

Hope that anchors the soul

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[0 : 0 0] Our Bible reading today is from Hebrews 5, 11 to 6, 20. About this, we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you've become dull of hearing.

For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God.

You need milk, not solid food. For everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child.

But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.

Therefore, let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, and of instruction about washings, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.

[1 : 2 5] And this we will do if God permits. For it's impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted their heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the goodness of the word of God, and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God, to their own harm, and holding him up to contempt.

For land that has drunk the rain that often falls on it, and produces a crop useful to those for whose sake it is cultivated, receives a blessing from God.

But if it bears thorns and thistles, it's worthless, and near to being cursed, and its end is to be burned.

Though we speak in this way, yet in your case, beloved, we feel sure of better things, things that belong to salvation.

For God is not unjust, so as to overlook your work, and the love that you have shown for his name, in serving the saints, as you still do.

[2 : 5 8] And we desire each one of you, to show the same earnestness, to have the full assurance of hope, until the end, so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those, who through faith and patience, inherit the promises.

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, so that by two unchangeable things, in which it's impossible for God to lie, we, we, who have fled for refuge, might have strong encouragement, to hold fast to the hope, he 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 order of Melchizedek.

[4 : 53] Well, good morning everyone. Will you please pray with me, as we come to God's word.

Lord, I ask that you would, speak to each one of us, and fill us with the wonder, that, we should gain, from Christ's reward.

Lord, Lord, I pray that you would, do what I can't do, and, challenge, those of us who, need to hear, your challenge, and comfort, those of us who, need to hear, your comfort.

And I pray this in Jesus name. Amen. Can I just ask someone, to turn this fan down? I think my notes, are going to go everywhere. Thanks Alex.

Well, if you can have your Bibles open, or your Bible app, or turn notifications off, I would recommend, but, if you can have your Bibles, in front of you, because, I want to point you down, in some texts.

[6 : 00] We're arriving at, one of the, scariest, warnings, in the book of Hebrews, are we not? Of falling away. It's one of the, scariest warnings, in the whole Bible.

Some, take this passage, is clearly saying, you can never be sure, if tomorrow, you're going to wake up a believer. You, you can't be sure.

Others impose, on this passage, other beautiful parts, of scripture, precious, guarantees, that if you're in Christ, you will make it to glory.

And they kind of, pile up the passages, next to Hebrews 6, to kind of just, let's just soften this a bit. they kind of treat, the warning in this passage, as if there's this cliff, and there's this invisible force field, that if, even if you try to go over, you can't.

They treat it as a fake warning. I think this passage, and the warning in here, gets at the, gets at the heart of the question, does God want, his people, to be, assured, of their salvation?

[7 : 15] Does God want that? This passage, is one that, addresses that question. Up until preparing, this week, I think I thought of Hebrews 6, as the falling away chapter.

That just goes to show you, how much, your pastor, still, has to learn. And, this chapter is about hope. Can you believe that?

It's about hope. A sure, and steadfast hope. What I want to do this morning, is I want to, because there's so much fear, around this warning, in this passage, I want to, address that issue, head on.

And, start with my conclusion, and then I want to show you, in the text, why I'm confident of this. And then, I pray that we'll be, in a better position, in a better head space, to hear the real challenge, and the amazing hope, in this passage.

So, let me tell you, my conclusion, in a nutshell, and, this is, by no means, a novel, conclusion. Those who, profess, belief, in Jesus, can fall away.

[8 : 42] Experience, tells us that, doesn't it? Church history, tells us that. And, I think this passage, tells us that. Those who profess, but, those who belong, to Christ, will never, ever, fall away.

Now, I need to say more, to that, don't I? But, I think this is consistent, with why, the apostle John, wrote, one John, some professing Christians, left their church, and they are so, troubled by that fact.

And, here's, his conclusion, in chapter 2, verse 19. They went out from us, and he doesn't say, they went out from us, and now they don't belong, to us anymore. He says, they went out from us, but they were not of us.

If they had been, of us, they would have, continued with us. So, the warning in here, is very real, in verses 4 to 8.

