

An Anchor of the Soul

by Rick Leibee

Jesus Christ is our Great High Priest, appointed by God, touched with our infirmities, and worthy of the office, who offers sacrifices and represents us before God.

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Scripture: Matthew 6:33, John 11:35, Hebrews 5:7-9

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Christian Maturity"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the serious warnings found in the book of Hebrews, which focuses on lifting up Jesus. He uses the analogy of a principal choosing between two candidates for an administrative position to illustrate the importance of growth and progress in the Christian faith. The speaker encourages listeners to mature in their understanding of the Word of righteousness and to be able to discern right from wrong. He emphasizes the need for believers to move beyond the basic principles of the doctrine of Christ and strive for perfection in their spiritual journey.

Transcript

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Amen. Greetings to you by the power and the grace of the loving promises of God. I hope you have claimed and appropriated some of those promises this week by faith that God will continue to open things up to you as He shows you who He is and reveals Himself to you through Jesus Christ, His Son.

And we want to continue to remember one of the things that I said the very first day is that this week as one of the central themes of the book of Hebrews is Jesus Christ. And that little phrase in Hebrews 3.1, it's also in chapter 12 as well where it says to consider Jesus. So we're going to consider Jesus again.

We're going to look at Him a little bit from another perspective that's been mentioned briefly, but we'll look at it a little bit more this morning because the book of Hebrews is unique in several respects and one of the most important ways is it's the only book in the New Testament that presents Jesus Christ as your Great High Priest, as our Great High Priest. And it is such an important part of who He is and what He's now doing because when He was on this earth, He was not a priest. But He is now.

And it's very important that we understand what a priest does and what Jesus is now doing for you and I before His Father there in heaven and with His Father. So turn this morning to chapter 5. And we will begin by reading the first six verses here of chapter 5. 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. 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.

And by reason hereof he ought as for the people so also for himself to offer for sins. And no man taketh this honor unto himself but he that is called of God as was Aaron. So also Christ glorified not himself to be made a high priest but he that said unto him, Thou art my son.

Today have I begotten thee. As he hath saith also in another place, Thou art a priest forever. After the order of Melchizedek.

Thou art a priest forever. See, Jesus is now our priest. And it seems like that will be one of the roles, one of the functions, one of the offices that He will have forever.

We know and we sing a lot about Him being the King of kings and Lords of lords forever. But He's also going to be a priest forever. I don't understand everything about that, but we want to look at part of that this morning here as we look at these verses.

Now these verses help us to get a better grip or a better grasp on the definition of a priest. Some of you may have come from a religious setting where there are still priests. For example, I was Catholic until I was born again 29 years ago.

Anybody else here born again who used to be a Catholic? I'm the only one. My, I'm feeling alone. Okay, there's a couple.

So you know what a priest is, right? And his function in the church as he offers sacrifices and does things for men. Some of the rest of you that haven't been around that may not understand the function of a priest. But in these verses here, and as you study the Old Testament and the role and the duty of a priest, you get a little bit of a picture, an idea of what Jesus Christ did and is now still doing.

You see that He represents man here. He must be taken, the verse 1 says here, from among men, meaning that He must be a man. And here again is another reminder of the humanity of Christ.

And there are many reasons why He had to become a man. We looked at one the other day. It was simply so that He could die.

But also one of the reasons He had to become a man was God, looking down the corridors of time, knew that He was going to be your priest. And to be a priest, to represent man, He must be taken from among men, meaning He must be a man. And so here's another reason that Jesus became flesh.

Because as a man representing another man, what His job is to represent you before God. And that was the function of the priest in the Old Testament. They went to the priest and the priest represented a man before God.

So a man must represent a man before God. Now, it's also helpful in our minds here to make sure that we draw a distinction in our understanding between a prophet and a priest. In the Old Testament, we had both.

Prophets and priests. But what was the difference? A prophet represented God, so to speak, in that he had a message from God and the Word of the Lord would come upon him and then he would go to the people and tell them, thus sayeth God. And so he was the spokesman or the messenger for God, right? Whereas the priest, it seemed like, had the other duty, didn't he? The people would come with their sins and what they would need.

They would come with their offerings, their sacrifices. The priest would take it from them, take it into the Holy of Holies, take it into God and then offer it to God as a representative for man. And so, two different men, two different functions.

Both important and both needed. But again, here in the person of Christ, they come together, don't they? Because we've already studied and we've already realized from chapter 1 that while God spoke in time past through the prophets, now in these last days, He has spoken by whom? His Son. And so Jesus is the prophet of prophets in that He has the message of the ages.

The message of the ages has not only been entrusted in Him, He is the message of the ages. He is the way. He not only speaks the truth, He is the truth.

Amen? And so, He is the prophet of prophets, but now He also has this unique thing where these two functions merge into the life and the ministry of Jesus Christ where He also became a man so He could be chosen among men to represent men back to God. And so, prophet and priest come together in the person and in the ministry of Jesus Christ. And so, we need to understand that as we look at this.

And, you know, just as you think about this now, you may think, well, I'm a Christian now. I'm not sure what that means, Brother Rick. I don't think I need a priest.

Well, if you've read the New Testament, you'll realize you do. And you're thankful for His role as a priest, that He's always interceding for you and I. And I'm thankful that God included me when He said in 1 John, and if any man sins, we have an advocate with the Father. We have an advocate with the Father.

An advocate is one who is a go-between. An advocate is one who takes the side of this party and presents it to the other to obtain favor or to obtain a favorable judgment or response. That's what an advocate does.

And Jesus Christ is your priest advocate. Your advocate is your priest and your priest is your advocate. The two words merge very closely here.

And that's one of the reasons why, though I was Catholic and understand what the earthly priest is, now that I understand who Jesus Christ is as the Great High Priest, I don't want a man today to represent me before God. It's not good enough. We have something better.

