

Hebrews 4-6

Last time we went through chapter 3 and most of chapter 4. And in chapter 4 Paul introduced his next comparison between the Son and someone from the OT. And this time his comparison was between the Son and Moses. And in this case Paul took that comparison a step further, so that he wasn't just comparing the Son and Moses, but his focus was actually on the comparison between the people of Israel among whom Moses served, and the Hebrews over which Jesus is the Son.

And so Paul used some OT prophecy from Psalm 95 to show how they are in a similar position as their fathers were. And that there was some admonition from God there, based on that. That God warned them to harden not their hearts, as in the provocation.

And so Paul admonished them to hold fast the rejoicing of the hope unto the end. To not depart from the living God. To not be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. To keep believing, and take earnest heed to the word of the Son, and not transgress it. Because God will know, he can see their hearts, and his word itself can discern them. And so they need to be believing. Because there is a certain day, when like their fathers, God is going to bring them to the inheritance, to give them the opportunity to enter into his rest. A promise that has been left them, because every prior generation has come short of it. And so they need to fear, because if as a people they aren't ready on that day, they won't be able to receive the inheritance. Like their fathers died in the wilderness, the unbelieving will have to perish. They won't be able to enter in. And even the believing weren't able to enter in at that time, they had to wander and wait until the nation was ready. And so this being the last chance, they need to exhort one another daily, so that on that day they are all ready, and can receive their inheritance. They can enter into God's rest.

Chapter 4 Verse 14

Hebrews 4:14 Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.

So he tells them here to hold fast their profession. Seeing that they have a great high priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God.

And so he's bringing the priesthood back into this here. He talked about that going into chapter 3, but he's been still going back and giving some more background on what he has to say on the priesthood, giving them some more admonition, expounding this OT passage, as he calls on them to consider their great high priest and apostle, Christ Jesus.

And so Paul has been telling them different things about the kingdom, but what he's been working around to here, is the priesthood. And he's still not quite ready to say what he wants to say on that yet. He's got to set up all of this background first, before he can say it. And so he's going to continue to do that, before he gets to the core of his message on the priesthood in a couple more chapters.

So we aren't going to see exactly what his point is on the priesthood yet. We're not going to see the full picture on that yet. Some of these times when he brings the priesthood up it even seems a little disjointed. But he keeps bringing it up, he keeps calling attention to it, and relating these things back to it, to keep it at the forefront of their minds.

So what he's doing right now, is he's in the process of this admonition that he's giving them, he's calling their minds to some things that show how Jesus Christ, in the most practical terms, is a worthy priest. He's calling attention to the fact that Jesus's experience makes him a really good priest. Not just a priest in some spiritual sense, not just in the spiritual realm. He's not just a worthy priest of some calling that God gave him, to satisfy God. Paul is here first touting Christ's credentials as Jesus the man, that make him a worthy priest for men. How he fulfills our needs. Not God's demands, not our needs in some abstract, etherial, heavenly, sense, but our most basic needs of a priest, as fellowmen.

In other words, Paul's point here right now, is not that Christ fulfills the role of a heavenly priest. That's not what he's dealing with. He's going to expand on this later, but that's not where he's starting here. He's starting with showing that Jesus fulfills the role of an earthly priest.

Paul has related Jesus's manhood to the kingdom, and he's now also relating that to the priesthood. And he's demonstrating that as a man, Jesus is fully able to fulfill the role of a priest for men. He's fully able to fulfill the ministries that God gave to priests that were men, to perform for their fellow men. That he is in fact *especially* capable of fulfilling every aspect of the priestly ministry, that a man who is a priest must fulfill.

And so Paul's going to say that Jesus completely fulfills the qualifications to be a priest for men. And then he adds, "But wait, there's more," he's a high priest who has passed into the heavens. And so he's also supremely qualified to minister as that ministry relates to God. But Paul wants to make it clear, that first and foremost he is supremely qualified and able to minister as that ministry relates to men. That just because he is now in the heavens, doesn't mean that he isn't able to relate to us as they would expect a high priest to do.

Verse 15

Hebrews 4:15 For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

And so do you see what he's saying? They have an high priest that can be touched with the feeling of their infirmity. They have a high priest that is a man. That was in all points tempted like as they are. That was tempted to loose faith. Tempted to stop believing. Tempted to neglect the work of salvation. Tempted to not drink the cup. But he didn't sin. He didn't transgress the word of God, he fulfilled it, and declared it, and passed into the heavens.

Yet he still understands what they are going through. He is not, just because he has passed into the heavens, untouched by the feeling of our infirmities. He has been tempted like as they are. He knows what it feels like. He is a man.

Verse 16

Hebrews 4:16 Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

So he's not a high priest that they can't come to. That they can't approach to. That wouldn't understand the struggle their going through. That wouldn't understand their suffering and temptation. He's a high priest that has suffered being tempted, and is able to succor them that are tempted. If they come before his throne, it is a throne of grace. And he will succor them, granting them mercy, and giving them grace to help in time of need.

What Paul is saying here, is that they aren't in need of an earthly priest to minister to them in regard to temptation. In regard to sin. In regard to their suffering. In regard to their belief. They don't need an earthly priest to succor them. They don't need an earthly priest to keep them in the faith, or to encourage them in their trials.

