

# (Hebrews) ch.4:11-5:6

by Zac Poonen

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of faith in entering into God's rest and overcoming obstacles in life, highlighting the role of the word of God and the need for humility in our relationship with God.*

**Duration:** 1:17:04

**Scripture:** Matthew 5:4, Matthew 16:17, 1 Corinthians 2:14, 2 Timothy 3:16, Hebrews 4:11-12, Hebrews 12:6

**Topics:** "Holy Spirit", "Faith And Works"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of being filled with the Holy Spirit and not being controlled by our own emotions. The Word of God is described as a living and powerful tool that can discern the thoughts and intentions of our hearts. The preacher warns against falling into unbelief, using the example of the Israelites who failed to enter the promised land. To avoid this, believers are encouraged to be diligent and not wait for some future moment, but to seize the opportunity for salvation now. The sermon also highlights the significance of our motives in serving God, as even good actions can be tainted if our intentions are selfish or corrupt. The preacher explains the concept of the trinity of man, consisting of body, soul, and spirit, with the spirit being the part that connects us to God.

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## Transcript

We saw last week Hebrews 4 and verse 11 where the Apostle says, Let us be diligent to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief. And the example that he is referring to is what he had mentioned in chapter 3 of the Israelites who came out of Egypt but did not enter into Canaan. As we considered in an earlier study, there are two aspects to our salvation.

One is a coming out and the other is a coming in. And this is so beautifully typified in the case of the Israelites who came out of Egypt. They had to come into Canaan, not only come out of Egypt but into Canaan.

And they got stuck half way. They came out of Egypt but they wandered in the wilderness and never entered into Canaan. And the reason we are told is their unbelief.

They could not believe that God could take them into this land because they were terrified by the giants. Now we have seen in Hebrews 4.9 that there remains a rest for the people of God. It is God's will that His people be continuously at rest.

Their hearts and their minds are to be at rest. Now our hearts and minds cannot be at rest until we have known what it is to cease from committing conscious sin. Unless we cease from sin, there can be no rest.

It is sin which brings restlessness in our hearts. And we need to cease from sin if we are to enter into rest. We are told here there remains a rest for the people of God.

But there is a possibility that the people of God may not enter into that rest. Just like the children of Israel never entered into Canaan. The children of Israel looked at the land of Canaan and said it is impossible to enter into that land.

And there are many today who could be considered among the people of God who look into this life of victory over sin and feel it is impossible to enter into it. Exactly like the Israelites in the wilderness. But in the midst of those Israelites, in the midst of those over 600,000 people, there were two, Joshua and Caleb, who believed they could enter.

There was a remnant who had faith. And even so today, there is a remnant among the people of God who have faith to believe that we can enter into the land of Canaan. The giants are not so strong that they cannot be overcome.

And no matter how strong they be, they cannot be stronger than God. And so whatever impossibility and whatever difficulty and obstruction stands between us and the promised land of victory and of rest, we can enter in if we have faith in God. It is not a question of entering in our own strength.

The children of Israel could not overcome the giants in Canaan through their own strength. And if they had attempted, they would have failed. But it was a question of faith and confidence in God and in dependence upon His ability to go and overcome the giants.

And it is exactly the same way that we are to enter into rest. We are told that just shall live by faith. That means in dependence upon God.

And if we live in dependence upon God, then there is no giant that can stand before us. And just like God told Joshua, no man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. In exactly the same way, we have the spiritual equivalent of that in the New Covenant.

In Romans 6.14, sin shall not have dominion over you. Or in other words, no sin will be able to stand before you all the days of your life. No giant will be able to stand before you all the days of your life.

Now it is a question of whether we believe it. We are told in Hebrews 4.3, we who believe enter into rest. Not shall enter into rest, but do immediately enter into rest.

So if we do not enter into this rest, it is because we do not believe. And those are the people spoken of in verse 2. Unto us was the gospel preached as well as unto them, but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it. It was the lack of faith in the ability of God.

And in that sense, it was an insult to God when they who professed to be the people of God got terrified by the giants. And likewise, we do not realize what an insult to God our unbelief is. When we look at some sin that has dominated our life for so long, when we look at some habit that has made us its slave for so many years, and we do not seem to be able to overcome it, we do not realize what an insult it is to the God we profess to believe in.

For we are saying that His power which we profess to have received is not able to overcome this habit to which I am a slave. This giant which has ruled me for so long in my life, this evil habit, this unclean thinking that has ruled my life for so long, that has brought me at its mercy for so many years, I am unable to overcome it. If that be true, then the God I profess to believe in is an impotent God.