We live in better days, better times, better covenants, better promises. And we have a better priest because we have the Great High Priest. And I don't want a man.

And I don't think any man should take that title today. I can say that as one who has come from a religion who has got it. Now, may I say very carefully for all those dear Catholics that I still love and pray for and minister to, they've got it completely wrong.

They've got it completely wrong. The whole offering of the Mass, the whole confessional thing that you have to go to that priest so that he can represent you before God is, may I say very carefully, heresy. You know, I say that carefully.

But that is what it is. It is wrong. Something happened in their thinking and their theology that is totally wrong.

And just in my own heart before God, I don't want that kind of man to represent me to God. I want Jesus Christ to be my advocate, don't you? Because He has their credentials. He has the authorization.

He's lived the life. He's done all of those things. That's who I want to represent me before God.

I don't want a second best, third best, or a hundredth best, do you? When I have Jesus Christ. If any man sins, he has an advocate with the Father. And so this function of priest, while you may at first kind of look at it and go, well, let's skip over that part, Brother Rick.

You know, I'm not interested in priests. You need to be very interested in this priest. You need to be very interested in this priest.

He's very important to you. Very important. He has passed the test of heaven.

And you know, I can, I don't want you to get confused, I can pray for you, and you can pray for me. Amen? And I can intercede for you, meaning I can pray intercessory prayers for you. But I cannot represent you to God.

I cannot represent your case before God. I can pray for you. But, so I'm not taking away prayer here at all.

Don't misunderstand me. We as the brotherhood, we pray for each other. We care about each other.

We plead to God for each other and all those things. But, we pray that Jesus Christ would represent you to the Father and that He would hear our cries for you and that He would then take all of those prayers and represent them and plead your case to the Father. Well, a priest must also offer sacrifices.

One of the functions in the Old Testament, we don't have time to go over this in any great detail, is the priest would take the sacrifices or gifts or offerings of the people because the people had a problem. What was their problem? Sin. That's right, sin.

Sin is an awful thing. We don't see in our 21st century church world or theology, I don't think we have enough right teaching on sin. Sin is an awful thing.

Sin is terrible. You know, because we're not arrested every time we commit a sin, we sometimes don't think it's as serious as it is. You know, we see a criminal.

He does drugs. He murders. He gets arrested.

We think, wow, that guy's really bad. Well, you know, you're a criminal before God when you sin. Only much worse.

Much worse. I don't have time to paint the picture to preach a message on sin, which we should have. Maybe somebody will preach that tonight or tomorrow night.

I don't know. But, sin, we have an awful problem. We have a terrible problem.

And we can't just sweep it under the rug. We can't just pay a fine because we went over the speed limit. Okay? This is not a little thing.

We need somebody to offer something. Because the Bible teaches that without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sin. So there must be a sacrifice.

There must be a life given for sins. Because only blood can cover those things. And so in Jesus Christ, we have one who not only offers blood, it is His blood.

He is both the victim, may I say. He is the offering and the priest. He carries again into that office both of those things.

He carries His blood and He carries the blood Himself to God. He not only gives the blood, He takes the blood to God. Because as the priest, that's the function of the priest, is to take the blood, to take the offering to God, so that the sins will be remitted or removed.

And the Bible says later here in the book of Hebrews, that when Jesus Christ does that, God not only forgives them, He does something that I still don't understand. Maybe I won't until I get to heaven. It says He forgets them.

He forgets them. It's as if they never happened. He cast them as far as the east is from the west.

And He says, I will remember them when? No more. What does no more mean? No more. I mean, isn't that plain? He will remember them? No more.

What a priest! Don't tell me you're not interested in Jesus Christ being your priest. Don't tell me that. You are very interested.

You are very interested in Him being your priest. It's very important. One of the next qualifications that we have here in these first six verses, is it says that He must be touched with our infirmities.

And the infirmities here isn't because maybe some of you are sick. Maybe some of you have a physical handicap. Maybe you have a physical problem.

I don't know. It isn't talking about that. You have a sickness.

You have a disease. And it's sin. And it's the worst disease that ever was or ever will be.

That is your infirmity. And He's touched with it. And again, you try to wrestle with that and you think, well, wait a minute.

What do you mean, touched with our infirmities? Well, again, in the Old Testament, one of the reasons the priest was chosen among men is because when they came with their sins and he had to take them to God,

since he was a man, he understood what sin was, didn't he? He couldn't sit there in judgment of the people and think, you've done that sin again. Shame on you. No.

He'd have to think, oh, I've done those things too. I know what it feels like. I know what it is to be a man.

And so he could go to God with compassion and with understanding, couldn't he? And Jesus Christ here, it says, we've studied this before, is touched with our infirmities. And again, Jesus Christ never sinned. The difference is this.

He understands the feelings of our infirmities because as we've already studied earlier this week, He was tested and proved, wasn't He? He was put under the pressure of sin. And so though He walked the dirty streets of this world, He did not sin, but when He saw man fall into sin and fall down in the dirt, just like the woman who was caught in adultery, He didn't fall down with her, but I believe He got down and helped her back up, didn't He? And said, go and sin no more. So He touched what it was like.

He lived it. He saw it. He related to the people who had it.

And so He had a heart and a compassion. Though He didn't fall in the dirt with us, meaning He didn't fall into sin, yet He had to help us back up out of it even as He walked these streets. He had to rub shoulders with people that sinned.

And He had to see them and see the destruction and the waste that it did on their lives. And out of His heart came pity and compassion, didn't it? That's what came out of His heart. So He was touched with our infirmities.

And also, finally here, it says that a priest must be appointed by God. It says one does not take upon the honor upon himself. And I don't know what to do with all this.

