

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope

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[0 : 0 0] so Hebrews 10 verse 19 you remember the first 18 verses all about what Christ has done for us that once for all sacrifice and then we're starting to talk about implications now verse 19 therefore brothers since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain that is his flesh and since we have a great high priest over the house of God let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith with her heart sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and her bodies washed with pure water let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering for he who promised is faithful and let us consider how to stir one another up to love and good work not neglecting to meet together as is the habit of some but encouraging one another and all the more as you see the day approaching see your kids enjoy your time well good afternoon everyone good to see you all will you pray with me as we come to God's word let's pray yeah father how we need uh your word uh how we need your voice in our life um we know that we don't live on bread alone but we live off every word that comes from your mouth i thank you that you have given us your word and that you um you save us through it you reveal yourself through it you give us hope through it so i pray that you would speak this afternoon i pray that you would uh help all of us to have hearts ready to receive what you have to say uh in Jesus name amen well i don't think it would be an exaggeration to say that as a church family we're going through a time of upheaval in geology terms upheaval is when the earth's crust is radically displaced where there was once solid flat reliable ground all of a sudden there's a hill or a mountain so obviously we've had the the sudden threat and interruption of covid which has just shaken our world everything we thought was reliable has just been shaken there's relational and economic implications of this and the uncertainty of tomorrow it's troubling it's distressing and then it's forced us as a church to split into two congregations with a number of our folk permanently on zoom that added extra distance places we've had to change the way we do things from music to cancelling play group increased need for people to fill in roles just to make Sunday happen it's just it's different it's unsettling it's change it's it's not by choice the covert's kind of forces on us and there's been a change of identity as well it's no longer i go to grace evangelical

only it's also i go to 4 p.m i belong to 4 p.m church or i go to 10 a.m there's a change of identity there and now we are losing one of our leaders as well as the abundant ministry of Joe it's not just their ministries we're losing but we're losing Rob and Joe i don't want to be over dramatic i don't want to catastrophize but i think it is accurate to say that we're going through a time of unexpected upheaval and upheaval is destabilizing it's distressing how do we respond to this distress well i think there's some not helpful responses some are easier to control than others but there's an increase in anxiety because of the situations we're in with all the uncertainty which is understandable this there's reports on the news of so many people turning to religion even hearing Chris's client talk about that when there's uncertainty why don't we go to God and hopefully there is some genuine seeking there but maybe some of it is just if i give God this much attention he has to give me a better life maybe there's that attitude as well i'm not sure i think we can look to our political leaders and blame them for not fixing things or over rely on them too much other ways to deal with distress i think is just to numb the pain wherever you can find comfort whether that's just keep watching Netflix or whether that's more gaming or whatever it is or more destructive things like alcohol or pornography there's an increase in that in our society as well so we can try and numb the pain and then others just try and worry more and gain control of their lives maybe there's a mixture of those kind of responses how do we have better responses in times of distress more constructive responses i think we need one thing which is our theme for this morning hope you've got to have hope i heard this week uh someone in the church some of their hairdresser said that they thought we're nearing the end of covert there's less and less cases uh society's getting back to normal

things are looking up we're nearing the end is that hope it might be how we use the word hope but it's just wishful thinking isn't it of course we want covid we want it to be near the end but we look at news reports of what's happening overseas and it's wishful thinking i hope i get a good night's sleep tonight um i hope unemployment doesn't rise any higher in our country it's uncertain i can't control those things it's wishful thinking i think a more sophisticated form of wishful thinking in our culture at the moment is uh it's a bit popular the idea of uh the power of positive thinking if i think positively the outcomes will be more certain but it's still reliant on you and your abilities when god talks about hope he's talking about ground that cannot be shaken

