



The hope anchored soul

*"We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure.
It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain where,
Jesus who went before us, has entered on our behalf."*

(Hebrews 6:19)

An anchor attached to boat or ship, keeps it from drifting. In this text we are told that believers' souls have an anchor. We have hope-anchored souls. "Hope" in the Bible is different from what the word means in common usage. Often it is the expression of a wish or desire, with its fulfillment not at all certain. We're not sure that we will receive what we desire. As I am writing this it is very cold in Michigan and we hope that the weather will soon warm up. But we're not sure. Hope in the Bible has a somewhat different meaning; it is a certainty, because it is a desire or wish based on a promise. And some time elapses before our wishes or desires are fulfilled. (A boy is promised a new bicycle on his next birthday, but he has to wait until his birthday comes to receive it.) The sacred author says that the hope we have, that for which we are waiting and hoping, is like *"an anchor of the soul."* Our souls are made secure, because our expectations are surely to be fulfilled.

The Hebrew Christians to whom this epistle was written had problems. There was persecution — not "unto blood," but persecution nevertheless. The result was that their faith weakened; they became sluggish in their outlook, activity and hope. They were despondent and impatient. And who are we, who have never experienced persecution, to criticize them?

Weak faith is common to God's people. Everyone who will live a godly life will experience opposition. When cross-bearing for Christ's sake is prolonged, we often become discouraged. There are also many "common" adversities, physical difficulties, frustrations, and problems of widows, widowers and elderly. Whatever the problems may be the Lord knows them and will give His people what they need when they, in faith, seek help from Him.

The writer speaks of how God gave His promises to Abraham and in Him, to all believers, confirming them with an oath. He wanted to make the unchanging nature of His purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised. In an oath, we call upon someone greater than we are (here the all-seeing and all-knowing God Himself) to witness that we are speaking the truth. Since God cannot call upon anyone greater than He is, He swears by Himself.

What did God promise under oath to Abraham? That he would have many descendants and that God would give them the land of Canaan. The promise ultimately refers to the heavenly Canaan, or heaven itself, and all salvation.

This eternal salvation, in Christ was the hope of Abraham, and is still the hope of all God's people. The object of our hope is the eternal glory in the new heaven and earth.

That hope is for us an anchor of the soul. It makes our souls secure. It prevents us from being swept away by all life's storms, including persecution and opposition brought upon the church by the devil.

That anchor will hold. What makes our hope sure? Jesus Christ has *"entered into the sanctuary"* which is *"behind the curtain."* The language refers to the old Testament tabernacle and temple. In them were the Holy Place and beyond that the Holy of Holies. In the Holy of Holies God dwelt, in the symbol of the cloud. According to custom, the high priest would enter into the Holy of Holies

behind the curtain with some of the sacrificial blood which would be poured on the "mercy seat" as a type of the blood of the *coming* Christ. Through the blood of Christ, the blood atonement, our sins would be forgiven once and for all and our peace would be secured with God.

The writer says that the "*anchor of our souls*" enters into the inner part behind the curtain. He is not thinking of the temple built by Herod, or the earlier one built by Solomon, but the "Holy of Holies" in heaven, into which Jesus entered with His atoning blood.

This work of Christ included His resurrection and ascension into heaven. During this time of the year we may be reminded of His ascension. That ascension was a very important link in the chain of salvation, although it is ignored by the world and almost ignored by the Christian church.

To Christ, who has entered into "the heavenly sanctuary," our souls are anchored. The discouraged and despondent Hebrew Christians must be reminded that their souls were anchored to Christ. That is to be the comfort for all God's people in all times and all circumstances! We are as safe and our salvation is as sure as Christ is in heaven today.

Our little boats are still on the sea of life and at times the waves may be high and threatening.

Life can be difficult in rough seas. But we must not fear if we are "anchored" in Christ who has ascended into heaven as the atoning and risen Lord. We are as safe as Jesus Christ is at the Father's right hand.

Let all Christians when weak in faith, anxious, or discouraged look at this Jesus.

As the anchor normally is out of sight down deep in the water, so the heavenly anchor is out of sight. It is in heaven above, where Christ is.

Although the worlds' ships will drift and be wrecked the ship of God's people is firmly anchored.

Our certainty lies in Jesus. He conquered death, rising from the grave and ascending into heaven. He prays for us, constantly holding us fast. That's the comfort of all who trust in Christ.

*Tho' the angry surges roll
On my tempest driven soul
I am peaceful for I know,
Wildly though the winds may blow,
I've an anchor safe and sure,
That can ever more endure.*

*Mighty tides about me sweep
Perils lurk within the deep,
Angry clouds o'er shade the sky,
And the tempest rises high;
Still I stand the tempest's shock
For my anchor grips the Rock.*

*Blow your wildest,
then O gale, On my bark so small and frail:
By His grace I shall not fail
For my anchor holds, my anchor
holds.*

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