You know, today as we see men choosing religious careers, I don't know what to say about all those things. I hope some of them truly are called of God. It's a dangerous thing.

It's a dangerous thing. It's not a career. You know, it's not a career.

It's being treated like that. It's being treated like that. The ministry is being treated that way.

I don't believe that's the heart of God according to passages like this. I don't believe it's the heart of God. Because it says no man here can appoint himself.

You know, God has to do the appointing. God has to do it. And God clearly gave His only begotten Son.

God clearly chose Him before the foundations of this earth to come and to be Your priest now and forevermore the Bible teaches here after the order of Melchizedek. Well, now the one little word here I do want to just make a quick note on it says, Thou art my Son, today have I begotten Thee. Now, I believe in the framework of this passage the moment that Jesus Christ or maybe not the moment, but the time period in which He was becoming a priest wasn't when He was born in Bethlehem.

When He says He's begotten Him, He means begotten first among the dead. See, by passing through that veil of death, He entered into a whole other area. Not only did He have a glorified body, but He has new glorified ministries and one of them is the priesthood.

And so He's explaining here that part of what happened there on the cross and His death and resurrection wasn't just that He was resurrected, although that's enough, but He also was begotten, meaning birthed into something new. And here He's being birthed into a new office. So the begotten here doesn't mean the day that He was born in Bethlehem.

It means the day that He was born into this new office and resurrected into that. And the amazing thing here is because God appointed Him to it and because of the life He lived, it proved His worthiness. He is worthy of this office.

He is worthy to be our great High Priest. He is worthy. And one of the reasons I'm spending a few minutes on this is you must receive by faith and understand in your head and in your heart His worthiness to have this office because there will be days in your Christian life when it seems like all hell will rage against you and condemn you and say things like, you still have your guilt.

Nothing really happened back there at Bible school. You're probably not saved anyway. And all these things will be whispered into your ear.

And I've even stood by people on their deathbed. And some people, although they're Christians, will have a momentary wave, it seems like, of this jolt where hell is raging against their spirit, it seems like. And the devil comes at this last hour to whisper, you still have your guilt.

And the only thing I think that helps them endure that is the faith and the belief that Jesus Christ is worthy and I am saved because of what Jesus has said. Am I worthy? No. You're right, devil.

There's nothing in me. There's no good thing in me. But in Jesus Christ is the worthiness of God and in Him is my salvation.

And He is my priest and He has pled my case and I believe in Him. And so we have to get this. You have to get this.

There will be moments in your life where you need to believe in the worthiness of Jesus Christ. He is the source of your eternal salvation. If we read on ahead here in verse 9, we won't get there just yet, you're going to see that phrase.

He is the source of your eternal salvation. Well, I don't want to skip over verse 6. Thou art a priest after the order of Melchizedek. Because chapter 7, practically the whole chapter is about that subject.

And so Lord willing, tomorrow we will look at that and it's very important that we do. But this phrase is going to be mentioned two or three times just in this chapter. But we'll move on trusting that we'll be able to look at it in some detail tomorrow.

Now verse 7 here, I do want to pause on for a moment. It's a very, may I say, unique verse and a very important verse in understanding His office as a priest here. Verse 7. Why don't you stand with me as we read a couple of verses here.

Just stand quietly, keep your Bibles open. Verse 7. Who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears... This is Jesus Christ. ...unto Him that was able to save Him from death and was heard in that He feared.

Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered. And being made perfect, He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him. Alright, you may be seated.

Now verse 7 here is a bit of a unique verse. It talks about Jesus Christ having strong cryings and tears. Now, if you've studied the life of Jesus, which I hope you have, and I hope if you haven't, that you've gotten a little bit of your appetite whetted this week through the book of Hebrews, that you'll go do a very detailed study of the life of Jesus, that you'll know that it's only recorded in Scripture that He wept three times.

Right? Three times. That it's only recorded three times. And yet here, it talks about strong cryings and tears.

Well, the first time that Scripture talks about Him weeping was at the tomb of Lazarus when He was there. And a lot of people like to say the shortest verse in the Bible, Jesus wept. And you wonder why did He cry? Because He knew what He was going to do.

He was going to raise Lazarus from the dead. But you know what? I don't believe He was crying for Lazarus. I believe He was crying because He was moved with compassion because His sisters, Lazarus' sisters, were weeping and mourning.

And He loved them. The Bible says He loved this family. And as He saw their tears because of the awful enemy death had come and taken their brother, and His heart was moved as it often was when He looked upon the plight of people with compassion.

And I believe He wept tears of compassion towards them. That's what I believe happened that day. And you know, I think we all understand how that feels, don't we? Haven't you ever gone to the funeral of someone else? Maybe someone died and as you look there, you see someone's brother or sister or mother or father in the grave and you see the tears of the family.

Doesn't it move your heart to compassion? Haven't you shed a tear that way? I have. It wasn't your relative. It wasn't your whatever.

But yet, you see the other people and something moves within you. Jesus also wept, the Bible says, when He came upon Jerusalem there and He says, O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how long would I have gathered you? Like a hen gathers her chicks. And He weeps over this, may I say, Christ-rejecting city because He knows as He looks ahead a day or two there in time, He knows they're going to reject the answer to life.

They're going to reject their Messiah. And He knows they've killed the prophets. And in effect, they've rejected God time and time again.

And just the heaviness of realizing the choices they've made, He weeps for them. He weeps for that city of Jerusalem. You know, I know there's going to come a day in heaven when the Bible says there will be no more tears and crying.

I don't know if that means there's not any now, but sometimes I think Jesus still weeps today over cities as He sees decisions made in cities like Ephrata and Lancaster and wherever you're from. I wonder if He cries over cities today. I think He does.

