

Prayer

Dear Lord, forgive me when I have failed to live up to the standards to which I aspire. In the face of temptations, give me the courage to choose to do what is right and turn away from the tempter: and in the face of danger, give me the strength to stand firm in faith and resolve. Bless me, dear Lord, and receive my prayer I pray: AMEN

Other Prayer Suggestions

Weekly Theme: The Human Spirit

As you have prayed this week concerning the human spirit and the work of God's Spirit, I hope that you have seen connection between the two which were previously not obvious. Today, pray by way of asking the Lord to help you become more aware of spiritual things, and sensitive to the work of the Holy Spirit. You will be greatly blessed!

Meditation

Everlasting Light, shine on me in the midst of darkness;
Everlasting Goodness, deliver me from all evil;
Everlasting Strength, sustain me in my hours of need;
Everlasting Rock, inspire me to stand firm in faith;
Everlasting Wisdom, scatter the filth of my ignorance;
Everlasting Power, be my support, through all;
Everlasting Peace, still the fears which fill my head;
Everlasting Love, wrap me in the warmth of Your arms;
Everlasting Hope, keep me moving onwards, for You;
Thanks be to God.

Bible Study - Hebrews 6:13-20

¹³ When God made the promise to Abraham, since He had no-one greater to swear by, he swore on His own self, ¹⁴ saying, 'I will indeed bless you and multiply you.'¹⁵ And so, having waited patiently, Abraham obtained the promise.

¹⁶ People swear by someone greater than themselves, of course, and the oath confirms what is said and puts an end to all dispute. ¹⁷ Therefore when God wanted to show the unchangeable nature of his purpose very clearly to those who were heirs to what He promised, he confirmed it by an oath, ¹⁸ and He did this so that through two fixed things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to Him for refuge might be strongly encouraged to take hold of the hope set before us. ¹⁹ We have this hope like a sure and steady anchor of the soul, a hope that enters the inner shrine behind the curtain ²⁰ where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf, having become a High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

Review

In this, the last passage from Hebrews chapter 6, the writer continues from his discussion about faith, love and hope (6:9-12) to describe why it is that anyone can have confidence in God and His promises. He was making the case aware of people in the church who might have either been flagging in zeal, or tempted to doubt the promises of God, because of the continued delay in His coming and the endless persecution which followed some in the early days of the Church.

Hebrews firstly takes the example of Abraham. When God first spoke to Abraham (Gen 12:1-3), He promised him that he would make him into a great nation and bless him; also making him into a great blessing for the whole world. When Hebrews says that God swore 'on His own self'

(6:13), it means that in the text of Genesis, God's promise is a form of oath which was made on the basis of God's own ability to fulfil what He said. Frankly, God is not God unless He is capable doing whatever He says! And on this basis, because Abraham persisted in faithfulness, he received the proof of God's promise when his wife Sarah bore him a son, so that he could have future children and become a 'great nation'. This should itself be a reason for us to persist in our hope for God's promises to be fulfilled; or as the early Christians thought, for Christ to come in glory!

Hebrews then explains the ancient principle of swearing an oath (which is not the same as the idea of 'taking the Lord's name in vain' with which we are familiar from the Ten Commandments). What is said here is self explanatory (6:16), however, when the writer applies this to God, he said 'he confirmed it by an oath, and He did this so that through two fixed things in which it is impossible for God to lie ... we might be strongly encouraged' (6:17,18). What does this mean, and what are the 'two things' about which God cannot lie? It is not necessarily clear to the modern reader, but what Hebrews is saying is that neither God's promise nor his oath which confirms it, neither of these two things can fail because God is God. That is why we can hold on to what God has said with confidence.

Then, conscious of the people in the church to which he wrote who were troubled at the delay in Christ's coming again, something for which they may have waited for a long time, Hebrews speaks powerfully about our sure hope in God. He describes it poetically as like a 'steady anchor of the soul'; a wonderful word picture which has influenced theologians and hymn writers alike over centuries. Lastly, as if he has recalled where he began this detour describing faith love and hope, the writer of Hebrews links this idea straight back to Jesus as the great High Priest. Our sure hope rests in the fact that Jesus has taken control of all access to God the Father, by 'entering the inner shrine behind the curtain'; again, a poetic way of describing the rending of the Temple veil at the point of Jesus' death on the Cross, exposing the inner sanctuary of the Temple (see Matthew 27:51 etc.). Jesus, our unique High Priest (and therefore like Melchizedek!) has gone ahead of us through death to secure our rights of access to the Father, and this should be all that we require for faith and hope for the future.

We have now come full circle in Hebrews, back to the discussion about Jesus as High Priest which was broken off at Hebrews 5:11. As we continue with Hebrews, we will now find out much more of what the writer regards as 'solid food' teaching about the nature of Jesus and His role as our High Priest.

Questions *(for use in groups)*

1. Does the description of oaths in this text help you to understand what is being said in this part of Hebrews?
2. Are the promises God made to Abraham still in operation for us today, or have they been fulfilled by Christ?
3. When you say the words 'we have a sure and steady anchor of the soul', what springs to your mind?

Discipleship

This text is about certainty before God and before others about matters of faith. It has become fashionable to talk about doubt positively in many parts of the church today, and for some this is reckoned to be helpful, and others find it profoundly unhelpful. Certainly, faith is intended by God to be permanent, but doubt is transient and can only be part of someone's personal journey. Do you believe that there is a place for doubt in matters of faith, and if so, how does this relate to this passage of Scripture?

Final Prayer

Thank You, Lord Jesus Christ, for Your goodness and Your love, which lighten my life and give it meaning and substance. Hold me in this same goodness and love so that I may sustain a faithful witness to You throughout my life; through Jesus Christ, AMEN