

Anchored or Adrift? - there's no third way

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Date: 27 October 2019

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[0 : 00] But we're going to turn to our Bibles and to our reading this morning, which you'll find at Hebrews chapter 5, beginning at verse 11, and the whole of chapter 6.

And these verses take in some of what some people think to be some of the most difficult passages and verses in the whole New Testament. So we're going to have to work hard this morning.

And just before I read, just look again at chapter 5, verses 9 and 10. The last two verses that we read last week and studied.

Being made perfect, Jesus became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him. Being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek.

He tells us three things there, three key things about the Lord Jesus. And those are things that he takes up and expands in the great central section, chapters 7 to 10. Verse 10, we're told there that Jesus is the priestly son of God.

[1 : 01] He's the everlasting priest like Melchizedek. Well, that's what's taken up and explained all through chapter 7, as we'll see next time. Verse 9, he was made perfect. That is, he became the perfect sacrifice for sin once and for all.

And that is the heart of Hebrews chapter 8 and chapter 9, as we'll see when we come to it. And that is why he alone can bring permanent salvation. He became the source of eternal salvation.

And that's what he expands all the way through chapter 10 until verse 18. He's a very careful teacher. He's telling us what he's going to tell us. Then he's going to explain it in great detail.

Because he is determined that Christian believers will grasp that Jesus is everything. That Jesus is the fulfillment. That he's the climax of the whole Bible story.

That he is the long-promised priestly son of God. Who alone can bring the perfect sacrifice for sins. And who therefore alone can achieve not temporary, but permanent salvation.

[2 : 05] And to know the full depth, the length and breadth, the height and the depth of that is necessary for saving, enduring faith.

That's why he says in chapter 5, verse 11, about this, we have much to say. But before he goes on to say it, he needs to wake us up and warn us to listen.

Because that's the problem with this Hebrew church. They've stopped listening attentively to the word of God. And that is a very, very dangerous place to be.

Hence this reading today with this great warning and encouragement. And hence also at the end of chapter 10, we come once again. It's like an envelope to another great warning and exhortation.

To listen to this exposition of the gospel of God. So chapter 5, verse 11, about this, this great gospel revelation. We have much to say.

[3 : 02] But it's hard to explain since you have become sluggish of hearing. I'm using that word deliberately. You'll see why. For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God.

You need milk, not solid food. For everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness. Since he's a child, an infant. But solid food is for the mature adult.

For those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil. Therefore let us leave in place or leave standing firmly.

It's difficult to get the translation of that quite right. He's not saying leave behind elementary things, of course. But he's saying, you know all this. Let's leave that firmly in place, the elementary doctrine of Christ.

And go on to maturity. Not laying all over again a foundation of repentance from dead works. And faith towards God. And instruction about washing.

[4 : 08] The laying on of hands. The resurrection of the dead. And eternal punishment. And this we will do. If God permits. For it's impossible to restore again to repentance those who have once been enlightened.

Who have tasted the heavenly gift. And have shared in the Holy Spirit. And have tasted the goodness of the word of God. And the powers of the age to come. It's impossible if they then fall away. Since they're crucifying once again the Son of God.

To their own harm. And holding them up to contempt. It's impossible. If they then fall away. To be restored.

To repentance. The land that has drunk the rain. That often falls on it. And produces a crop useful to those. For whose sake it's cultivated. Receives a blessing from God.

But if it bears thorns and thistles. It's worthless. And near to being cursed. And its end is to be burned.

[5 : 13] Though we speak in this way. Yet in your case beloved. We feel sure of better things. Things that belong to salvation. For God is not unjust.

So as to overlook your work. And the love that you showed for his sake. In serving the saints. As you still do. But we desire that each one of you. Will show the same earnestness.

To have the full assurance of hope. Until the end. So that you may not be sluggish. But imitators of those who through faith and patience.

Inherit the promises. For when God made a promise to Abraham. Since he had no one greater by him to swear. He swore by himself. Saying surely I will bless you and multiply you.

But thus Abraham having patiently waited and endured. Obtained the promise. For people swear by something greater than themselves. And in all their disputes.

[6 : 11] An oath. Is final. For confirmation. So when God desired to show more convincingly. To the heirs. Of the promise.

That's us. The unchangeable character of his purpose. He guaranteed it. With an oath. So that by two unchangeable things.

In which it's impossible for God to lie. We who have fled for refuge. Might have a strong encouragement. To hold fast to the hope set before us.

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. Having become a high priest forever. Just like Melchizedek.