I don't know. I don't know. I know there will be a day when those tears will stop, but for now, I believe He's interceding on behalf of us, on behalf of cities in heaven.

And now the third time it's recorded that He wept was in the Garden of Gethsemane. And that's what this verse is talking about, I believe. You know, you wonder sometimes again how can He sympathize? How can He understand what sin is like? How can He be a faithful high priest? And the reason this verse is in here is to take us back on that night after the Last Supper, where He went down through the Valley of Kidron and up the side of Mount of Olives.

And He went to that little grove of trees on the top of that mount to that garden where it was His habit to go with His disciples. And then He had the rest of them stay and He chose out three of His more, could we say spiritually sensitive disciples? Peter, James, and John, and asked them to come a further distance as He went back into the gloomy, dark shadows of Gethsemane that night. And He knew what was going to happen.

And He knew He would need help. And for the first time in His whole ministry on earth, He did something very unusual. He asked His disciples to help Him.

He said, watch with Me. Pray with Me. He was pleading with Him to help Him.

He knew what He was going to face. And He was God, but He was man too. And I believe that man part of Him was, you know, He knew what was coming.

He knew what He was going to face. He said, watch with Me. The first time He asked Him for help.

Did you ever know that? Very interesting. He asked Him for help. Watch with Me.

Come. Pray with Me. And there in that dark, gloomy shadows of Gethsemane, something happened which there was no prophecy about that I can find in the Old Testament.

There's no prophecy. There's prophecies about the cross. But you know, I can't find anything in the Old Testament that I feel clearly is a prophecy about what happened that night.

But that night here in verse 7 of Hebrews 5, it tells us there were strong cries, pleadings, tears unto God. Tears unto God. And that's what happened that night.

Because in that night, something happened that is very, very different. For the first time in His ministry here on earth, He fell to His knees and cried out. And I believe what He was crying about is what came upon Him there as He drank that bitter cup was not only the sense of His impending death, but also a sense of sin began to settle upon Him for the first time.

Have you ever had a sense of sin settle upon you? Do you know what I'm talking about? Maybe it's not that you just committed a sin that second. But as you think about sin, something settles on you. Maybe it's sort of like conviction.

It's like the weight of sin began to descend and settle upon His frame, upon His soul. And I think for the first time in His life, He began to feel what it was like to be a criminal before His Holy Father. And He didn't understand what to do with it.

And so He cries with strong cries. And He cries with tears. And He even begs, let this cup pass.

Let this cup pass. And it wasn't just the death. It was this sense of sin.

This sense of sin upon this holy, perfect person of Jesus Christ settling down. And I believe this sense of sin was such a crushing weight to Him that I believe it broke His heart to the point where somehow it even affected Him physically that His blood seemed to break forth and it came out through His pores. And the Bible describes it as great drops of blood fell to the ground from that crushing of the weight of sense of sin that came upon His frame that night.

And that's what I believe this verse is talking about. So, though He was perfect, and He is and He was, He had a sense of sin. He was touched with our infirmities.

And I believe that's one of the things that happened there on that dark and gloomy night at Gethsemane. And where it says here in verse 8, though He were a son, yet He learned He obedience by the things which He suffered. And He suffered physically beyond which any man has ever suffered, I believe, in that crucifixion.

But yet, the suffering didn't just begin on the cross. It didn't begin on the cross, young people. It began on that dark night in Gethsemane.

There was such a suffering that He sweat blood. His heart was crushed with a sense of sin. And then it takes us on here a little further.

Verse 9, And being made perfect... How was He made perfect? On the cross. I believe we go from the garden to the cross here. The word perfect here means fulfillment and completeness.

The fulfillment and the completeness and the perfectness of His life and His ministry was exemplified in His death and His burial and His resurrection. He was made perfect. He fulfilled that which we are sent to do.

It is finished, He cried from the cross. The debt is paid. The thing was fulfilled.

The contract was signed and sealed. It was finished. It was a done deal.

It was completed. It was perfect. Let's move on here a little bit now.

Well, the other little point I'd like to make here is He became the Author of eternal salvation. And notice the last little part. Unto all them... And notice this little phrase, that obey Him.

See, He was obedient to God even unto death. But do you know what He tells you and I to do? Pick up our cross and follow Him. So if we obey Him, our obedience to Him out of love for Him, if you love Me, obey Me, as He says in John, is picking up our cross and following Him, then we will be what? His disciples indeed.

Amen? If you want to be a disciple of Jesus Christ, it's not only understanding these things, it's living them out in obedience to Him. He met His cross. You have yours.

You need to pick up your cross and follow Him into whatever that means. Okay, let's keep moving here. We'll skip verse 10 as well because of the Melchizedek reference, which we'll pick up tomorrow.

And we'll finish the rest of the chapter here. Of whom we have many things to say. He's talking about both Jesus and the priesthood of Melchizedek.

And hard to be uttered, meaning these things are not easily understood. Sometimes we have to do a little study. Sometimes we have to do a little digging.

Sometimes we have to let God do a little digging in our heart too, don't we? It's not just all digging here. We have to be willing to let God touch what in your life and my life needs to come under the obedience of Jesus Christ, don't we? And hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing. Now again, you know this.

He's not talking about their physical ears, is He? He's talking about they have a heart problem. Now He's going to describe it here in a little bit of detail. And we need to listen to this so that we can learn and see and not make the same mistakes.

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. For everyone that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. 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 so what He's saying here back in verse 12 is for when the time ye ought to be teachers, He's talking about maturity and growing up in the Christian faith. We talked about it a little bit yesterday, but we're going to talk about it a little bit more today in the context of this. You can read about it also a little bit similar passage and thoughts in 1 Corinthians there where He's talking to the church there and says that they are still babes.

