

The Ebb Tide
By Arch Chater

God's people are entering a time when faith and confidence and hope are most essential. A time when eventually each one will find their faith severely tested, a time when nothing less than a resolute belief in Jesus Christ and faithful allegiance to Him will stand the test. A time when a full understanding and appreciation of what Jesus has done and is doing for each one is truly accepted. A time for all believers to cling to the truth and to their only hope of salvation and eternal life and that is in total submission of their lives to Jesus Christ.

"It is the hope that we have as an anchor to the soul sure and steadfast that entereth into that within the veil," "by His own blood having obtained eternal redemption for us." Hebrews 6:19, 9:12. "The One who is able to save to the uttermost, all who come unto God by Him, since He ever liveth to make intercession for them." Heb 7:25.

For Jesus came to this earth and lived out a perfect righteous life as man, and gave that life, dying a horrible death paying the penalty for man's sins. Now our Saviour mediates in the heavenly sanctuary for all those who have accepted His gift of salvation and have committed their lives to Him in faith and hope.

It is a hope that is lovingly presented in God's word and has placed salvation for mankind squarely and vividly before the whole world in probably the best known passage of Scripture, for it is written, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." John 3:16.

This wonderful gift, promise and hope so leads the believer by faith to obtain it. It is the hope that calls for patience, a hope that calls for endurance, an endurance to develop strength of character as problems, afflictions and the trials of life are encountered, allowed by the Lord to come upon us. In so experiencing and prevailing, one's religion is proven to be genuine. Out of such experiences of life, grows and develops a more confident hope, as the experiences of Job testifies to. The severe discipline of character can strengthen the faith and the hope of the sincere believer for didn't Job say after he eventually realised that he wasn't being punished, but that the Lord was testing him, "When he has tried me, I shall come forth as gold."? Job 23:10. Paul also counselled in Romans 5:4 "We glory (we rejoice) in tribulation, knowing that

tribulation worketh patience (endurance) and patience, experience and experience, hope.” Friends it is a hope endorsed by the presence of the Holy spirit in the heart, for again Paul says, “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.” And that is further endorsed by the fruit of the Spirit in the life. Gal 5:23, 23. It is a hope that cannot disappoint us. It is a hope that we have as an anchor to the soul, sure and steadfast that entereth into that within the veil. This hope of salvation we have through Jesus Christ is surely a trusty anchor for it connects us with God in the heavenly sanctuary where Jesus our Saviour mediates on our behalf in the presence of the Father. What better hope could we have, but it is a hope that must endure, for Jesus said in Matt 24:13, when speaking of the end of the world, “He that endureth unto the end, shall be saved.” The strength, the quality, the durability of the hope that we have which is the anchor to our souls, has to be individually developed and will depend upon one’s alliance and allegiance to Jesus Christ.

It is an anchor of hope that must hold firm when the tide turns, and turn it surely will and the outgoing tide, the ebb tide, will bring the world into a time of trouble such as never was. One’s hope, one’s anchor will then be subjected to the stress and strain of tribulation, privation, affliction and persecution, for Satan will exercise all his power to dislodge us from our anchors of hope. The words of Jesus in Matt 24, to endure unto the end, have the same meaning of those of Jesus in Rev 2:25 where Jesus said, “Hold fast till I come.” Will your anchors hold fast? Will mine? - for only an anchor designed, formed and forged in the furnace under the guidance and direction of its Designer, Jesus Christ, will hold fast. That degree of faith, hope developed in Him and by Him, by subjection of the life to Him, will only develop your anchor and my anchor of hope – anchors that will hold fast in the troublesome times ahead, for they will be embedded in the Rock, the Designer, the Developer, the Source of our hope, Jesus Christ.