[7 : 06] Amen. And may God bless to us. His word. Well turn up if you would.

The reading that we read together. Hebrews chapter 5 verse 11. Through to the end of Hebrews chapter 6. And the question is.

Are we anchored? Or are we adrift? When you're in a car going uphill. Unless you're moving forwards in gear. You're going to start going backwards.

Because there's no neutral in a hill. Is there? That's a backward gear. When a plane is shooting forwards. If it stops the onward thrust of its engines.

It won't stop in mid air. Will it? It starts going down very very quickly. And unless that thrust is reengaged. It's heading for disaster. And it's similar in the human body.

[8 : 03] If a young child is not growing. And we say it's failing to thrive. It's not static. It's going backwards. It's dangerous. And it will lead to lasting damage.

And so it is with Christian faith. That's the message of this letter of Hebrews. Through and through. If our Christian faith isn't going forwards and growing. It's going to be going backwards.

Into real danger. There's no such thing as saying. Oh I've done enough. I've gone far enough now. I'll take my foot off the pedal. Of keen Christianity.

And I'm just going to coast for a bit. That is a positive decision. To go back. Back into this world. That God has called us out of.

And that's a road away. Away from the prize. Of our great salvation. It's the road to ruin. Because the only faith that saves.

[9 : 02] Is the faith that endures. And the faith that endures. Is a faith that is mature. Because you're either going on. As an adult. Or you're going back.

Into apostasy. That's why either side. As I've said. Of this great central section. In Hebrews. Of chapter 7 to 10. That expound the greatness of Christ.

Either side. We have these powerful exhortations. That envelope that central section. Great encouragements. To keep going on. And great warnings. Not to go back. So in chapter 6 here. We're told. Go onwards. Be adult in your faith. Don't fall back. Don't hold up Christ. Again to contempt. Don't be sluggish deserters. But imitate those who through patient endurance. Inherit God's promise. And it's the same when we come to chapter 10. [9 : 59] He's saying keep going onwards. Don't spurn the son of God. Don't shrink back. And be as those who are destroyed. Go on. And be those who through faith. Preserve their souls. It's clear. Stark exhortation.

To all Christian people. So how are we to endure to the end? Well faith that keeps going onward. Faith that is undaunted faith. Is faith that is understanding faith. Faith that endures in Christ. Is faith that is educated in Christ. And therefore encouraged by Christ. And so the faith that is going on. And forward in salvation. Will be the faith that is going on. And deeper. Into the scriptures. It will be faith that is being encouraged. As it engages with. And understands. The whole gospel revelation. In the Bible. About Christ. And what he's done. And how in him alone. Is the hope. Of the future to be found. [10 : 57] And that's why. Between these two great exhortations. In chapter 6. And chapter 10. As I've said. There's a great exposition. And explanation. Of the person and work of Christ. Our great savior. About this. He says in chapter 5. Verse 11. We have much to say. Because it's only in. In taking it in. And in digesting it. And in living out. This solid food. Of gospel hope. In Christ. That will give us understanding. That will give us. Undaunted. Life sustaining faith. That does endure. And that does inherit. The promised kingdom. That's the only way. To real assurance. In our lives. As Christians. The only way. To the real assurance. Of faith. Is to be constantly. Anchored. In the gospel of Christ. And all its glorious. Implications. And if we're not. Thus anchored. Inevitably. [11 : 54] We're going to be adrift. There is no third way. Much as it was beloved. Of Tony Blair. Those of you. Who can remember. We're either going on. Or. We're adrift. We're either spiritual. Adults. Or we're spiritually adrift. And we're in real danger. Of sinking. On the rocks. Of spiritual. Apostasy. And the problem. Is that. Very often. Today. Just like the. The church. That he was writing to. Hear first. But as verse 11 says. We've become dull. We've become sluggish. Of hearing. And we need there. For a strong. Wake up call. That's. What he gives us. In these verses. There is a wealth. Of assurance. For us. As believers. In Christ. In our wonderful. Anchor. The anchor. Of our souls. We'll see that. In verses 13 to 20. But first of all. Here from chapter 5. [12 : 48] Verse 11. To 6. Verse 12. Our preacher. Gives us. A wake up. To adulthood. In a warning. Of apostasy. Because he wants to wake us up. And shake us up. And these verses. Most certainly do that. You can see that the. The sections held together. By verse 11 of chapter 5. And verse 12. Of chapter 6. Which both use this same word. Sluggish. It's obscured in our ESV. For some reason. Translates it dull. In verse 11. But it's a very unusual word. It's only two times. As it appears. In the New Testament. So it's very striking. You've become sluggish. Of hearing. He says. So I'm going to wake you up. So you won't be sluggish anymore. That's the message. Wake up. Stop this drift. Back into infancy. Come back. To being adults. In your faith. Grown ups. Who go onward. Not infants. Who go backwards. Because you need to know. That if you keep going back. That way. [13 : 48] There will be no coming back. Only end of that road. Look down to chapter 6. Verse 8. It's the curse of God. And it's the consuming fire. Of his judgment. It's a real wake up call. And it's based on a very real warning. Look first at verses. 11 of chapter 5. To chapter 6. Verse 3. Which is a real wake up. To spiritual adulthood. Wake up. Because you've become dull.