The heavenly priest himself is fully capable of doing that. He's felt what they are feeling, and is able to give them grace from his throne, so that they will be able make it through their temptation and suffering, and hold fast unto the end.

When they come to him they will find grace to help in time of need.

GRACE

And this word grace, it's a beautiful word. It's a word that we use a lot. But I think we're often kind of fuzzy on exactly what it means. So I want to take a look at that.

Now, Paul pairs grace here with mercy. And that is fitting, grace and mercy go together. But they aren't the same thing. We often think of them as similar, but we do realize that they aren't exactly the same thing.

We all know what mercy is. Mercy is when you forgive somebody for something that they did wrong. Mercy is forgiving sin, forgiving a debt.

Mercy is when there is a deficit in your account, that you owed to God, and God comes along and forgives the debt. You no longer owe anything on your account.

But what is grace?

Well, the first time that the term grace is used is in Genesis chapter 6:

Genesis 6:5 And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

6 And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.

7 And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them.

8 But Noah found **grace** in the eyes of the LORD.

Now, let me ask you, did Noah find mercy in the eyes of the LORD? God said that he was going to destroy everyone for their wickedness. So by saving Noah, was God showing Noah mercy? What did Noah do? Was he deserving of destruction? Was he that wicked and violent before God, but God was merciful and let him live anyhow? No.

9 These are the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God.

So no. Noah walked with God. Noah wasn't wicked. He wasn't wicked and violent like the rest of the earth that God wanted to destroy. God would not have pronounced that judgment on Noah personally. Noah not being judged would not be God showing Noah mercy. So it didn't say that God showed Noah mercy, it said he found grace in the eyes of the LORD.

10 And Noah begat three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

11 The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence.

12 And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth.

13 And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth.

14 Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch.

So how did God show grace to Noah?

He gave Noah a way to escape the judgment that was coming on the wicked. He aided him, he helped him, by telling him what to do so that God could supernaturally deliver him from the destruction of the earth.

That wasn't mercy. That wasn't God saving a wicked, wicked man that deserved to be destroyed with the rest of the earth. That was grace. That was God helping a righteous man to be delivered, when without God's help he'd have perished with the wicked.

And we could go through passage after passage after passage that show the same thing. But it is really very simple. Mercy is when you had a debt, and God paid it. When you had a deficit in your bank account, and God wiped it out. And grace, is when God then came along, and made a deposit of one million dollars into your account. Mercy is when your debt goes away, grace is when God gives you something to spend.

Mercy is when you go to the bank and the debt has been paid in full. Grace is when you can write that check because God has put some money in your account.

Grace is when God helps you in time of need. It is when he gives you aid. It is when he succors you. It is when he gives you anything.

Mercy is when our sins were paid for, grace is when God gave us his own righteousness that we can live out in our daily lives through his spirit.

So do you see the difference between mercy and grace? Do you see why he's telling them to come to the throne of grace, so that they can receive mercy and also find grace to help in time of need?

Like Noah, they aren't wicked. But there is still a danger that they might perish with the wicked. That they might not hold fast. And they need God's help, they need his grace, they need his intervention, to ensure that they aren't destroyed with the wicked, but receive the promise of inheritance.

Mercy would be God forgiving them if they sinned when they were tempted. Grace is God helping them to overcome the temptation.

Christ is able to give them grace, he's able to succor them, to give them the strength to keep believing, to hold fast, to not let these things slip, to not neglect their so great salvation. He gives them the grace to get through their suffering and temptation, because he knows what they are going through, he's been through suffering and death, and he can give them, send them from his throne, exactly what they need to comfort the feeling of their infirmities in time of need.

They don't need an earthly priest to do that. They don't need an earthly priest, to have a priest that can understand them. Jesus can, and they can come before his throne anytime anywhere and receive that grace from him in their time of need.

And so Jesus is a superior priest, not just in regard to his ministry to God, as Paul will show later, but also in regard to his ministry to us.

And that is something that is important for the Hebrews to understand. Because they have lived with a priesthood for thousands of years. They know how it works. They know the ministry that it performs for them. And even if they already see Christ as their heavenly priest, they may think that they continue to need the aid of earthly priests as long as they walk this earth. But Paul is showing that that's not necessary. That Jesus the Son of God, who has passed into the heavens, can fully perform the ministry of grace that they need.

Chapter 5 Verse 1

Hebrews 5:1 For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins:

So every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men. Men become priests for their fellow men. And Jesus is no different. He's a man who has become a priest for his fellow men. "In things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins:"

Verse 2

Hebrews 5:2 Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity.

So now he is explaining to us why this is important. Why a priest ought to be able to relate to the infirmities of those that he is ministering for.

And the reason is because he has to be able to offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins. To provide both grace and mercy.

He needs to be able to have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way, because part of his job is to offer their sin offerings. He needs to offer sacrifices for their sins, and make atonement for them. He needs to be able to come before God, come before his mercy seat, and have their sins covered, have God's wrath turned away from them.

And so, if he is going to do that for them, that is not something that he should be doing half-heartedly. That isn't something that you want him to be doing, just barely going through the motions of it, while wishing a curse to your soul. You don't want him to be doing it grudgingly. You want him to come before God earnestly seeking his mercy for you.

The same thing when he is offering a gift, a peace offering or thank offering for God, coming before him to seek his blessing and grace.

