

Anchored to Christ

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Preacher: Colin Campbell

[0 : 00] Our second reading is from Hebrews chapter 6 verses 13 to 20 and that is on page 1004 in the Pew Bible.

! Hebrews chapter 6 verses 13 to 20 page 1004.!

And the heading is the certainty of God's promise. For when God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself, saying, surely I will bless you and multiply you.

And thus Abraham, having patiently waited, obtained the promise. 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.

[1 : 17] 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.

We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul. A hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the honor of Melchizedek.

Amen. And may God bless the reading of his word. Just a very quick word of prayer. Heavenly Father, pray that your word and all that I say would come in the power of the Holy Spirit and that your name would be glorified through Christ our Lord.

Amen. Amen. All of us need encouragement at different times in our life.

And there are many times, and encouragement has to come from something outside of ourselves. If somebody just comes to you and says, look, be encouraged, it's kind of futile unless there's a reason for being encouraged.

[2 : 43] And, you know, the root meaning of the word encourage is to put courage into, to put courage into you. And when you are in need of encouragement, we've all been there, that sense of weakness.

And if it is extreme, perhaps a sense of hopelessness. There was a man called Viktor Frankl. He was a prisoner in Auschwitz. And he wrote a number of books following that, following his experience in Auschwitz and the extremes of the human condition that he saw there.

And there was another, some books I read years ago, and I don't know if it was Sozhanitsyn, but it was someone who'd experienced the Soviet gulags and the punitive measurements and extreme harsh and cruel circumstances they had.

And what both of them said was, in terms of when people would come in who they thought would survive the best or had the best chance of survival in these utterly cruel conditions, were those who lived with hope.

It wasn't those who came in with the best physical condition or the most positive outlook or character or personality. It was those who had a fundamental hope, and that would sustain them.

[4 : 06] And the writer to the Hebrews, if you look at these seven verses, the word hope is mentioned there three times. And the letter to the Hebrews is written to a church that was being persecuted, formerly Jews, converted Jews.

And he is writing to them to encourage them, to give them hope in the midst of persecution when they're tempted to fall away.

And the writer is saying, here is how I want to encourage you, and I want to give you hope to put courage into you. And he does that by three means.

And just interesting, the word encouragement in the Biblical Greek, and I know some of you do Biblical Greek, it is parakaleo, and it's to call to one side. And I just thought the similarity of that and

the Holy Spirit, the paraclete, the advocate, the comforter.

So, to encourage is to come to one side, similar to the Holy Spirit. And so, the writer to the Hebrews, he gives them three reasons in this promise, in this section of the Scripture, to be encouraged and to have hope.

[5 : 19] And like I said, you've got to look outside yourself. We don't find that encouragement or that hope within us. It has to come from without side. So, in this passage, he's saying three main points, the three main reasons for their hope.

He's saying, consider Abraham, consider the unchanging character and purpose of God, and consider where your anchor is.

So, consider the example of Abraham, consider the unchanging nature and character of God, and consider where your anchor is. And if you look at Abraham, all of us have heard of Abraham, possibly throughout the world in terms of biblical characters, probably nobody more well known than Abraham.

And of course, he features in other significant world faiths, but in a slightly different context. And he's seen as the father of the faith, the example of the faith, father Abraham.

And it was to Abraham through whom the promises came, through Isaac. And yet, Abraham, this great man of faith, if we go back prior to him making the sacrifice of his son, Abraham married Sarah.

[6 : 36] And on two occasions, Abraham was prepared to give over his wife to save his own skin.

The great man of faith, father Abraham, correct me if I'm wrong, mentioned more in the New Testament than any other Old Testament character.

Romans 4, all about Abraham and other portions of Scripture, including Hebrews. And yet, this great man of faith, on two occasions, instead of fighting for his wife, instead of protecting his wife, instead of trusting God with the outcome, Abraham said to his wife, Sarah, here's what I want you to do.

I want you to just say you are my sister, say you're my cousin, say you're anything but my wife.

Because if they hear you're my wife, I might get harmed.