He even calls them carnal Christians still taking in milk when they should be ready for meat. Someone here... I mean, as we think about this, we need to understand that maturity in the Christian faith does not have to do with marking time. It has to do with true spiritual growth or development.

Let me illustrate it this way. In our home, we have a four-year-old son. His name is Micaiah.

We all think he's very cute. We think he says very clever things for his age and all that. But, what if... what if... his mind were to stop right now at age four, but his body were to grow? Has he grown up? Not really.

And even, may I say, and you can catch that in Paul here, how sad it is after all this time that he ought to have grown up, you're still a babe. And we would think that of my son, wouldn't we? You know, if he were to grow up and be 25 and still act like a four-year-old, though we would still love him, we would think, this isn't right. Something's wrong.

And we would actually be grieved, wouldn't we? And we would think, oh no, it shouldn't be this way. And that's what Paul here, I believe, is saying. He's saying, look, when time you ought to be teachers, when time you ought to be planting churches, when time you ought to be stopping all this gossiping and backbiting and jealousies and evil speakings and running back and forth and getting all these things right back to the foundations and you tear them apart and you go right back and you need somebody to explain the Gospel to you over and over and over and over again because you just can't get a hold of faith.

You need to grow up. You need to move on in your Christian life. And you're Christians, it seems like he's calling them Christians here, but he's saying, how long are you going to be this way? How long? And you

know, again, we need to understand as we listen to this, there's nothing wrong with milk, okay? Milk is good, right? And when you're a baby, you have to have milk to grow your bones and to grow strong and all of that.

But again, the example of my little son, what if at 25 he was still just drinking milk? You know, you'd be thinking, there's something wrong with that boy, wouldn't you? Well, that's what Paul is saying here. There's something wrong. There's something wrong with these people.

And they're not growing up to the maturity. They're just marking time instead of marching forward. Maybe another illustration from the world, from a job situation might help you a little bit.

Imagine a principal in a school and he has a position, an administrative position, maybe assistant principal to Phil, and he has two candidates. One has five years of experience. One has 20 years of experience.

He chooses the one with five. Well, the one with 20 comes and says, wait a minute, I've been here 20 years. I have 20 years of experience.

The principal sadly shakes his head and says, well, actually, you don't. The problem is, you have one year experience that you've repeated the same thing over and over again 20 times and over and over again. Do you see the picture? And that's the way it is with some of us in our Christian life.

You know, we're just over and over the same old things. Every revival meeting, we've got to come to the altar, not because God is dealing with the deeper issues of our life, because we're still struggling with our salvation. And I don't believe Paul is being unkind.

He's saying you're still struggling with these basic principles. You need to get a hold of it. You need to see Jesus Christ high and lifted up.

Put your faith in Him and then move on and be a disciple. You know, God has work to be done. And He needs disciples.

May I say He can't use babies to do the work of God. He needs young men and young women and people to get out there and work in the Kingdom of God. And He can't use babies.

Babies aren't going to be able to make it. Because they're still going to be fussing around and getting angry and losing their temper and they're going to keep falling into the same sins all the time and they're just, you know, back and forth and back and forth, just like a baby. Just not really getting anywhere.

You know? The sad thing is, in a Christian, it's not cute anymore, is it? It's not funny anymore. And that's what Paul is saying. He's saying this is a serious issue.

This is a serious issue. Heart trouble. Ear trouble.

But really, ultimately, ultimately, these are heart issues. And he mentions something here in verse 13, for everyone that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness. In the word of righteousness.

That means he doesn't know the Word of God. You know, you can read the Bible 20 times and still not know the Word of God. When I was in college, as I said yesterday, I had the misfortune of going to college, I had a professor who was actually a teacher in a seminary as well.

And the college that I went to, he taught a course at the college called Judeo-Christian Heritage. And I got to talk to him a little bit. And he had a reputation on the college campus of being sort of a wild party guy and he was always getting in trouble with the dean and all this sort of stuff.

I mean, that man, he had so much of the Bible memorized it would shock you. But he didn't know God. So he did not know how to handle the Word of Righteousness.

He knew the dates. He knew the names of the people better than I ever will, I'm sure, in two lifetimes. But he did not know how to handle the Word of God.

He didn't know how to handle the Word of Righteousness. And so, you know, I just encourage you, you need to learn how to read the Word of God, study it, take it in, and let the Holy Spirit be your teacher in spiritual things. Because you may go out every week witnessing, and you should.

You may be a prayer group leader. And amen, I'm glad you are. But if you don't know how to study, if you don't know how to handle the Word of God, the Bible teaches you're not going to grow like you should.

Do not neglect it. You're not going to grow. Here it is.

You will not grow like you should. You cannot neglect this one. And part of this is then as you learn that, there are many marks of maturity, but one of the marks it gives us here is the ability to discern good and evil.

Did you catch that at the end of this passage here? "By strong meat belongeth to them that are full of age." And again, age there does not mean I have met young people, 20 years old, that I think are more mature than me in the faith sometimes. Because they're full of age. They're full of the Word of God and they're full of the wisdom of God.

It isn't marked because you're 30 years old or 40 years old or 50 years old. It's marked as you let yourself be matured in the things of God. They're full of age.

Full of age. "Even those who by reason of use..." Notice the phrase, reason of use. They've used the Word of God correctly.

"...have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." And that is so important to be able to discern good and evil. There are many Christians today, unfortunately, who are still blown about by every wind of doctrine it seems. There's many other warnings about this in the Word of God.

Anyone who has observed the Christian scene for very long recognizes that it seems like there's certain fads, may I call them, or certain things that seem to come up around again and again and again in the Christian scene. And some people run to those things. And they get blown about by every wind of doctrine.

You know, this whole thing of what day is the Sabbath? Some people run to that one. Faith healers. So-called faith healers.

Tongues movements. Using modern entertainment to give out Gospel. All these different things.