I quote from 5T 484-5, “The Lord is willing to help us, to strength us, but we must pass through the refining process until all the impurities in the character are burned away. Each member of the church will be subjected to the furnace, not to consume, but to purify....” “Their earthliness must be removed that the image of Christ may be perfectly reflected, unbelief must be overcome. Faith, patience and hope are to be developed.” The development of our faith, our patience and our hope is the development of the strength and durability of our anchors and the hope of salvation

through Jesus Christ. This can only be achieved by willing obedience to God and the endurance in the furnace of affliction under the watchful eye of our Saviour Jesus Christ, for He said, "Behold I have refined thee. I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction." Isa 48:10 "Everyone has undiscovered traits of character that must come to light through trials. God allows those who are self-sufficient to be sorely tempted that they may understand their helplessness." 7T 210.

R&H 10 April, 1894 "He knows just what fire of temptation and trial is needed to purify the precious metal in order that the radiance of divine love may be reflected."

Each one is granted a period of probation to develop their anchor of hope, forged in unison with Jesus Christ, for He said, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." Heb 13:5. "I am with you always even unto the end of the world." Matt 28:20. "Christ in you, the hope of glory." Col 1:27

Our anchors of hope are to be of such durability and strength "in the completion of character" as to hold fast when the tide turns and surges against us. GC 621-2, "The season of distress and anguish before us will require a faith that can endure weariness, delay, hunger – a faith that will not fail, though sorely tried. The period of probation is granted to all to prepare for that time. Jacob prevailed because he was persevering and determined. The time of trouble such as never was is soon to open upon us and we shall need, an experience which we do not now possess, which many are too indolent to obtain."

And from R&H 26 November, 1861 "The condition of God's people was presented before me. Many failed in coming up to the standard set up by our Saviour. They are in an alarming condition, not careful to examine the foundation of their hope, but are indifferent to their state, and self-deceived. Some, I saw, had departed from God, and were united with the spirit of the world."

Friends, confronted with these warnings, how diligent and committed we need to be in our allegiance and submission to the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives, that each may in the strength of Jesus Christ develop the quality and durability of their hope. We need anchors that will hold fast in Jesus when the tide turns and the time of trouble surges against those who honour God and keep His commandments. It is a tide and time of trouble that will

dislodge the anchors of those not firmly embedded in the Rock, Jesus Christ.

Great Controversy p.593

“ ...None but those who have fortified the mind with the truths of the Bible will stand through the last great conflict.”

Friends, an anchor of hope that is not sure and steadfast, is as good as no anchor at all. As an illustration, I draw on an experience I once had with such an anchor - one that was not sure and steadfast.

Quite a few years ago now, and as a younger man, I experienced the feeling of the imminent loss of my life through my own lack of preparation, inwardly rebuking myself for my complacency, for finding myself in what appeared to be an irreversible situation. This occurred whilst fishing from my boat that I had poorly anchored. I had anchored my boat in deep water, in an estuary very close to the open sea.

The estuary was narrow. It was a remote area and I was alone. The waters were calm. The tide was running in. Full tide was approaching, and as full tide was reached and the tide turned suddenly, and the outgoing waters surged out to meet the sea, causing my anchor to drag and become dislodged.

The nearness that day of being swept out over the bar and into the turbulent waters, capsizing my boat with the possibility of the loss of my life was real and frightening. I knew my anchor was embedded in the sand and not in rock and would not hold on the outgoing tide. I knew I needed to be vigilant and to change my position before the tide turned and surged out to sea. I knew that I had anchored in a place of high risk, very close to the bar and the turbulence of the sea. Knowing full well all these things, I procrastinated about changing my position until the last moment, because the fishing was so good. Friends, I was so engrossed in the pleasures of the moment, as to put the safety of my life in jeopardy.

It had been my intention to leave it until the last moment before the tide turned to change my position. There is a short period of time called “dead water” before the tide turns, when the tide is neither running in nor running out; when the waters are absolutely still and peaceful; a time that can lead one into a false sense of security,

clouding the mind to the realisation of the imminent danger present.

