

# Morning Service - Rev. George Macaskill

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Preacher: Rev. George Macaskill

[ 0 : 00 ] Now, let's turn to verse 22 in the chapter which we read. Hebrews chapter 13, and I want to concentrate on the first clause in the paragraph.

I appeal to you, brothers, bear with my word of exhortation.

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Now, as we begin a new year, there's probably nothing we all more expect or want than encouragement.

Especially as we've lost a minister. Father, God has moved your minister to another place, and you're to seek and look for another one.

[ 1 : 05 ] So you need encouragement. We always need encouragement. Now, in our text, the word exhortation is translated elsewhere in the Bible as encouragement.

In fact, it's translated six times as the word comfort. So here he is. Here's the apostle, the writer to the Hebrews saying, I appeal to you, brothers, bear with my word of encouragement.

Hasn't sin made a terrible mess of us when you think about it? We need to be encouraged to be encouragement.

Eh? We need to be encouraged to be encouraged. He says, I appeal to you, bear with me as I try to encourage you. Isn't that amazing?

In the previous chapter, chapter 12, verse 5, they had forgotten the word of encouragement. They'd forgotten the comfort he'd already spoken about.

[ 2 : 26 ] What peculiar people we are. We need to be encouraged to be encouraged. Now, what is true encouragement?

Is it simply you've got a friend and he's got a problem and he's got to go through a trial and you go up to him and you pat him on the back and say, don't worry, Paul, don't worry.

Is that real encouragement? Is that real encouragement? Is that real encouragement? Is that real encouragement? Is that real encouragement? When God comforts, when God encourages, it is real, authentic, genuine encouragement.

He doesn't just say, oh, don't worry. He encourages and he strengthens. There are two things I want to look at as we bear with a word of encouragement.

When God encourages, he gives reasons for encouragement. Good reason to be encouraged.

[ 3 : 45 ] And when God, secondly, when God encourages, his word encourages. His word actually strengthens. Just hearing it strengthens and encourages.

So let's look at these two things. The genuine reason that God encourages us. There's a verse in Romans chapter 8, verse 24, which says, hope that is seen is not hope.

Now, I was, I just can't, I couldn't get my head around that for many a long year until I realized that what it's saying is, you don't hope for something you already have.

You've got it. You don't hope for it, do you? In the Bible, hope means something quite different from what we use it today.

When we use the word hope, it's a measure of uncertainty. Oh, I hope I'll get that job. Meaning, you're not certain you'll get that job. But when God uses the word hope in the Bible, it means it's something certain, not uncertain.

[ 5 : 04 ] In the Bible, a good hope is not hoping for something good. In the Bible, a good hope is depending on, it's hoping on something reliable, something dependable, something worth depending on.

You remember when the Israelites lost Moses. Do you remember how God encouraged them? He said, Moses is dead.

Now, therefore, arise. They had their period of mourning. And he said, now the period of mourning is over.

Now arise and get on with the work. What was he saying? Look, Moses was good. Moses was your best leader.

Moses was terrific. But they were saying, as they had to cross the promised land, we haven't got Moses. We're missing Moses. Moses was a great strength to us.

[ 6 : 20 ] Moses was a great hope to us. But Moses is gone. And Christ says, yes, Moses is dead. But I'm not dead.

What made Moses great? What made Moses great? God made Moses great. God made Moses great. And as you miss a minister, you were blessed by.

And might be saying, oh, he was just the man to sort out this problem and to do this and to do that. Who gave him these gifts? Who made him that, like that?

God made him. And there's plenty other fish in the sea, as they say to people who have a fallen relationship. God has his men everywhere.

God has his people everywhere. Yes, Moses is dead. But God is not dead. And it is God who made Moses great.

[ 7 : 26 ] And if you are missing your pastor, God is the one that made him what he was to you. And God is saying, yes, Moses is dead.

But my word is not dead. Where did Moses get all his wisdom from? Where did Moses get his instructions from? The word, the Bible.

God might have taken away your minister, but he's not taken away his word. And it's his word that leads and guides and blesses.