And sluggish. He says in verse 11. In fact. He's not saying. You see. In verse 12. That they are. Just as yet. Immature. And untaught believers. And so he's going to feed them milk. No. He's being deliberately provocative to them. To jolt them. And shake them up. He's saying. You were adults. You were eating proper food. But. You've regressed. And you're acting like infants. [14:44] That's the word in verse 13. The word child. It's really infant. He's contrasting infants and adults. Why have you regressed? Well.

Very simple. Because. You've stopped listening. You're dull. And disinterested. Of hearing. Remember chapter 2. Verse 1. They've stopped paying attention. To this great salvation. Of God's word. And that friends. Always leads to spiritual regression. It leads to drift. And it leads to disobedience. And that is a place of great. Great danger. It's not that they're uneducated. And untaught. But now. Like. Like. Like a working adult. Who goes back. To a diet.

Of only just. Only just drinking milk. They find that totally inadequate. For working life. Well. This is totally inadequate. For spiritual life. And that leaves you.

[15:40] Verse 13. Unskilled. In the word of righteousness. That is. No real use at all. For actually living out. Any of the implications. Of this gospel. Of righteousness. So you may know the gospel.

But the truth is. Your life doesn't show it. And so nobody else. Would know it. Well. The Christian church. Has always had many.

Such. Stunted. And disfigured Christians. In its midst. Hasn't it? Still does today. But you see. Real faith. Is not useless. Real faith. Is not without. Impact in life.

Is it? It's visible. It's seen. When the word of righteousness. Is lived out. It's noticed by people. And of course. Then. It's often opposed. Isn't it? And it puts you with Jesus.

Beyond the pale of. Polite society. Outside the camp. With him. As chapter 13. Puts it. Outside. Of the world's approval.

[16:38] Because Jesus said. In the world. You will have trouble. If you really believe in me. They called me a devil. They're going to call you devils too. But we don't like being called devils.

Do we? And so it's very. Very tempting. To seek some sort of. Accommodation. To find a kind of. Chrino. To use today's. Terminology.

Christianity. In name only. Where we say. We've come out. Of the world. But really. Just still in it. In all but name. But that's not.

Christian. Maturity. In adulthood. And nor is it. Even just the status quo. It is regressing. Into infancy. Into slavery. Into ruin.

So what's the cure? Well. It's to wake up. Sharply. And to start acting again. As grown ups. Not going back to primary school. And to primary school milk.

[17:37] Like I used to get every day. In the classroom. In the 1970s. It's about being a proper adult. On a proper adult diet. Of solid spiritual food. Now friends.

Let me tell you. There are hordes of Christians. In church today. Who are not doing that. All over. The country. People have stopped. Growing long ago.

And are going backwards. Into infantile behavior. Oh. We just like keeping to the simple gospel. Sometimes people say. No. No. No.

That's not growing up. That's not going on. You're going back. There'll be lots and lots of people. In lots and lots of churches today. Who are spending far more time. Singing songs.

With very threadbare lyrics. Very childish lyrics. Far more time doing that. Than listening to any solid food. Of applied biblical truth. Isn't that right? No.

[18:34] If you want to be spiritual adults. Verse 14. Who know even the most basic things. About right and wrong thinking. The most basic things. About how to conduct yourselves in life. That milk of infants.

Is no good. You need adult food friends. So he says in verse 1 of chapter 6. Let's go onwards. Actually the verb is in the passive there.

Let us be carried on. To maturity. By immersing ourselves in the word of the gospel. Is what he means. Notice as I said in the reading.

He's not saying in verse 1. Leave behind basic Christian teaching. That you had when you started your Christian life. He's meaning you've had it. And I leave it firmly standing in place.

It's the same verb that is used in John 14. When Jesus says. My peace I leave with you. Leave that with you. In place. Firmly. That firm foundation. But it's been laid.

