

# The Embodiment of our Hope

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- [ 0 : 0 0 ]     Now as God enables us, let us again turn to the portion of scripture we've read together. In the epistle to the Hebrews, chapter 6, and we may read again from verse 17. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show 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 steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil. Whether the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek. Now the epistle to the Hebrews, it seems clear, was written to Hebrew Christians.
- [ 1 : 2 6 ]     That is, people who had had their background a religious activity based upon the Old Testament ceremonies. They had been well aware and had been involved in bringing sacrifices up to the temple. And they would have witnessed the priests offering the sacrifices at the altar and so on. All these tangible aspects of the Jews, they were very well aware of and had seen it for long enough. But when the gospel came to them, and the power of the gospel dealt with them, they received the gospel message. They received the gospel, and you only have to go through the book of Acts to see the way the Lord was blessing the preaching of the gospel.
- [ 2 : 3 5 ]     Even from the day of Pentecost onwards, the way the power of God was present, to change the hearts and the direction of people's lives, so that they turned their back upon their previous lifestyles and embraced the gospel. But we see in this particular chapter, chapter 4, sorry, chapter 6 and verse 4, it speaks about some who were once enlightened and tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the power of the world to come. If they shall fall away, it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance. In other words, he is talking about people who may have had some involvement with the gospel, nevertheless they didn't continue to follow Jesus Christ by faith. One of the commentaries on the book of Hebrews, it's got this title, the epistle of warning. It's a warning to people who may have had some involvement with the gospel at one particular time in their life, but who nevertheless did not continue to follow the Lord Jesus Christ. And some of the people to whom this epistle is written were in that category. They were, as it were, ready to turn back from a wholehearted faith following of Jesus Christ, ready to turn back to what they once knew by way of religious observance, and religious activity at the temple, and so on.

[ 4 : 53 ] The temple had not yet been destroyed, so this epistle was written before the year AD 70, when the Romans came and destroyed the temple. And this was written before that time, and people still had an anchoring after the temple worship.

But there are warnings here. And the warning is that it is impossible, it says here, to renew them to repentance, who may have had some involvement with the gospel, but who had turned back from following it.

Now, before I go on, I have three or four points I want to make later on in the chapter. But I was thinking yesterday about this, and I think that the parable of the sower, in the gospel of Matthew, and Mark, and Luke, it says I've put some light on what we have here, from verse 4 in chapter 6 in Hebrews and following.

He's talking about some people who were like shallow ground into which the seed fell, and the seed immediately sprang up, but when the sun shone upon it, when persecution came, the seed withered and died.

That was a picture of the way the gospel influences some people, although they respond in some measure, they really don't bear any fruit.

[ 6 : 28 ] And then it goes on to talk about the seed that falls among the thorns. And of course, the seed begins to grow, but the thorns choke it.

The cares of this world and things of that nature, the love of money, it's as if these things dominate the thinking of those who have had some contact with the gospel and some influence from the gospel message.

Nevertheless, they don't bear fruit because other things take over in their lives. And I think the writing of Luke at chapter 8, when he talks about this situation with the seed falling into various kinds of ground, he says, the reason that some brought forth fruit rather than others is that they brought forth fruit with patience.

This is Luke chapter 8 and verse 15. They brought forth fruit with patience. They were committed.

They were totally giving themselves to the gospel which they had heard and which they had embraced. And this is what it says in Hebrews 10 at verse 36.

[ 7 : 55 ] The same word is used. It says, You have need of patience. After that ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.

You have need of commitment. You have need of being fully committed to a steadfast following of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And one more reference. In Hebrews chapter 12, after telling them about the number of people in chapter 11 who lived their lives by faith, then he says in chapter 12 at the beginning, wherefore seeing we also are compassed but with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us and let us run with patience, with commitment, with endurance, the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.

So he sets that before them by way of warning, to be serious in their following of the Lord Jesus Christ and to have that steadfast commitment to Jesus as the one who is alone able to save them from their sins.

And he acknowledges then going on in chapter 6 and at verse 10, he says, God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love which you have showed toward his name in that you have ministered to the saints and do minister.