And so the best and most effective high priest is one who can have compassion on the ignorant, those that have sinned through ignorance, and them that are out of the way, who have transgressed the law.

And an earthly high priest can do that, because he also himself is compassed with infirmity.

Verse 3

Hebrews 5:3 And by reason hereof he ought, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins.

And so in the law, the high priest was commanded to offer a sacrifice for himself, before he made sacrifice for the people. So he was reminded of the fact that he was also compassed with infirmity. And so he would also be touched by the feeling of their infirmity. We'd expect that he'd

then have compassion on the ignorant and them out of the way, knowing that he also is in need of God's mercy.

Verse 4

Hebrews 5:4 And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.

And so this is what is needful in a high priest. But a man doesn't become a high priest just by thinking to himself, "Well, I'm a compassionate person, I ought to be able to do that, I think I'll become a high priest." You don't just become a high priest. You don't even just get ordained a high priest, by men. No man taketh this honor unto himself, but the that is called of God, as was Aaron.

So it is ultimately God that chooses who becomes a high priest. It is God that has to call them. He called Aaron and his sons to be priests for ever.

And since it is God that gets to choose, he gets to pick somebody who fulfills the requirements of the ministry. God understands their need for a high priest that will have compassion on them. After all, that is what the high priest's job is, to offer sacrifices for sins. So he needs to have compassion on the ignorant and them that are out of the way. And God understands that, and when he ordains a man to be a high priest, he takes that into account. Don't you think he chooses one that is able for fulfill that ministry? He's not going to choose somebody who is untouched by the infirmities of men. He's not going to choose someone who refuses to have compassion on them. He's going to choose someone that will show them mercy, and seek God's mercy on their behalf.

Verse 5

Hebrews 5:5 So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee.

And so we know that Christ is a compassionate high priest. Because he also was called of God, as Aaron was. He didn't just make himself a high priest somehow. The same God that called him his Son, that made him the Son, that gave him that name, and that calling to rule the kingdom, is the same God that also ordained him a high priest.

And so he is indeed full of compassion.

Matthew 9:36 But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.

Matthew 14:14 And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick.

And so we see repeatedly in the gospels how Jesus did indeed have compassion on the ignorant and them that were out of the way. Those that were scattered abroad, as sheep that had no shepherd.

In fact, in Isaiah 49:15 it says of the Father:

Isaiah 49:15 Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee.

And so God is more compassionate even than a mother. And the Son is likewise also full of compassion like the Father, because he has not only created man, but also become a man, and was tempted in all points like as we are.

And so Christ was fully qualified to be a faithful high priest, and that's why the Father chose him, because he knew that he was full of compassion.

Verse 6

Hebrews 5:6 As he saith also in another place, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

So he quotes from Psalm 110 verse 4.

And we've looked at this passage once already, because it related to the kingdom. It is one of those OT passages that speaks of Christ sitting on the right hand of God.

Psalms 110:1 A Psalm of David. The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.

2 The LORD shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies.

3 Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth.

4 The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

5 The Lord at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath.

6 He shall judge among the heathen, he shall fill the places with the dead bodies; he shall wound the heads over many countries.

7 He shall drink of the brook in the way: therefore shall he lift up the head.

And so it is clear, that the same one who sits at the right hand of God, that the Son of God, the heir of the kingdom, is the same one that has been giving a calling of being a priest. That the LORD has ordained him a priest.

Verse 7

Hebrews 5:7 Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared;

And so again he points out why it ought to be obvious to us that Christ will be a compassionate high priest. Because he did come as a man of flesh. He did suffer as a man of flesh. He was tempted as a man of flesh. He asked God that the cup might pass from him, that he might somehow escape that death. He cried out to God, with tears, with great drops of blood. He was as moved as one can humanly be by his suffering, by his temptation. And so he cried out to the Father. He put his trust in him.

And it says that he was heard in that he feared. He cried out to God, and God heard him. God heard him when he cried out in his fear of death.

And God's response wasn't to save him from death. Instead it was to give him assurance of life. That in drinking that cup he would become the captain of salvation to all them that believe. Paul quoted a while back from Psalm 22:

Psalms 22:21 Save me from the lion's mouth: for **thou hast heard me** from the horns of the unicorns.

22 I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee.

And so upon Jesus's death, he knew that God had heard him, and that he would rise again to declare his name unto his brethren.

Verse 8

Hebrews 5:8 Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered;

And so as we observed before, he was made the Son of God before he was made the captain of our salvation. He could obtain that name and that inheritance simply by being conceived. But he didn't just have that name. He didn't just become a Son in name. He became a Son in very deed. By doing the will of the Father. By learning obedience by the things which he suffered. Thus being perfected not only as the Son of God, but the captain of our salvation.

Verse 9

Hebrews 5:9 And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;

And so he became the caption of salvation for his brethren. He became one among his brethren, one among the congregation, the saints which are in the earth. A brother of those who like him, obey the Father. Even suffering pain and the temptation of death, just as his brethren suffer that same temptation.

Verse 10

Hebrews 5:10 Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec.

And so God called him an high priest after the order of Melchizedek. And not just a priest in name, any more than he is just the Son in name. But he became a Son in obedience, and through that same trial also became a priest indeed as well. Because by suffering in his own human infirmity, he became perfectly able to succor them that are tempted, perfectly able to have compassion on the ignorant and those out of the way, perfectly able to be touched with the feeling of their infirmities.

