

12. Understanding Why Our Hope Is Like an Anchor

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain to others why salvation accompanies true belief. However, we also saw that the desire of the Lord is that each one who believes will grow to spiritual maturity. In an earlier topic, we saw that Melchizedek was introduced to help us understand how Christ serves as our Great High Priest. In the next several topics, we are going to learn important lessons to help our children understand how Melchizedek teaches us many lessons about the ministry of Christ.

In Hebrews 6:13-15, we read, “For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, saying, ‘Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you.’ And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.” Many of the Jewish Christians had grown up learning the laws that were given to Moses in the wilderness. This is illustrated when Paul came back and reported to the leaders of the church in Jerusalem what God was doing among the Gentiles. The leaders of the church in Jerusalem immediately responded in Acts 21:20, “And when they heard *it*, they glorified the Lord. And they said to him, ‘You see, brother, how many myriads of Jews there are who have believed, and they are all zealous for the law.’” The Jewish Christians needed to understand how to grow in grace. As a result, the writer of Hebrews went back to Abraham who did not have the law.

God had promised Abraham several great blessings. Immediately after Abraham had been willing to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice because of his faith, God said to Abraham in Genesis 22:16-18, “And said: ‘By Myself I have sworn, says the LORD, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only *son*-- blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which *is* on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.’” Here, we see that because God could swear by no one greater He swore by Himself. God promised to greatly multiply the descendants of Abraham. God also promised that Christ would bring blessing to all nations.

In Hebrews 6:12, we finished our last topic by seeing that the Hebrew Christians were encouraged to have a strong hope and imitate the patience of the Old Testament saints. Here, in these next verses, we see that Abraham is the first illustration of that patience. We see that Abraham patiently endured and had now obtained the fulfillment of the promise that had been given to Him. Hebrews 11:12-13 says, “Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born *as many* as the stars of the sky in multitude--innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore. These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced *them* and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.” Abraham did not see this promise fulfilled during his lifetime. In fact, Christ was not born until about two thousand years after the death of Abraham. However, that patience was rewarded when Christ came two thousand years later.

It is important to understand why Abraham could have such faith in the promise of God. Hebrews 6:16-18 says, “For men indeed swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation *is* for them an

end of all dispute. Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed *it* by an oath, that by two immutable 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*.” When people make a promise, they swear by something greater that they will keep that promise. That is how mankind has settled disputes for thousands of years.

Through the years, many people have sworn by God that they will keep their promise. We know that no one is greater than God. As a result, we see that God swore by Himself when He made this promise to Abraham. The word translated “immutability” means *that which is unchangeable*. The reason that God swore by Himself was due to the fact that God wanted to show Abraham and his descendants that He would not break His promise because His character and His Word are unchangeable. As a result, God gave His oath to show that His promise to Abraham was unchangeable.

Here, we see that God gave Abraham two unchangeable things. The first was His promise and the second was His oath. We see that the writer of Hebrews also reminded the Jewish Christians that it is impossible for God to lie. As a result, His promise and oath provide strong consolation. The word translated “consolation” means *encouragement or that which provides comfort*. 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17 says, “Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who has loved us and given *us* everlasting consolation and good hope by grace, comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work.” Here, we see that the writer of Hebrews wanted to give the Jewish Christians the same encouragement that Paul gave to the Thessalonians.

As a result, the writer of Hebrews reminded the Jewish Christians that instead of fear they could find a place of refuge if they would lay hold of the hope that was set before us. The word translated “to lay hold” means *to get possession of or to hold in the hand*. God wants all Christians to take possession of the hope that we have as Christians. The word translated “hope” means that *joyful and confident expectation of eternal salvation*. Titus 2:13-14 says, “Looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself *His* own special people, zealous for good works.” Here, we see that when we are focused on that joyful and confident expectation of our eternal salvation we have a strong desire to live a life that is pleasing to the Lord. We also are eager to serve the Lord.

That is why Hebrews 6:19-20 goes on to say, “This *hope* we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence *behind* the veil, where the forerunner has entered for us, *even* Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.” Here, we see that the Jewish Christians were reminded of the fact that the hope that they had in Christ is like an anchor of the soul. The word translated “anchor” means *any stay or safeguard* because it would make a boat stay in place and protect it. The word is only used four times in the New Testament. The other three times are all in Acts 27 when the ship on which Paul was sailing was caught in a storm that was about to destroy the ship. In that case, they put out the anchors to protect the ship until the light of morning so that they could see.

The writer of Hebrews wanted the Jewish Christians to see that the hope that we have as Christians is an anchor of the soul. That confident expectation that we have is like a safeguard of protection for our mind, emotions and will. First, see that our hope is sure. The word translated “sure” means *that which can be relied upon*. Philippians 3:1 says, “Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. For me to write the same things to you *is* not tedious, but for you *it is* safe.” Here, the word is translated “safe”. As Paul wrote to the Philippians, he wanted them to know that the message could be relied upon. The writer of Hebrews wanted the Jewish Christians to know that they could rely on the hope that we have in Christ.

Second, we see that our hope is steadfast. The word translated “steadfast” means *stable or firm*. The word is used in 2 Peter 1:19 where we read, “And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.” In this passage, the word is translated “confirmed”. That passage goes on to tell us that we know that the Word of God is true because it was written by holy men of God as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. This means that we can have the same confidence in the hope that Christ has given us as we have in the Word of God.

The reason that we can have confidence in that hope is due to the fact that Christ has entered within the veil. Here, we see that the writer uses an Old Testament illustration the Jews would easily understand. In the Old Testament, the high priest would go into the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement once each year. He would take blood as a covering for His own sin and then blood as a covering for the sins of the people. Hebrews 7:26-27 says, “For such a High Priest was fitting for us, *who is* holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens; who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people's, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself.” Here, we see that Christ, our High Priest, offered His own blood to take away our sins.

That is also the reason why Christ had to be a High Priest after the order of Melchizedek instead of the order of Aaron. This is explained much more fully in Hebrews 7. Christ entered into the presence of the Father with His own blood as our High Priest. He now intercedes and speaks for us to the Father. 1 John 2:2 says, “And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.” The word translated “propitiation” means *that which satisfies*. Our hope is so certain because we know that the Father is satisfied with the blood of Christ as the payment for our sin. We want to help our physical and spiritual children rest in this hope as an anchor to their souls. We also want to help our children learn how to explain the importance of this hope to others so that they know that their protection is in Christ. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children understand that our hope is like an anchor.