He is unable. He is powerless. He can forgive my sin, but He cannot keep me from falling.

But that is not the God of the Bible. That is not the Jesus described in the scriptures. The Jesus that we read of in the New Testament is one who we are told in Jude verse 24 is able to keep us from falling.

He is able, but whether He keeps us from falling or not depends on our faith. It is just like saying Jesus is able to forgive the sins of everyone in the whole world, and yet the vast majority of people in the world never have their sins forgiven. Not because Jesus is not able, but because they don't have faith in His ability to forgive their sins.

Now you, dear friend, may have had your sins forgiven. How did you have it forgiven? By faith. You believed that Jesus was able to forgive your sin, and you came to Him in faith and He did forgive your sin, did He not? And it is that faith that distinguishes you from the other people of the world.

Otherwise you are just as much a wicked sinner and a criminal like the rest of them. But your faith has distinguished you in the fact that your sins are forgiven and the people around you, their sins are not. Now in exactly the same way, Jesus is able to keep us from falling also, but very few enter into this because of the same reason, lack of faith.

But where there is faith, we enter in. We are told in Hebrews 4.11, let us be diligent to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief. Now He is writing to believers, He is writing to holy brethren, chapter 3, verse 1, partakers of the heavenly calling, and He is telling them, dear brothers and sisters, be diligent that you do not make the same mistake that the Egyptians made who were redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, who were baptized in water, symbolized in the baptism in the Red Sea, were baptized in the Holy Spirit symbolically through the baptism of the cloud that came down upon them from above, and yet, in spite of all that, they did not enter into the promised land of victory because of unbelief.

And we are told here in Hebrews 4.11 that we can fall. We don't have to fall because Jesus can keep us from falling. But we can fall if we are unbelieving like those Israelites were unbelieving.

And to avoid such a fall, we are told to be diligent, to make speed, to make haste, not to sit lazily around waiting for some day when God will do some wonderful work for me. This is the deception of the devil who tells us to wait and wait and wait. The Bible says, now is the day of salvation.

It is now that you can enter in. If you are waiting for something to happen ten years from now, I might as well tell you right now, it will never happen. But if you believe that God's promises are yea and amen in Christ Jesus now, not tomorrow, not next year, but now, then we shall be wholehearted to possess the promises.

We shall cry out to God in hunger and thirst for righteousness and we shall find the promise being fulfilled in our life. Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they shall be filled. They shall enter into rest.

We have been looking at Hebrews 4.11 where we are told to enter into that rest which God has prepared for his people. And we have seen that it is the one who has seized from his own works, verse 10, who enters into this rest. We have to seize from those works which originate from ourselves if we are to enter into rest.

The life of faith is a life of dependence upon God where we work in the strength which God supplies to fulfill not the plans of our own wisdom and our own mind, but to fulfill God's plans. And this is why it goes on in verse 12 to say the word of God is living and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit and of the joints and marrow and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. The word of God divides soul and spirit.

Now we need to understand something of what the Bible teaches about soul and spirit if we are to understand the meaning of this verse in its context, in relation to the rest which God has for his people. Man was made in the image of God. We are told that in Genesis 1. God said, let us make man in our image, Genesis 1, 26.

And the very fact that God says, let us, implies that in the Godhead there is a plurality of persons. And we know from subsequent revelation in the scriptures that there are three persons in the Godhead, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. And God says, let us make man in our image.

And man made in God's image is also a trinity. And we read of that in 1 Thessalonians 5 and verse 23. 1 Thessalonians 5, verse 23.

And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless under the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. There you find in the middle of the verse man referred to as a trinity. Spirit, soul and body.

It is our body which makes us conscious of the world around us with its five senses and flesh and bones and blood. It is our soul which is the seat of our personality which makes us conscious of ourself. And our soul includes our intellect with which we think, our mind.

Secondly, our emotions with which we feel feelings of hatred or joy or sorrow or fear. And also it includes our will with which we decide and take action. So the soul comprises our personality which comprises of mind, emotions and will.

But the deeper than body and soul is what the Bible calls the spirit. And it is this part of us which makes us conscious of God. It is in this area that man is distinguished from the animals.

Man has a spirit that makes him conscious of God. He's got a conscience in that spirit. And that conscience tells him that there is a God.

This is why you can go into heathen jungles where there has been no instruction on religion far less of Christianity and yet you find the people are religious. They may worship a stone or sun or moon or something. They feel there is a God whom they have to appease, whom they have to please, to whom they are responsible morally.