And so the Hebrews do not have an high priest, a heavenly high priest, in Christ Jesus, who is unable to minister in the manner that they need. He is perfectly able to fulfill the ministry that they are in need of. He suffered death, and is able to give them just the grace that they need to succor them in their own temptations.

And its very clear that he does indeed have the qualifications to fulfill that ministry, as God himself called him an high priest after the order of Melchizedek.

Verse 11

Hebrews 5:11 Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing.

And so Paul has a lot more to say about the priesthood. But he says it is difficult for him to say it, because the Hebrews are dull of hearing.

So we've kind of noticed how Paul has been beating around the bush here. It has been obvious that he's got some things to say about the priesthood. He keeps bringing it up. But then he keeps having to go back and talk about different things, to prepare his listeners to hear what he's got to say.

And so he's working around to something, and he just comes out and tells them, rebukes them, and says, "It's really hard for me to say what I need to say here, because y'all are dull of hearing." It's like they're deaf or something.

Verse 12

Hebrews 5:12 For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.

And so the reason that he says that they must be dull of hearing, is because they've heard this all before. And yet he feels like they need to hear it all over again, that he can't just assume that they know it. But it is very fundamental stuff. These are the first principles of the oracles of God. The most basic things. They've had to have heard this before. Jesus himself, and his disciples, had to have told them these things. But they need to hear it again. So they must be dull of hearing or something.

I mean, as Hebrews, they should know more about this stuff than the Gentile churches know. They are the first ones that heard, they had all the OT background knowledge, they had and knew the word of God by the prophets. They should be teaching these things to the Gentiles, to others, not needing the apostle of the Gentiles to have to teach *them* these things again.

And so I said that Hebrews was going to be dealing with fundamentals. Very foundational stuff. And that is exactly what Paul says here. That what they need is milk, and that's what he's going to have to give them. Not strong meat.

So the book of Hebrews doesn't really have much strong meat in it. It has milk in it. It is about fundamentals. It is about the first principles of the oracles of God.

ORACLES

Now this word oracles, is a word that we don't use a lot in everyday speech anymore. Usually, we only use the term oracle to refer to ancient pagan priests who claimed to be able to give prophecies or wisdom from the gods.

But basically what an oracle is is any agent whereby you can get prophecy or wisdom from a divine source. And when Paul uses the term here, it is clear that he is referring to scripture. To the word of God. Both the word spoken unto the fathers by the prophets, and the word that has been spoken unto them by the Son. And so it isn't just one oracle, but oracles of God. The old and new testaments.

And his choice of the word oracles here is very fitting, in regard to the contrast between the old and new testaments, and the contrast between the Son and the OT priests. You see, the word oracle appears in the OT, always in the singular form. And it is always a reference to a place, a place where you could come to enquire of God. Specifically, the oracle of God was the holy of holies within the temple, where they placed the ark of the covenant. But in the NT the term oracles is always plural, and it is always a reference to scripture. The word of God that was spoken by the prophets. And now also the word spoken by the Son. And so the oracle of God that they need to go to, to get wisdom, to know what they should do, is not some place under the control of an earthly high priest. Instead they need to seek to the oracles of God, the scriptures of the prophets, and of the word of the Son. But unfortunately, he tells them, they don't know the first thing about it. The Hebrews don't know the first principles of the oracles of God. They have need that one teach them that again. They need milk, and not strong meat.

Verse 13

Hebrews 5:13 For every one that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe.

And so he clearly defines what he meant by oracles here, when he says "the word of righteousness." He's referring to the scriptures. And they need milk, he's had to take them by the hand and give them this milk here in these last chapters, because they are unskillful in the word. They are like babes. All that they know how to use is milk, that is all that they know how to teach.

Verse 14

Hebrews 5:14 But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

And the cure for that, Paul makes it very clear, is to use their senses. The way to mature, and get ready to receive strong meat from the word, is to use their senses. To consume the word. To use it. To teach it, and in time, as they do that, and as they hear others more skillful teach it, as Paul is doing here, they'll learn to discern both good and evil. True doctrine from false. And so to come of full age, they need to exercise their senses. And that's what Paul is going to help them do here.

Chapter 6 Verses 1-2

Hebrews 6:1 Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God,
2 Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.

And so Paul says, OK, you're not ready for meat yet, because you've forgotten the first principles of the oracles of God. You've just been using milk, and that's all you've been using. You should be graduating on to stronger meat, but you haven't been exercising your senses by

tasting anything stronger. You've just been teaching the same milky doctrines over and over and over again. You're stuck on the principles of the doctrine of Christ, but you need to go on unto perfection.

And he tells us what it was that they were teaching over and over and over again. And what it is essentially what they had just experienced in Christ's ministry. They just kept reliving that over and over again.

First, he says, "of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God." And that's the first thing that John the Baptist came preaching. "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." And then Christ soon came along, saying the same thing, that they needed to repent and put their faith in God.

And that repentance and faith was followed by what? What was John called? He was called John the Baptist.

And so the next thing that he says is, "Of the doctrine of baptisms." And so they would talk about how John came baptizing, and preaching repentance. And then Jesus came along baptizing, and preaching repentance. And so there was John's baptism, and Christ's baptism. And then the baptism by the apostles and disciples of those that afterward believed. And so it was a doctrine of baptisms, plural.