[19 : 30] All these Christian basics in verse 2. That you've been taught. And you know. But your problem is. You're not living it out. So wake up.

And resume your place as Christian adults. Because you need to build. On that foundation of your faith. That's what Peter says in his first letter. Isn't it? 1 Peter 1. Add to your faith.

Build on your faith. With steadfastness. With godliness. With brotherly affection. With love. That's what will keep you. He says. From being ineffectual. And unfruitful. In the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

You see. Christianity explored. You've done. Discipleship explored. You've done. Now it's got to become. Christianity applied. And discipleship experienced.

Onward. Every day. Well is that you. And me. Is the Bible here in the pulpit.

[20 : 24] Getting into. The pew. And is it getting into our pores. As people. Is the gospel really getting into control. Of your passions.

Of your prayers. Of your purpose in life. Of your purse strings. That's a telling one. You need to be wakened up.

He's telling these people. To real applied Christianity. So you go on. As adults. As grown ups. And that's what I'm doing here. In this letter. He says in verse 3.

If God permits. Notice that. You can't presume upon God. You see. You have to wake up and listen. Because if you don't. It's no use saying. Oh well.

I'm a Christian. Once saved. Always saved. I mean. I'm a member of an evangelical church. What more do you want? No. No. No. You can slide. Very imperceptibly. And you can find yourself.

[21 : 20] In a place of real danger. With all of those things. And God may draw a line. And we're not conscious.

Of him doing any such thing. And then. He is saying here. It may be too late. When it becomes impossible.

Even for the loudest of alarms. To wake us up at all. Look at verse 4. When it becomes not just hard. But you see. Impossible. To restore again.

To repentance. And that's why what follows here. In verses 4 to 12. Is a wake up. Not just a spiritual. Adulthood. But a warning.

Starkly. About real. Spiritual. Apostasy. As I said. Many have found this passage. Perhaps among the hardest. Of the New Testament. And often get into great tangles.

[22 : 16] As a result. So I'm going to try and be as clear. As I possibly can. To be true. To the preacher's real message here. For all of us listening today. Just as it was. For the first readers.

Three questions. First of all. Who is he warning here? Well friends. The salutary answer. Is he is warning. Real Christian people. Like you and me. He's warning people.

He addresses in verse 9. As beloved ones. Of whom he feels sure. Of their salvation. He includes himself. In the warning. Verse 1. Let us.

Go on. So he's warning himself. Along with them. As every. Honest preacher must. Just like the priests of old. Remember we saw last week. Because he's conscious.

Of his own weakness and sins. Some people have gone through. The most extraordinary.

Contortions. To try and prove. That these. These descriptions.

[23 : 09] Of those who are. Enlightened. Who have tasted. The Holy Spirit. Who have shared. The Holy Spirit. The goodness of God's word. The powers of the age to come. To try and suggest.

That somehow. These are not real. Christians. That he's talking to. Let me just quote. One of the most reliable scholars. I've found. Who says this. It is hard to imagine. A clearer description.

Of what it means. To be. A Christian believer. There's no getting away for it. If you are a Christian believer. Here this morning. This warning. Is for you.

And it's for me. Second then. What is he warning. About. Well again. There's no avoiding it. Is there. He's warning.

About the reality. Of spiritual apostasy. Of drifting back. That can only lead. In the end. To the curse. Of ultimate judgment.

[24 : 06] Verses four to six. Are clear. If. Those who have. Have shared. Such. Extraordinary. Spiritual blessings. Fall away. Verse six. If they turn away.

From Christ. There is no way back. Verse four. It is impossible. To restore again. To repentance. Why? Well he illustrates it. In verses seven and eight. Doesn't he? Exactly as Jesus did.

Repeatedly. Land that has been so blessed.

That produces no fruit. Just thorns. And thistles. It's fit for only one thing. For cursing. And for burning with fire. It's a language of. Of the covenant curses. In Deuteronomy 28 and 29. It's a language of Isaiah five. Where. God describes Israel's apostasy. And the coming judgment of God. It's a language Jesus used. [24 : 59] Of the barren fig tree. Remember that despite all the patient. Watering and working. Produces nothing. And will be cut down. It's a language he uses. Of the vine. And the unfruitful branches.

That will be cut away. And burned in the fire. And many many other. Such sayings. It's the language of God's blessing. And his curse.

And these Hebrew Christians. Who knew the Old Testament. Were very very familiar with it. What he's saying to them is this. God is still the covenant God. He takes his promises. With absolute seriousness.