We have his word in our language. What a blessing that is. What a blessing that is. I don't know if I've mentioned here before, but I always remember, you remember those of us who are a bit older, the Iron Curtain, before the USSR fell, before communism fell, as it were.

You weren't allowed to bring Bibles. Bibles had to be smuggled into Russia. They were prohibited. And I always remember, I think it was Brother Andrew, somebody I knew who went there and he had a Bible in his pocket with the full intention of giving it to a believer who couldn't get a hold of a Bible.

[ 8 : 59 ] And they made a secret arrangement to meet under a lamppost in Red Square. And they went there. It was the dead of winter and it was a cold night. And they all had their coats and scarves and that.

And they weren't very sure who were they meeting. And they're a wee sign to give another. And then when they gave that little secret sign, that signal to each other, the missionary made it clear that the man that was meeting the missionary said, look, he says, can you tell me something? Once he was sure it was a missionary and he put his hand in his pocket, took out a page, one page of the Bible. And he showed it to the missionary and he said, sir, he says, can you assure me that is God's Word?

Can you assure me that's a Bible? And the missionary read it. Oh yeah, yeah. He says, I can definitely tell you that's God's Word. That's a Bible.

That's God's Word. Well, the man said, please, please, can you give me the next page? can you give me the next page?

[ 10 : 18 ] I think I've got, I've got nine Bibles on my mobile phone. He would give anything for the next page.

And there's millions of people without God's Word today. You have God's Word.

That's what makes people great. God said to Joshua, who was to carry on, Moses is dead, but God's not dead.

Moses is dead, but God's Word is not dead. Moses is dead, but God's power is not dead.

God's power is not missing. God's power divided the Red Sea. Moses' power? No, no, no. God's power.

[ 11 : 20 ] God's power is the same yesterday, today, and forever. It's still available to sinners who ask in the name of Jesus for the power of God.

And you have that, you might never minister at the moment, but the power of God is still available. Moses is dead, but God's mercy is not dead.

God's mercy is not missing. God's mercy is still available. Who was it that forgave Israel their sins? It wasn't Moses and it wasn't Joshua.

It was God God. God's still alive and God is still merciful. God is still merciful and he's merciful to sinners.

You free church people, you had a great lecturer, a professor once, Rabbi Duncan, they called him, but apparently he was very subject to depression and one day he was very depressed.

[12:41] But he said to his students, he was lecturing to them and he said, he told them he was depressed, but he said this, it's very interesting, my only hope is my sin.

I'm a sinner, therefore, I'm qualified for the mercy of God in Christ.

You do not need to be holy to receive the mercy of God. Mercy, the definition of mercy actually is kindness you don't deserve.

Never ever pray to God, Lord, I deserve to get this. Because you know what God will say to you? The equivalent of, well, if you deserve it, move over to the justice department. God is into mercy, giving mercy to those who do not deserve it.

[13:58] Undeservedness is a qualification for the mercy of God in Christ. Never forget that.

We deserve nothing but his wrath and his curse, both in this world and in that which is to come.

God dispenses mercy to undeserving sinners. Never ever forget that.

Moses is dead, but the mercy of God is still around. Moses is dead, Moses is not here, but God's promise is not missing.

God still promises. This Bible is full of promises. Here's one, no one perishes who trusts in God.

[15:03] No one. It's an utter impossibility to be lost for all eternity if you trust in God. Psalm 34, none, the last verse, in fact I think is the last line, none perish who him trust.

That's still around. And God has promised. It's not as if he's to find out something to wrestle with God with.

He's made promises. Trust in God. None perish that trust in him. And something else. Moses was dead, you see.

Moses was no longer there. But God's plan for the people of God was not missing, was not dead, was not gone. God's plan for this congregation isn't away.

It isn't gone somewhere else. God has a blueprint blueprint for you. And one jot and one tittle of his plan does not need tweaking.

[16:24] It's bang on schedule. His plan, his blessing is on track, is on course.

It's not running behind schedule. It mightn't be work out the way we think it will, but that doesn't matter. It's God's plan.