And then, there was the laying of of hands. How after Jesus was baptized by John, he went around laying his hands on the sick, and they recovered. And how when he was taken up, he said that those that believed would have that sign follow them as well.

And then later, the apostles would also lay their hands on believers that they might receive the Holy Ghost.

So there was a doctrine of laying on of hands.

And then after Jesus had completed his ministry, he died, and was raised again. And so after the laying on of hands he says, "and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment."

And so Jesus rose, and his followers will rise again, but those that are not saved will suffer eternal judgement.

And so that is what they were teaching. The principles of the doctrine of Christ. That Christ had come, and these things had happened.

And that is *all* that they were teaching. They just kept going over it again and again. And Paul rebukes them for that, and tells them to stop being babes that only use milk, but to go on unto perfection. To leave the doctrine of Christ, and go back to the first principles of the oracles of God.

Now, I said some things earlier in this study, to the effect that presently in the church age, we are too fixated on things in our present age, and are missing parts of the big picture.

And at this juncture I'd like to say, that I was dead right. This is exactly what Paul is telling them. That there is more to the scripture than Christ and his first coming, and they need to stop just teaching that over and over and go on unto perfection. And go back to the things that are the first principles of the oracles of God. Go back to the meat, and become skillful in the word, by exercising their senses, instead of just drinking the milk over and over and over again.

And those first principles are the things that he's been talking about here. The things that he's been expounding here from the OT. The kingdom and the priesthood. And how the kingdom and

the priesthood relate to God's eternal plan. Not just the kingdom and the priesthood from the OT perspective, or the kingdom and the priesthood from the NT perspective, but the kingdom and the priesthood from the eternal perspective. Understanding both what God promised and declared before, and also what he has now done, and will do.

And they need to understand this. They need to take earnest heed to it. They need to stop focussing on the doctrine of Christ, and focus instead on the things that Christ said. Because Christ didn't come preaching the doctrine of baptisms and of laying on of hands and of the resurrection of the dead and of eternal judgment. He didn't come preaching the cross. He came teaching about the kingdom, about the inheritance. And if they want to receive that inheritance, they need to not just know that Christ has come and what he did, but beyond that, beyond this milk, they need to also consider what he said, and its implications for the kingdom and the priesthood. They need to go back to the first principles of the oracles of God. Instead of only looking at those principles in the law, to look at them in the prophets and in the words of the Son as well.

Verse 3

Hebrews 6:3 And this will we do, if God permit.

And so Paul said, "And that's exactly what we're going to do here. I'm going to walk you through it."

So Paul is not going to give them milk from the principles of the doctrine of Christ. He's going to leave those things, and go on unto perfection. He's going to take them on to the first principles of the oracles of God, that they may understand the word more perfectly.

That is, he will, if God will permit.

So once again he is emphasizing that things are conditional here. He's implying here that there is a possibility that God wouldn't permit them to go on unto perfection.

What? Why?

Verse 4-6

Hebrews 6:4 For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost,
5 And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come,
6 If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.

So what is the condition? In verse 3 he said, "if God permit," what condition does he give here? "If they shall fall away."

So what he said was that he was going to help them leave the principles of the doctrine of Christ, and go on unto perfection. Go back to those first principles of the oracles of God again. If God would permit. And the reason why God might not permit would be "if they fall away." That is, if Paul's hearers had fallen away, then God wouldn't permit. Paul wouldn't be able to do that, he wouldn't be able to leave the principles of the doctrine of Christ and bring them unto perfection.

Now, do you see the implication of what he is saying here? It is kind of wild. He's just said that what they were teaching was milk, the doctrine of Christ over and over again, faith toward God and eternal judgment. And he's saying that there is a danger that they've fallen away. They have been teaching the principles of the doctrine of Christ, but they may have fallen away. And the reason that he thinks that they may have fallen away is precisely *because* they were teaching the principles of the doctrine of Christ. They were still teaching milk, they needed somebody to teach them again, when they should have been teachers themselves. They hadn't gone on unto perfection.

And so he is calling into doubt their salvation.

Because they are teaching faith, repentance, baptism, resurrection, and judgment, and aren't going back to the first principles, and aren't going on unto perfection, he's calling into doubt their salvation.

Because they don't understand the kingdom and the priesthood, he's calling into doubt their salvation.

That's what he's doing.

When you see a group of people, who are teaching the principles of the doctrine of Christ, and teaching the principles of the doctrine of Christ, and teaching the principles of the doctrine of Christ, you ought to question whether they are saved. Whether they have fallen away from the faith.

Because they haven't gone on unto perfection.

And so at that point it might actually be impossible for them to go on unto perfection. You ought to try to take them unto perfection, as Paul does here. You ought to try to get them to leave the principles of the doctrine of Christ, as Paul does here. But you should be frank with them, and understand, that it might be too late. God might not permit it. It might not be possible. They might have fallen away.

If they had been once enlightened, had once seen the light of Christ, the light of his word. If they had tasted the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost. If they had tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they had tasted of these things that Paul is telling them now, but have fallen away back into just the doctrine of Christ:—Then if that is the case, it is impossible to renew them unto repentance.

If they fall away it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance, seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.

And so Paul is not going to lay the foundation again. He said, "That would be a waste of my time. That wouldn't do any good." Because if you fall away, the foundation can't be laid again. You can't repent again. Christ can't be crucified again. You can't crucify him unto you afresh, and put him to an open shame.

