

An Anchor of the Soul

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 10 August 2014

Preacher: Rev Kenneth I Macleod

[0 : 00] Let's turn for a little to the chapter we read in Hebrews, Hebrews chapter 6, and reading at verse 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 has gone.

We've said it often enough before, but when somebody promises you something or promises me something, our hope of that promise being fulfilled rests very much on the reliability or the faithfulness of the person who has promised.

Because sometimes we can make a promise and we say to somebody, well I'm going to do this and we forget all about it. We say to somebody, I'm definitely going to do this and circumstances change so that what we promised to do and we had every intention of doing, we can no longer do.

So that's often what happens in life. But that is never ever true of God because whatever God promises, he will be absolutely faithful to that promise.

The promise of God is guaranteed. And that's something that this chapter along with, or this section is highlighting and it's in keeping with so much of the word of God.

[1 : 38] Now, we know that some of God's promises are conditional. In other words, there's a condition attached to it.

For instance, God says to us, you will find me, but the condition attached to is that we must seek him.

That's what we would term as a conditional promise. There's a condition attached so that the finding of God is dependent upon our seeking. Seek, he says, and you will find.

In order for the door to be opened, the word of God says, knock and it will be opened. That's what we would term a conditional promise. And there are loads of conditional promises in the word.

But there are also what we would term loads of unconditional promises, which do not put any condition upon ourselves.

[2 : 38] It is where God makes a promise to us, not based upon who we are or what we are. For instance, he says to his people, I will never leave you.

I will never forsake you. And that promise is not based upon our reliability or our ability to refrain even from sinning.

It is based upon his absolute faithfulness. God doesn't waver in that promise. God knows everything about us when he made that promise.

And he's going to remain faithful and true to it right into death itself. That he will never leave nor forsake. That doesn't mean that nothing bad will happen to us in life.

It doesn't mean that we won't have troubles. It doesn't mean that we won't die. But it means exactly what it says. That he will never leave us nor forsake us.

[3 : 44] And in an amazing way, not only will he never leave our soul, but he will never even leave our body in death. Because we are told how it's beautifully put within our catechism, the souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness and immediately pass into glory.

And their bodies being still united to Christ to rest in the grave for the resurrection. It's quite an extraordinary thing. Where the Lord is still in an amazing way.

There is an attachment even to the dust. Very dust is precious. And will be raised again as a body. So there is this. When the Lord makes a promise like that, it is not based upon ourselves.

It is based upon him and his complete faithfulness to us. And God is giving examples here of, for instance, to Abraham, how the Lord made promises to Abraham.

And he made this promise, this oath upon himself. And it was based upon his faithfulness. There were times that Abraham, great and wonderful man, and although he was a real pioneer of faith, there were times that Abraham's faith wobbled and there were times that Abraham sinned.

[5 : 00] That didn't alter in any way God's ultimate purpose or alter God's love of Abraham in any way. You know, sometimes when we sin, when we fall, when we aren't what we should be, we sometimes say, oh, that's it.

God's going to change his purposes for me. That's me. I've ruined everything. And the amazing thing is, no, we haven't. God's not going to alter Kosh because we've sinned.

Because God knows everything about us. When God made that promise to us, he knew every aspect of our life. He knows all about our life. There are no surprises.

God doesn't say of us, oh, well, I never saw that side to his character. God never says, I never knew that this is the sort of thing she would do.

Never. Nothing ever takes the Lord by surprise. He knows the end from the beginning. And he is the one who has made that promise and has committed himself to us.

[6 : 09] So that's what we're finding here. And the Bible tells us here, as we see, that there are two things that God cannot do. At one level we say God can do everything.

Well, the Bible shows us that there are two things that God cannot do. One is, he cannot change. He's unchangeable in his being. That means that he doesn't all of a sudden change his mind according to how things are going.

Although there are references, sometimes when the Bible will try and help us to understand God's dealings, it's almost as if he does. But when we take the totality of Scripture together, it makes it very clear to us that the purposes of God are fixed.

And that God doesn't alter his purpose. He doesn't change his mind. And so God is unchangeable in his being. If anybody was to argue in any way about where God was to change, the only place that you could ever say.

But it wasn't a change in the sense of that this was something that he hadn't planned or purpose. It was when the second person of the Godhead took human nature. If ever you were to say there was a change, it would be in that.

