

An Anchor of the Soul • Hebrews 6:19-20

I. INTRODUCTION

A. *Trying Times*

1. Thomas Paine, whose thoughts and writing helped fuel the fire of America's War of Independence from British tyranny, began his classic work, *The American Crisis* with these words . . .
These are the times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of their country; but he that stands it now, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman.
2. America faces a new crisis, when the freedom from *political* tyranny, so dearly bought in that first conflict, is now threatened by a *religious* tyranny.
3. The cause of liberty has been renewed *throughout* our history when hundreds of thousands of our brave young men and women have stood in *foreign* fields and fought on ships to repel the evil of tyrants and those who would extinguish Lady Liberty's torch.
4. The roots of the tree of freedom are watered by the blood of those who hold freedom dearer than life and will stand in opposition to those who would crush freedom under the heel of tyranny.

B. *Today*

1. Our nation is now embroiled in a conflict that will more than likely see the deaths of more of our brave & loyal citizens.
2. As the President so eloquently expressed this last Thursday evening – this is a war between liberty and evil.
3. Our text this morning gives us a word of hope and reminds us that no matter what part each of us may be called to play in these trying times – *our* souls can be at rest in Christ.

II. TEXT

A. *Vs. 19-20*

- 19 This *hope* we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the *Presence* behind**

the veil,

20 where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

1. These verses flow out of what comes before them.
2. The *hope* he speaks of in v. 19 is explained in vs. 13-18

B. The Promise To Abraham

1. What we find in these verses recounts an age-old story that actually explains what is taking place in our world *today*.
2. God appeared to Abraham while he was living in Mesopotamia and told him to pack up and move west to Canaan.
3. For some reason, Abraham only moved about half the way there then stopped.
4. He stayed put till his father died, then packed up and moved again – but he was now 75 years old!
5. God had made Abraham an amazing promise -
 - a. He told Abraham that He was going to give him a land,
 - b. and so many descendants he couldn't number them.
 - c. these descendants would become the nation from which God would bring the Messiah, who would end sin's evil tyranny over the human race.
6. Once Abraham was finally in the land, God repeatedly renewed that promise, adding a bit more detail to it each time.
7. Finally, as Abraham was getting on in years and still childless, a bit discouraged that a son had not been born to he and his wife Sarah, God came to him and told him to look up at the night sky and count the stars.
 - a. then God told him that his descendants would be as numerous as those stars
 - b. and would possess the land he stood in.
 - c. in that moment, Abraham's last lingering doubts departed and he believed God completely.
 - d. we read that God, based on Abraham's faith in His promise, counted Abraham as righteous!
8. Yet more time passed, and still Sarah remained barren.
9. It was then that a bit of doubt returned, and Abraham and Sarah,

- thinking maybe God needed some help, devised a plan to get a son – they would use a *surrogate*.
10. So Hagar, Sarah's Egyptian maid was brought in and conceived a son whom Abraham named *Ishmael*.
 11. But this was not what God intended. He meant for Sarah, Abraham's *wife* to bear a son.
 12. The son who would fulfill the promise of God needed *himself* to be a *miracle*, so God was waiting for both Abraham and Sarah to get to the age where it would be *impossible* for them to bear children in their own strength.
 - a. Sarah was already there, but Abraham had a while to go, as was proven by the birth of Ishmael.
 - b. finally, when Abraham was 100 and well past the age of being able to father children, Sarah conceived and gave birth to *Isaac*.
 - c. and that's when the trouble began – trouble which has continued to this day.
 13. For you see, there was immediate envy and enmity on Ishmael's part toward his half-brother Isaac.
 14. Ishmael was no longer the center of Abraham's affection; he knew he would lose out on his inheritance as the firstborn because his mother wasn't his father's wife.
 15. When Abraham realized there was actual *danger* in allowing Hagar and Ishmael to continue in the house he sent them away.
 16. That son Ishmael, became the father of some of the tribes that came to populate the Saudi Arabians peninsula – today we call them *Arabs*.
 17. Isaac, of course, grew up to become the father of the *Jews*.
 18. And the age old contest between Ishmael and Isaac for the inheritance of Abraham continues to this day in the conflict between Islam and Judaism.
 19. Friends, make no mistake, the recent terrorist attacks on our nation are due in large part to our support of Israel.
 20. Our historic reputation as being a Christian nation and our support of Israel inflames the hatred of radical Muslims.
 21. We'll be taking look at this in our study on Wednesday evening.
 22. For now, let's return to what the writer of Hebrews says here –
 23. God promised to fulfill His promises through Isaac!
 24. In fact, God took an oath and swore by His own name that He

would fulfill His promise to Abraham to give him the land of Canaan and make his descendants into a mighty nation.

