

AN ANCHOR FOR THE SOUL

“We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain,” (Heb 6:19)

The anchor referred to in this verse is known today as a “kedge anchor”. In 1812 the American frigate Constitution escaped a British squadron by using kedge anchors. These anchors are cast into the sea from a small boat, and the ship is winched in the desired direction regardless of wind or tide. This Scripture informs us that hope is a firm and secure anchor for the soul. It is positioned so that it draws us into the inner sanctuary with God. Regardless of shifting winds our hope is an anchor that enables us to enter into the very presence of God.

Abraham is used as an example to teach us about the power of hope. Against hope he believed in hope (Rom. 4:18). His wife was not only barren, she was past the age of having children (Heb. 11:11). Since God wanted Abraham to take hold of this hope, He confirmed it with an oath. Because he never lost hope, Abraham waited patiently and received what God had promised. Since God also wants us to take hold of hope, He has confirmed His promise to us in such way that it becomes an anchor for our soul. This anchor is firm and secure and draws us into the presence of Jesus regardless of shifting winds or changing tides. (See Heb. 6:13 - 20).

At the risk of being indiscreet, it is important to remember that Isaac was not virgin born. Abraham’s hope prompted him to action. He was not “weak” in his faith, nor did he consider his “own body as dead” though he was about a hundred years old. His hope transcended the deadness of Sarah’s womb and he became “fully persuaded” that God would do what He had promised. That’s why he did not “waver” but was “strengthened”. Abraham believed in hope and was not disappointed. If we truly have hope, we will not be disappointed either!

How vividly I recall witnessing to a cancer patient many years ago. Though he was terminally ill, he admitted being too proud to change on his death bed. He did, however, have great confidence in modern medicine. Consequently, he was clinging to the hope that the cancer treatments would somehow make him well. Then the doctor inadvertently did something that pulled the plug on his optimism and totally destroyed his hope. As a gesture of kindness, the doctor removed all restrictions on his diet and told him that he could eat anything he wanted to. The patient told me that he felt like a condemned man on death row receiving his last meal. Almost immediately he was a different man. His face was drained of color. One moment he had hope in modern medicine, and the next moment he had no hope at all. He died within two days and as far as I know never confessed Christ. Like a runner giving up when the finish line was in sight, this poor man refused the only real hope there is. The absence of hope affected him physically and hastened his rendezvous with destiny. Spiritually, he apparently died without hope as well.

Not so with Christians! We have been begotten again to a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (1 Pet. 1:3). Like a warrior’s helmet our hope protects our minds from discouragement (1 Thess. 5:8). Like a river of living water, hope purifies our lives (1 Jn. 3:3). We plough in hope and we thresh in hope (1 Cor. 9:10). We rejoice in hope (Rom. 5:2) and we are saved by hope (Rom. 8:24). Our hope transcends the temporal things of earth and like an anchor of the soul draws us within the veil to an eternal inheritance (Heb. 9:15). As Paul put it, if our hope is only in this life, we are of all men most miserable (1 Cor. 15:19).

But, as we have said before, hope is not passive. Once the anchor has been dropped at the desired destination, that’s when the work really begins. Yes, the anchor is steadfast and sure. Yes, the cable can stand the test of adverse winds and rising tides. Yes, God supervises the whole process so that we will never be tempted beyond what we are able to bear. But someone must still operate the winch. God does not do this all by Himself, but has chosen to let us participate in this process. We are laborers together with God and hope helps provide the energy we need to succeed (1 Cor. 3:9). Isaiah said it like this: “ **those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.**” (Isa 40:31)