the standard of his own character. In our language we would say it like this--"Abraham, I will give you a son and on the basis of my own honor, I promise I will keep this vow". God no longer makes promises like this, but the Bible, The Written Word is his oath that he will keep this promise. God has written it all down, completed it, and given it to us. The "It is finished" of the cross has become the "It is finished" of his oath and promises. The Bible is the mind of God written down. This is why we call it God's Word--it is his oath. This word cannot be taken from us even though Satan has done his best to destroy it. The Word of God has been under fire more than anything else in the earth, but after 2,000 years of Christian history, we have this perfect Book with a perfect God standing behind it. The Bible is God's oath and promise.

HEBREWS 6:14 "Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee." This is quoted from God's verbal promise to Abraham. God kept the promise and Abraham became God's great champion of faith. The blessing not only came to Abraham but to the whole Jewish race and to the whole world.

HEBREWS 6:15 "And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise." There was no written Bible in Abraham's day, no Canon of Scripture. God made the promise verbally and based on the oath of his own character. Today we have the Canon of Scripture, have it all written down and we can read it and reread it and review it until it becomes a part of our minds. So until we had the Bible written down we had two immutable things--

1. The content of the Word
2. The promise of God to stand behind it

But now we have the promises and vows in written form.

The promises are unchangeable and the God behind the doctrine in the promises is unchangeable. It is impossible for God to welsch on a promise. You remember the song "God never changes though the seas rise up to swallow mountain ranges". And just because we fail it doesn't mean that God withdraws the promises. The Word liveth and abideth forever because the God behind it liveth and abideth forever. Behind the Word you have content. When a history book is written it is no more accurate than the author behind it. No person is stronger than his character and his promise.

HEBREWS 6:16-18 "For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us" "It is impossible for God to lie". This is because of his perfect character. This phrase "We might have a strong consolation" is better translated "We might have a strong inner encouragement". This is a present, active, subjunctive. It means we will always have the Word. And the subjunctive means the potential is before us and we can learn it or refuse to learn it. So we should set aside anything in order to learn the Word of God. Carrying the Bible around and reading long passages every day doesn't mean a thing. But when you study it, and learn the true meaning and hide that meaning in your mind then you are on the road to relaxed, happy and glorious living. "Who have fled for refuge" means the point of salvation. So when you are once saved and begin to take in the Word of God, you are on the way to victory in your Christian life.

HEBREWS 6:19 "Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the vail" We have studied how Christ is the Bishop of the soul, now here we see that he is the anchor of the soul. Storm anchors on their ships served as brakes and kept them from being dashed on the rocks. Here in our passage instead of the anchor going down to grab the bottom of the sea and hold the ship back from the rocks, our anchor goes up and takes hold of him and he holds us in his power. "Sure and stedfast" are two Greek words that mean his word keeps us from turning over and sinking and also gives us stability so we can have a pleasant journey.

HEBREWS 6:20 "Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." Jesus Christ is the pilot of the ship. He pulls us safely into the port. We are entered into union with Christ and we are given the power of the Holy Spirit.