[ 9 : 45 ] And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end. He acknowledges that these people, at least some of them to whom he's writing, that they have shown in their life previous to this a commitment to the Lord and a labour of love in the work of the gospel.

And of course we are asked also to engage in like manner in our own day and generation to labour in the gospel loving one another.

It was said of the saints in the first century and the Bible says it of them, Behold how they love one another. How they love one another.

They think of each other. They serve each other. They live thinking and praying about their friends and others around about them.

That is the kind of picture we have of the early church loving one another and giving themselves to the gospel in love to the Lord and to one another.

[ 11 : 03 ] But then coming to the verses toward the end of this chapter which are the verses really that I've been thinking about for two or three days and they are very theologically deep verses and I've tried to just highlight four things try and simplify if I can and I'm sure I'm not able to simplify what is so gloriously deep before us.

First of all I'd like to say one or two words from verse 18 talking about the people to whom he is addressing these words. in the middle of verse 18 we read 18 from the beginning 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.

He's talking about people who have fled for refuge. That's the way he names the Christians whom he is addressing in this particular chapter.

There are people who have fled for refuge. That's the first thing. And secondly there are people who have had a hope set before them.

This is still verse 18. A people who have had a hope set before them. And thirdly he's talking about the anchor of the soul which is sure and steadfast.

[ 12 : 41 ] This hope we have as an anchor of the soul both sure and steadfast. And then finally a word on verse 20 the forerunner who is Jesus.

The forerunner has entered for us even Jesus made a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

One or two thoughts on each of these four headings. First of all he describes these people as those who have fled for refuge.

Remember I said at the beginning that these people had been nurtured and had been involved with the religion of the Jews the ceremonies of the temple.

But a time came in their life when they fled away from that situation and they fled as those who had been faced with particular dangers because it was taught them by the Holy Spirit that there was no fulfillment in the actual ceremonies of the Old Testament as they were in themselves.

[ 14 : 11 ] That they were only representative of Jesus Christ the great Savior of his people. and when the Lord dealt with these people they realized that they were in danger.

This is what happens invariably when the Lord is dealing with a soul in a saving way. But when the word of God in the hand of the Spirit comes that the people are convinced of their sin and their misery.

They are convinced that the law of God is condemning them. They are convinced that the justice of God would be just in destroying them because they are sinners before God and they are sinners against the glory of his law and they realize that there is no place in which they can stand and be safe where they are in their present situation and they need to flee from that awareness of lostness from their lost condition they need to flee to a place of safety.

Maybe you remember when this was your own experience at the beginning of your Christian life when you realized that you were not safe where you were for time and for eternity when you felt the eye of God upon you and that eye was accusing you that eye was showing you who you were and where you were and where you ought to be and then it says here that these people that they fled for refuge now in the Old Testament scriptures we have a number of references to cities of refuge that God commanded to be built people who had accidentally or not premeditatedly killed somebody and they were given this provision to flee to a particular city that was nearest to them and there remain safe from the pursuer of justice until such time as the high priest who had been alive at the time passed away and then they were free they were free it was a city of refuge and people availed themselves of the safety of that city of refuge repeatedly down through the Old

Testament scripture and I think this is something that is said before us here that the people to whom the Lord is writing this epistle they have fled for refuge they have been found out as it were by God's justice and God's holy eye and convinced and convicted them of their sin and they need to have a place where they can be free from the just deserts of their sin they have fled for refuge and we see that there are a number of references in the Old Testament of people who talk about the security that is there in God himself he is the only refuge of the sinner even

[ 18 : 26 ] God in Christ a man shall find a hiding place from the wind and as a cupboard from the tempest as rubbish of water in a dry place and the shadow of a great rock in a weary land and these people found themselves in a weary land in a tiresome land in a land of conviction and it says that he fled for refuge and then secondly he talks about that there is a hope set before them refuge to lay hold upon a hope set before us one of the commentators says as God is the author of our salvation so