There is such, a spiritual condition, that after experiencing, so much of God's blessings, for the people of God, if that person, abandons the faith, deliberately, not just for superficial pressure, like we see Peter denying Christ, three times, not just superficial pressure, but deliberately, at the level of their heart, over a long period of time, such a person, this passage says, it is impossible, not just difficult, but impossible, for them, to repent again.

[10 : 22] I don't think it's impossible, because God won't accept, their repentance, if they actually repented, it's impossible, because, they will never want, to repent, they're incapable, of repenting, that is scary, that's scary, that's a real warning, perhaps the author, still has that first generation, in Exodus in mind, that we saw in previous weeks, where the spies, they go into the promised land, and they say, it is a good land, they get some of the fruit, and they take it back, and they're like, wow, but their hearts, are still in Egypt, they don't trust his promise, imagine, a lady, who's grown up in the church, let's call her, I'm really hoping, I don't know, anyone called Judith, in this church,

I was just like, testing my brain, let's call her Judith, okay, just to imagine, someone real, with a real name, I'm not thinking, of anyone in particular, okay, Judith was once, enjoying friendships, in church, really close friendships, and she was on the music team, and after a while, her good friends moved, out of church, and then, she started to feel like, she didn't feel appreciated, for all her efforts, in the music team, and then the pastor, just started saying things, that offended her views, and then she just starts, seeing just all the problems, gee, hypocrites in the church, and then she just slowly, moves away from the church, and years, and years, and years later, she just doesn't identify, as a Christian anymore, and her old friends, they reach out to her, in deep concern, pleading with her, for the love of God, literally the love of God, for you, and warning her, but nothing, that kind of person,

Judah thinks, she knows Christianity, from within its walls, but, here's the question, has she known, love for Jesus, for his own sake, it can be, like receiving, an inoculation, to the gospel, you can, you get a dead version, of the virus, and if you receive that, it makes you immune, to the real thing, spiritually, that can happen, you can think, you know the real thing, and someone just gets, deadened, to the gospel, they've heard it all before, it's a scary, scary, spiritual condition, to be in, I'm not saying, you and I, can know, who is in that condition, I'm not sure, based on this passage, you and I can know that, I think it's above our pay grade, we just offer the gospel, only God knows that, I'm just trying to describe, this warning is real, it happens, the hardest description, in here, is, in verse four, that how can you partake, of the Holy Spirit, and not be united, to Jesus, perhaps it's sharing, not in an individual sense, sharing in the Holy Spirit, but you're in the community, of the Holy Spirit, but maybe, but maybe it's even deeper, than that, maybe it is in an individual sense, and the following two phrases, in verse five, explain it, you've tasted, you've shared in the Holy Spirit, in as much as, tasting the goodness, of the word of God, and the powers, of the age to come, that doesn't necessarily mean, that they, that person has, the Holy Spirit, as a seal, of their salvation, it could be like someone, like we saw in Acts eight,

Simon, the Samaritan, to some degree, he believed, he heard the good news, to some degree, he believed, he was even baptized, but at the core, of his person, he still loved, his own name, he still loved power, the gospel, never got, to his core, it's a real warning, but I don't think, the author, thinks his readers, are in this condition, or even close to it, the picture, of two kinds of soil, that we've got, in verses seven and eight, it's not saying, that one field, had fruit, and then it became, thorns and thistles, it's, one bears fruit, and one, never bears fruit, it's only thorns, and thistles, I think it's very similar, to Jesus's parable, the four soils, the gospel, can produce, something, in people, where the second soil, sprouts up, quickly, and the third soil, is choked, by the concerns, of this world, there can be, some superficial change, but it's the fourth soil, who are good, varying degrees of fruit, 30, 60, 100, varying degrees of fruit, but there's real fruit, the author, does not believe, his readers are fruitless, he doesn't believe, they're that land, that are fruitless, look at verse four, it is impossible, in the case of those, who, and then jump to verse nine, though we speak in this way, yet in your case, beloved, beloved, we don't use that word, do we, loved ones, loved ones, in your case, loved ones, not just loved by the author, but loved by God, we are confident, of better things, he's confident, of a genuine faith, in their case, and he gives the reason, for his confidence, in verse 10,