They might harm me. That's a mark of astounding cowardice, and I hope all the men think it is. That he was prepared to say, on you go, wife.

[7 : 49] You can be sacrificed, you can be defiled. They can do to you as you please, as they please, but my skin will be saved. And yet, this is the father of the faith.

And what is it showing us? And then we come up to the chapter we read years later, in Genesis 22. Abraham has come so far in his faith that he is now prepared at the command of God to sacrifice the promised son.

No longer is Abraham the disobedient coward. Now he is the supreme example of faith. So Abraham has gone from the cowardly man to the man of great faith.

And how has that happened? God's mercy and God's grace. God was never finished with Abraham. God forgave Abraham the great sin, and God continued to work with Abraham.

And in terms of considering Abraham, what the Word of God is saying to us is, consider Abraham, because child of God, your heavenly Father will never leave you.

[9 : 11] You may have sinned greatly. You may have disobeyed greatly. But God's hand is on you. God is not finished with you. God will fulfill His purpose for you.

His mercy is great. His blood is great. The sacrifice of Christ is great enough to cover all your sins. And in this situation you find yourself.

I want you to consider Abraham and be encouraged. And have hope. Because God uses great sinners. Indeed, God chooses great sinners.

He uses great sinners. It's great sinners who have accomplished anything great in the hands of God. And if you're struggling with sin tonight, if you're lamenting over an old sin, God is not finished with you.

God will forgive you. And God will fulfill His purpose for you. The great father of the faith, Abraham, gave up his wife. And yet, here he is, a model of faith.

[10 : 16] That's the first point. And here is the... I just want to end this point by saying this. The promises of God to Abraham were never determined or reliant on the strength of Abraham's faith.

They were always reliant on God's grace towards them. Always. And it is the same with you and I. The promises of God towards us are never reliant on the strength of our faith.

Because that will fluctuate greatly, to say the least. They are always reliant on God's grace towards us. So, that's the first point.

Consider Abraham and be encouraged. The second point I want to make is consider the unchangeable character and purpose of God.

And in this, in the verses here, if you look at verse 17, he's saying that it's God's desire to show to His people the heirs of the promise, more convincingly, the unchangeable character of His purpose.

[11:27] So, consider this. God's desire. Not only has God made the promise. Not only has God sworn His oath, His desire is to convince us, the heirs of the promise.

We are the heirs of the promise of God. Every child of God, everyone in Christ is an heir of the promise. Just as Abraham was.

Just as David was. Just as Joseph was. Just as Joshua was. Name them all. All the great saints. Heirs of the promise. We are the same. We are heirs of the promise.

And God is saying, I want to show you and convince you my promises and my love toward you are sure. They are steadfast.

They will be fulfilled. And think of God stooping to do that. Desiring. His desire. God's desire is to convince us.

[12:26] That's His desire. To convince you of His promises. And He does it with two things. He says in which it is possible to His promise and His oath.

But when He says that, He said it's the unchangeable character of His purpose. We have a God who does not change. Who never lies.

And it's His promise and His oath. So He made the promise to Abraham. And then He gave that oath back in Genesis chapter 22 that we read from.

The oath He said. And it is. Forgive me. What He says to Abraham after he had obeyed Him.

And He said, I will surely bless you. I will surely multiply you. And your offspring shall possess the gates of His enemies. And Abraham's promise.

[13:31] Sorry. God's promise to Abraham. God's word is always true. God's word is always reliant on. But the oath He made. The oath He followed it through on.

Was God's desire to convince you of the promise which was always true. A wee example. Think of a wee boy. We don't hear it so much now.

Maybe. Maybe. And He's maybe going to jump off a wall in His Father's arms. And He's going to jump. And He's a wee bit scared. And He says, Dad, Dad. Are you going to catch me?

Are you going to catch me? He says, of course I'm going to catch you, son. Of course I'm going to catch you. Why would I not catch you? Father has given His Son a promise. And His Son doesn't doubt it.

But He says, do you swear to God, Dad? Do you swear to God you're going to catch me? He says, of course I swear to God. And He jumps. Okay, it's a weak example. But the Father has given His promise.