These things come and go in Christian movements. And certain people just need to be attracted to them and run to them. You know, instead of using the Word of God and the Spirit of God in their heart and in

their life, having their senses full of age to be able to discern, is this right? Is this of God? Is really God in this? Or is this just an emotional peel? And it seems like those that are babes in Christ, they're drawn to those things that are full of signs and wonders and strong emotional appeals rather than saying, is this the Spirit of God? Is God really moving and working in this? Or is this just a lot of fireworks, so to speak? And we need to be very careful.

We need to be able to discern between good and evil in all of these things. And some people seem to be very quickly drawn to certain movements within the Christian scene where one man is lifted up as having all the answers. They just want to go sit at his feet.

And I'm all for Bible teachers. But when you see something like that going on, automatically, something should go in your mind. There's something not right here.

Because no man has all the answers. Right? And we need to be very careful. But some people seem to be just like, oh, I've got to go hear so-and-so.

And it's like the book of the month club. I'm not against books. Please hear me.

I'm just saying we need to have this sense. You need to come of age and discern is God in this thing? Is God for this? Because if God be for it, amen. But is this just another teaching? Is this just another thing coming here or there? And we need to get on with the kingdom of God.

And we need to move on with furthering things instead of just going over the same principles again and again. Discerning good and evil. This affects so many things.

You know, there's a lot of things you have to decide in your life, young people. You're at a time, and I'm sure Brother Paul is covering some of this, but you're at a time where you're having to make decisions about things that are going to lay foundations in your life. And not everything is spelled out in the Word of God.

You know, it doesn't take any discernment when the Bible says thou shalt not kill, does it? I mean, zero discernment is needed, right? But what about the Internet? What about what job I do for a living? What about those sort of things? What about what clothes I wear? What about what music I listen to? You know, it's not just black and white, is it? Rather, you have to come of age and get a sense of the Word of righteousness and know how to handle and be able to discern right from wrong and good from evil, don't you? Do you understand what I'm saying? And that's what Paul's talking about. He needs people in the church. God needs people who are men and women who are mature, who are grown up, who are able to make those decisions, who are able to see through things, who are able to use the Word of God and be Spirit-filled about it and be loving and full of compassion and not just going back over the same old things again and again.

The same old things again and again. Alright, well, let's move on here to chapter 6. And verses 1-3 are really a continuation of therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ. Let's move on to perfection.

I don't think I'm going to read those verses. I'll start in verse 4. That's really a continuation of the same thing we've been going over. Let's move down to verse 4 here.

Remember again, there are many serious warnings in the book of Hebrews. It is a book that lifts up Jesus. Amen? But, in the midst of lifting up Jesus, there are serious warnings in the book of Hebrews.

And this is probably the most sobering one. Many a good man of God has trembled as he's looked at these passages and I tremble. I do not profess to say I have all the answers.

I checked with some other men of God in history and whatever, what they thought of this, and this is one of those passages that a lot of different people have a lot of different ideas on. And I'm not saying what I'm going to present today is the be-all end-all, but I believe in my heart, I'm clear before God, that it is right thinking and it is the right way to look at this passage. And so I'm just going to give it to you today and trust the Spirit of God to work.

But, even if I'm wrong, may I say even if my application is wrong on this passage, whatever your application is on this passage, take a deep breath. This is a serious, sober passage. This is a serious business.

This is not a little thing in the Kingdom of God. This should make you tremble. Your palms should be sweating just a little bit.

Maybe a lot as we read this. And so we want to be very careful how we look at this. Verse 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 and have tasted the good Word of God and the powers of the world to come, 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.

Serious words. Serious words here. Now we must reckon, first of all, with the fact that to me it is very clear, and I hope it is to you, that Paul again, as he has been throughout the book of Hebrews, is talking to Christians.

He's talking to Christians. This is not a passage that you preach on the street corner to try to get somebody to come to Christ. And more importantly, this is a passage that you as a Christian need to understand and come to grips with as best you can.

Because it says, for those who were once enlightened. What does it mean to be enlightened? We were in the dominion of darkness. We have been translated into the kingdom of His dear Son, right? To the kingdom of light.

We have seen. We were blinded. The Bible says you were blinded and in darkness by the prince of this world who tried to darken us to the things of God.

But Jesus came and the light of the Gospel came and we were enlightened because Jesus says, I am the light of this world. For those that were enlightened, if you're here today and you're born again, you have been enlightened. And this verse is for you and about you.

And have tasted of the heavenly gift. What is the heavenly gift? God said in John 3.16 that He what? God gave His only begotten Son. The gift of God is His own Son, Jesus Christ.

And through Him who is the source of eternal life, salvation is the work and the gift of God. And we're made partakers. To partake of something is to take it inside into the inner parts.

Yesterday, whatever you had for lunch, you partook of. And today, it is part of you. Some of your cells, some of your blood are now part of what you ate yesterday because you partook of it.

It is in you and you are it and it is you. And it's hard to divide because you can't anymore, can you? You can't take that thing away because it's now part of you. So you're partakers of the Holy Ghost and have tasted the good Word of God and the powers of the world to come.

And now it says, if they shall fall away, to renew them again. And now we're to this part that we need to talk about for a few minutes. The phrase, if they shall fall away is key to this whole understanding.

And again, note the word if. Note the word if. But the phrase, shall fall away.

I've looked at this thing in different languages. I've looked at it in different versions of the Bible, in the Amplified Bible. And the answer that I came up with best is as you look in the Greek, it says peripeto.

And one of the key definitions there is to apostatize. And if you understand what apostasy means, it means one who has known the truth, who has been enlightened, as we read here, who has tasted these things, but then on choice, turns away and actually leaves that and goes back into the state that they were in before. I asked Brother Andy Zielinski, what does it mean in the Spanish? And I can't remember the word, Brother, but ricotro? And it means, the picture there in Spanish is somebody's down in a pit and then they climb out of the pit and they're free and they're okay, but then they go back down into the same place they were before.

