

**Text: Heb 6.18-20**

For today's message, let's start by comparing some lines in our text with chapter 5.

Read Heb 6.18-20, compare 5.9-11

Heb 5.9-11 And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation,<sup>10</sup> being designated by God as a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek.<sup>11</sup> ¶  
Concerning him we have much to say, and *it is hard to explain*, since you have become dull of hearing.

Clearly, there is a link between 6.20 and 5.10.

The high priesthood of Christ is the underlying concern.

Heb 5.11-6.20 interrupts the author's thought to exhort them once again about their spiritual deficiency.

We've defined this as the temptation to waver, to go back to a form of religion (Judaism) that seemed to them safer at their present time.

For us, the temptation might express itself differently, but when we are beset by ridicule, persecution, threat of job loss, even possibly threat of prosecution (or worse) for simply believing the Bible, we might want to step back to a safer place.

The danger of that step back was dramatically explained as we considered especially Heb 6.4-6.

Now the author is reassuring that he thinks better of them and he is laying out for them the solid hope Jesus represents in his role of high priest after the order of Melchizedek.

That assurance is once again our topic today.

**Proposition:** If you are in Christ, you are tied to a secure Rock, which ensures the realization of your hope.

**I. Taking hold: the right response to fear (18)**

A. God's will for Christians: take hold

1. Many fearful things could paralyze our faith

2. Yet in contrast to the fearful things we have

- a. God's word
- b. God's oath

3. Therefore, take hold

B. Taking hold involves the fruitful Christian life

**\* Note: look at each of these passages**

1. Strive faithfully (6.11)
2. Resist sin (3.13)
3. Perform good works [love] (10.24)
4. Accept the Lord's sometimes stern instruction (12.5-7)

**\* Note: look at each of these passages**

C. Rather than faint, fight; rather than let go, hang on

That is where we concluded last time, but we will go on to even more assurance.

## II. Looking up: the proper location of confidence (19)

A. Which hope is an anchor

1. The word "hope" is not in the Gk of v. 19 (implied from v. 18)
2. The idea of an anchor is a common symbol of safety and security, both in the secular world and in the Christian world
  - a. Commentators note at least 66 pictures of anchors appearing in Roman catacombs
  - b. An anchor grips the rocks of the seabed, giving a boat safety and stability in a storm
3. This security is for our soul: which should be our primary concern
  - a. Certainly, the fears we have in this world are more for our physical person: how will I live? What are the threats?

b. But Jesus said:

Mt 16.26 “For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?”

c. The anchor is an “anchor of the soul”

B. Which hope is sure and steadfast

1. The terms here are “nearly synonymous”<sup>1</sup>

a. “Undisturbed by outward influences”

b. “Firm in its inherent character”<sup>2</sup>

2. In other words, “the anchor grips the solid rock” as our hymn says... and

a. The chain is unbreakable

b. And no winds or waves can disturb the security it offers

C. Which hope is within the veil

1. Entering within the veil is what the high priest did on the Day of Atonement, once a year

a. In the Holy of holies

b. Here he would offer those rituals that cleansed the nation so they could have access to God for one more year

c. In this way, God was “made propitious” *i.e.* willing to hear the prayers of Israel, to accept their sacrifices

2. Here the picture is of our Hope entering within the veil

a. In Romans 5, we are encouraged to pray direct to God since Jesus gave us access to the Holy of holies

b. Here, we are encouraged to hold on to the hope, because it resides in the holy of holies

We are going to develop this a bit more later

<sup>1</sup> William L. Lane, *Hebrews 1-8* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1991), 153.

<sup>2</sup> Brooke Foss Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 3rd ed. (London: Macmillan, 1903), 165.

### III. Walking on: in the path Jesus set for us (20)

I wasn't quite sure how to word this point...

#### A. Our forerunner behind the veil

1. Our hope went behind the veil with our forerunner
  - a. Word occurs only here in NT
  - b. Common enough in Gk literature, usually in the plural
    - 1) Military scouts or an advance troop heading behind the lines
    - 2) Advance ships of a fleet
    - 3) Early ripened fruit
    - 4) Heralds running along ahead to announce the arrival of some important person
    - 5) In singular: the runner who breaks away from the pack and finishes well ahead

All these ideas imply “precedence” or “sequence” – going on ahead, which partly grasps it.