And this is because they have a spirit. All human beings are born with a spirit. If we didn't have a spirit, we wouldn't be conscious of God.

We are told when God created Adam in Genesis chapter 2 and verse 7, the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground. That is his body. His body was made from the dust of the ground.

And then we read that the Lord God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. That is man's spirit making him God conscious. God never did that with any animal.

And man became a living soul because he was breathed into by God. He had a spirit and the union of spirit and body resulted in man becoming a living soul. So there you have in that verse the three parts of man, body, soul and spirit.

And God's intention was that the spirit of man should be supreme, should rule in man under the control of the Holy Spirit. It is our spirit that is united with the Holy Spirit when we are born again. When we are born into the world, our spirits are darkened and dead, separated from God.

They exist but darkened and dead, fallen away from God. But when the Holy Spirit comes in, when we are truly born again, born of God, of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God unites with our spirit and brings it to life. And then God's intention is that this living, quickened spirit of man, united with the Holy Spirit, should henceforth be the ruler in man.

In other words, man should no longer be a slave to his body as he was before. He should no longer even be a slave to his mind and its desires or to his emotions and to feelings of being up and down and being depressed and elated, all these things which are in the realm of feeling. It is not God's will that we should be a slave to any of these things.

God's will is that the spirit in us should rule. This is the whole purpose of redemption, that God may bring man back to the place where he originally intended Adam to be. This is what Jesus has done for us.

His salvation and redemption is to bring us back to the place of God's original purpose for us, where the spirit is dominant. Now, you need to see that this is God's will for you, that in your life, you who are a spirit, soul and body, that your spirit, under the control of the Holy Spirit, rules every area of your life, then you can be properly termed a spirit-filled person. The evidence of a person being filled with the Holy Spirit is that the Holy Spirit has total control over every area of that person's life.

That person is no longer a slave to his bodily desires. He no longer acts out from his mind and his emotions. All of these he appreciates and values, but they are under the control of God's Holy Spirit.

This is the unmistakable evidence of the spirit-filled person. This is how it was with the Lord Jesus Christ. In the life of Jesus, he who had become a man just like us, his bodily desires never ruled him.

He was not a slave to the desires of his mind. He was not a slave to the up-and-down feelings produced by his emotions. He, right through his life, was under the control of the Holy Spirit and has given us a demonstration of what it means to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Now, here we are told in Hebrews 4.12 that the word of God is living and like a sharp two-edged sword comes inside us and divides asunder between soul and spirit and shows us what originates from us and what originates from God. And he wants to put to death in our life what originates from us so that he can give to us more of the divine nature. Now, this is a great mystery, but if we are seeking God with all of our hearts, he will show us what it means.

We cannot examine ourselves. That's one thing we see from this verse. We cannot look inside and find out what originates from us and what originates from the Holy Spirit.

We are told in verse 12 the word of God does that. Here we see the importance of the word of God. That alone can show us what is soulish and what is spiritual.

We turn again to Hebrews 4.12 and in the last week we saw something about soul and spirit. Now, this is not merely a technical theological point that we are arguing about because great issues depend upon our understanding of soul and spirit. We cannot enter into God's rest fully if we do not see the distinction between that which originates from our own soul and that which originates from the Holy Spirit moving upon our spirit.

And the word of God is the means by which we can, as we are told in this verse, divide asunder between soul and spirit, prevent this mixture. In most believers, there is a mixture of soul and spirit. The two are joined together.

There is their own soulish or their own activity mingled with the spiritual which is the activity of God. And because there is a mixture, the living waters that come out from their innermost being that Jesus spoke of are mixed and polluted by their own waters coming out from their soul. God's desire is that pure living waters flow out from our spirit to be a blessing to others.

And for this, it is essential for us to allow the word of God to separate the soul and the spirit in us. The soul is that which belongs to man. The spirit is that part of us which can contact God.

As we saw last week, man is a trinity of spirit, soul and body. It is only with our body that we can contact this world. That is plain and evident.

The day that a person dies, his spirit and soul leave his body. He can no longer contact this world because the only means of contacting this world is through the body. Now that's very plain and evident, so plain and evident that we don't even have to consider it.

If a man does not have a body, even though he is spirit and soul, he cannot contact this world as is the case with those who have died. But equally so, we need to realize that it is only with the spirit that we can contact God. Just like it is only with the body that we can contact this world, it is only with our spirit that we can contact God.

