

September 29, 2019 (Pentecost 16 C)

Hebrews 13:9-16
“An ANCHORED Faith”

During the month of September we’ve worked through a number of ways that God freshens up, revitalizes, and strengthens our FAITH. Today, as we conclude our series, we will focus on how our faith is so solidly *anchored*. I hope you never fail to understand or appreciate how rare, miraculous, and blessed this fact truly is. Only the One true Christian Faith, and that faith alone . . . *never* changes.

We are saved by that gift of faith in God’s Chosen One – the Messiah who is the only way to eternal life / the One who became a sacrifice of atonement and provides us forgiveness in His Blood and righteousness in His Life – so that we sinners can stand in the presence of Almighty God. From Adam and Eve, to Noah, to Moses, through the prophets to the first disciples, and right down here to us modern disciples – the doctrine / the teaching / the way of salvation has never changed through time. It’s the **ONLY** thing we have that is timeless and changeless – in a world where everything is changing constantly.

Every man-made philosophy and religion change with the times – they are tossed all over the place on the winds of popularity and prevailing thought. Sadly, so many Christian churches (and whole church bodies) have embraced modern philosophical ideas – and, having lost their footing on Scripture, get blown around in strange ways to strange places. All too often you hear people say: *“This is not the church I grew up in! How did we get here?”*

We want our faith to be **anchored** – so we can say, *“This is still the church I grew up in! The teachings haven’t changed from the time my grandparents were young – and they’re not changing now – so that my grandchildren are going to be taught the exact same things, and inherit that solidly anchored faith.”*

There’s only ONE way for our faith to be truly and solidly ANCHORED . . . it must be anchored in the **Word of God**. God Himself told us: *“Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.”* (Matthew 24:35) The Book of **Hebrews** closes up with this strong admonition:

Hebrews 13:9-16 (EHV)

9 Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings. For it is good for our hearts to be strengthened by grace, not by foods, which are of no help to those who make them a way of life.

The strange self-righteous, legalistic, teachings of the Pharisees – to the open minded, hollow, liberal teachings of the Sadducees – to the weird, mysterious, cryptic, dualistic philosophies of the Gnostics back then . . . have all been updated, massaged, rebranded, and repackaged – and they keep swirling all around us today. They try to pull up our anchor from God’s Word, so that we lose everything He’s given us.

I don’t think the Book of Hebrews here is *just* warning us about those philosophies out there in culture and those things coming at us through the TV, entertainment, and media we soak up. We have strange teachings, philosophies, and ideas that pop up right there in our own heads!

- If you ever think God is disgusted with you and is punishing you for your sins and wretched weaknesses . . . that’s a strange teaching not found in His Word.
- If you’re feeling pretty pleased with yourself, and that your sins recently haven’t been all that bad, and basically there’s not much to repent of . . . you didn’t get that message from Him.
- If you ever feel totally worthless, and all alone, and like your life is hollow and meaningless . . . that’s simply not true.
- If you think it’s your job to police morality and to act as the judge, jury, and executioner – because everyone must live up to the wonderful standards you have set for yourself . . . you’ve been sucked in by unscriptural ideas.
- If you think, *“Oh – I would only be happy and ever so fulfilled in life if I had that _____ which is missing from my life! I’m miserable now, but if I had that I’d be overjoyed!”* . . . then you’ve bought into a huge lie.

We **all** tell ourselves lies. That’s just one reason we come here to church and say, *“Satan – get your lies out of my head! Jesus – replace them with the truth.”* And – through His Word – He does. **Grace** itself is a strange and foreign philosophy to the world . . . but we love it and we eat it up! He does not treat you as your sins deserve! He forgives all your mistakes and covers up all your guilt. He blesses you with everything you need to do His work, and doesn’t

expect you to be concerned or burdened with all those things outside your control. Indeed, as Jesus Himself told us – ***that TRUTH will set you free!*** It’s not the habits, the rituals, the routines, or the church membership card that will get you through life to heaven – it’s God’s GRACE in His Word of Truth that keeps us anchored.

When we are ***chained tightly*** to the WORD – then we are ***chained tightly*** to CHRIST:

Verse 10: We have an altar from which those who minister at the tent have no right to eat. 11 For the high priest brings the blood of the animals sacrificed for sins into the Most Holy Place, and then their bodies are burned outside the camp. 12 Jesus suffered outside the gate for this reason: to sanctify people by his own blood. 13 So then let us go to him, outside of the camp, bearing his disgrace. 14 For we do not have a permanent city here, but we are looking for the city that is coming. 15 Through Jesus, therefore, let us constantly offer to God a sacrifice of praise, that is, the fruit of lips that confess his name. 16 And do not forget to do good and share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.

The Jewish people were linked / chained to that physical place – the TEMPLE – where they would meet God and God would meet with them. The blood of animals (shed for their sins) was placed on the Mercy Seat and also sprinkled upon them. And, the bodies were burned up outside the camp . . . in a place of death and impurity, as we see in **Leviticus 16:27-28** ***“The bull and the goat for the sin offerings, whose blood was brought into the Most Holy Place to make atonement, must be taken outside the camp; their hides, flesh and offal are to be burned up. The man who burns them must wash his clothes and bathe himself with water; afterward he may come into the camp.”***

As hard as it was for them – God told them they were linked to CHRIST now – and, it’s better to go and be with Him, outside the camp, in disgrace . . . where the Blood of Immanuel covers all your sins. He is now the place you go to meet with God. The building / the Temple (now that Christ had come) means nothing. And, very soon God would allow that Temple to be completely destroyed – never to be built again. It’s His testimony to all Jewish people down through the ages: ***If you want to meet God and find forgiveness for your sins – the only place you can find it is in Jesus.***

That was a hard transition for them. It tore families apart. They bore serious disgrace. They suffered persecution. It cost them a lot – sometimes *everything* – but nothing compared to what Jesus gave them (and us): a place in His City; the New Jerusalem.

Jesus meets us wherever His Word is taught accurately in purity and wherever we see His Gifts of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper being properly administered. And . . . we stand with Him outside the camp too. We’re outside the norm of what’s popular anymore. Mainstream Christianity has “pulled up anchor” and gone along with the crowds. And yet, here we stand, in a place of disgrace (according to the world) and being mocked by modern people who have embraced modern ideas that are rife with hypocrisy and deadly poison.

Here we stand with Jesus who told us: ***“If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.”*** (*Matthew 16:24*) Be prepared to suffer – as we stand with Jesus “outside the camp”. Be prepared for your faith to cost you in all sorts of ways – in the relationships lost, the time spent, the effort, the energy put in, and in the dollars we sacrifice – for Him and for the cause of bringing the Gospel out to the world. He will PUSH us outside our comfort zones and into the dirt . . . but, it’s only temporary, and we have that new and permanent city (filled with God’s glory) waiting for us.

We are truly blessed to have that same ***anchored faith*** God gave His people way back then:

- An **anchored faith** loves and clings to the Word of God – building one’s entire life upon it.
- An **anchored faith** is chained to Christ – for He is the only way to receive forgiveness, peace, and the certainty of eternal life.
- An **anchored faith** is willing to bear disgrace for Him, as we take up our crosses and follow Him.
- An **anchored faith** receives power and wisdom to face any challenge in life, and any darkness (no matter how deep).
- An **anchored faith** sacrifices whatever it must – willingly (and even joyfully) to bring glory to Christ and the Gospel to others.
- An **anchored faith** knows it’s all worth it, because this is not our home . . . our home is up there with the Lamb of God, who is reigning on His throne!