C. The Oath

1. The writer of Hebrews highlights the fact that God *took an oath* to fulfill His promise.
2. When we enter a court to give testimony as a witness, we take an oath by saying, “So help me God.”
 - a. the appeal to God is supposed to *affirm* our truthfulness
 - b. we are calling God to bear witness to our testimony
 - c. and if we lie, then we will have to answer to Him!
3. But if God wants to affirm His determination to keep *His* promise, who can *He* swear by?
4. Yet still, in His desire to show Abraham the *absolute guarantee* of His intention to fulfill His promise, He took an oath.
5. The writer of Hebrews says that since it’s impossible for God to lie,
 - a. first His *promise*,
 - b. then second, His *oath* to fulfill the promise -
 - c. drove any last little bit of doubt out of Abraham’s mind as to whether or not God could or *would* give him descendants that would constitute an entire nation, which would possess the land of Canaan and through whom the Messiah would come who would release the human race from bondage to sin and death.
6. This confidence in God resulted in a *hope* in Abraham that was as good as actually seeing the real thing.
7. The writer of Hebrews wants his readers to see that as the descendants of Abraham, they’re *a part of* that promise.
 - a. as His *physical* descendants they are the *fulfillment of the promise*
 - b. and because of their faith in Jesus as the Messiah, they’re the *spiritual* descendants of the faith of Abraham
 - c. the very same *hope* Abraham had is now theirs because they share the same *faith* he had.
8. Look at vs. 17 & 18 . . .

17 Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability [unchanging nature] of His counsel, confirmed *it* by an oath,

18 that by two immutable [unchanging] things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us.

9. That hope is the hope that was originally given to Abraham – that from his descendants would come the Savior.
 - a. a Savior who would free mankind –
 - b. from the tyranny of fear, sin and death.

D. Strong Consolation

1. Before we move on to consider vs. 19 & 20, I want to pause and take a closer look at two words in v. 18.
2. The writer says because God *cannot* lie and has made us a stupendous promise of salvation, we can have – **strong consolation.**
3. How you & I need some strong consolation this morning.
4. Millions of people across our nation are grieving.
 - a. I've read numerous reports this week from other pastors about the general state of depression that has settled over their congregations.
 - b. counselors and therapists are swamped with calls for appointments with people who are grief-stricken and can't understand why because they didn't personally lose anyone in the attacks
 - c. in talking with many of you, there's a wide-spread sense of mourning and loss.
5. I hope and want this morning's message to be a word of consolation, *strong* consolation.
6. Some translations render this as "great encouragement."
7. Many years ago on one of my first Sierra trips, I was hiking with a couple other friends.
 - a. I'd left work late Friday night and driven all the way to the trail head to start hiking early Saturday morning
 - b. needless to say, I didn't get much sleep on the drive and was exhausted as we started the hike
 - c. about 8 miles later, I was in back, making my way up a set of switchbacks to the summit of a pass at about 11,000 ft.
 - d. I was so tired I actually fell asleep while hiking.

- e. the things we do when we're young and stupid!
 - f. my two friends made it to the top long before I, and it got to the point where I was so tired that each step seemed like a major effort.
 - g. a hundred feet or so from the top, where the switchback ran right under the summit, one of my friends leaned over and yelled down to me and said,
 - h. "Wait till you see the view from up here! The lakes and trees in the next valley are incredible!"
 - i. hearing the voice of my friend just above me gave me an idea of how close I was to the end, and the vision he was able to instill in me of what I was soon to enjoy, was the dose of energy I needed to propel my feet those last yards to the top.
8. That is what the author is doing here.
- a. he's encouraging men and women who were tired and beat up by persecution
 - b. he's reminding them of their destiny
 - c. the trail isn't then end – it's the means for getting somewhere
 - d. and that somewhere is heaven!
9. In Christ we've fled from the wrath of God and found hope;
- a. a confident hope that He whose begun a good work in us will complete it
 - b. the hope of a heavenly Homecoming where Jesus is our Homecoming King and we are His Queen.
10. That hope is set before us now – a sure thing because it is based in the promise of God who cannot lie.

E. The Anchor

1. So he says . . .

19 This *hope* we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the *Presence* behind the veil,

20 where the forerunner has entered for us, *even* Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

- 2. What an incredible picture he paints here.
- 3. A ship's anchor is only really secure if it *catches* on something.