The soul, the true self, the personality stands in between and can use the body to contact the world and the spirit to contact God. And just like a man cannot contact this world without the body, we can also say equally true it is a man cannot contact God without a spirit. A man cannot contact this world merely with his soul, that is with his mind, his emotions and his will.

Your mind needs a vehicle of expression either through your tongue and speech or through your hands and writing. Otherwise your mind cannot communicate to the world. Your emotions need to be expressed through your body.

Otherwise it can't be seen. In exactly the same way, it is through the spirit alone that we can contact God. We cannot contact God with our mind or our emotions or our will.

Now it is here that the importance of understanding the difference between soul and spirit lies. We cannot contact God with our soul, which means we cannot contact God with our mind first of all. In other words, you cannot understand God merely with the use of your mind.

So that if you go to the Bible and you merely use your mind, you cannot understand God. You can understand the Bible as a book like a chemistry book or a physics book and a religious book, but you can't know God because God cannot be known by the soul. God cannot be known by the mind.

We need something more than the mind, and that is why we need the revelation of the Holy Spirit, which God gives to the humble. And this is why a humble person can know more about God than a clever person, because the clever person's got good brains, the humble person's got a good heart, and it's the humble person to whom God gives revelation. Jesus said in Matthew chapter 11, and verse 25, I thank thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hidden these things from the wise and the clever and has revealed them or given revelation to those who are babes, those who are like babies, who are humble in their hearts.

And so God takes pleasure in hiding spiritual truth from those who are wise and clever if they are proud of their wisdom and cleverness. But those who humble themselves like little children can receive revelation of God. And so we need to realize that our cleverness and our intelligence give us no advantage in the things of God over the illiterate, stupid person.

It's not a question of our mind, it's a question of our heart. And so let no one think that because he's got a clever brain, he can serve God better. Let no one think that because he's very intelligent, he can understand the Bible better.

It's got nothing to do with your mind. Your mind is only a vehicle for reading and understanding the Bible. But to contact God and to have revelation of God, we need to be humble and let our spirits be open to the revelation of the Holy Spirit.

Otherwise we shall read the Scriptures and remain in ignorance of what the Scriptures are teaching. This is the condition with many people. This is the foolishness of people who think that they can study the Bible in a seminary and go out and serve God.

It's got nothing to do with seminary knowledge. It's got everything to do with humility of heart. And that is what we need to learn, humility of heart.

Then we can have revelation on the Scriptures without wasting our time on commentaries and all the other things that people study. Now, the other thing we see here is that God cannot be contacted with our emotions. For that too is a part of the soul.

And yet many people think that it is in our emotions that we feel God. Many people feel that in a meeting God is present only when they get excited. When their emotions are stirred up and they feel elated, then they think God is present in a meeting.

Just like some other people think that God is present in a meeting only when the noise level reaches a certain pitch. And when the noise level with everybody shouting and screaming reaches a particular pitch, then they think God is there. This is foolishness.

As foolish as the other person who thinks that God is present in a meeting only when everybody is silent. When there's great quietness and silence, then they think God is there. Both people are equally foolish, for God does not contact our emotions.

Yes, our emotions are stirred, but God is not contacted by our soul. It is true that the spirit-filled person is a person full of joy. He is giving thanks for everything.

There is no grumbling or murmuring in the life of the spirit-filled person. There is no depression or discouragement or gloom in the life of the spirit-filled person. But he does not feel God in his emotions.

He knows God in his spirit and his joy and his victory are deep down in his spirit. Think of a verse just like what Jesus said in Matthew 5. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Yes, we need to mourn, but that doesn't mean we have to lose our joy.

We can mourn for the sins of others without losing our joy. When we realize that God is contacted in our spirit. And so let's not deceive ourselves in these two areas.

God is not contacted with our mind. He is not contacted with our emotions. God can be contacted only in our spirit.

And for that, we have to humble ourselves before him. Get low before him. And the lower we get, the more we can know of God.

Jesus once told Simon Peter in Matthew chapter 16 that flesh and blood had not revealed him to him. In verse 17, how did Peter get revelation about Jesus? Not because he was the cleverest man in Israel, but because he humbled himself. And it is thus that we shall have contact with God as well.

We have been looking at Hebrews 4.12 where we read the word of God is living and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit and of the joints and marrow and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And we have seen something in the last two weeks of what it means to be divided by the word of God in the realm of soul and spirit so that we distinguish between the two and don't confuse the two and don't allow the two to be mixed. The spirit is to be Lord in our life and the soul is to be the servant of the spirit.