The tide turned suddenly and I was ill prepared as the massive expanse and volume of the backwaters behind me surged out to the sea with tremendous power. I had left it too late in preparation. The strain on my anchor caused it to drag and then become dislodged and I found myself being quickly swept toward the bar, the boiling surf and the sea barely 150 m away. In my anxiety to start the motor, I flooded the engine with fuel. Panic momentarily overtook me as in desperation I tried to start the motor. With very little distance remaining between the turbulent sea and me, I managed to start the engine as the boat entered rougher waters. Quickly turning the boat around, I made it back to safer anchorage, retrieving the anchor which was dangling uselessly beneath the boat.

Friends the analogy I have tried to draw, I trust is evident. We're all afloat on the waters of life, now anchored in the estuary of life, where the waters meet the sea. The waters of life are relatively calm at present, not unlike the dead water at the time of full tide. This is the time of the cry, "...Peace, peace; when there is no peace." Jer.6.14, though not far distant, we can see the turbulence of the sea and hear the roar of the waves. Friends the evidences of the nearness of the time of trouble are before us. It is nearly full tide, that period of time just before the tide turns, when the ebb tide will flow and the waters surge out to meet the turbulence of the sea. God is soon to remove His restraining hand from the four angels, holding back the winds of strife when the tide will turn and the surges of the time of trouble, of strife and terror will befall the world. "There are forces now ready and only waiting the divine permission to spread desolation everywhere." GC 614. The sand of self-reliance and doctrines of men provides no safe anchorage. While God's professing people are unwisely anchored in the sand of false doctrines and works, they content themselves with enjoying the pleasures of sin for a season (Heb.11.25). They choose to anchor in the world regardless of the dangers. They refuse to heed the 4th angel to "come out of her my people" and they refuse to sever their attachments to commandments of men and attachments the world. Their Laodicean anchor drags uselessly, unable to save them and they are swept deeply into the time of trouble; the turbulent sea equating with the plagues and the wrath of God.

Only then those who have the seal of God will have anchors that will hold – anchors of hope that have been developed for quality and endurance by those who have given their full allegiance to Jesus and submitted their lives to God. These anchors are anchors firmly embedded in the hope of our salvation, the Rock that is Jesus Christ.

Friends, it all comes down to preparation, which would reveal one's trust, one's faith and hope by the life one leads; in the anchor to the soul, salvation through Jesus Christ. Let none of us be found procrastinating, being unprepared, having their anchors of hope made from inferior material of their own devising. An anchor 50% in the rock and 50% in the sand will not hold. Neither an anchor neither 90% in the rock and 10% in the sand will hold. Only an anchor that is 100% in the rock will hold when the tide turns.

Let none be found like the 5 foolish virgins, who forsook preparation until the last moment, until the tide had turned and they found their anchors of hope buried in the sand. And the Lord said to them, that He did not know them. Let none be found like those who turned deaf ears to Noah's warning to make preparation. They ignored his warnings and the door of the ark was closed to them. The tide had turned and their anchors of hope of their own devising were also found buried in the sand. Let none be found like the man at the wedding feast, without a wedding garment and the king came in and found him unprepared. The tide once again, had turned for this man, who was also found to have an anchor of his own devising planted in the sand of his own self-righteousness. He was cast into outer darkness.

Friends the tide is about to turn for this world. Let each one prepare now and fully develop their anchors of hope with characters forged in the likeness of our Saviour Jesus Christ.

We need to develop anchors of durability, anchors of depth of character, having that degree of hope that reveals Jesus Christ anchored in us and we anchored in Him.

Only then will it be in evidence, that the reality of that hope that we have, is surely an anchor to the soul, sure and steadfast, an anchor that can be relied upon to hold fast when the tide turns and the ebb tide flows bringing tribulation and the time of trouble. That

anchor of hope will be embedded in the Rock Jesus Christ. Anywhere else is anchored in sand and will not hold.

Friends, the ebb tide is soon to flow. Let each one make good use of whatever time remains to develop anchors of hope; anchors that will hold fast till He comes.

Sand = self; self-reliance

Fishing = pleasures of sin, worldly attachments

4 winds = backwater

Rock = Jesus

Anchor = faith in Jesus, hope

Sea = destruction

Boat = life

Bottleneck = little time of trouble

Dead water = false sense of security