[14:28] And the oath is when He swears to God. The promise was always there. The promise was always true. But the Father, desiring to convince His Son, to convince Him as God does that, swears an oath to God.

Saying, yes, I swear to God I will catch you. That's what God is doing. For us, the heirs of the promise, He is saying, I swear by myself. There is nobody greater to swear by than myself.

And so I swear by myself that this promise that is always going to come true, I swear by myself that will come through. I want to convince you. I so want you to know the assurance and the joy and the power of real faith in my word.

And the power of living according to that word. I want to convince you. My promise hasn't changed. The oath is me trying to convince you that this is true.

That my word will be true. And the other thing, when God makes a promise, God doesn't deal in wishes, in good intentions, in possible maybes, in religious well-meaning phrases.

[15:40] God's word is absolutely sure. All hell cannot loosen or bend the promises of God to His people. Nothing can change that.

And what He's saying to them is saying, my purpose for you is unchangeable. Your circumstances will change. Life will change.

But I will not change. And my purpose for you will not change. You're having a good day today. My purpose for you remains the same as the trials you face tomorrow.

Don't look to how you're feeling. Don't look to your circumstances. Look to the promise and the oath and the unchangeable. Character of God and His counsel and His purpose.

Because that never changes. And it is the only thing that never changes. Because everything else around you will change. But God's purpose and promise toward you will not change.

[16:36] Genesis 3. What is the first thing before the fall that Satan did to Eve?

What did he say? What was he trying to cast doubt on? He said, did God really say? Eve, did God really say?

So back to the Garden of Eden. Satan, at the very beginning, what was he doing? Trying to cast doubt on the Word of God. And that is the fight of faith we face every day, is trusting in the Word of God.

And that's why God is desiring to convince us that His Word, His promise, is absolutely sure at all times.

Because that's where our greatest struggles are. It is when we're not trusting in the Word of God. Started in Genesis 3.

[17:34] Did God really say? And Satan comes to us today and he says, Did God really say He would forgive your sins? Yes. Did God really say He's working all things together for good to those who love God?

Did God really say you are adopted as His child? Did God really say there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus? Did God really say, I've lavished my love upon you?

Yes. Yes, He did. But the evil one will come in and seek to cast doubt. So be convinced and be assured. And God's oath today, what is God's oath today?

We look to the cross. For all the promises of God are yes in Him. When His blood was shed, when we have been purchased, the ultimate fulfillment of all the promises of God is found in Christ.

And all God's promises are yes in Him. So be encouraged. And have hope. So that's considering Abraham, considering the unchangeable character and purpose of God.

[18:42] God. And excuse me. The only other thing I want to say about the Word of God is, God cannot lie.

He cannot lie. That's something that cannot be said of any of us in here. We can lie. And there's no question that there are times when we will have in our life.

God cannot. God cannot lie. God cannot lie. So when you look at the promises of God, know that. He cannot lie. Don't doubt the promises of God.

God cannot lie. And my last point is to consider where our anchor is. so he's come on to it and he said so he said consider Abraham when you're considering the promise of God the oath of God, the character of God and the purpose of God this is the hope that anchors the soul he's saying if your hope is not in the unchangeable character and purpose of God then, excuse me your hope is not anchored and all of us are looking for an anchor for the soul sure and steadfast who remembers the BB certain age, maybe not so popular now but the boys brigade people of a certain age, including myself remember the BB and were in the BB and the motto was sure and steadfast and it was an anchor was the badge very cool uniform you used to wear and I found out today actually