it's a future that no virus no circumstance no person no one nothing can threaten it's a future that can't experience upheaval god's hope is more solid than the earth's crust that we are sitting and standing on right now it is a certain thing when god talks about hope so let's spend our time focusing on one verse this afternoon hebrews 10 23 let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering for he who promised is faithful so we've heard the past two weeks uh that christ once for all sacrifice our uncleanness inside and out how good was that video this is uh um our uncleanness has been fully atoned for fully washed fully paid for so that we can now enter god's presence without fear but with confidence not confidence in ourselves but fully assured that christ's blood has done it all you can relate to god not in fear of judgment but resting in his arms and knowing god as your father since christ your brother and great priest has fully brought you into god's presence in the heavenly places now that is good news so let us hold fast the confession of our hope why would we move away from that that phrase though the confession of our hope it might seem a bit obscure at first what's actually being said first i want to spend some time looking at what the hope is what is it what is the hope we have hope is by definition future orientated the christian life is fundamentally a posture of looking forward it's leaning forward we haven't arrived yet the best is still to come it is waiting for the full experience of what god has promised us of what christ is purchased for us by his blood one peter talks about our living hope our inheritance that cannot perish spoil or fade kept in heaven for you who are shielded by god's power through faith god's future his promised future of dwelling with us is sure the inheritance is kept safe we are kept safe by his power not our own effort which means sin failure sickness persecution satan nothing can touch it hebrews 12 28 describes the content of our hope in this way the context of this verse in so chapter 12 28 is in light of god's coming judgment that will shake and remove everything that's been corrupted by sin that judgment is coming but here's our hope let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken a kingdom that cannot be shaken and thus let us offer to god acceptable worship with reverence and our hope for our an eternal and eternal rest is another way hebrews describes it living in god's world as he originally meant us to be dwelling face to face with god walking with him in the cool of the day

in the garden resting in his arms the whole world united in joyful worship that is going to be an amazing day an amazing eternity i really like hebrews chapter 6 verse 19 um maybe it will help you clarify what our hope is even more and the security of our hope hebrews 6 19 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 is gone as a forerunner on our behalf having become a high priest forever it's a lovely image we have an anchor for the soul when the storm rages we have an anchor waves are washing over but our soul is anchored it's anchored because our hope has entered into the inner place behind the curtain that's that temple imagery again into god's most immediate presence the most holy place in heaven obviously that's talking about what we looked at last week christ has gone there ahead of us us and because he's gone ahead of us and he's done it all for us we will be there one day fully yes we access god's presence by faith now but we will have that immediate presence with him fully one day so we aren't told to hold fast our hope we're actually told to hold fast to our confession without wavering the hope is sorted by jesus he's got that covered that's not our job to control the hope what we're told to do is hold fast to the confession of our hope confession here is more than just telling someone that we're a christian or sharing the gospel with them although it includes those things confession is an all of life thing everyone is hoping all of the time in things and you show it by what you say and what you do you can't help that we're all hoping so what what are you displaying what are you confessing with your life that your hope is in 1 peter chapter 2 where we're told to be ready to give a reason for the hope that we have that assumes that someone who's going to ask for a reason can see something different in us by the way we live why do you have hope and the context in 1 peter is the same as hebrews the context is hardship hardship is the time when hope is seen most clearly because other things that you could be trusting in have been taken

away how can you be so sure you will live again after being diagnosed with a terminal illness that is out of this world hope to believe that how can you still believe god is good when you've lost the person you love that hope of future being together again that's incredible or remaining calm when being made redundant people people should be able to see it and hardship is the best opportunity to show it that our hope is in heaven it's not it's not here in a sense

so hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering what could make us waver what would what could make us stop identifying with christ or just drawing away from christ and all he is offering us in us in the world by faith in him let me mention just two things one is sin prizing something in this world more than what christ offers us and we just play around with sin and over time our conscience just stops pricking us anymore we used to care and feel guilty or ashamed but we just got so used to it and our conscience gets hardened and we slowly move away from anyone who would challenge us from our christians brothers and sisters that that beautiful accountability and encouragement that we have here John Owen says be killing sin or sin will be killing you i think i think another thing that would make us just shrink back what from what christ offers us is just the relational cost of following jesus at uni or school or in the workplace you just want to shrink from conversations sometimes don't you just want to hide and go oh gee i wish i wasn't a christian right now i feel like i need to say the christian perspective is here or maybe that's just me who feels that sometimes that pressure it would just be so much easier to fit in if you weren't a christian and so we can be tempted to just pull away you why would we act like this as if we didn't have hope these paths only lead to a dead end which is what the next paragraph is about in hebrews to reject to absolutely reject so this isn't wavering isn't just talking about the sin that we all struggle with we need to keep using our access to god that that forgiveness and that power to keep going on in the struggle that is the normal christian walk but this absolute wavering and pulling away from christ is and to treat christ's blood as worthless there's only one thing at the end of that road and that is a fearful expectation of god's judgment why would we live that way why would we go down that road when we have such a great hope hope so that's the negative side what does holding fast look like positively i think we see that in the next paragraph so in verses 32 to 34 the original readers are reminded of their holding fast in the early days of their christian faith have a look at verses 32 to 34 but recall the former days when after you were enlightened you endured a hard struggle with sufferings sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction and sometimes being partners with those so treated for you had compassion on those in prison and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property since you knew that you yourselves had a better