And friends. We must take them still. With absolute seriousness. And he's far more seriously. Than ever before. In the former days. Because how shall we escape.

If we neglect. Such a great salvation. Remember. We have the ultimate word. Of God in Christ. In chapter 12. He again says the same things. We in former days.

[25 : 56] Those in former days. Didn't escape. How much less. Will we escape. If we reject him. Who warns from heaven. Don't forget. He says to them. Our God is a consuming fire.

And how can that fire of judgment. Not then consume. Those who have professed Christ. And proclaim Christ.

And yet now. As verse 6 here says. Hold him in contempt. Crucify again. The son of God. Use very similar terminology. Again in chapter 10. How can a real Christian.

Ever do such a thing. Hmm. Well because. As John Calvin says. Satan creeps upon us stealthily. And allures us gradually.

By subtly hidden desires. So that when we go astray. We're not conscious. Of so astray. And we slip down gradually. Until at last.

[26 : 55] We fall headlong. Isn't that right? When the pressure. Of the world's hostility. Is on us. Shaming us. When the pressure of our appetites.

Are on us. For many things. Including peace. And prosperity. And to avoid. Shame and persecution. And we so easily capitulate.

Don't we? We seek peace with the world. The world that hates. And crucifies Christ. C.S. Lewis is right. Isn't he? When he talks about the twin dangers. For the Christian.

Yes. There's the antagonism. Between us and the world. But there's also the opposite. There's the assimilation. Back into the world. That is so easy for us. To fall into. Where we begin to side with. Those who hate the son of God. And when we find ourselves. Abandoning others. Who love the son of God. There's just one example.

[27 : 54] In all the battles. That are around us. For the historic denominations. In the western world today. There are many. There are many. Many people. Who call themselves. Evangelical Christians. Even among the clergy.

Who when the chips are really down. Have sided with. People who hate the gospel. Who hate the evangelical faith. And have stood with them.

Against those who love Christ. And the gospel. And are standing for that faith. Once we're all delivered. To the saints. And they've done it. Because. Well. They love. The worldly institution. Of the church. And they want its praise. They want its positions. They want its patronage. That is a very dangerous. Path to have chosen. Just as it is.

When. When any of us. As Christians. Fail to stand. With those who are being. Ridiculed. And ostracized. And hurt. And persecuted. For their love of Christ. And the gospel. We may sometimes disagree.

[28 : 51] With certain things. And the way they express things. But we want a form of Christianity. That doesn't put us. Under the opprobrium. That they fall under.

Doesn't put us. Outside the camp. Keeps us at peace. With our friends. And with the world. And with society. And with the media. And with the government. And with our pensions.

And with our passions. We can go very. Very far astray. As John Calvin said. Without even becoming conscious.

That we're doing it. That's what Jesus is speaking about. Isn't it? In Matthew chapter 25. When he talks about the sheep and the goats. On the day of judgment. There are many many people. Who are saying on that day. Lord. Lord. When did we ever crucify you again? When did we ever hold you up to contempt? When did we ever spurn the son of God? And he'll say. You did it every time.

[29 : 47] Every time. You fail to stand. With the least of these. My brethren. When you refused to join them. Outside the camp. When you saw them suffer.

And you sought peace. With those who hated them. Because they hated me. And God will hold guilty. Such as these. Says Jesus.

Who by their actions. Or by their lack of actions. Demonstrate. That they are ashamed. Really. Of the son of God. And of his words. In the midst of a wicked. And corrupt generation. And Jesus says of him.

The son of man. Will also be ashamed. When he comes. In the glory of the father. With his holy angels. And we need to be warned. Friends. Of that. Don't we? And repentance.

Is not in our hands. Again. As John Calvin says. It's given by God. Only to those. Who have not. Wholly fallen away. From faith. So this is a very.

[30 : 48] Salutory warning. He says. Not to keep on. Putting off. Until tomorrow. That repentance. And so further. Restranging us from God.

Listen to what he says. From this. We conclude. That it's not only. Unbelievers. Who are to be. Chided. Sharply. And forcibly. But even. The elect. Themselves. The very ones.

Whom we reckon. To be. Among. The sons of God. So the third question. And if these are real. Believers. He is warning.

About real apostasy. And he is warning. About exactly that. Why then. Is he giving. Such a warning. And is it. Is it a real. Warning. Well yes.

It is real. And it's very. Purpose. Is to preserve. Real believers. Through. Persevering. Faith. He's giving.