I didn't know it but the founder, just as an aside almost the founder of the BB some of you would have known this was a man called William Alexander Smith he was born in Thurshoe and he was a major lieutenant colonel in the army and the first boys brigade meeting was at the Free Church Mission Hall in North Woodside Road in Glasgow in 1883 I didn't know that I just thought that was an interesting little aside but what he wanted to do he started off it with young boys along a military sort of format with his history and he wanted to provide them an anchor for their life he wanted them to be approaching their life that transitional phase from a young boy into man providing an anchor and I cannot remember what he said but in terms of his overall goals it was quite a bit but part of it was about Christ's kingdom he wanted these young men these young boys to be starting off anchored to Christ and that's why the motto was sure and steadfast and as the writer comes with this nautical illustration on having an anchor for the soul you know what he's aiming at there is of course that when we want to have that the greatest times we need the encouragement and the hope is when the storms of our life hit us and these storms can take many many forms in all our lives some of them great storms some of them might just be a wee gale that can blow us off track if we're not fully following Christ and I'm sure many you can apply and think of storms you've been through and who knows what that's the storm loss of a loved one loss of a job marital breakdown loneliness who knows there's many storms in life that pain us that hurt us and what the writer is

saying here is when the soul is anchored it's not that that pain will not still be very real but the soul being anchored will hold you steady in that pain and in that storm some of you know that I work offshore on rigs and we sometimes have to do rig moves so my rig's about 21,000 ton displacement and when we go on rig moves we have three tugs various bollard pools that's the strength of the pool and when we're coming into a platform we have four anchors they're pre-laid anchors we hook up to them and we have three tugs and that's to get us into the final position up against the platform and sometimes you're talking 10 centimetres you know it's amazing what engineers in an office think is realistic out in the North Sea but that's another discussion but we're to try and get that rig in such close proximity to a platform it's remarkable like I say we've got four anchors hooked up to the winches three boats just to get us into position now in terms of the storms obviously we're only allowed to go into position when the weather conditions are appropriate okay so if it's five metre seas and it's blowing 50 to 60 knots we're not going anywhere but the other critical thing so it has to be very calm waters calm seas now the storms are obvious you can see the storms you can feel the storms the storms are obvious but what's not so obvious are the currents you can't see the currents and even when we've got flat calm water with all that assistance from the boats and the anchors even when we've got flat calm water we have to wait watch the tide tables and wait until it's slack water before we move into the final position because the currents

[24 : 33] that you cannot see can do just as much damage as the storms and it's very similar in our life if we're looking away from Christ if we're not anchored we can be drifting without knowing it without realising it until we've got to a certain point where we are in trouble and so when the writer writes about about the anchor about being anchored don't wait for the storms because then it's too late and the currents will have pulled you away always look to Christ always know who your anchor is always trust in the unchangeable character and purpose of God and I said we have to consider where our anchor is he speaks here of Christ our forerunner going into the most holy place ahead of us our anchor is with Christ in the very presence of God now the word for forerunner

I'll stick with the nautical image that it's got here the word for forerunner is prodromos and in Greek shipping at the time they used to have the prodromos was either one of two things it was a little boat that would take the rope for the anchor into the harbour so if it was too strong or the tides the tide was too low for a boat to come into the harbour the prodromos that was the little boat would take the anchor or the end of the rope into the harbour and hook it up to the anchor and wait for either the weather to come down or the tide to rise so the forerunner was connecting the boat to the anchor the other example is sometimes it might actually be a swimmer and he would put the rope around him if it was just tidal and not storm it would actually be a man he would tie the rope to him powerful swimmer he'd swim in as the forerunner as the prodromos going ahead of the boat to hook it up to the anchor and sometimes sometimes the anchor he might actually hook it up to like a winch or a capstan and that would be able to haul the vessel in and okay maybe the text isn't strictly saying this but that's okay because it still applies and what I'm saying is when we are anchored to Christ similar to what I was saying about the

God's promise to Abraham not being relying on the strength of Abraham's faith but on God's grace it's not relying on us holding on to the anchor and hauling ourselves in when we are anchored to Christ Christ always has us and he's hauling us in and he's taking us on and he will never stop doing that and God as a loving heavenly father wants his children to know that that Christ always has you and he will never let go of you and that is what it is to be anchored to Christ Christ has you so be encouraged and have hope God's grace to Abraham was fulfilled God's purpose for you will not change and you are anchored to Christ and he is the same yesterday today and forever and he laid down his life for you why would you doubt him
Amen so that