[7 : 29] Because we find the Son of God taking to himself what he never had before. But he has this human nature forevermore now. The two natures in one person, which of course is another, is a huge mystery.

But God doesn't change in his being, in his thinking, in his purposes. And he cannot lie. That's the other thing he says. That God, he cannot lie.

He cannot tell a lie. He is truth. Jesus was truth and is truth personified. I am the way, the truth, and the life. And so we've always got to remember that when we are listening to and trying to understand the being of God.

And so we find here that the Lord, who cannot lie, who cannot deceive, is the one who has given us this great hope.

So we're told here that, at verse 18, 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 that is set before us.

[8 : 41] Now hope, of course, it's a beautiful word. It's a beautiful concept, to have hope. You know, we use the expression, we often use it when, say, somebody is very ill.

We might say, well, where there's life, there's hope. And that is so true. There's always this, when there's life, you're still hoping that things might turn for the better.

But what is true naturally is even more true spiritually. When there is life in the soul, there is hope.

One of the things that was born into your heart the day that Jesus came into your life is hope.

And it's not the kind of hope that we have in the world where we say, well, I hope next year to do this or that. I hope later on, when we talk about our plans or our intentions, I hope to go here or I hope to go there.

I hope to do this. I hope to do that. And we intend to do that, but we might not be able to do it because things might come in the way. Our hopes are often dashed. Often we have hopes and say, oh, I hope that one day, I hope one day I will meet such and such a person.

[9 : 59] I hope one day to go to such and such a country. I hope one day to get such and such a job. I hope one day to be such and such a person. Our life is full of these kind of hopes.

But these hopes aren't based on anything. There is no real foundation to the hope. Because as I say, everything can change.

But the hope of the Christian is different. We have our living hope. It's alive. And the foundation of this hope is Jesus.

Our hope is in him. Which means that the Christian hope is a hope that is not only alive and living, but it is guaranteed.

And what do we hope for? Well, everything that is told is in the word of God. That is the right and that is the privilege and that is the future of the believer. Remember, today you might be saying to yourself, you know, I really, really want to become a better Christian.

[11:06] That is my hope. That's, well, that's your hope. That's a living hope. There's nothing the Lord wants more for you than that you will become a better Christian.

But you might be saying, ah, but you know what I'm really hoping for? What I'm really looking forward to is when I get to heaven. That is a real hope. It is real. It is burning within your heart.

There's persuasion, this knowledge. And in fact, Christian hope, you could say that there are two things about Christian hope. There is expectation and there is enjoyment.

There is expectation when you, say, for instance, with regard to many of the things that you have in Jesus Christ, in the hope that you have.

There is expectation that it's even going to be better than your thinking is showing to you.

[12:05] And that is going to be so true, particularly with regard to heaven. It's going to surpass anything that we even began to imagine.

Because although we have been given life, spiritual life, yet we're still grounded by the here and the now, and there's so much that we cannot.

So we're saying we're not in that 3D dimension. We're not in the 3D lifestyle yet. But we're given glimpses. We know how it's going to be or we have an idea how it's going to be, but it's going to far surpass anything.

So there's an expectation in Christian hope. But there's also an enjoyment here and now. Because God gives us his peace in that hope and contentment in that hope so that we're ready to wait.

Waiting goes side and side with hope, side by side with hope. I waited for the Lord. So many of the Psalms talk about this waiting and this hoping. Psalm 130, for instance, is full of Christian hope and Christian waiting.

[13:18] Waiting for the fulfillment of what we're hoping for. And so the Christian is somebody who has this living hope.

And we're told here that we hold strong and courage to hold fast to the hope that is set before us. And then we're told we have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul.

A hope that enters into the inn and so on. And so one of the wonderful things here is that we see that here we have this hope.

And it talks here that a Christian is somebody who holds fast. Gripping with a really strong hold.

That's really how you are as a Christian. You're holding. You're holding on to Christ. But here's the wonderful thing. He first is the one who got hold of you.

[14:16] And that's one of the things that before you become a Christian, and I'll be quite honest to you, that was one of the things that really mixed me up. Because I just couldn't get it.

And I would hear people saying, Ah, you've just got to believe and to trust in the Lord. And then I was told, Well, but it's the Lord who saves you. And I would ask the Lord to save me, but it wasn't happening.