God is not unjust, so as to overlook your work, and that the love, and the love, that you have shown, for his name, in serving the saints, as you still do, these believers, had shown a real love for God, how have they shown that, by serving his saints, and we get a picture, of that in chapter 10, some in the church, early on, were put in prison, and instead of playing it safe, they looked after those, who imprisoned, and they themselves, were at great risk, they lost property, they lost their houses, it was real sacrifice, and they lost it with joy, they knew the hope, set before them, and they loved God's people, even losing this world, with joy, the author remembers that, and he says, I am sure of better things, I see fruit, so why the warning, is that where your mind, has got to, why the warning, if he's so confident, his readers are, fruitful, fruitful, fruitful,

[18 : 33] I don't think it's a fake warning, so why warn, I think it's like Psalm 73, I love Psalm 73, I don't know if you know it, I'm going to say a few of the lines, and maybe that'll remind you, but I think it's, the purpose of the warning here, is like Psalm 73, my feet, had almost stumbled, my steps, had nearly slipped, for I was envious, of the arrogant, when I saw, the prosperity, of the wicked, always at ease, they increase, in riches, until I went, into the sanctuary of God, and then I discerned, their end, truly you set them, in slippery places, you make them fall to ruin, how they are destroyed, in a moment, swept away utterly, by terrors, oh I am continually, with you, you hold my right hand, you guide me, with your counsel, and afterward, you will receive me, to glory,

I think, don't we all need, Psalm 73, because there's times, where we can, look at those, who aren't trusting in Jesus, and we think, that's an attractive path, but look at their end, and it helps us wake up, wake up to that path, it is not a good path, at all, so I think, the author here, is saying, I'm not saying, you're on this path, to destruction, I'm saying, you're attracted to it, consider the end, of that road, that is not a good road, I think, it's like a friend, who's flirting, with someone, who's not their spouse, like, they're not, they're not, committing adultery, they tell you, of their deep feelings, for this other woman, and they think, there is this path, where they can be, friends with this woman, and be faithful to their, they think that, that such a path exists,

I think it's like, saying to your friend, I'm sorry, that path does not exist, you probably wouldn't say, I'm sorry, that path does not exist, look friend, where that path ends, many have walked before you, over that cliff, you will lose more, and more affection, for your spouse, until you despise her, you will, your marriage will implode, the destructive effect, on your children, and your community, and you, I do not want to know, how God, I wouldn't want to be facing God, if you go down that road, thinking about the end of that road, is really loving, before you walk down it, I think it's like that, this warning in here, is like a warning, near the edge of a cliff, very bright, you can't miss it, cliff ahead, jagged rocks at the bottom, death certain, do not go down this path, and God's people, will hear the warning, today if you hear his voice, don't harden your heart, don't harden your heart, don't harden your heart, if you are keenly aware, of your sin, if you're really aware, of your failure, again and again, and you're aware, of the lack, the smallness of your faith, and the inconsistency, of your faith, and, you feel like an imposter, in this room right now, if you feel like that, this warning is not to you, it's not actually for you, remember our passage, last week, that Wilco took us through, we have a, sympathetic high priest, he knows, our temptation, he knows it, he's experienced it, and he says, come, come to my throne of grace, your failure, after failure, after failure, come to me, you'll find mercy, and I'm going to put you back, on your feet again, and again, and again, this warning is not for you, if you think you're a failure, it's not for you, this warning, is if you think you can water down Jesus, play it safe in this world, be in love with this world, and be in love with Jesus, at the same time, this warning is for you, and we all need that warning sometimes, so what are these original hearers, doing, what is their path, they're taking, that they think is so attractive, we'll have a look at the, the end of chapter five,

I'm a child of Gary and Mary, I'm a child of God, hopefully I have dependent, faith in Jesus like a child, those senses of child, I love those senses, but if you called me a child, in any other way, it would not be a compliment, you can probably think of exceptions, but you get my point, the author doesn't think they're apostates, he does think they're being willfully babies, willfully, he pauses in chapter five, verse 10, talking about Jesus as our perfect high priest, until he picks it up again in seven, verse one, he's saying, I can't go on with this, because you don't want to hear it, you don't want to mature, and understand Jesus, as your high priest, they should be, by this point in their Christian walk, they should be teaching others, that Jesus is our perfect high priest, but they're not, they're still on the ABCs, they're in this extended adolescence, it's probably out of fear, if you look at verses six, one and two, when he talks about the elementary doctrines of Christ, these doctrines about repentance, and faith towards God, and ritual washings,