The Bible does not teach the annihilation of the soul as Hinduism and Yoga and Buddhism teach, but it teaches the subservience of the soul to the spirit somewhat like a husband and wife. The spirit and the soul are to be like husband and wife, both needed, but the husband is to be the head. It's not that the wife is not to be needed, but she is not to lord it over her husband.

So likewise, it is not a question of destruction or annihilation of the soul, but rather of the soul being the servant of the spirit and the spirit controlling our mind and controlling our emotions so that we don't act merely on the basis of our mind or of our emotions, but allow our mind and emotions to be servants of the Holy Spirit who resides within our spirit so that we can serve God from our spirit in purity. Then living waters can flow from our innermost being. This is a much vaster subject and can be covered in a short study, but it is worth considering what it means to live in dependence upon God, in dependence on the Holy Spirit's leading in every area of our life, in dependence upon the strength supplied by the Holy Spirit as we seek Him in prayer.

It is this which the Word of God shows us, our self-sufficiency, which makes us live from our soul, our self-confidence, which is depending on the abilities of our soul. God seeks to shatter this so that we have no confidence in ourself. We lean upon God.

We have no sufficiency in ourself or wisdom in ourself. We derive all this from God. This is what it means to live by the spirit in a nutshell.

Now, it further says here, the Word of God is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. The Word of God shows us the thoughts and motives of our heart, and we shall find in the final day when we stand before God that it is the thoughts and motives of our heart that matter more than even what we actually did. We are not going to be judged so much by what we do as by the question, why did we do it? In other words, what was the motive behind doing it? A man can preach a good sermon, and by itself that's a good thing, but God may see deep down in his heart a desire for glory for himself, or he may preach that sermon because he wants to make money and get a good collection from the people to whom he preaches, or he may preach it because he wants to impress people, and the motive being bad and corrupt spoils the whole service that he has done for God.

But we cannot see the thoughts and intents of the heart. God alone can see it. We may only see a man's external service.

This is why in the final day when Jesus comes we shall have many surprises, because we shall discover that many people whom we were very impressed by here on earth are not very big in the eyes of God. In fact, they are rejected by God because their motives were corrupt. The word of God is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

It goes right inside, and this is why it's so important for us to expose ourselves to the word of God continuously. We cannot discern even our own heart, leave alone someone else's heart. Paul says in 1 Corinthians in chapter 4 and verse 4, he says, I am conscious of nothing against myself, yet I am not by this acquitted, for he who judges me is the Lord.

Even the apostle Paul had to say that he could not fully discern his own heart. All he could say was, to the best of my knowledge, I am clean. To the best of my knowledge, I am clean and pure, and that we should be able to say.

We should be perfect according to the light we have in our conscience, so that there is no conscious area of wrong motive, no conscious area where we are seeking anything for ourselves, but we are seeking the glory of God wholly. We're seeking to do His will wholly. We live before His faith.

We read in verse 13 of Hebrews 4, Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight, but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. That again shows us the same thought that we are completely exposed before God. And this last phrase, which describes God as Him with whom we have to do, indicates that there is really ultimately only one person with whom we have to do anything, and that is God.

It is He alone to whom we are ultimately answerable for all our deeds and actions and thoughts and everything. Jesus said that even the words that come out of our mouth will be judged by Him. Every word that we speak will be judged by God.

Every idle word that we speak will bring condemnation upon ourselves. And it's not a question of whether we have convinced men that we are right and that we are just and righteous. What about Him with whom we have to do? Our Creator.

We are called here the creature. Every creature. Implying that we stand now before God who is our Creator.

And it is with Him we have to do. And there is nothing that is not manifest in His sight. Everything that we do, and not only everything that we do, but everything that we even think is open before Him.

As it says in Proverbs 15 and verse 3, The eyes of the Lord are in every place beholding the evil and the good. And the word of God is given to us so that we can see ourselves to a measure right now as God sees us. So that we can judge ourselves before Him who is our Creator.

Before Him in whose sight we are told in verse 13, All things are naked and open. Nothing can be hidden. Before Him with whom we have to do.

And if we judge ourselves now in the light that God's word gives us, we will not be judged in the final day. We are told in 1 Corinthians chapter 11 verse 31, If we should judge ourselves we should not be judged. Verse 32, When we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord that we should not be condemned with the world.

And so there is a reason with which God has given us His word. His word can expose our heart and show it to us. Something like an x-ray film.

You go and stand before that x-ray machine and it takes a film of your inside. And then you can look at that film and see what is inside which you cannot see otherwise. And then you can judge yourself on the basis of that x-ray film.

