

Once For All

Lenten Devotions 2025

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Note: Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the English Standard Version.

Third Week of Lent — Monday, March 24

For everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil. Therefore let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity. (Hebrews 5:13-6:1)

Growing Up

When a one-year-old toddles on shaky legs taking his first, tentative steps, the proud parents stretch out their arms, eagerly waiting to scoop up their little one and praise his accomplishment. It is a sweet scene. But the parents don't expect it to be like this forever. They know their little boy will become steadier on his feet, eventually learning to walk without falling and then to run and jump and play. In short, he will grow up.

As the writer of Hebrews penned today's verses, perhaps he felt like a spiritual parent—joyful that these believers had tasted the grace of God and put their trust in Christ. The foundational truths of the Gospel had taken hold in their hearts. For that, he was thankful. Now he expected that these initial steps of faith would lead to continued spiritual growth, but it seems he was disappointed about how that was going. That's why he speaks strong words: don't stagnate; don't become complacent. Don't miss out on all God has for you!

Spiritual growth is a natural and expected path for God's sons and daughters. And it's a path the Holy Spirit is delighted to lead us day by day. What step on that path will you take today? Perhaps you can devote extra time to be in the Word or to pray as you drive to work or run errands. The Spirit might nudge you to love your neighbors by shoveling their walk, taking them a meal or just dropping by for a visit. Maybe you will stretch your faith muscles by turning a troubling situation over to God or giving thanks in all circumstances.

These steps, small though they may seem, show that you are growing up. They please your heavenly Father. You might even picture Him stretching out His arms to scoop you up in an embrace of joyful love.

Dear Lord, Make me aware of steps I can take on the path of spiritual growth. Thank You that You work in me, giving me the desire and the power to do what pleases You (Philippians 2:13 NLT). Amen.

Tuesday, March 25

For land that has drunk the rain that often falls on it, and produces a crop useful to those for whose sake it is cultivated, receives a blessing from God. But if it bears thorns and thistles, it is worthless and near to being cursed, and its end is to be burned. Though we speak in this way, yet in your case, beloved, we feel sure of better things—things that belong to salvation. (Hebrews 6:7-9)

Better Things

A useful crop and a blessing or a worthless crop and a burning. Yikes! These verses are sobering. No follower of Christ wants his or her life to be like a barren crop. How sad that would be!

Despite the warning offered in today's reading, the author turns the corner and speaks hope, "Beloved, we feel sure of better things—things that belong to salvation." What causes him to be so confident? Is it because the Hebrews are such strong Christians, because they will come through in the end? No, it is because these believers are in Christ, at the cost of His once-for-all sacrifice. They belong to Him. They are united with Him as a branch is united to the vine.

That's the word picture Jesus used: "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:4-5).

If you want to be fruitful, abide—abide in Christ.

Gracious Savior and True Vine, Thank You for the life and strength that flow to me when I am connected to You. Amen.

Wednesday, March 26

For God is not unjust so as to overlook your work and the love that you have shown for his name in serving the saints, as you still do. And we desire each one of you to 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. (Hebrews 6:10-12)

Faith and Patience

Works of faith. Labors of love. These are phrases the apostle Paul used to describe the believer's faith-in-action. It seems the writer of Hebrews had the same things in mind when he spoke of the "better things that belong to salvation," which he was confident would be displayed in the lives of his readers.

Later in this letter, the author spells out some of the ways the Hebrews had lived out their faith: they had endured suffering and persecution; they had shown kindness to those imprisoned for the Gospel; they had joyfully accepted the seizure of their property, because they knew all earthly wealth was of little value compared to the heavenly riches they would inherit (see Hebrews 10:32-34).

The Hebrew believers set a good example for us. Their trust in Christ, solidly grounded on His once-for-all sacrifice, was indeed growing. It expressed itself in outward acts of love and inner qualities of faith and patience.

May this be true of us as well!

Dear Jesus, Strengthen my faith so that it shows in how I treat others and in how I trust You day by day. Amen.

Thursday, March 27

For when God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself, saying, "Surely I will bless you and multiply you." And thus Abraham, having patiently waited, obtained the promise. (Hebrews 6:13-15)

Waiting for the Promises

Yesterday we considered that the Hebrew believers are examples of those who lived out their faith and waited patiently to receive their full salvation in heaven. Today Abraham is given as a similar example. He received the covenant promise from God that he would become a great nation and even bless the whole world when the Messiah was born through his descendants. But my, what a long wait he had! His son, Isaac, was born when Abraham was 100 years old. Abraham wasn't even alive when the children of Israel reached the promised land. And it was centuries later when the Messiah arrived in a humble manger and began His purposeful journey to the cross.

Isn't it interesting that our reading says Abraham waited patiently? I'm not so sure about that! We can think of times when his patience ran out and he took matters into his own hands (see Genesis 16) or when he twisted the truth rather than trusting God (see Genesis 12).

Abraham's faith had its ups and downs, yet God graciously chose to remember Abraham's patient waiting. What comfort this is for us! Our faith also has ups and downs, high and lows, yet we can be encouraged by God's promises to those who wait on Him: "They who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint" (Isaiah 40:31).

Lord Jesus, You know what I am facing today. I wait on You and cling to Your promises. Amen.

Friday, March 28

So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath, so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have 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, (Hebrews 6:17-19)

An Anchor for our Souls

I hope you have a good day. I hope it doesn't rain. I hope my haircut turns out okay. We use the word "hope" lightly, to express a desired outcome. Perhaps it's just wishful thinking or an optimistic expectation.

Biblical hope, by contrast, is much deeper and stronger. So strong that it's called an anchor. Picture a boat on a large lake. The anchor keeps the boat snug in its safe harbor. The anchor protects the boat from being driven into danger by the wind or the waves.

Today's reading tells us that our hope as believers is like an anchor. In fact, it is "a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul." Why is this so? Because it is grounded in the once-for-all sacrifice we have been considering during Lent. Christ has suffered, died and risen. He has brought us forgiveness, abundant life, and an eternal home in heaven. Since nothing can change that reality, nothing can destroy our hope.

Winds and waves of all sorts still assail us. Sometimes our circumstances get the best of us, and our hope grows dim. When that happens, anchor your soul to the Rock. As the chorus to an old hymn puts it:

*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.*

(lyrics by Priscilla J. Owens)

Dear Jesus, I anchor my soul to You. Keep me safe in Your arms. Amen.