I think they're all things, that their Jewish family and society, would be like, oh yeah, okay, we can accept that, they're sticking to things, that their fellow Jews would accept, would play it safe, but if they embrace Jesus, as their perfect high priest, who's done away, with the old priesthood, you don't need that, those sacrifices anymore, you don't need all that, that's dangerous, that is dangerous, your father could say to you, as long as you keep going on about this Jesus, as high priest business, I don't want to see you in my house, it could, I don't know if that really happened, but it could cost them dearly, I think it's out of fear, let's just water down Jesus, to what our fellow Jews, who crucified Jesus, accept, so that we can play it safe, so our author's main concern, is, to go on to maturity, he doesn't think they're apostates, he thinks they're being willfully children, they're attracted to this path, of playing it safe, water down Jesus, so that you, fit in, just notice at this point, that, moving on from, elementary doctrines of Christ, is not moving on, to some teaching, that's not about Christ, it's some like, second tier, second level, level 30 boss,

[27 : 28] Christian, it's not moving on from Christ, it's, it's what the whole book of Hebrews, is about, it's going deeper, into who Jesus is, maturity, is going deeper, into who he is, and what he's done, it's not moving past that, or maturity, in verse 14 of chapter 5, it's, it's in the daily, confusion, and hardship of life, going, what pleases God, in this situation, how do I live in Christ, and honour him, in this situation, not playing it safe, how do I get by, in this world, in this situation, but, how do I live in Jesus, in this situation, that's maturity, so it's not moving, beyond Jesus, let's be clear about that, so I think the passage, does have a real, challenge to us, I think the challenge is, where are you tempted, to downplay,

Jesus, and just water him down, to what, those around you, find, acceptable, I think that's the challenge, because, at that point, we will be, willfully remaining, children, and, someone who stays, on that path, that's a dangerous path, so, he scares, his readers, to snap out, of the illusion, that they can, simply just, play it safe, and water Jesus down, but, the warning, isn't the main thing, the author wants to say, fearing, the fate, of those, who fall away, that can wake you up, but, it won't, fear won't produce maturity, the main thing, the author wants to get to, is to show, his readers, how sure, and steadfast, their hope is, hope, hope, that will produce maturity, that will give us, perspective, and courage, and, knowing we're safe, to go deeper, into Jesus, and stand out, for him, imitate those, who through faith, and patience, inherit the promises,

God's given us, in this church, people who are ahead of us, we can imitate their faith, he's given us, people in church history, and, we can imitate their faith, I can't, I can't wait, to get to chapter 11, and the great cloud, of witnesses, and, imitate, faith, and patience, and who better, than Abraham, he goes to Abraham, the man of faith, the pioneer, of saving faith, life, is hard, trials, are dreadfully, dreadfully painful, and so, was the case, for Abraham, the section here, is quoting, from just after Abraham, offers up Isaac, I'm not sure, I can think, of a trial, more costly, than that, it's easy, to imagine, a God, who, doesn't care, whether we feel, assured of our salvation, or not, maybe he just wants, to keep us on our toes, keep us a bit unsure, so that we'll be obedient, but as another pastor, said about this passage,

I've got a God, who spends most of his energy, helping me know, my future is secure, that's the kind of God, painted here, God promised Abraham, I will bless you, God can't lie, it's not in his nature, to lie, all you need, is his promise, if you trust in Christ, all God's promises, are yours, I will bless you, all we need, is his promise, but our God, adds an oath, to his promise, to Abraham, him, there's a game, we play with Sam, at home, that can range, from silly, to really sweet, we take turns, saying, I love you more, than all the snot, in the world, I love you more, than all the baby chinos, in the world,

