



“Will Your Anchor Hold?”

Kevin Presley

I hope you and your family are staying well in the pandemic we are currently experiencing. Our prayers and good will are certainly with the many who are sick and suffering today. We are trusting God to see us through this global crisis that has developed. I want to talk about that for a little while today because almost everyone's lives have been disrupted to some extent and for many, their lives have been seemingly upended in such a short amount of time. It is sobering to realize how quickly things can change. The Bible says, ***“Boast not thyself of tomorrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth” (Proverbs 27:1).*** In a matter of a few weeks, the wheels of society have nearly ground to a halt. Hundreds of thousands of people have become sick; tens of thousands around the world have even died. A robust and growing economy is teetering on the brink of disaster. Families planning their futures have been told they may lose their jobs and their retirement accounts have nearly vanished. Many are living in fear of how long this might last and what the long-term fallout could be.

I think it's safe to say we're in the midst of a storm. Because violent storms come in life, ships need anchors. Your ship on the turbulent sea of life needs an anchor. What the present crisis is revealing is that many people do not have one. Their lives are dominated by fear, confusion, and even despair. The Bible speaks of various storms that came and caught even the people of God in their fury. One such account took place in the life of the apostle Paul.

Falsely accused by the Jews, Paul had been a prisoner now for a few years and had appeared before Caesar to plead his case. The time was drawing near and he and other prisoners were on board a ship on their way to the city of Rome. Despite Paul's warning that they were going to run into a terrible storm, his captors went ahead and sailed directly into danger. An awful tempest was tossing the ship about, and after two weeks of stormy seas, the men of the ship were giving up hope. An angel told Paul that they would survive but not before being shipwrecked on an island. The situation on that last night became incredibly desperate. The Bible describes it like this:

Acts 27:27-29 “But when the fourteenth night was come, as we were driven up and down in Adria, about midnight the shipmen deemed that they drew near to some country; And sounded, and found it twenty fathoms: and when they had gone a little further, they sounded again, and found it fifteen fathoms. Then fearing lest we should have fallen upon rocks, they cast four anchors out of the stern, and wished for the day.”

Some translations say *they prayed for daylight to come*. I think many today feel like those sailors must've felt that night. Perhaps you feel that way today. People are feeling hopeless and fearful of what may come because they have no option. They look out through the stormy darkness and cast out the anchor they had aboard the ship and hope for the best, praying at least for the light of day to come. But the people of God should have the calm assurance that Paul had that night long ago, for God has provided us with an anchor that cannot be moved and cannot fail. I hope you'll stop and really think about your soul today as we ask the question *Will your anchor hold?*

Anchors are not a luxury. They are a necessity. When the waters dash upon a ship and threaten to cast it upon the rocks, the anchor can be the only thing standing between the ship and disaster. It's there to stabilize the boat, to hold it in place, to keep it from the rocky shoal, and to keep it from drifting off course. The storm is not as threatening when the anchor is securely fastened in the deep. Spiritual anchors have the same effect in our lives. The Bible uses this metaphor to emphasize the importance of God's protection and care as we cross the sea of life.

Hebrews 6:17-19 “Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil;”

In other words, the certainty of God's promises is an anchor that holds the soul in place. It is believed that the Hebrew epistle was written to Christians whose faith was being tested and threatened by persecution. Many were tempted to turn away from Christ and revert to Judaism and its temple worship because of the challenges of living for Christ. The writer reminds them that God does not lie. His promises are true and immutable. The new covenant was real. The true priesthood of Jesus Christ was reality and the new covenant was better, lasting, and saving. God has proven that His promises and His word are true all throughout time and He has done so in many ways. This truth should tether and firmly hold our souls in place even when they come up against great trials and storms.

People are relying on many different things as anchors in times of peril. It's rather obvious when we see troubles come. They lay plans, trust in various people and things, and hope that things will turn out a certain way. But they eventually find that those anchors fail them when they truly need them. I wish to repeat that every soul needs an anchor because every ship will at some time enter very perilous seas. It will not always be smooth sailing—as we are seeing right now. Often, the tempest comes suddenly as this one has, and often it comes more fiercely than we ever imagined. We are living in uncertain and fearful days right now.

Think about it. In a matter of a few weeks, we have seen our lives come to a grinding halt. With every single day that goes by, we come closer to physical, financial, and societal disaster; at least it seems that way. My personal instinct and optimism cause me to believe that with God's help, we can emerge from the present distress, but truly none of us knows what will come to pass. Nor do we know what the long-

term damage to our economy and our society will be. For some of us, perhaps it is even more personal. You may be tending to sick loved ones. Perhaps the pandemic has already reached into your home and family. Maybe you were laid off from your job and you have no idea when things will turn around. Maybe you're nervously awaiting that phone call in the coming hours or days ahead. What kind of anchor do you have to rely upon? The real question is, will your anchor hold?