Christ was only crucified once, you can only repent once, you can only be born-again once. And if you fall away, that's it. It is a one-shot deal.

And so Paul is not going to waste time with the principles of the doctrine of Christ. He's not going to go over that again with people who have already heard it repeatedly and made a profession. He'd be wasting his time. Instead he's going to go on unto perfection.

He's not going to preach Christ again, to people who have already been once enlightened.

Once you've been made partakers of the Holy Ghost, the doctrine of Christ can't do you any good. It can't make you any more a partaker than you already are. And if it could, if you've fallen

away, and need to be renewed, it can't do that for you either. So preaching the principles of Christ, like faith and repentance, to saved people, is a waste of time. And Paul's not going to do that. He's not going to crucify the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.

That's what he calls laying the foundation again. That's what he calls using milk over and over again. Teaching it over and over again. As if you're a baby all over again. As if you're getting born-again all over again. As if you are repenting over and over again. Falling away and coming back. Reliving it all over again, the principles of the doctrine of Christ. He says that when they do that they are crucifying unto themselves the Son of God afresh, and putting him to an open shame.

And note the way that he says that. They crucify *unto themselves* the Son of God. It is a personal thing, specifically for them. It is something that they do to Christ, for themselves. As if they have fallen away and are repenting again. And so they need Christ to come again, and die again, so that they can have their sins paid for again.

And Paul says, I'm not going to do that. That is putting Christ to an open shame. I'm not going to do that, I'm going to take you on unto perfection, if the LORD will even permit me to. If you haven't actually fallen away.

That would be putting Christ to an open shame, because it would be saying that he was insufficient. That what he did on calvary, that his temptation, his suffering and death, were insufficient for you. That his grace, his succoring, was insufficient for you, to keep in in the faith, for you to keep believing, and not fall away.

That even having been enlightened, and tasting of the heavenly gift, and being made a partaker of the Holy Ghost, and tasting the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, is not enough. That the grace of Christ is not enough, for you to keep believing. The ministry of Christ, as a priest for you, is not enough. That the only way for him to save you is die again and again, because he is unable to keep you in the faith.

That's putting Christ to an open shame. That's saying that he doesn't have enough grace, he doesn't have enough compassion, to save those that come unto God by him. That he is a worthless high priest.

And Christ will not respect that. He will not honor that. Christ will not respect somebody who has fallen away from faith, who had been made a partaker of his grace, but rejected it, and now wants to kill him again.

And so it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance. If they were partakers, and fell away, there is no hope for them.

And so the Hebrews need to beware, that they aren't laying the foundation of the principles of the doctrine of Christ over and over again. That they aren't pretending that they can repent over and over again. Because they can't. Once they're in the faith, they need to not let these things slip, they need to not neglect their salvation, they need to take earnest heed to the word of the Son, and go on unto perfection, and not forget the principles of the oracles of God. Because if they do fall away, they cannot be renewed.

Verse 7

Hebrews 6:7 For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God:

So he's illustrating his point with a figurative analogy. And he uses a figure that they should already be familiar with, because it is used elsewhere in scripture. Jesus uses the same figure in his parable of the sower.

And so the earth here, is them. The earth is their hearts. That's what it represented in the parable of the sower, right?

And he says that they've been drinking in the rain that cometh oft upon them. And he's speaking of the doctrine that they've been hearing:

Deuteronomy 32:2 My doctrine shall drop as the **rain**, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small **rain** upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass:

So they've been receiving the water of life, the word of God. They've heard the doctrine of Christ over and over again, it has come often upon them.

And when the gentle rain comes down often upon the earth, what happens? The earth brings forth herbs. Things sprout, and grow, and mature. It brings forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed. In this case that is the Son, who sent them his word. And so they should be bringing forth, maturing and growing forth fruit that is meet unto God. That's what ought to be happening, that's the expected thing.

Isaiah 55:10 For as the **rain** cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth **the earth**, and maketh it **bring forth** and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater:

11 So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.

And so that is what God expects. That is what his word does. It does not return void, it is effectual. So if they have been hearing that word repeatedly, and a seed has truly sprung up in their hearts, then it should be growing and bringing forth.

And when that happens, when a piece of ground yields good fruit, it is blessed. People bless it. They thank God for his bounty and wish his blessing upon that piece of ground, because they can see the herbs springing forth there.

So when they receive the rain, when they hear the word, they should be growing and maturing and bringing forth, and they'll receive blessing from God.

But they haven't been doing that. They haven't been growing and maturing. They are still babes, teaching milk. They receive the rain often upon them, they hear the word of the doctrine of Christ again and again, but they are bringing no fruit to perfection. They aren't even hardly sprouting.

Verse 8

Hebrews 6:8 But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned.

So when the earth receives rain, but instead of bringing forth herbs meet for those by whom it is dressed, the kind of plants that those caring for the land need from it, it brings forth thorns, it doesn't receive blessing. They don't ask God's blessing upon it. It is nigh unto cursing. And its

end is to be burned. The thorns and briars have to be burnt out, so that something else can be planted there.

And so those that keep hearing the word, but aren't bringing forth fruit, are like the earth that is bearing briars. It is nigh unto cursing, and its end is to be burned. They won't receive the blessing, the inheritance, they will instead be punished, they'll be damned, they'll burn up in hell. They heard the doctrine of Christ again and again and again and never came unto perfection.