Christ is the embodiment of our hope Christ himself as God is the author of our salvation Christ is the embodiment of our hope he himself is our hope he's not particularly talking here about the grace of hope he's talking about the object of our hope and he says that Christ himself is that hope set before us now when you talk about our hope it's not a forlorn hope that the gospel brings before us it is a most certain hope because Christ is the mediator between God and man and the eternal covenant of redemption and the covenant of grace is

God's ordering for the plight of sinners and he is the one who has from all eternity appointed Christ to be mediator and in his offices as mediator he is prophet and priest and king and these people who are being taught by the spirit they needed to be taught the way of salvation that the way of salvation was not through the old testament rituals but the way of salvation was in the mediator Jesus Christ the one promised in the scriptures even from the very beginning of the scriptures in Genesis chapter 3 and we see that also the Lord Jesus Christ that he is the one who came into the world taking human nature to himself and taking the sins of

God's people upon himself isn't it marvellous the short text that John the Baptist preached on only a few words behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world a fairly short text regarding words but oh the depth of it and this is what we have set before us in the scriptures the hope the fact that Jesus Christ is the one who came into the world as the sin bearer as the one who came to satisfy divine justice and reconcile God's people to himself and it says here that we have fled for refuge to lay hold upon hope set before us hope set before us is not a vain or false hope because it says here that

God has more abundantly shown to the heirs of promise the immutability of his countess verse 17 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 God has promised salvation to those who believe and then he says to Abraham blessing I will bless you and multiplying I will multiply you in other words God takes an oath upon himself the veracity of God is the basis of our hope and our consolation that God is the author of our salvation and that Jesus Christ is the focus upon which our faith and hope must rest he is our prophet able to teach us he is our priest having given himself up as a sacrifice his blood he has carried as it were into the holy of holies just as the high priest would do on the day of atonement in the old testament symbolizing what

[ 24 : 23 ] Christ was going to do with his own blood taking it into the presence of God and God being satisfied with all that Christ has done he is our righteousness he is the one upon whom we lean so that we might be justified that our sins might be forgiven and that our iniquities might be cleansed Isaiah says let us reason together saith the Lord though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow though they be like crimson they shall be as white as snow that is not that is not an untrue promise that God is giving he is giving all these promises by way of giving strong consolation to those who have fled to

Christ and received him and rested upon him alone for salvation because God has guaranteed that the work of Christ is trustworthy and those who trust in him will never be put to shame and then thirdly which hope it says at the beginning of verse 19 we have as an anchor of the soul both sure and steadfast an anchor of the soul it's as if he is bringing before us the situation that a sailor or a fisherman might experience in bad or stormy weather he'll need to cast his anchor to make sure that his vessel does not crash and be broken upon the rocks and so it is with

Christ Jesus if we continue to trust in him and lean upon him and look to him and serve him and love him he will prove to be an anchor of our soul in the storms of life don't know what storms you may be having even this evening there are various kinds of storms maybe storms in our family storms within your very own soul storms in relation to physical or mental illness problems in society there could be various kinds of storms at that level and then of course there is the storm of temptation that the devil so frequently tries and surround us with hope but when we hope in Jesus Christ he will prove that the anchor that he is will never move an anchor of the soul both sure and steadfast these two words are together sure meaning it cannot fail and steadfast meaning it is stable people people who trust in

Jesus they will find that he will never ever let them down never ever let them down which hope says we have we have as an anchor of the soul both sure and steadfast and which entereth into that within the veil isn't it amazing that our hope that our faith enters within the veil in heaven because that is where Jesus is the embodiment of our hope the embodiment of all that is through regarding our salvation that is where he is and that is where our desire is that is where our focus is little wonder the apostle says let your affections be set on the things that are above not on the things that are on the earth the things that are above are the things that really matter and it was a lesson to these people here to whom the apostle is writing that they needed to turn their back upon the things that were diverting their attention and turning them away from the reality of who

Christ was and the glory that was his and to enter more more and more into the area within the veil where Christ is at the right hand of God and what is Christ doing at the right hand of God well it says that he is presenting himself in the presence of God for us for the Christian he is dealing as it were on our behalf with God he is making continual intercession for the people of God what an amazing thought that is he knows your temptations he knows the storms of your life he knows the uphill struggle that you have he knows every detail about you and it says here we have strong consolation we are encouraged if we have fled to