And I couldn't reach out. And sometimes you get frustrated. Sometimes you give up. And you feel, ah, what's happening here? But you know, when you come to faith, and my friend, if you're seeking the Lord, be persuaded of this.

You seek with the Lord with all your heart. You'll find. You might not find today. I hope you do. I pray you do. But you might not. But you will find. The Lord, that's one of His promises. Seek me, and you will find me.

He says that. But when you come to faith, that's what you realize. Is that it's actually the Lord who got hold of me.

[15:19] It's the Lord who actually drew me. And it's not until you've actually come to faith, into the kingdom, that it all becomes clear. As we were saying, the blurring moves.

It goes from blurred vision to clear vision. And you would say to yourself, ah, how could I not have seen this? It's so obvious.

It's so evident. It's so clear. But that's how it is theologically. That's how it is through. That the Lord got hold of us.

And He has gripped us. And while we're gripping on to Him, it is His grip that is actually holding us. Yes, we are working out our salvation with fear and trembling.

But it is Him who is working in us, both to will and to do of His good pleasure. It's a wonderful coming together of God's purposes and our life working together.

[16:22] And so we're told that this Christian hope is, it's like an anchor. It's like an anchor, sure and steadfast. And that anchor is Jesus. And when an anchor is doing its work on a ship, do you know the thing about the anchor is you can't see it.

If the anchor is lying on the deck, then the anchor is not doing its work. If a boat in a storm draws into a harbor and is planning to let down the anchor and the crews say, ah, such a beautiful anchor, I actually feel better if I can see that anchor right now.

I want to see that anchor there. But you say to them, it's no point having the anchor there. You've got to let it down. It's only when it goes down and takes over, that's when it's doing its work. And so it is with Jesus.

He is the one who has gone in to the veil. He is the one who has gone behind the curtain. He is the one who is doing the work for us. And you know, so often we get a wee bit upset about it and say, ah, you know, I'm a Christian and all that, but I'm just not seeing.

I need to see better. But what we're doing is we're seeing by faith. We're not seeing by sight. One day we'll see by sight. That's part of the wonder that lies ahead.

[17:42] Right now we're seeing by faith. We're persuaded of what Jesus is doing. That he is there as this firm and sure anchor.

He is doing the work. Means when it says that he's a sure anchor, it means that it doesn't slip. Sometimes you hear of a boat that it slipped its anchor.

And I'm sure that in the history of shipping there have been many tragedies because of a boat slipping its anchor or being taken away from its moorings or whatever.

But that will never happen with a Christian. It is sure and steadfast. It cannot be surer. It cannot be more steadfast than this.

This is a great and wonderful thing. And so we find in this that Jesus, who is the one who has gone in for us behind, that's what it says, we have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain.

[18:48] Now, of course, when we read Hebrews, we've always got to keep the Old Testament, an idea of the Old Testament beside us. Because this epistle has been written with so much of the Old Testament, the whole tabernacle system and the sacrificial system and all that was happening, it's a backdrop to it.

And when we think of the curtain and going in behind the curtain, we're thinking there of the high priest and the great day of atonement, going in behind the curtain, before the mercy seat, sprinkling the blood.

And here atonement is being made for sin. And that's what Jesus has done for us. This is where everything is fixed and fastened and sure.

Today are you resting in the finished work of Jesus. Nobody else but the high priest in those days was allowed in behind that curtain. He alone was able to go in and make atonement for the people of God.

Remember, there was a whole sacrifice and everything that was involved before. And it's the same with Jesus. He is the one alone who has done this. And so here is a chain that will never break, that is all the way from heaven to earth.

[20:16] And you are held by that chain. And you say to yourself, ah, you know, I'm sure as a Christian there are times you wonder what will happen to you. And you say, you know, my faith is so slim, they're so weak.

I sometimes wonder, is there any faith here at all? And I'm sure that all the Christians in here at one time or another have feared that you will make shipwreck.

That one day you're going to go under. That before you reach the desired haven that you're going to crash on the rocks. And you say to yourself, you know, I'm scared I won't make it.

My friend, that chain won't break. As the Apostle Paul said, as he looked at every possibility, he said, I am persuaded that neither life nor death nor things present nor things to come nor height nor

depth nor any other creature is able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. That is the anchor. That is the chain. That's how we're held. Nothing is able to sever it or to break it in any shape or form. It's no wonder the old writer said, I shall not be moved.