Instead, they bore thorns and briars. That choked the word, so that it became unfruitful. They were like the people in Christ's parable that received the word with gladness, but had no root in themselves, and in time of temptation fell away. That let these things slip. That neglected their salvation. That when they were tempted by suffering and death and persecution, left the faith.

And that is what Paul is warning the Hebrews against. The same thing that Christ warned them against. And he's telling them that they are in danger of doing this very thing. That in fact it seems to him like this may be what they're already doing. That they've been receiving the rain coming off upon them, and yet they haven't been bringing forth. They keep hearing the doctrine of Christ, but never go on unto perfection, and understand it from the first principles of the oracles of God.

So there is a danger there for them, that they are on the brink of.

Verse 9

Hebrews 6:9 But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak.

Whew. I'm sure they were glad to hear that.

Paul says that he is persuaded that they are actually bringing forth some fruit. That they aren't just bearing briars and thorns. That they are in fact bringing forth those things that accompany salvation. The things that are expected from those that are going to be saved and receive the inheritance.

So he's given them some hard words here, but he is persuaded that they haven't left the faith, that aren't just bearing thorns and briars, that their end isn't to be burned.

Verse 10

Hebrews 6:10 For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.

And so he points out the fruits of their belief, the fruits that they've brought forth upon hearing the word of God. And he says that God is not unrighteous to forget that. He may look at that ground and say, "Man, it looks like it is pretty fallow." But then he'll remember, "But it has brought forth some great crops before, it has brought forth some good fruit before, and so I'll send some more rain on it, and bless it, and see if it will bring forth again."

And so they've in the past had a work and labour of love that they showed toward his name, in that they ministered to the saints. And Paul says that they not only have ministered to the saints, but do minister. They are continuing to do so. It is a continuing ministry. So it isn't as if they've completely stopped bearing fruit. It isn't as if they've started bearing a bunch of thorns and briars. As he said, he's persuaded better things of them. They haven't completely stopped

bringing forth from that belief in Christ and his word. But they're just not going on unto perfection right now, and there is a danger that if they stop growing, they'll stop bearing, and thorns and briars will take over, and choke the word, and they'll become unfruitful. But that hasn't happened yet, they are still ministering, they still have the things that accompany salvation.

Verse 11

Hebrews 6:11 And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end:

And so Paul is not writing to the Hebrews to tell them that they are bringing forth thorns and briars, and they're going to be burned up. He's writing them out of a desire that every one of them, *every one of them*, would show the same diligence unto the end. So that they might have the full assurance of the hope. So that there'd be no question. They'd have full assurance of the hope, because they'd still be rejoicing in it. They'd still be exhorting one another daily, and standing fast in the confidence that they will receive the inheritance.

Verse 12

Hebrews 6:12 That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

And so his desire is that they not be negligent, that they wouldn't let these things slip, that they'd not be slothful, but labour to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief. That instead they would be followers of them who through faith, and patience, enduring temptation and persecution, inherit the promises.

And so now he is calling their mind back to their fathers again, back to figures in the OT. He just showed them an example of what not to do, who not to be like, but he isn't going to leave it at that. He's now going to show them some examples of what they should do, of who they should be like from the OT. Some examples of people who we know will inherit the promises. And so he's going to show them the faith and patience of those people, and how when they had died, they had that assurance that they were heirs of the promise. Because although some did not believe, their unbelief will not make the word of God without effect.

Verses 13-14

Hebrews 6:13 For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself,
14 Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee.

And so they can have confidence in the word of God. There is no reason for them to doubt it. There is no reason for them to fear that God won't keep up his end of the bargain. The only fear is that they might stop believing. But they have a sure word to believe in, they have a faithful God to trust. So why wouldn't they trust him, why wouldn't they believe him, how could they be slothful?

They can look back on the example of Abraham, the first Hebrew, that God called out, to whom God originally gave that promise. And that promise that God made wasn't just any promise. God swore to it. And he didn't just swear to it, he swore by the very greatest thing that he could swear by. He swore by himself. And so that is a sure promise. God would have to break his oath, to deny himself, in order to not keep that promise. And God won't do that.

As Paul wrote to Timothy:

2 Timothy 2:11 It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him:
12 If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us:
13 If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself.

And so God remains faithful. If the Hebrews suffer, they will reign with him. But if they believe not, as Paul said there, he cannot deny himself and save them anyway. If they fall away, they can't be renewed again unto repentance, but are rejected.

And likewise he cannot deny himself by not bringing them into his rest, when they do believe. He'd be denying himself, because he's sworn by himself.

And so they have a sure promise, confirmed by an oath, and so they should follow those like Abraham, who through faith will inherit that promise. That like the earth that receives rain, and brings forth fruit, will receive that blessing from God, who swore saying, "Surely blessing I will bless thee."

Verse 15

Hebrews 6:15 And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.

And so Abraham, by faith, did indeed obtain the promise. He was indeed blessed and multiplied. And so they, as Hebrews, should be following in those footsteps of their father Abraham, and steadfastly believe the word of God that has now been spoken to them, by the Son.

And Paul is going to expound on the faith of Abraham and the other patriarchs more later on, so we won't dwell on that more here. We'll wait until Paul gets to that.