There's an old, old song in our hymnals that says, *Will your anchor hold in the storms of life, when the clouds unfold their wings of strife? When the strong tides lift and the cables strain, will your anchor drift or firm remain?* What about you? What hope do you have in these suddenly turbulent and confusing times? I can tell you that many people's anchors will fail them. The things to which they are turning and in which they are trusting have already failed them and will continue to do so.

It is sad to think that the anchor that many are turning to this very day is alcohol and drugs. I noticed the news report since the government has started shuttering businesses, public gatherings, and attractions that they have gone to great lengths to keep the liquor business open and available and to keep a steady stream flowing to the public. Various news headlines in my own home state emphasize that local liquor stores will be providing drive-up service. Rules have been bent to allow eating establishments to serve alcohol to go. Some have commented on social media in response to the news that they don't know how they would survive the turmoil if they didn't have their beer and their booze to ride out the storm. Think about what a sad commentary that is on our society and alcohol's prominent place in that society—that alcohol/drugs is one of the very first things that people turn to when trouble comes.

Proverbs 20:1 “Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.”

Proverbs 23:31-32 “Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder.”

Paul commanded, ***Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess;*** (That word means *debauchery* or *an abandoned, dissolute life*) ***...but be filled with the spirit (Ephesians 5:18).*** Friend, if you're turning to something that is sinful and destructive when trouble comes, you don't have much of an anchor. If all you can do is drown your troubles in something that has destroyed countless lives itself, something that has demolished homes and dismantled dreams, you don't have much of an anchor to see you through the storm. I can assure you there is a much, much better life and a much better way than that. Then some look to money as an anchor. They build up a fortune or carefully save and invest so that when lean times come, they can be somewhat insulated and come through it. But that's no guarantee. Multi-billion-dollar industries right now are teetering on the brink of bankruptcy today because of just a few weeks of little to no business. In two weeks, the stock market erased years of gain and 401k and retirement investments for millions of Americans were wiped out. Perhaps some have time to eventually see that money come back, time to work and regain. But many who will soon need it are now facing very hard times and they are fearful that a lifetime of work has been virtually wiped away.

Proverbs 11:4 “Riches profit not in the day of wrath: but righteousness delivereth from death.”

There's a reason in times of depression and economic hardship that people have turned to God. These are painful reminders that wealth is fleeting, and riches are very uncertain. Banks can fail, jobs can be

lost, stock markets can crash, houses and businesses can burn to the ground. No, money is no anchor to trust in against the storms of life.

Then, the anchor of health will eventually fail. Even if you're young, your health can be taken away in just a moment. Some of you have been to the doctor and walked out of that office with your lives suddenly upended, never to be the same again because of that dreaded diagnosis when you discovered that spot or that lump or those strange feelings that sent you to the doctor to be checked out. You go from one moment thinking all is well and the future is bright to suddenly facing sickness and maybe even the shocking prospect of a premature death.

Some are trusting in the promise of tomorrow. Holding on to optimism that tomorrow will bring a new day...*Just hold on and things will eventually get better.* Well, optimism is a good thing and sometimes that turns out to be the case. But many times, for many people, it doesn't. **"Boast not thyself of tomorrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth" (Proverbs 27:1).** A phone call, a knock at the door from the sheriff can change your life in the blink of an eye.

Then there's the anchor of false and misleading religion. There are feel-good peddlers of pulpit psychology who would have you believe that God will make you wealthy and healthy if you just have enough faith and buy into their commercialized brand of Christianity. The problem is, Jesus never promised to make anyone rich. Do you realize that? Jesus never promised to keep people healthy either. In fact, He taught that the opposite is often the case for people who choose to follow Him. He told His disciples, **"...In the world, ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).** He pointed them to eternity. That's where our focus needs to be. That's where our treasures need to be laid up. That's where our interests and our affections need to be today--in those things that are lasting, eternal, those things that will never fade away--instead of those things that are in the world that the Lord never even promised would be ours. But many people have bought into that philosophy and when trouble comes, their anchor fails. Because, yes, trouble WILL come.

What I want you to know today is that Jesus Christ and His truth is an anchor that will NEVER fail. When everything else is stripped away, the committed follower of Jesus Christ has a peace, a joy, a confidence, and a hope that nothing in this world or in hell beneath can take away. Paul once called it *the peace of God which passeth all understanding (Philippians 4:7)*. That peace is obtained only through a right relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

The fact is, sin is the source of all of our storms in life. Sin has made a mess of the world since the beginning of time. Since Adam first introduced it into human history, sin has been wreaking havoc and destruction on everything with which it has come into contact. You look at our uncertain world as it rocks and reels—now with disease, at other times with various conflicts and crises of one form or another: wars, famines, diseases, crimes, sorrow, death—all of those things are the result of sin's presence in the world. Man's rebellion against God.