[21 : 31] It's not that he rested in himself. But he was resting in the one who couldn't move. You see, we move.

We're everything that God isn't in a sense. And yet the amazing thing is God in Christ is making us like himself. We are unreliable.

We're unpredictable. We're changeable. All the things that he isn't. And that's why we fear. But if our hope is in him, then our hope is in one who is altogether reliable, who is altogether unchangeable, who is completely predictable.

And so it makes a world of difference. So our hope is all tied into Christ and tied into the resurrection of Christ.

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.

[22 : 41] That's where Jesus has gone. That's a beauty. We've said this so often, but this is what distinguishes the Christian faith from all the others. Where is Mohammed?

Where is Joseph Smith? Where are all the founders, you would say, of many of the great or big religions in this world? They're in a grave somewhere.

Their bodies. Where is the body of the head of the Christian faith? In glory. The angel said, look. Look where he lay. This is the place the Lord lay. He's not here, for he has risen. And that's where he has gone. He has gone as a forerunner. He has gone ahead.

As he says, I have gone to prepare a place for you. He's gone as a forerunner with regard to preparation and occupation.

[23 : 41] In preparation he has gone, and that's what he did on the cross and in the resurrection, prepared a place for us. It's a place of occupation because he's going to come and take us to be with himself.

Is there any better news? Is there any better hope that the world could hear of today? No. This is the great news that Jesus is a forerunner.

A forerunner was somebody in the old days who ran ahead and would break the news, who went ahead telling what was happening. That's what Jesus has done. Not only telling us the good news, but he himself preparing the way.

The anchor of hope. As we close today, where is your hope in this world based? Here's the question you have to ask yourself and be honest.

Don't hide away from it. Don't fudge the question. Don't say, I'll think about that later. Right now, where is your hope for life and for death, for eternity, for everything based?

[24 : 52] Is it on yourself and in yourself or is it in Jesus Christ? If it's in yourself alone, you're like the person who built their house in the sand.

And remember what happened. When the storms came, it collapsed. But if you build upon the rock that is Christ, it doesn't matter what storm that comes, and it might be few, it'll stand.

And make sure Jesus is your hope today. Let us pray. O Lord, our God, we give thanks for the great news of the gospel, for the great encouragement, for the great hope that is set before us.

And we pray that we may know what this anchor in Jesus, the sure and steadfast anchor that we have, the hope that is in Jesus Christ. May that hope as a living hope work in our life in a way where we will be able to experience the encouragement and the enjoyment of that hope in Jesus Christ.

We pray to bless us all, and we pray to part us with your blessing. We pray to bless us as we meet for a cup of tea afterwards and watch over us, and we give thanks for the privileges that we enjoy.

[26 : 12] Take us all home in safety, we pray. In Jesus' name we ask all. Amen. Our concluding psalm is Psalm 107 from the Scottish Psalter. Psalm 107 from the Scottish Psalter and the Tunis Loch Broom.

We're going to sing from verse 26 through to verse 31. Psalm 107 from verse 26.

And you'll find that on page 384. Psalm 107 They mount to heaven, then to the depths they do go down again. Their soul doth faint and melt away with trouble and with pain.

They reel and stagger like one drunk at their woods' end they be. Then they to God in troubled cry, who them from strates doth free. The storm is changed into a calm at his command and will, so that the waves which raged before now quiet are and still.

Then are they glad, because addressed and quiet now they be. So to the haven he then brings which they desire to see. Psalm 107 verses 26 to 31 the Tunis Loch Broom.

[27 : 24] They mount to heaven. Amen. Amen. Amen. Chance Giants It will JR.

ethan protein in the misty fire Petition in the battle in Portugal after I ■a on drum X list of their imprec declaring Ere fire plant in micro■ launches fore B could whereas die there in troubled high who then prostrates that be.

The storm is changed into a calm at his command and will so that the waves which reached before now quiet are still then are they glad because at rest and quiet now they be.

So do the name and heal and wings which they desire to see.

O that strength to the Lord who give grace for his goodness then and for his works of wonder come unto the sounds of him now may the grace mercy and peace of God the Father Son and Holy Spirit rest and abide upon each one of you now and forever more amen