Okay? So, apostasy, as it's given there in the Greek, and then if you look it up in Bynes and some of the other places what that means, it actually was taken from the definition from a political... the best definition there is like if you're in a political party and you actually defect and go to the enemy of your political party and join them and actually then talk bad about them and go against the things they were for. You know, it's like a very, very, may I use this, liberal Democrat, can I say that? You know, defecting and becoming the staunchest right-wing Republican. You know, I mean, you would think, well, that can never happen.

Well, it does occasionally happen in American politics. But that's some of the picture of what is in this word here. And it is a grave and serious act of a professed Christian who knowingly and deliberately rejects the revealed truth regarding the work and the life of Jesus Christ.

Now, again, this is not heresy. Heresy is usually 90-95% truth and a little bit false. It's not somebody who's in the Christian faith quote, unquote, but then twists it and perverts it and has teachings that are off and wrong and that are bad teachings that end up in heresy.

This is someone who's rejecting the whole thing. They're falling away. They are leaving and going back to that they were before.

Let's read a couple of other passages of Scripture. Turn to 1 Timothy 4, verse 1, and it says, Now the Spirit speaks expressly that in the latter times, some shall depart from the faith. Now, this is not backsliding.

If you're sitting here and you're thinking, oh no, I was a Christian, but I backslid and I got into some sin and now Brother Rick is saying that I cannot come back to God. It's not saying that. You know, departing from the faith means, like I'm saying, it's a rejecting and a going back to the state.

It's going back to the state you were in before you were born again where you... See, before you were born again, do you know what you were? You were an enemy of the cross. You were a Christ-rejecting person. Do you realize we live in a Christ-rejecting world? Do you understand that? It sounds too plain when I say it straight out.

But we live in a Christ-rejecting world. Everything in this world is going opposite and is diametrically opposed to the cross of Christ. We live in a Christ-rejecting world.

And when you fall away, you join back with them and you are rejecting Christ and His work on the cross. You are departing. Departing means you are leaving it.

You are no longer with it. And if you're not with it, you are its enemy, as Jesus said. There's only two camps here.

There's not a third class of Christians. Okay? There's only two camps. And they're departing.

They're departing. Let's look at another passage. Oh, time is rushing here.

2 Peter 2 These are sobering passages. And I hope you are sober as you listen to them this morning here. 2 Peter 2 "...which have forsaken the right way and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam, the son of Bostar, who loved the wages of unrighteousness, but was rebuked for his iniquity.

The dumbass speaking with man's voice, forbade the madness of the prophet." And then skip on down here. Verse 20, "...for if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness than after they had known it to turn." See, the word turn there, if you look that up in the Greek and the German and some other translations, the word turn there is the opposite word of being born again.

Instead of conversion, it actually means reversion. It means to revert. So, when I was in the world, I got converted into Christianity.

These turn away. That means they revert and go back over here where they were before. And so as I put this together, that is what I believe this passage is talking about.

Now, I don't personally know of anyone who fits this category. There are people that I have read about in church history that this has happened to. I don't understand it, all how it works out, all the applications or the practicalities for a person to have once tasted these things to actually revert and end up over here.

But I believe it has happened and it does happen or there wouldn't be a warning in the Word of God. God does not warn us just to hear Himself talking in some vain repetition like men do. This is a serious, sober passage.

And I will say this. I wasn't trying to let backsliders off earlier. If you are backslidden, if you get entangled again in the pollutions of the world, did you catch it there in 2 Peter? In the end, if you keep in that, I believe you will reach a point where you will revert and you will reject and you will turn away from the faith which you once had.

Don't ask me the day that happens. Don't ask me the minute that happens. I don't know.

I'm sorry. I don't know. And you know, maybe it's good that we don't know.

I can't see your heart. You can't see my heart. But the hope I would give you is this.

If there is anything in you left that is still truly seeking and searching after God, there is still hope for you. But again, be careful. God's Spirit will not always strive with man.

Do not spurn the day of grace. Do not take backsliding as some loophole that gets you out of this passage. Don't you dare do that.

Don't you dare do that. You are playing with eternal judgment and fire. You are playing with these things.

Do not do that. Like I said, we should approach this verse with great trembling. With great sobriety.

Well, let's move on for sake of time here. I do want to finish this chapter. I don't know how I'm going to do that in six or seven minutes.

I'm going to skip the next couple of verses here because they're referring back to here. And we want to look at v. 9 just for a moment. But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you.

Aren't you glad there's a God in Heaven who knows us? And He knows you needed to hear that. He knows I needed to hear that. And so I say to you this morning, but, beloved, I am persuaded of better things of you.

My heart is with you, God is saying. My heart is for you. You can press on.

You will press on. By the grace of God, I am persuaded of better things of you. V. 10, For God is not unrighteous to forget your work of labor and love, which He has showed toward His name, in that ye have ministered to the saints and to the minister.

Work and labor of love. Now again, it's important you understand the order here of salvation. Works will not save you.

But if you are saved and you don't have works, I would doubt that you are saved. Do you follow me? It's kind of like the age-old argument. I remember when I was in college, I had a sociology professor.

And we were having this debate, as we often do in college, things that are sort of nonsensical in a way. But actually, this one made a little bit of sense. He said, which is more important, heredity or environment? You ever heard anybody debate that? Heredity versus environment? You know, in a person's life, which is more important, their heredity, their genes, or their environment, meaning the situation they live in? Well, this particular professor happened to be an old country fellow that grew up on a farm and he had a little bit of common sense.