- a. any significant weight dropped over the side will secure a ship in *restful* water
- b. but when the waves come and the seas rise, that anchor has to be fixed to something secure or the ship will slip it's anchor and drift away.
4. The picture the writer paints here is that Jesus Christ has taken our anchor, entered heaven and tied it to round the legs of the throne of God.
5. The image he uses is one they would have easily understood but which may be lost on us.
6. Once a year, and *only* once a year, the Jewish high priest would pass through the curtain and enter of the Holy of holies in the temple and stand before the ark of the covenant where the glory cloud of God's presence was manifest.
 - a. he would then carefully sprinkle on the top of the ark, the blood of a goat that had been sacrificed on behalf of the sins of the entire nation
 - b. once he had performed this humble and simple service, he would carefully back out of the Lord's presence, passing once more through the veil that separated that sacred place from the rest of the temple.
7. Jesus is *our* high priest who's entered the *heavenly* holy place that the temple was merely an *earthly copy* of.
 - a. and when He entered the heavenly sanctuary, He brought, not the blood of a goat, but His *own* blood.
 - b. this He offered before the Father as the *final* sacrifice for sins.
 - c. and instead of leaving, He sat down at the right hand of the Father – His work forever complete -
 - d. and our hope ever secure because He now ever lives to make intercession for us.
8. No matter what storms may come, because we are firmly anchored to God we are safe and need not worry about being shipwrecked.
9. Indeed, just as a storm-tossed ship with a firm anchor always points in the direction of it's anchorage, it's the storms of life that *reveal* what we truly put out hope in.
10. When the storms of trial come, it's the unique opportunity of God's people to point to Him as the only real and lasting hope.

III. CONCLUSION

A. Hope

1. It's been said that man can live for about 40 days without *food*
 - a. 4 days without *water*
 - b. 3 minutes without *air*
 - c. but he can't live for one second without *hope*
2. Victor Frankl, one of the survivors of the Holocaust, wrote a book on his reflections of having lived through that atrocity.
 - a. he said that the common trait of those who managed to survive the terror of Hitler's death camps was a sense of *hope*
 - b. those who despaired and gave up hope ended up wasting away.
3. Some years ago the psychology department of Duke University ran a rather cruel experiment.
 - a. though I don't applaud what they did, the results were interesting
 - b. they decided to see how long rats could swim.
 - c. in one container filled with water they placed a bunch of rats.
 - d. they swam a several minutes then drowned.
 - e. in the other container, also filled with water they placed several rats and let them swim until it was clear they were tiring, then they lifted them out and dried them off.
 - f. as soon as the rats were dry, they again put them in the water tank, again rescuing them before they drowned.
 - g. the third time they put the rats into the water, they swam for over an hour!
 - h. the prospect of rescue had fired them with a resolve to keep swimming
4. We usually say, "As long as there's life, there's hope."
5. But really, as long as there's hope, there's life.

B. Our Anchor

1. You & I have a hope, a real substantial hope today because Jesus rose from the dead and now sits at the right hand of the Father.
2. His resurrection is the sure guarantee of ours!
3. God kept His promise to Abraham –
 - a. gave Him and His descendants the land of Israel,
 - b. and has preserved their nation to this day despite all the odds

- c. and finally, He brought forth the Messiah, Who has broken sin's dominion and set man free from death.
- 4. Yes, God kept His promise to Abraham – and the good news is that God will keep His promise to all those who like Abraham look in faith, to Him.

C. The Battle

- 1. But make no mistake - the forces of darkness that originally enslaved man and tried to thwart the promises of God to Abraham are still at work trying their best to rob *us* of our hope.
- 2. The lesson for us to learn this morning is that in a time of great trial and stress, when men and women are confused and can't see a way out – it's the followers of Christ who have an *unconquerable hope*.
- 3. When everything seems to be shaking loose, when buildings and industries crash to the ground – the Christian stands on solid ground.

My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and
righteousness.

I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus name.
On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand.

When darkness hides His lovely face, I rest on His unchanging
grace

In every high and stormy gale, my anchor holds within the veil.

His Oath, His covenant, His blood – Support me in overwhelming
flood

When all around my soul gives way – He then is all my hope and
stay.

On *Christ* the solid rock I stand, all *other* ground is sinking sand.

- 4. This is a time of *unprecedented opportunity* for the Church because people are being shaken.
 - a. things they've invested in, counted on and lived for
 - b. are proving unstable and fragile
- 5. We, the *People of Hope*, must hold forth that hope *now*, boldly and without hesitation.