

Hebrews 6:19-20

Ash Wednesday, Feb. 14, '24
Pastor Sam Rodebaugh

We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain,²⁰ where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

If you ever get to go out on a boat or a pontoon, there's a few things that you'd probably always remember to take with you. I'm thinking specifically of life jackets or other such flotation devices. If you were boating late at night, you'd want to have lights on your boat too, to alert other boats of your presence. You do all this because you're concerned about safety; it's important to take those types of precautions.

We like our stuff, our houses, our family members—the things we care about—to be safe and secure. It's security that we're looking for in our lives. You want a job that provides financial security. You want a house that provides security for your family from the elements and from other dangers. When you park your car in a parking lot, you lock the doors and you take your keys with you so that it's secure, so that it can't be stolen.

But all of the security systems and different forms of security which we use for our safety and peace of mind, they all come up short. Because they're only effective for a short time, and really they're only moderately effective at that. If we want true security, there has to be a better solution. How can we feel safe and secure not only in this life, but also in that which is to come? Of course, you all know the answer. The Holy Spirit assures us today and throughout Scripture that:

Jesus is Our Security

- I. He once and for all was the sacrifice to pay for our sins.
- II. Our hope of eternal salvation is anchored in Jesus Christ.

Now, there's language in our text for this morning that describes features of the temple. And maybe we're not overly familiar with how the temple looked, but the *original* readers of the book of Hebrews were *very* familiar with the temple layout. It wasn't lost on them. They knew how the temple was structured, how things flowed from one station to another, they understood the very distinct purpose from God in the temple's design. They had seen with their own eyes that thick curtain separating the Holy of Holies from the rest of the temple. They had been there, once a year, when the High Priest would enter into the Holy of Holies behind the curtain, carrying the blood of animals that had been sacrificed to the Lord.

And even though they didn't get to watch, because the actions of the High Priest were prescribed in Leviticus 16, the Hebrews knew exactly what the High priest was doing behind the curtain. They knew how he would take the blood and sprinkle it on the Ark of the Covenant, on the lid which was called the Mercy Seat. They knew what God said about this too, that this would bring peace with God, paying for the peoples' sins for the past year. Now, was this animal blood *actually* paying for sins? No, of course not. And many understood that. But what God had set up for them was a regimen of sacrifices throughout the year that He would accept as sufficient *because* they pointed forward to a Savior and a final sacrifice. Every burnt offering and sacrifice that was done in Old Testament times re-asserted the fact that God's plan involved a final sacrifice dying for sin as our substitute.

Now, many of you know this from our Bible Study last year, but Hebrews is often called the “Better Letter” because it presents ceremonies and customs that existed in Jewish worship at the time, appointed by God, pointing to these things and then showing how Jesus was better. Not that He was an alternative, but that Jesus was actually the fulfillment and the *replacement* for what had already been there. So, after centuries of sacrifices, thousands of years of the Priest entering the Most Holy Place behind the curtain to atone for people’s sins—the writer to the Hebrews explains that now *Jesus* had done that Himself. But He *won’t* do it next year. He wouldn’t have to do it again, even if and when *you* do sin again. Jesus did this one time. He was the sacrificial Lamb that God had appointed to pay for all sins for all time.

He entered the Most Holy Place, He made the necessary sacrifice, He brought with Himself the blood when He served as your substitute on the cross. When He cried out, “**My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?**”—He was suffering. He was going through the agonies of hell, separation from God. He took that upon His own soul, and He did it for you and for me.

But would it be enough? Would the same God who had formerly required all of those countless sacrifices—would He really count this one payment as sufficient to pay for *everything* for you, even the sins you haven’t committed yet? Yes, absolutely! We are promised, “**The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin.**” (1 John 1:7) And all really means *all* there. The day you die, you can rest assured that *all* of your sins have been taken care of, paid for in full on the cross of Calvary.

So, security after death, a lasting and permanent security for our souls—we already have that in Jesus the Lamb. It’s as we just sang: “*Not all the blood of beasts On Jewish altars slain Could give the guilty conscience peace Or wash away the stain. But Christ, the heavenly Lamb, Takes all our sins away; A sacrifice of nobler name And richer blood than they.*”

Now, the Jewish Christians to whom the book of Hebrews was written were a people under immense pressure for their faith. Some had been shunned by their families. They’d *all* been told that because they left their religious heritage they were no longer Jewish people. Many suffered socially, even economically; their *wallets* took a hit because they followed Christ. They were even told that they had forsaken Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; essentially, they were told that their forefathers whom they were so proud to claim were rolling over in their graves because these Jews were following Jesus. And that’s, of course, not true. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had also been following Jesus in faith before this. But, these Jewish Christians were told that they’d forsaken all of that.

And for what? To worship in secret in their small groups in house churches? To retreat to the catacombs for fear of being arrested and killed? What was the point of that? How could they hope to get anywhere by living like that? We can hardly even imagine just how difficult it was to be an early Christian facing all these pressures. Following Jesus must have felt like being a boat caught in the middle of a storm, getting tossed about in the tumult, very little feeling of comfort or safety and never sure of where the next wave was going to come from.

As Christians today, we also face a great deal of pressure and ridicule. It’s suggested that we’re foolish if we hold onto Scripture if it disagrees with so-called science. If you confess that there is a heaven and a hell, that there truly is absolute right and wrong according to God, then even many so-called

Christians will call you intolerant, close-minded, and bigoted. We too, could feel at times that we are caught in a storm. Our faith is constantly under attack, and the easiest thing to do would be to simply join everyone else on the shore.

So, what do we do? Should we just keep telling ourselves, “I’m right, everyone else is wrong. I just won’t listen to them”? We *might* think that way at times, but that’s not really the right solution. That’s not what our anchor is. Our confidence doesn’t rest in *us being right*. Our hope, our anchor, our confidence is in Jesus. What happens to us here, the things we have to go through now—that will all soon fade away. But the promise of life and salvation in heaven, the security for our souls after death, that is certain. We can depend upon these realities because they’re not based on us, they’re locked in tight with Jesus.

When Jesus hung there on the cross and said, ***“It is finished,”*** He was speaking to you. The payment for your sins, it was finished. Your entry fee to heaven, it was finished—paid for in its entirety. Everything that was needed to be done so that you could be confident in knowing what will happen to you after you die, it was all finished right there on the cross. And so, the hope that we have in Jesus is rightly described in our text as ***“a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul.”***

When you feel like you’re caught out at sea, being tossed around in the massive storm of life, and maybe you feel like your faith is growing weaker—you might feel yourself giving up hope, fearing that you’re losing heaven. In that moment, you ought to remember where your anchor is. What is your anchor latching onto? Your anchor, your faith, moors you to Jesus. And when you are tied to Jesus, then you are strong enough because Jesus is strong enough. And anchors firmly secured to Jesus means that our hope is secure, that our eternal future safe and sound in the Lamb of God.

So whenever you, like the early Christians, find life getting tough—when your faith is under attack—look to the hill outside Jerusalem. See there in the eerie darkness the Son of God, nailed to a cross. Rest assured that He does that for you. And seeing that, *you may know* that your soul is secure. Regardless of what happens here, you are safe and sound in the palm of your Savior. **Jesus is Your Security.** Amen.

“And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:7) Amen.