[31 : 45] Early warning. Of the danger. Says John Calvin. Precisely. So that we may be. On our guard. Against it. That is. He is not looking. Backwards. He is not saying.

These people have already. Fallen away. But he's looking. Forward. And he is. Urging them. Not to fall away. And to persevere. And to go on. He's not denying.

For a moment. What's taught. Everywhere. In scripture. That. There is the real. Perseverance. Of the saints. The elect of God. But he's simply saying. That those who do. So persevere.

Are the true saints. Of God. Real faith. Always. Endures. It goes. On holding fast. Because. It goes on.

Hearing. And listening. To God. And not. Growing sluggish. Of hearing. And turning away. From him. And you are always. Either going on. Or going back.

[32 : 43] He's not interested. In. In fruitless discussions. About whether people. May or may not. Be true believers. He's just. Urging them all. Don't you. Fall away. See the Bible's.

Focus. Always. Is on plain. Practical. Earthly. And personal. Realities. Not about. Speculation. Of heavenly. Mysteries. These warnings.

Here. And the warnings. Elsewhere. In Hebrews. Also. Strongly. Echo. The words. Of Deuteronomy. Chapter. 29. In fact. Those. That chapter. Is quoted. Plainly. In Hebrews. Chapter. 12.

And that chapter. Is one. Which warns. Similarly. Beware. Lest there be. Any one of you. Who hears. The covenant word of God. And is presumptuous. And stubborn in heart.

The Lord will never be willing. To forgive such a one. He says. It's a chapter. Full of warnings. Just like here. But the very last verse. Of that chapter. Deuteronomy. 29. Verse 29. Says this.

[33 : 37] The secret things. Belong to the Lord. Our God. And don't go messing around. But the things revealed. These warnings.

Belong to us. That we may do. All the words. Of this law. You see. He's. He's not at all. Inviting us. Into speculation. About the mysteries.

Of God's eternal will. He's warning us. Pure and simple. And saying. Make sure. None of you. Drift. And fall away. Make sure you hear.

And heed God's words. Because. It's God's exhortation. In his words. Both his warnings. And of course. His great encouragements. That are the means.

Of grace to us. So that we will. Persevere. So be very clear. Friends. The purpose. Of this chapter. Is not. To tie us up.

[34 : 30] In endless speculation. It is to tether us. In eternal salvation. Let me say that again. It is not. To tie us up. In endless speculation.

It is to tether us. In eternal salvation. So take heed. He is saying. And by the way. If these warnings. Make you exceedingly fearful.

If they bring you. To your knees. Then don't fear. Have faith. Because. If you're penitent. Like that. In response to this word. You can't be apostate.

God's brought you. To repentance. What he's saying to you. Is don't go back there again. But if you're sitting here.

This morning. And you're presumptuous. In your heart. And you're thinking. Well this is not. For the likes of me. I'm a mature Christian. I'm not needing. These kind of warnings. Then friends. You need to listen.

[35 : 27] You need to be shocked. And shaken. By these warnings. These are real. And they are for you. Because Satan. Can lure us. So subtly.

And it's possible. To have strayed. Much. Much. Much. Further. Than we could ever think. We could be near. That line.

Of no return. So don't put off. Repentance. That repentance. May well. Become impossible. Tomorrow. If God has said. Of you. This Sunday.

Is their last chance. If they will not listen. I will depart. Do not put off. Repentance. Repentance. And he wants.

To encourage you. To turn around. And to go on. Back to where you should be. It's not all warning. In this chapter. Is it? Look at verses 9 to 12. If you're still listening today. Then it's not too late.

[36 : 24] We feel better. Sure. Of better things. Of you. He says. And he speaks. In verse 10. Of their real faith. Of their standing for God. And standing. For God's people. As they've done in the past.

No doubt. He's talking here. Of the time. That he speaks about. Later. In chapter 10. When they were first converted. When they. When they were publicly humiliated. When they stood for God. Regardless. When they visited people in prison.

When they looked. After their brothers. And he says here. In verse 10. You're still doing that. At least some of you are. But I want all of you. He says in verse 11. All of you.

To keep going. Like that. To the very end. You can't stop. Having an active. Christian life. You can't retire. Friends. Doesn't matter how old you are.

They won't say. Oh I've done my bit. No. No. No. No. Don't fall into middle-aged. Christian slumber. There's no retirement. If you're not going forwards.

[37 : 19] You're going backwards. Don't lose sight. Of what it's really all about. It's about the world to come. And that's still ahead. Isn't it? It's not behind us. And so real faith is always looking forwards.