If you can read that film, then you can see whether you've got a cancer inside you. You can see whether you've got tuberculosis. You can see whether you've got a bone broken inside on the basis of that x-ray film.

The word of God is like that. It's given to us as an x-ray film to show us what's inside our heart. And therefore, the one who neglects the word of God, the one who neglects to meditate on the word of God and to search it and to examine it has no opportunity to see himself as God sees him.

And therefore, in the day of judgment, he's going to get many surprises as he sees the wickedness of his own heart which God exposes before him and he can be judged and condemned. And so we need to fear and tremble before the word of God because that gives us an idea of the motives, the wrong things in our heart that we can judge ourselves now so that in that day when we stand before him with whom we have to do, we shall not be condemned along with the rest of the world. We turn now to Hebrews chapter 4 in verse 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 for we have not a high priest who cannot be touched by the feeling of our infirmities but was in all points tempted like as we are yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. Now we have been told in verse 12 and 13 about the word of God that divides between soul and spirit and shows us what is in

our heart.

And he has spoken earlier about entering into rest, seizing from our own works, seizing from committing sin. It is one of the main themes of the book of Hebrews that we might stop committing sin and go on to perfection to enter into the full blessing of the new covenant. And he comes here in verse 14 to 16 to speak about Jesus, our great high priest before whom we are all priests.

Under the old covenant, Aaron was the high priest when they first came out of Egypt. And then one high priest was chosen from his descendants when he died and like that in succession. And then there were many priests from among his sons.

One high priest and many priests. And we are told in the New Testament this corresponds to Jesus, our great high priest before whom all of us are priests. We are told, for example, in Revelation chapter 1 and verse 5 that Jesus has made us kings and priests to God the Father.

Revelation chapter 1, verse 5 and 6. Jesus has made us kings and priests unto God our Father. We are told further in chapter 5 and verse 10 the same thing again that he has made us kings and priests. All of us who have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus have been made priests unto God.

And so the New Testament does not even think or consider a priesthood separate from the priesthood of all believers. There is no such thing as a certain category of people being priests. Not in the New Testament.

That is a tradition of man which has absolutely no foundation in the New Testament. In the New Testament we see that every person who comes into a genuine experience of the new birth is a priest unto God. And Jesus is the great High Priest.

Now, because we are ignorant of our privileges we may remain without enjoying our privileges. And so even though God has made you a priest if you do not know that you are a priest you may not enjoy the privileges of being a priest or fulfill the functions of being a priest. So a knowledge of our position is first of all essential.

God has made us priests. We cannot make ourselves into priests. God has made us priests in Christ unto Him.

And God has made Jesus a High Priest. We are told in Hebrews 5 in verse 4 concerning Aaron the High Priest in the Old Testament no man takes this honor of being High Priest unto himself but only he who is called of God as was Aaron. And so also Christ was appointed High Priest by God.

And we are appointed priests by God. We cannot make ourselves priests. Jesus did not make himself a High Priest.

God His Father made Him a High Priest for us that we might be priests. And so we are told in Hebrews 4 in verse 14 seeing then that we have a great High Priest that is passed through the heavens Jesus the Son of God let us hold fast our profession. We are to hold fast but we are to first of all see Jesus as our High Priest as the leader of us who are priests.

For all of us He is a High Priest who has gone ahead of us. We saw earlier in our study of Hebrews 2 verse 11 both he that sanctifies and they who are sanctified are all out of one. For which case He that is

Jesus is not ashamed to call them brethren.

He calls us brethren because He and we now have one Father even God. This is what we saw in our study of that verse when Jesus spoke to Mary Magdalene on the day of resurrection. He told her go and tell my disciples that I am ascending to my Father and your Father to my God and your God.

John 20 verse 17 And so Jesus has done such a work when He came down here to earth that He has become our elder brother as a man. He who was God came down to earth and became man just like us who are born again. Yes, that's what we saw in Hebrews 2 verse 17 He was made in all things like unto His brethren.

His brethren are those who are born again. And He was made like unto His brethren in all things so that, we are told in Hebrews 2 verse 17 He might be a merciful and faithful high priest. He was made like us in every way so that He could be our high priest.

And so He who is the high priest and we who are priests come of one Father, even God. Even as we see in the Old Testament it was Aaron's descendants who became priests and from among Aaron's descendants the high priest was chosen. And this is how it was with Jesus when He came down to earth and emptied Himself of that position of equality with the Father and became one like unto us that He might be our high priest.