Isaiah 57:20-21 "But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked."

The only true and lasting peace to be found in this world and beyond is in being reconciled to a loving and holy God by being forgiven of our sins through the gospel of Jesus Christ. Let me remind you of some anchors that the Christian has in the storms of life. These are anchors that will ALWAYS hold, no matter how fierce the storm.

One such anchor is the word of God. The Bible is God's revelation to man. People today may not think a lot about the Bible. Maybe at best they think it's a good book with some comforting sayings in it. But the Bible is much more than that. It is God's revelation of Himself to man. It is not only the roadmap to heaven, but along the journey it is a source of promise, reassurance, and hope to the person who heeds and obeys it. The Bible gives us council in every single situation of life we find ourselves in. Do you realize the Bible has that power and ability? There's not a predicament you will ever find yourself in, not a crossroad of decision that you'll come to, not a single perplexity or mystery of life that the Bible cannot give you some principle, precept, or example that will anchor your soul. Do you have that kind of relationship to the Bible? Do you read it every day? Do you constantly turn to it in good times and bad? If you're not girding up your mind and your heart with God's word as you go through life, it won't do you so much good when you get into the storm. But the Christian who always has that anchor on board his vessel will always have something to fasten him to the depth when the waves begin to roll and the storm begins to beat.

Then there's the Fatherhood of God. Do you have someone in your life—perhaps a father or mother, brother or sister, friend—that you can always turn to? Someone you can always pour out your heart to and know they will listen? Do you have some special someone who will always love you and understand what you're going through or how you feel? It might be a husband, wife, or some other family member. Having that kind of relationship is invaluable. It imparts strength that is hard to get through life without. But they don't live forever. Friends sometimes fail us and disappoint us. People we thought were friends desert us. Maybe they're taken away from this life and we no longer have them in our lives. Do you know there's a friend who will never fail? God wants to have that kind of relationship with you. He is so interested in your welfare and your soul.

Sometimes we get to thinking that God is just some being out beyond the blue, somewhere up past the clouds, but I want you to know that God is so intimately acquainted with you and interested in your welfare and your soul that while you and I were yet sinners and estranged from Him, He sent His Son Jesus Christ, to this world searching for you and me. He wants to be your Father, your Counselor, your unfailing Friend. There is never an inconvenient time for you to talk to Him and seek His help and strength if you are His child and are on praying terms with Him. But that is a relationship that, first of all, only comes through faith and obedience to Him, and it's a relationship that has to be cultivated and maintained throughout all the seasons of life.

True enough that all of us are the creation of God and we are loved by God by virtue of being His creation, but the kind of relationship I just described only comes to those who are in covenant with Him. Those who approach Him through faith in Christ and obedience and submission to the gospel. There are many who want to cry out to God in times of crisis and disaster, but the reality is, they have no relationship with God. Friend, when you truly leave the world behind and commit yourself to Him and live the Christian life, you have ***a friend that sticketh closer than a brother (Proverbs 18:24)***. You have a Father who will never fail you and never let you down.

The Christian also has the anchor of fellowship. The church. God designed the church that way. It is a community of love and support. Those who are In Christ are not in this world alone. They have a relationship of brothers and sisters in Christ that the world doesn't enjoy or, frankly, even understand. I have friends and loved ones, but more than that brothers and sisters in the Lord Jesus Christ, literally all around this world. I know them on a first name basis. They are people I trust and on whom I can depend in my hour of darkest need. That's a wonderful blessing of being In Christ and being part of His kingdom.

Ultimately, the Christian has the anchor of hope, which as we read in the beginning, the Hebrew writer said we have ***as an anchor of the soul (Hebrews 6:19)***. People in the world fret over their lives and their futures, but the person who knows the Lord has not only the desire, but the expectation of everything that God has promised. If everything else in this world—including the very breath of life—is lost, the child of God has the hope of eternal life. He doesn't fear death on that basis.

I Corinthians 15:19 “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.”

Proverbs 14:32 “...the righteous hath hope in his death.”

That old song continues: *We have an anchor that keeps the soul steadfast and sure while the billows roll. Fastened to the Rock which cannot move, grounded firm and deep in the Savior's love.* You see, other anchors won't hold, but the anchor of Jesus Christ, the anchor of a Christian life, the anchor of true faith in God and a life devoted in His service—those are anchors that will hold.

How is it with you today? Is your anchor holding? Isn't this a good time to really stop and evaluate your relationship with Jesus Christ? Perhaps you've never been baptized into Christ. Perhaps you've never become a child of God as the Bible teaches that one becomes a Christian. You are not ready for whatever may come. You're fretting and fearing the future. Or maybe you've drifted far away and your faith needs to be rekindled, restored, and renewed. We want to help you and we hope that you'll reach out today.

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