Israel of old stopped looking forward. Didn't they? To the land that was ahead. So they drifted back. And they failed to enter. Not so for you. He's saying here. We mustn't become sluggish like that.

Verse 12. Do you see? Don't imitate them who were given so much. And lost it all. But rather imitate those who kept looking forward. Who kept going forward. To be inheritors of God's promises.

Through faith and patience. Through enduring faith. That's real faith. That's adult faith. That keeps looking to the future. Even after you may have received many, many blessings from God.

Like Abraham. Whose eyes were on God's eternal future. Even after he had received the promise of his son Isaac. After many long years of waiting. Because his trust was surely and certainly in God's word of the world to come.

[38 : 35] So how much more is his message? How much more can we go on with endurance? Who have received even greater and more certain hope than Abraham. In God's final word to the world.

In Jesus Christ. And you see that's encouragement here in verses 13 to 20. He reminds us that we have a wealth of assurance. In our wonderful anchor.

A sure and steadfast anchor in the world to come. Through our hope in Jesus. Who's already entered that world. Verse 20. As a forerunner. As the guarantee of our future also.

See Abraham's faith was real. It was saving faith because it was enduring faith. And it was as he endured in that faith.

That he was assured by God that his hope was really real. See it's only as you actually trust God in practice. In reality. Not just in theory.

[39 : 35] That you will prove him trustworthy. Obviously. Assured faith comes out of enduring faith. It's only as you actually walk over a narrow bridge over a canyon.

That you actually prove that that bridge is solid. And that you can go on using it. You will not get that assurance just by looking at it. And that was Abraham's faith. That's the whole point of verses 13 to 16 here.

Do you see? Paul in Romans 4 tells us that no distrust made him waver. He was a Christian. He was a Christian. He was a Christian. But he grew strong in faith. As he gave glory to God.

Entrusting him in all things. And that's why his faith was real. And justifying faith. James. James 2 says exactly the same thing. And he lands on exactly the same issue.

As Hebrews does right here. Because the greatest test. Of Abraham's patient waiting. His patient endurance. Was when having waited so, so long for that son that God promised him.

[40 : 35] Isaac. God then actually asks him to give his son up. And to offer him as a sacrifice to God. When God said to him in effect. Don't let what is visible to you.

Isaac your son. Don't let that be where you put your trust. Trust in me. Trust in my promise of a future. For you and your seed. Which is as yet still unseen.

And Abraham did trust God. And he kept looking to the future. Knowing as Hebrews 11 says. That God was able even to raise the dead. In other words.

He knew. That what God had really promised for him. And Isaac and all his seed. Was a resurrection life. In the world to come. A heavenly country. An enduring city. And that's why he was able to obey God.

Even at extraordinary. Agonizing personal cost. And put his son on the altar. And it was then. That we're told here in verse 14.

[41 : 35] That God gave him this oath. Of confirmation. And that as verse 15 says. He obtained. A promise. That is I think that that.

Promise really came home to him. In his heart. With utter final assurance. That he could trust God. Absolutely. And to the end. For the future.

That he promised him. What was the oath. That he received. Well remember. When Isaac was on the altar. God interceded. Didn't he? And he provided instead. A ram for the sacrifice.

And Abraham exclaimed. The Lord will provide. Provide. And in that action of God. Providing the saving sacrifice. For Abraham's offspring.

God's promise was. Was elevated. To an oath. A final confirmation. As verse 16 puts it. God's provision.

[42 : 31] Of the sacrifice. Sealed with an oath. God's promise of salvation. To Abraham and his seed. And God's work.

Sealed. His word. And it came home. With great assurance. To Abraham's heart. And so you see. Verse 17. The point is. How much more. Can we be assured. Of God's.

Unchangeable promise to us. We're the heirs. Of all his promises. To Abraham. Because he's also. Guaranteed it to us. With an oath. Just as he.

He foreshadowed that. To Abraham. He has shown us. Fully and completely. And finally. That God will provide. That God has provided. The sacrifice. That saves.

All the offspring. Of Abraham. Not with a ram. From the thicket. But with his own son. Jesus. Our great high priest. Who made the perfect sacrifice.

[43 : 28] And is the source. Of eternal salvation. He is the guarantee. The word there. In verse 17. Guaranteed. Is quite literally. He mediated.

He mediated. He mediated. The oath. Three times. In Hebrews. We're said that. We're told that Jesus. Is the mediator. Of a new covenant. He is the mediator.

Of the oath of God. Which is sealed. With his own blood. Forever. And so. We can say. With Abraham. But with even greater. Even better assurance.