We need to see this and we need to see all of us who are born again as priests. Not one is more special than another. A man in full time work is no more a priest than a man in a secular occupation.

Both have equally Jesus as their high priest. And we are told in Hebrews 4 verse 15 that we do not have a high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities. Jesus knows our infirmities.

Not in terms of knowledge intellectually but knowledge experientially. God knows about our infirmities because He is God and He knows all things. But when God became man and became like us when God was manifest in our flesh then He could be touched by the feeling of our infirmities having walked the same way that He calls us to walk here on this earth.

He could feel those infirmities. He could feel the struggle we feel when we struggle against sin. He felt it.

And we are told in all points verse 15 the last part He was tempted like we are yet without sin. He was tempted just like us. God allowed His Son to go through the same things, the same problems that you and I experience so that He could be for us a merciful and a faithful high priest who has tasted everything that we can ever taste in our life.

Who has faced everything that we can ever face in our life. And who has overcome. And gone ahead of us paving the way for us so that we can follow in His footsteps.

Once we are born again God calls us to follow in the footsteps of Jesus. And how good God is to give us a high priest in Jesus Christ who has all the experience that we experience in our daily life. We turn now to Hebrews chapter 4 verse 14, 15 and 16.

We have been seeing here that Jesus is our great high priest. And He has gone ahead of us paving the way for us to follow. One of the commands that fell most frequently from the lips of Jesus when He was here on earth was follow me.

And those two words ring out even to us across these many centuries. And today also the words that come to the one who is born again is the words of Jesus. Follow me.

Paul says in Philippians chapter 3 that he is pressing toward the mark following in the footsteps of Jesus. And he asks others to follow after him. He says in 1 Corinthians 11 verse 1 Be followers of me even as I also am of Christ.

Jesus has gone ahead of us and given us an example to follow. He is not only our saviour but also our example. Or as Hebrews 6 verse 20 calls Him our forerunner.

Jesus, our high priest is our forerunner who has entered within the veil into the most holy place into God's presence. In 15 of chapter 4 as well where we are told we have this great high priest who has passed into the heavens Jesus the son of God a high priest who knows the feeling of our infirmities because he was tempted in all points like as we are and yet without sin. Now, we are told in the book of Hebrews very clearly that in order for the experience of Jesus as a man to be complete God allowed him to go through all that we go through even though he was the son of God.

We are told in Hebrews 5 and verse 8 although he was a son yet he learned obedience by the things which he suffered and the things which he suffered was not just the suffering of the cross.

We are told earlier in chapter 2 verse 18 that he suffered being tempted and therefore he is able to succor or assist and relieve those who are tempted and so the sufferings of Jesus were not just for a few hours before he was crucified and went on the cross no the sufferings of Jesus took place during his entire lifetime for he was tempted during his entire lifetime and having suffered being tempted he is able to assist us when we are tempted likewise and now we see that we have in him a high priest who was tempted like us in all things and yet without committing sin now this is an important point that the apostle comes to in Hebrews 4.15 explaining to us how Jesus is a high priest completely and adequately fitted for all our needs and in order to be adequate as a high priest for us God

allows him to go through every temptation that any human being in the history of the world has ever faced and even temptations that it is possible for a man to face which he may not necessarily face he was tempted he was tempted in all points like as we are and yet he did not commit sin now when we look at the fact that Jesus did not commit sin that doesn't sound very wonderful to most of us because we say he was God he was the son of God he could not possibly have committed sin but the holiness that Jesus obtained through victory over sin was not an honorary type of holiness that was bestowed on him but one that was earned through battle we are told in Hebrews 12 in verse 4 that we have not yet resisted unto blood in our striving against sin like Jesus did for the verses 2 and 3 are

referring to Jesus looking unto Jesus, verse 2 consider Jesus, verse 3 and then we are told we have not yet resisted unto blood striving against sin like he did and so Jesus in his struggle against sin resisted unto blood he gave up his life he gave up his blood he died rather than sin and so it was through a struggle that Jesus overcame temptation not without a struggle now if he had fought against temptation in his position as God there would have been no struggle we are told in James chapter 1 that God cannot sin he cannot even be tempted but Jesus was tempted because he had emptied himself of his privileges as God when he came to earth as a man like us he was tempted it says in verse 15 like we are tempted he felt the same pull of temptation that we feel but he did not yield to it he