[20 : 29] possession and an abiding one that's incredible holding fast confessing christ as our hope will look like endurance no matter what comes not just endurance but endurance with joy because we know our hope is certain if our hope was in the things of this world when they're taken away we can't have joy but if our hope is bound up with christ waiting for that promised kingdom that can't be shaken then whatever else fails us we can remain firm with joy our hope has entered into heaven behind the curtain we have an anchor for the soul i like to picture like the anchor cord is just like going up to heaven and is kind of attached up in heaven this season of upheaval as a church family is not a time to despair it is one of the best opportunities we have to display that our hope is in christ and it's certain i'm not trying to just hype us all up to rally together and press on i'm not trying to hype us up but i'm saying we can we have an opportunity here to display our hope amidst covid amidst the disruption in our church family as well we can show that the source of our confidence is in christ and not in ourselves here and now how do we know that our hope is not just wishful thinking for he who promised is faithful i think promises can be cheap today can't they like indicating on facebook that you're going to an event we're pretty cheap with what we put on facebook or maybe you just put maybe and not commit sound like a slide do you but anyway that's not in my script um or politicians promising something that they just can't deliver on they don't have the power to it's a cheap promise or as a society we have cheapened the marriage covenant promise i'm saying wider society i think promises can be cheap in our world this is the opposite of god's character we see his character in the history of the old testament in how he relates to sinful people offering them life again and again and again we see it after israel is delivered from egypt in the wilderness they've just seen all his miracles a great salvation from slavery and they're just grumbling did you bring us out here to die are you kidding me you you just got saved and yet god is faithful with them he's patient with them and then the judges period just chaos people did what they wanted what they thought best in their own eyes and yet god was faithful to his promises to abraham and then under the kings so many of the kings led the whole nation astray doing what was

evil in the eyes of the lord and yet god remained faithful even when they went into exile he was sending prophets saying come back i'm faithful to my promise my promise still stands

come and have life in me and where did all those promises lead it led to god's son's blood his body given for us jesus risen seated at the father's side having secured our salvation once and for all all those promises being yes in christ is there greater faithfulness than that our god is a faithful god you won't find anyone like him father son and spirit all our hope is bound up in a person in the character of a person it is bound up in what jesus has already done on the cross and his resurrection our hope is sitting next to the father in heaven that's where our hope is just as we saw last week that our confidence to enter god's presence has nothing to do with our merit but what christ has done so too our hope for the future has nothing to do with our ability to feel hopeful or our ability to maintain the basis of our hope our hope is outside ourselves christ himself and what he accomplished is our hope our hope for the future has already been secured by christ's blood and ascension in the past so we can live out our hope in the present our future hope is secured in the past it's already done so we can live it out so during this season of upheaval we have an anchor for our souls i don't think we should despair i don't think we should fret and try and maintain control as if tomorrow depends on us i think it is a time to grieve as a church family i think it's a time to draw near to god to maintain our joy and i think it's a time to continue to encourage one another's faith as we're going to hear in the next few verses of hebrews next week this time of upheaval is the best opportunity to show that we have hope a certain hope let's not wave up but hold fast our future is sure because he who promised is faithful i'm going to finish by reading the lyrics of um of our next song cornerstone i'm just so glad that the muses chose this song it just fits this word to us today from hebrews so well so let me read these lyrics and then and then muses will will sing it for us i think my hope is built on nothing less than jesus blood and righteousness i dare not trust the sweetest frame but holy trust in jesus name when darkness seems to hide his face i rest on his unchanging grace in every high and stormy gale my anchor holds within the veil when he shall come with trumpet sound oh may i then in him be found dressed in his righteousness alone
faultless we will stand before the throne and thanks also dear you dear