And God's plan is greater than your plan and my plan. God is all-powerful. God is all-wise.

God is all-good. And God is alive and well. all. And so is his word and so is his power and so is his mercy and so is his promise and so is his plan.

So secondly, I want to look at the fact that God, when he encourages, he strengthens. It's amazing. Simply by speaking his word, God strengthens his people.

[17:40] Just reading a promise from God, reading a blessing from God, hearing and speaking, brings strength. I sang Psalm 68 verse 28 for a specific reason.

Thy God commands thy strength. God commands strength. God's just to speak the word.

Are you weak? Are you helpless? Do you need strength? God commands strength and he's alive and well and he's in his house and he's here.

second thing to note about God strengthening through his word. Waiting on God strengthens.

Psalm 27 verse 14 Wait for the Lord. Be strong. Let your heart take courage. Wait on the Lord and he will strengthen your heart.

[19:00] Always remember hearing the longer you wait for an answer to prayer. Waiting is like interest in your bank account, a savings account.

You get interest. The longer you keep it in, the more interest you get. and the longer you have to wait on God to hear your prayer, the more interest you get when he delivers.

And his time is better than our time. We want things now, don't we? We expect to get them immediately. We tend to think that the only way God blesses is by divine fate, instantly.

No, no, no. God can wait. God is an eternal being, and there's no such thing as time with God.

A thousand years are as one day, the Bible tells us. And one day is as a thousand years. You think of the first promise, the first gospel promise, Genesis chapter 3, verse 15.

[ 20 : 22 ] the promise of Christ coming. How long did it take? Approximately 4,000 years.

Oh, you say, he's not coming. He's not going to answer that. That's a long time. It's a long time for us. But one day is a thousand years.

To God, 96 hours. 96 hours he took us off. There's no time with God. You don't measure an eternal being according to our 70 year span, lifespan.

God commands strength just by speaking. Waiting on God strengthens. it matures you.

It makes you strong. It develops you. Taking courage strengthens.

[ 21 : 29 ] Taking courage strengthens. Be strong. Let your heart take courage, all you who wait on the Lord.

God. As Spurgeon would say, do a bold thing for once. Being bold with God.

Being strong with God. It strengthens. That's a way to get the strength of God. It's not a gamble to trust what God has promised.

I'm going to say this to you. Never hope for the best. Think about it.

What good will it do? Hoping for the best. Eh? What encouragement is that? Hoping for the best.

Listen. Hope in God.

[ 22 : 32 ] That's not a waste of time. That's not a gamble. It's what you hope on. And God has all power and all strength.

Think about it. Haven't you noticed, by the way, guarantees? They're getting longer and longer and longer and longer.

It used to be just a paragraph, we guarantee this for six months. Now it's paragraphs, pages.

They've discovered we can guarantee nothing.

There are all these qualifications, all these conditions, only within a certain period, only if you don't do this and only if you don't do that. They get longer. Why? Because we human beings can't guarantee anything.

And I cringe when I hear new prime ministers or new ministers of state saying, we're going to do this, we're going to do that.

[ 23 : 36 ] We're not in control. God's in control. Only God can guarantee. Only God can guarantee something.

Think about it. You don't control the weather. God controls the weather. When the wind blows, where it listens, where it wants.

Only God can guarantee. I suppose the conclusion of the whole matter is what we sing in Psalm 46.

You don't, if you're a Christian, you don't need strength.

God is your strength. You don't need strength. God's your strength. Psalm 46 verse 1.

We sing it often. God is our strength. The Christian doesn't need to be strong. He's got God. You don't hope for what you already have.

[ 24 : 46 ] You have God's spirit within you. If you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, if you're depending on Christ to forgive you your sins, you've got God.

You don't need strength. God is your strength. Well, let the last word be from Christ.

Christ strengthens us. Through what? God uses means.

And one of the means he uses to strengthen his church is, surprisingly, surprisingly, trials and tribulations.

tribulations. And when we ask God to deliver us from this and deliver us to that, we're in great danger of, as we say in this world, you're killing the goose that laid the golden egg.