The Lord. Has provided. The Lord. Will always provide. I can always trust. Absolutely. His promise to me. We have a better hope. Altogether.

That's what we'll see. Look at. Look at. Chapter 7. Verse 19. A better hope. Through which we draw near to God. And verse 20. Chapter 7. Not without an oath.

[44 : 23] Because the Lord has sworn. He will not change his mind. You. Are a priest. Forever. Forever. And that makes Jesus. The guarantor. Of a better covenant.

See what he's saying. God has in Jesus Christ. Sworn. Absolutely. And our assurance. Of glory. Is absolutely. Guaranteed.

By two. Unchangeable things. By the permanent promises. To Abraham. The promise of the old covenant era. The former days. And by the permanent. Priesthood of Christ.

Christ. The everlasting covenant. Now fulfilled. In these last days. Two. Unchangeable things. And so we have a hope. Verse 19. Beyond the curtain.

Gone through the heavens. Where Jesus has already gone. As a forerunner. On our behalf. As our great high priest. To guarantee. Our entry. Through his sacrifice. After him.

[45 : 20] God has sworn. Absolutely. And so we. He says in verse 19. Have a steadfast anchor. That will keep our souls.

Steadfast and sure. When the billows roll. All through the storms of life. Fastened to the rock. Which cannot move. It's impossible for God to lie. He sealed it.

On oath. In the blood of his son forever. And we are grounded. Firm and deep. In the savior's love. And that's why.

Do you see verse 18. We have such a strong encouragement. To hold fast. To the hope set before us. A strong encouragement. To real spiritual endurance.

To a faith. That endures. Into the world to come. We have fled to Jesus for refuge. Yes. But the best.

[46 : 14] The best is yet to be. And we must keep fastened to Jesus. In his eternal rest. And we can. He is saying to us. Because we have such a wonderful assurance.

In our wonderful anchor. In that guaranteed hope of our savior. We're told in chapter 11. Aren't we? That Abraham endured. As seeing him. Who is invisible.

Because he had God's word of promise. And because he saw. God's work of provision. And God sealed that to his heart. He obtained the promise.

God will provide. And friends. How much more surely. Can we endure? We who have God's final. Supreme word. In the person of his son.

And we have God's final. Sufficient work. In the priesthood. Of Jesus. Our savior. It was as. Abraham endured.

[47 : 10] In faith. Not distrusting God. But trusting him. Even when God seemed to be. Testing him. To the limits. To put his heavenly hope.

In his word. Even above his greatest. Earthly love. His son Isaac. It was as. He trusted. Giving glory to God. That he obtained.

The promise. The assurance of God. Came home to him. Deeply. And personally. The Lord. The Lord will. Always provide. For me. And for my seed.

And we have an even greater. A greater promise. Christian people. Often fear. And we want assurance.

We want assurance. So that we can trust God more. But you see. That's the wrong way around. The real wealth. Of assurance. Comes home to our hearts.

[48 : 05] As we put our trust. Holy. In our wonderful anchor. In the hope. That we have in Jesus Christ. It was as. Abraham put everything.

He held dear. In this world. On the altar of God. Trusting him. And trusting God's promise. For the glory to come. Above everything. It was as he did that. That he received. That great assurance.

The Lord will provide. And it's as we entrust ourselves. In the same way. Utterly. To the great hope. That we have in Jesus.

Even when he. He may ask us. To put on the altar. Some of our dearest things. In this world. For his sake. And especially then.

Because he's teaching us. That our life's anchor. Is fixed. Firmly there. Where true joy is to be found. As we do that. Living out. Real faith friends.

[49 : 01] That we will be assured. That we are those. Who through faith and patience. Shall inherit the promises. That's how the promises old.

And the promises new. In Christ. Become sealed. By the Savior. To me. So that. Touched by his grace. Forever. We will be standing secure.
On those promises. To me. Personally. You and me. We have that anchor. Where Jesus has gone. As our forerunner.
Let's hold fast. To the hope set before us. And we will know. The great blessing. That God will. Always provide. And we will therefore. Always endure. That's the message of Hebrews. To us. This morning. Let's pray.
[49 : 57] Heavenly Father. These are strong words. But you're treating us as adults. As grown ups. And so we pray. Oh God. Who has prepared for them. That love thee. Such good things. As past man's understanding. Pour into our hearts.
Such love towards thee. That we loving thee. Above all things. May obtain thy promises. Which exceed all. That we can desire. Through Jesus Christ.
Our Lord. Amen.