I love you more, than all the cheese, I love you more, all the money, in the world, I love you more, than all the poor patrol, in the world, God's promise, it's enough, it's enough, for us to know, we'll make it, but our God, it's as if he's searched, in heaven, on earth, and go, what's the most, valuable thing, I can assure my people, by myself, I have sworn, unless I stop, being God, I swear, I will bless you, he, he, he tells us, verse 17, because God, desired to show, more convincingly, to the heirs, of the promise, the unchangeable, character, of his purpose, and so, he guaranteed it, with an oath, he wants us, the heirs, of his promises, who look to Jesus, as our hope, to know, the unchanging character, of his purpose, this world, is not something, worth, playing it safe, watering down,

[33 : 49] Jesus for, it is heading, it is heading, for the cliff, over a waterfall, it is like a garment, that's going to be rolled up, and gone, it's, it's something, we should flee, for refuge from, and to delight, in the fact, that, we are heirs, of the world to come, so how do we hold fast, to this hope, how do we hold fast, if God wants us, to know our hope, how do we hold, scripture can use, this word hope, in different ways, as we do today, still, my hope, is that, I'm sorry, for all the, sport metaphors, okay, but my hope, is that Liverpool, win the Champions League, okay, that's the goal, that's the objective, that they win, my hope, is in,

Mohammed Salah, to keep scoring, he's the means, of achieving that hope, internally, I can feel, hopeful, or, not so hopeful, internally, subjectively, so there's the objective hope, there's the means, of that hope, and there's the feeling, of whether you feel hopeful, the author, is trying to, motivate us, in our subjective feelings, he is, that we might have, strong, mighty encouragement, but the way, you produce that, is not by looking inside, going, am I feeling hopeful, if you do that, every time I do that, let me speak personally, is, I don't know, yes, sometimes it's, you look internally, and you spiral down, I don't feel hopeful, sometimes, I don't feel as hopeful, as I ought to, the hope spoken of here, isn't, feelings, the hope spoken of here, is our objective hope, we are going to be brought, to glory, we're going to be, in that eternal city, whose architect, and builder, is God, we're going to, have a kingdom, that can't be shaken, a new heavens, and new earth, a new earth, a world of pure love, that's, that's, that's the hope, what's the means, it's nothing inside of me, it points us, to God's promise,

I've promised, and I've sworn with an oath, look at, your forerunner, look at your high priest, your hope, as Catherine talked about, in the kids talk, is, it's not inside you, it's up in heaven, it's not about you, it's, it's in heaven itself, it's like an anchor, for your soul, and it's up, in the holy of holies, he's using, that temple metaphor, behind the curtain, where only the high priest, could go, where the, ark of the covenant is, the new covenant, in Jesus blood, our high priest is there, he's in heaven, it's like our anchor, is tied, to something immovable, not you, I move all the time, our anchor, is tied, to the throne of God, because that's where Jesus is, that's where he's seated, isn't that encouraging, Hebrews 6, is about hope, and how anchored, how anchored we are,

Jesus is a forerunner, he's in glory, he's not just done it, for his own sake, he's representing us, he's done it on our behalf, if he's glorified, everyone with him, will be glorified, and Hebrews tells us, he's the one working in us, to make sure that rope, is tied to the other end, the end of the book, especially highlights this, I could go to other places, but the author ends on this note, chapter 13, 20 and 21, God is the one doing the heart work, inside of us, he didn't tie up the anchor, in heaven, and then just leave it up to us, for the other end, he's the one, doing the work inside of us, now may the God of peace, who brought again from the dead, our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, be by the blood, of the eternal covenant, equip you, with everything good, that you may do his will, working in us, that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever, and ever,

Amen. Our God wants, he uses most of his energy, to tell us, our hope is sure, no trial, no temptation, no one can move us, fear can wake us up, when we're attracted, to this path, of watering down Jesus, fear can go, hey, wake up, but, let's know our hope, hope, that is sure, and steadfast, that will make us, press on, to maturity, will you pray with me, let's pray, Father, we praise you, that our security, isn't left to us, otherwise, our feet would slip, and we would fall, thank you that, it's all up to Jesus, and that, our soul is anchored, in heaven, no one can touch it, we can't stuff it up,

[40 : 39] Lord, I beg you again, to, reassure, those of us, who are feeling hopeless, to fix their eyes, on Jesus, knowing where their hope is, and, I ask for those, who are attracted, to a path, that, is deadly, Lord, I pray that, you would wake, wake us up, in Jesus name, Amen.