[ 25 : 54 ] Are you praying for strength? God strengthen us through trials, through tribulations. Now in this letter to the Hebrews in chapter two, the Bible tells us that Christ was made perfect through suffering.

Now, Christ was made perfect through suffering. Wait a minute. I thought, what do you mean?

I thought Christ was always perfect. Was Christ not perfect in heaven? Yes, of course he was. But of course, what it's speaking about in Hebrews chapter two is Christ was made a perfect mediator through suffering.

A perfect mediator. He had to be a real human being. He had to go through what you and I go through in this world.

And of course Christ was perfect in heaven. of course he was. But what he didn't have, he was made perfect through suffering.

[ 27 : 13 ] But he never knew what it was like to worship God while suffering. Because there's no suffering in heaven. He didn't have that experience of worshiping God while going through pain.

There's no pain in heaven. There's no pain in heaven. There's no problems in heaven, friend. Be sure you go there. So Christ had to experience what Christians experience if he's to be their mediator.

so that he was made a complete perfect mediator through enduring suffering. And if Christ had to go through that, so must we.

And yet Christ was never discouraged. Nobody went through more trauma than Christ. in the garden of Gethsemane, contemplating what he was to suffer.

Many theologians believe that the Father in love to him kept from him the amount that he had to suffer without the support of his Father on the cross.

[ 28 : 37 ] That he only revealed that to him in the garden of Gethsemane and that's when he sweat drops of blood. no one faced more than Christ and yet he was made perfect through suffering.

Now he was never discouraged. He feared but was never discouraged. Never discouraged. And you and I should learn from him.

God is our strength. God can take us through this. God can endure us. Jesus said to Peter after Peter denied him three times.

Peter's son was very serious actually. Peter denied Christ not once, not twice, three times. After being warned, after vowing, he would not, he swore, he took a vow, he would not deny the Savior. And when he denied him, he denied him with oaths and cursing. Very serious. But it's all forgiven. Christ forgave him.

[ 29 : 55 ] And he can forgive you whatever sin you've committed. but Christ said to him after he denied him, when you restored, you see, a Christian, when you backslide, will always be restored.

A Christian. When you restored, what did he say? Strengthen the brethren. There's times when we feel weak.

You strengthened him, Peter. And he said it to him twice. And that's why the theologians tell us Peter has two messages in the Bible, two epistles, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, in both which he strengthens us.

And listen to him. After you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, strengthen, and establish you. Peter wrote that after committing such a serious sin with oaths and cursing. It's a word of God.

[ 31 : 18 ] It's not dead. It's alive. It's the power of God. God. It's the mercy of God. It's the promise of God. It's the plan of God to bless and multiply his church.

And it will not fail. So, our Bible tells us today, I appeal to you, brothers, bear with my word of encouragement, exhortation, comfort.

word. May God, the Holy Spirit, make his word, his truth, effectual to every one of us.

Let's bow our heads. Our Father in heaven, please take the things of Christ and make them ours.

Make them ours today. May they belong to us. us. We thank you, you assure us. If you ask, you will receive. If you knock, it will be opened unto you.

[ 32 : 25 ] If you seek, you will find. Hear us in mercy, answer us in peace, as we pray only in Christ's name and for your glory.

Amen. We'll conclude our service of worship by singing from Psalm 92 in the Scottish Psalter, page 353, from verse 12, the bottom of the page, 353, from verse 12.

But like the palm tree flourishing shall be the righteous one, he shall like to the cedar grow, that is in Lebanon. We go to the last verse.

To show that upright is the Lord, he is a rock to me, and he from all unrighteousness is altogether free. Psalm 92, verses 12 15.

15. But like the palm tree flourishing shall be the righteous one, he shall like to the cedar grow, that is in Lebanon.

[ 34 : 09 ] who's that within the hearts of God are planted by his face, they shall grow up and flood and shore in our God's holy place.

Until old age and others pay, they grew still forth shall bring.

They shall be cut and full of stuff that day be furnishing not better and they prosper The righteousness is all together free.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with us all now and forevermore.  
Amen.