But God gave Abraham a sure promise, and Abraham believed it, and received what God had sworn that he should give him.

Verse 16

Hebrews 6:16 For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife.

And so Paul is emphasizing how God swore by the greatest thing that he could. Because that is what we do isn't it? Now, most of us, as Christians, don't swear to much, because Jesus enjoined against it. But when people swear, they don't swear by some small, insignificant, unimportant thing. You don't hear somebody swear by the sewage plant down the street. They swear by something that is very great and holy, or something that is very dear to them. Because they want to demonstrate that they are sincere, they want to confirm the sincerity of what they've said. And so they swear by an oath to end all strife and show that you can believe their word on a thing.

Verse 17

Hebrews 6:17 Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath:

So that's what men do, they swear by the greater. And that's what God did, too. He swore by the greatest thing, that should give us the most confidence, that would most abundantly show unto the heirs the immutability of his counsel. He confirmed his promise to the Hebrews by an oath, so that there would be no question. So that nobody could doubt that he was going to do for Abraham what he had said. That his seed would be blessed. That they would be multiplied. That they would receive the inheritance. That they would enter into his rest. Because God wanted to abundantly show that to the heirs, so that they would have faith, and remain steadfast in belief of his promise.

You know, there are people today, that say that God broke his promise to Abraham. That he broke his promise to the Hebrews. They wouldn't frame it that way, they'd dress it up in all kinds of mumbo jumbo, but in practical terms that's what they teach. They teach replacement theology, that Israel will not be saved. That the Hebrews as a people, as a nation, will not be saved. That they will no enter into God's rest.

And when they teach that, they are essentially blaspheming God. They are blaspheming his name. They are calling him a liar. They are, after he has sworn, to put an end to all strife, still striving, still arguing over whether he really means it or not, whether he'll really keep the promise to the Hebrews or not. Even though God was willing to more abundantly show unto the heirs the immutability of his counsel, that he would not change it, that he would not go back, even though he confirmed it by an oath, and swore by himself, they still don't believe him. If that isn't blaspheming God and his word, I don't know what is. He did every thing that he could, he said it in the most sure and certain way that anything can be said. If you're not going to believe that, then you simply refuse to believe God and his word, and you're calling him a perverse liar, who cannot be trusted even when he swears to something by his own holy name.

But Paul calls on the Hebrews not to be like that. Not to stop believing. Not to forsake the promise that God made to their forefather Abraham. To remain steadfast. To heed the word spoken by the Son, in consideration of the fact that when God spoke to them, he confirmed it with an oath, and swore by himself, that he might abundantly show to them the immutability of his counsel.

Verse 18

Hebrews 6:18 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:

And so he swore by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for him to lie.

And what are those two things?

Well, first, there is the promise, right? The word of God that he spoke to Abraham. When we give our word to somebody, when they ask us to promise, and we say, "I promise," that means that we're serious. We're not going to go back on it or change it, it's immutable. I mean, a promise is almost like an oath, except it isn't, right? It's immutable.

And so that's one immutable thing, the promise itself. The fact that God gave his word and promised.

But he didn't just give one immutable thing, he didn't just give a promise. He gave two immutable things, he also confirmed it by an oath, and swore by himself. That he might more abundantly show the immutability of his counsel.

And so that's not just one immutable thing, that's two immutable things. A promise backed by an oath. And so it was impossible that God was lying about that. Because he not only gave his word of promise, but confirmed it by the most dreadful oath, swearing by himself.

And God did that, that the Hebrews might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before them. That they might remain steadfast in their belief, being certain of the faithfulness of God, and the surety of his word.

Verse 19

Hebrews 6:19 Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil;

And that hope is so strong, that faith is so strong in that word of promise, that it is an anchor of the soul. They have no reason to depart from the living God, to transgress the word, to let these things slip. Because that word itself is sure and steadfast, and so they can believe it, their faith can be sure and steadfast. That sure hope will keep them in the faith, and cause them to come boldly before the throne of grace, to receive mercy and find grace to help in time need. Because it also entereth into that within the veil, which is where the ark of the testimony, and the mercy seat were kept.

Verse 20

Hebrews 6:20 Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

And so they have a forerunner, already seated on the right hand of God, evidently made heir of that inheritance, crowned with glory and honor, and made higher than they angels. And his brethren after the flesh can be confident of being made partakers with him, of receiving that promise left them of entering into his rest, because he is also a faithful and merciful high priest in things pertaining to God. He can have compassion on the ignorant, he can dispense them grace and mercy from the throne of God himself. He can succor them in their temptation. And so they need not neglect so great salvation. They need not let these things slip. They need not fall from their steadfastness. They have a great high priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, so let them hold fast their profession. For he is made an high priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec.

And so in chapter 7 Paul is going to expound on what it means for Christ to be a high priest after the order of Melchisedec. Remember how he's been working things around to the priesthood here, but he's had to deal with some other things first. He kept bringing it up but then not really saying what he had to say. And he finally told them that they were really making it hard for him say what he needs to about Melchisedec because they are hard of hearing. And so now that he's gotten that out of the way, now that he's rebuked them for that, for not going on unto

perfection, he can go ahead, and finally take them on the next step unto perfection. He can finally expound some of these things relating to the first principles of the oracles of God. And so that's what we'll get to see, we'll stop here, and pick up in chapter 7, next time.