One other similar usage:

“The Greek word for *forerunner* was used in the second century A.D. of the smaller boats sent into the harbor by larger ships unable to enter due to the buffeting of the weather. These smaller boats carried the anchor through the breakers inside the harbor and dropped it there, securing the larger ship.”<sup>3</sup>

2. But for Christians, Jesus is a different kind of precursor in the Holy of holies

#### B. The second aspect of our verse: how he entered behind the veil

1. Jesus entered “having become a high priest”
  - a. Recall again, only the high priest enters behind the veil

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<sup>3</sup> The Nelson Study Bible, pp. 2085-86, in Constable, Heb 6.19.

b. He enters on the Day of Atonement to make it possible for Israel to access God for another year

2. Jesus became a special kind of high priest

a. After the “order” (τάξις) of Melchizedek (taxis → “taxonomy”)

1) So, “class”

2) Or, “kind”

The author of Hebrews intends to develop this theme fully, we are now approaching the heart of the Book, see chapters 7-10.

b. But Melchizedek

1) The king/priest who met Abraham after the battle when Abraham rescued Lot from raiding kings

2) Abraham gave Melchizedek a tenth of the spoils, as a tithe, Melchizedek being God’s representative

Much more on this next week and following

3) Non-Judaeian, non-Levitical, a different category of priests than the sons of Aaron

4) Compare Heb 7.17 and Ps 110.4

Ps 110.4 The LORD has sworn and will not change His mind, “You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek.”

“The order of words in the last clause, κατὰ τὴν τάξιν. M. ἀρχ. γεν., is emphatic. Stress is laid upon the fact that Christ is High-priest after a new and higher order. He does therefore all that the High-priest did and more.”<sup>4</sup>

c. Key thought in our text: a high priest *forever (into the ages)*

1) The “having become” suggests that when he entered the Holy of holies, he was already a priest

<sup>4</sup> Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 166.

- 2) In time, this priesthood began when he offered the sacrifice on the cross for sins
  - 3) In heaven, the ritual was complete when he figuratively presented his blood in the sanctuary, after the ascension
3. Jesus, as a priest, entered as a forerunner
- a. You see, something different happens with Christians than with Israelites
    - 1) Israelites needed a priest to intercede for them
      - a) Daily
      - b) Monthly
      - c) Personally
    - 2) Israelites needed the high priest to make access for them, once a year, Day of Atonement
  - b. Yet, Jesus entered the Holy place and gained *permanent* access for believers

KJV Rom 5:1 ¶ Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: <sup>2</sup> By whom also we have **access** by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

- 1) Having become a high priest, he went in ahead of us
- 2) In becoming a high priest, he made us priests, and gained for us access in him

Because of this, God always hears our prayers, if we are believers.

4. The theme of assurance: hang on to Jesus
- a. The right response to fear
  - b. The proper location of confidence (the heavenly holy place)
  - c. Walking on: continuing in the path Jesus set for us — despite the pressures!

## Conclusion:

In the high priest's ministry behind the veil, he was required to wear small bells on the hem of his garment. This was required so that when he ministered in the holy place, he would not die:

Ex 28.35 "It shall be on Aaron when he ministers; and its tinkling shall be heard when he enters and leaves the holy place before the LORD, so that he will not die.

Legend has it that he also wore a rope tied around his ankle, in case he did die, the other priests could pull him out (nothing in the OT about this).

But consider this:

If the High Priest had a rope attached so the lesser priests could drag him out if he died in the Holy of holies. Our High Priest has a rope attached so he can drag us in.

"The anchor is out of sight, but it holds. That is what matters."<sup>5</sup>

**Proposition:** If you are in Christ, you are tied to a secure Rock, which ensures the realization of your hope.

Are you in Christ?

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<sup>5</sup> Robertson, *Word Pictures*, Heb 6.19.