And he said, well, the way I look at it is this. Before you're born, heredity is the most important thing. Amen? He said, you know, after you're born, then where you're living is the most important thing.

Well, you know, that makes sense too. And I can testify to that because I have some adopted children. One girl from Korea, she doesn't speak Korean.

She doesn't even act Korean. She acts like, may I say, a libby because she lives in our home. So that makes sense.

But that's the way it is. The illustration here is with you being born again. Before you're born again, you know what works mean? Not nothing.

They're filthy rags. You know? Your righteousness, your works, is as filthy rags. Okay, before you're born again.

But after you're born again, if you don't have works, what would James say? You know? You don't have faith. He would say you never came to faith. He's pretty blunt.

Old James is. Read the book of James sometimes. He'll say it straight out.

He'll say it straight out. And so here, Paul is agreeing with that and saying, yes, one of the reasons he's persuaded to better things is he's seen their life. In other words, he's seen fruit.

If you don't have fruit in your life, there is something wrong with you. There is something wrong. There is something wrong.

And the fruit here is your works of love. What's the first thing he mentions? Towards the saints. Isn't that interesting? And to the ministry.

That you have a love and you have works towards those things. Alright, we need to keep moving here. In this passage here, it goes on through several verses here.

Starting in verse 11. It says, And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end. Have you noticed this thing of making it to the end of your Christian life is a big one in the book of Hebrews.

It's one of those little sub-themes. You know, steadfast. Hold on.

If you know some of those kind of verses, you know, I have an assurance that you're going to hope to the end. That you be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and what's the second thing? Patience. Did you know patience is important? And the word patience here means that same thing.

Steadfast. Hanging on. No matter what.

Enduring. You know, we don't preach this enough in our day and age. It used to be preached a lot back from the pulpits of old.

You know, we think it's just a big flash. You've got faith. You're fine.

Go on in your Christian life. No, you need to hold on. You need to hold on.

You need to have patience. And you know the example that He gives us here is Abraham's life. For when God made promises to Abraham, do you know how long it was from the time the first promise of Abraham was? For Isaac.

For the son. A promise until he was born. Does anybody know how long it was? 25 years.

That's right. 25 years. That's a long time to wait.

That's a long time to wait. Because He could swear by no greater. He could swear by no greater.

He swore by Himself saying, surely I will bless thee and multiply thee, and I will multiply thee. And so, after He had patiently endured, He obtained the promise. After He did what? By faith we know He got righteousness.

But He also obtained... You know one of the reasons He obtained the promise? The Bible says here. He patiently waited and endured. He patiently waited and endured.

You need to have the kind of faith that has some cement in it. It has some substance to it that it's going to endure through the storms of life. Anybody here heard of the Boston Marathon? You know what that is, a big race in Boston.

They run 26.2 miles. There's a place in that race called the Heartbreak Hill. And somewhere around the 13th mile of that 26-mile race, the hills of Boston begin.

And you're in this race. Can you imagine running 26 miles? I can't. But anyway, they hit these hills.

But then at mile 19, there's this big, long, steep hill. And they call it Heartbreak Hill. Because for a marathon runner, sometime around the 18th or 19th mile, something happens to your body, and all your glycogen and energy is gone.

And you're then running on lactic acid, and your muscles begin to burn and ache. And runners call it hitting the wall. It's like they can't get their breath.

Everything in their body hurts. It's screaming for them to stop. And the minute they hit that, they hit Heartbreak Hill.

And the only ones that finish, and that's why it's such a big thing to finish the Boston Marathon is, it's, quote, almost physically impossible. Yet people do it, and they grit it and gut it out. Well, in life, your Christian life, I'm here to tell you, is not going to be level.

It's not even going to be downhill. Sometimes there's going to be hills. Sometimes you're going to hit a Heartbreak Hill, and your heart is going to be broken.

Don't you think Abraham and Sarah's heart was broken several times waiting for Isaac to be born? But it says he obtained it because he endured by faith and patiently waited to the end. Now, we know he made a few mistakes, but I believe he repented of those as we have it in the Word of God, and he found his way through to keep waiting and trusting God. And then it finishes up here.

I'm going to skip down here to verse 18. That by two immutable things. The word immutable means unchangeableness.

There's an unchangeableness about the promises of God. There's an unchangeableness about the oath of God. And God makes an oath here.

For that it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation. While God is on the one hand asking you to endure, He wants to give you a strong consolation. A strong hope.

Who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope. Who is your refuge? Jesus Christ. In Israel in old days, if you were guilty of killing someone, you could actually flee to a city of refuge and be safe as long as you stayed in there and never left.

You and I have already been before the court of God. You are guilty. You are guilty.

It's not will you be judged, you have been judged. And you are guilty. The court has already been in session.

The decree has come. You are guilty and the penalty is death. You have one choice.

Fly. Flee to the city of refuge which is Jesus Christ. And so the strong consolation for you is you must flee.

Get thee hither to the refuge which is Jesus Christ. And it tells you that which hope we have. What is that hope? As an anchor of the soul.

That's the title of today's message. In all these things that are sober, we have an anchor of the soul. Both sure and steadfast, which an enterer has entered out within the veil.

Whither the forerunner for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. So, young people today, you have an anchor for your soul. And therefore, that is, may I say once again, the secret of your faith is entrusting in the work of someone else.

I'm not asking you to trust a forerunner who has gone before you, Jesus Christ. I'm not asking you to trust my words. I'm not asking you to trust an emotion.

The secret of your faith is trusting, depending your salvation, your refuge, your hope, your anchor in the veil in the finished work of Jesus Christ. That is your strong consolation that is immutable or unchangeable. A hope for you in the heavens.

Amen. May Jesus richly bless you today and may you see Him more clearly today than yesterday in all that God has for you. Thank you.

Amen.

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