[ 30 : 23 ] Christ to lay hold upon him because we have him as an anchor of the soul both sure and steadfast which entereth into that within the veil and then it says one word about the forerunner verse 20 whether the forerunner is for us entered even Jesus made a high priest forever after the order of Melchisedec he has gone ahead of us the forerunner the one who opened the way the way was closed sin closed the way between ourselves and our God there is a mountain by our sins and iniquities there is a mountain of provocation between us and God and but the forerunner came just like the forerunners would evidently come in the olden days and run ahead of the shooting party if they were shooting grouse or shooting deer and they would make sure that the party would have a reasonably walkable place where they could walk so that they could shoot the grouse or shoot the animals they used to have a forerunner a person who would go ahead of the shooting party and so it is with

Jesus in a much more glorious way that he has come and he has opened the way for us he has taken out of the way every impediment and everything that was blocking our way into God's favor and he has dealt with everything that stood in our way and he has taken in his own experience the punishment due to us for our sin and the forerunner for us has entered even Jesus he has gone in ahead of us into heaven and when he has gone into heaven the prayer that he uttered in John 17 is still being answered Father I will he said that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where

I am that they may behold my glory he has gone in ahead of us to prepare a place for us and the place that he has prepared for us he is preparing us for the place he has prepared a place by his saving work upon the cross and he is now by his Holy Spirit preparing us to fit into the place that he has prepared for us somebody once said I'm not sure have I told this here before but just a thing that I heard once and it stayed with me in relation to the people of God when they go to heaven that they will not be unexpected and they will not be unknown have you ever gone into a place and nobody knows you a place that you feel so uncomfortable because you feel nobody knows you and you don't seem to fit in well that's not the way heaven is going to be for the people of

God you will not be unexpected there and you will not be unknown because the Lord has gone ahead and he has prepared a place for you and it's as if the place is so personally prepared it's as if your name was on it your name is on it so these four points then I know there's much more in these verses than I was able to take out of them in these few minutes together but we see that these people who are true Christians they have fled for refuge to lay hold upon a hope set before them and that hope is Christ and he is the anchor of our soul both sure and steadfast and which enters in within the veil where

Christ the forerunner is for us entered even Jesus made a high priest forever after the order of Melchisedec pray that the Lord will bless these thoughts to us let us pray help us Lord this evening to take to heart what the scripture says to us and may we be deeply rooted in the glories of the teaching of your word we may not be like those in the parable of the sower who only momentarily had an effect or the gospel had only an effect momentarily upon them like the seed growing on the rocky ground or the seed growing temporarily among the thorns but we pray Lord that we may continue walking the way of holiness and obedience and always looking unto

[ 36 : 46 ] Jesus who is the author and finisher of our faith bless the congregation here we pray each individual here each family represented young and old alike we thank you that you are able to do great things among this congregation as well as in other places and we ask that you would open many hearts to receive the glorious gospel message and that many lives will be dedicated to you in this community go before us now we pray and cleanse our sins in Jesus name amen we'll conclude our worship at this time singing from Psalm 31 and verse 21 Psalm 31 verse 21 all praise and thanks be to the Lord for he has magnified his wondrous love to me within a city fortified from thine eyes cut off I am I in my haste said my voice yet heard thou when to thee with cries my moan I may to the end of the Psalm Psalm 31 verse 21 all praise and thanks be to the Lord after they say how do

For he had moved to life, his wondrous love to live with him, As he did all good life. For  
from thine eyes from all I am, I am my head of the truth, my voice yet that's not where to  
be, With Christ my Lord I am.

For from thine Lord I am. Because the Lord the power of faith for love, He then can see  
how to the shanty world.

The old good Catholic shall be stern, And to be heard shall sing, And to be heard shall be  
heard.

And to be heard shall be heard. Now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, The love of  
God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, Rest upon and abide with you all,  
now and forevermore.

[ 40 : 45 ]    Amen. Amen.