did not give in he overcame and he stood victorious as a man through the power of the Holy Spirit now the significance of this is that this is what makes him an adequate high priest for us an adequate forerunner who can say to us follow me and it leaves us no room for us to turn and say to him but Lord you do not know the struggle we face for he would say to us yes I do know the struggle you face for I faced it myself we cannot say to him Lord the pull of sin is so strong you don't realize it and he can say to us I do realize it for I faced it myself yes he has faced the pull of temptation himself and through the power of the Holy Spirit he did not sin the encouragement this gives us is that when we face temptation we too need not sin if we use the power of the Holy Spirit that God offers

to us the main reason why God has given us his Spirit is that we might enter into a life free from sin and this comes through following in the footsteps of Jesus who was tempted in all points no point excluded and tempted we are told in verse 15 like we are not merely like Adam was but like we are just like you and I are and yet he did not sin may God open our eyes to see the truth here so that we can follow in the footsteps of Jesus we have been looking at Jesus as our high priest in Hebrews chapter 4 verses 14 to 16 a great high priest who has passed into the heavens or through the heavens into the presence of God a high priest who has become our high priest fully equipped to meet our every need because he has been exposed to every temptation that we can ever face now notice carefully

what the scripture says it does not say that Jesus was exposed to every situation that we can ever face there are many situations Jesus never faced he was never married he never had any children many other things like that that we may face in the 20th century that did not exist in the 1st century but irrespective of the situation that may vary according to the circumstances we find ourselves in or the period of time that we live in temptation remains the same and it is every temptation that we face in whatever situation we may find ourselves in Jesus also was exposed to it maybe in a different set of circumstances maybe in a different situation maybe in a different century but the same temptation nevertheless are you tempted to be impatient here in the 20th century in a particular set of

circumstances Jesus was exposed to the same situation 20 centuries ago as a man in a different set of circumstances no doubt but the same temptation and he overcame in the power of the Holy Spirit he lived in victory and he is our high priest and so when we face some particular trial today some particular test and temptation we can have the encouragement in knowing that Jesus has also faced it and he has overcome and he says to us in the moment of temptation follow me as I put my self life to death you put yours to death this is the meaning of take up your cross daily and follow me God has given us the Holy Spirit so that we can daily take up the cross as Jesus took up the cross over his own self life and we can follow him then we too if we walk that way shall cease from sin we are told

in 1 Peter chapter 5 1 Peter and chapter 4 verse 1 Christ has suffered for us in the flesh arm yourselves with the same mind for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin Jesus came with a flesh like ours and suffered in it he denied himself he never gratified the desires of the flesh and therefore he suffered in the flesh right through his life and we are told to arm ourselves with the same mind and when we arm ourselves with the same mind we too can cease from sin and as Jesus never sinned we too need not sin there is no excuse for our sinning today because Jesus has shown us the way of victory coming in our flesh through the power of the Holy Spirit he remained spotless pure, free from sin he kept his heart pure all through his life and he says to us follow me this is the

significance of Jesus as our high priest being tempted in all points like as we are not just in all points but also like as we are yet without committing sin therefore we too can walk the same way for he is our

forerunner he is our elder brother he was made chapter 2 verse 17 of Hebrews in all things like unto us his brethren so that he could become our high priest he was tempted in all things like us his brethren so that he could become our high priest so these two verses Hebrews 2.17 and Hebrews 4.15 are very significant he was made in all things like unto us he was tempted in all things like us and yet he did not sin there is a difference between temptation and sin and we are told very clearly this difference in James 1.14 and 15 we are told in James 1 that we are tempted when we are

drawn by our own desire and when that desire conceives sin is born until the desire gets our will to yield to it sin is not conceived the mere fact that we have certain desires does not mean that we are sinful it is when we yield to those desires even in our thought life in our heart we give in to those desires then we sin consider for example if a lustful thought is flashed into your mind you find desire within your response to it but you say no to it and you don't tolerate that lustful thought in your mind for a single moment you have not sinned you have been tempted but you said no and you overcame Jesus was tempted too in all points like as we are and yet he did not sin and so we are told in 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 now in verse 16 the word therefore links it with verse 15 as someone has said whenever you see a therefore in the bible you must see what it is therefore what is this word therefore in verse 16 it links it with verse 15 Jesus was tempted in all points like as we are yet without committing sin yet without sinning therefore let us also who are following in his footsteps come boldly without any hesitation to the throne of God's grace the throne of God is called here the throne of grace and when we come to the throne of grace we can receive mercy and we can find grace mercy is to deal with the sins that we have committed all of us have committed sins we need mercy we need mercy for dealing with our entire past all the sins that we have committed so we

come first of all to obtain forgiveness mercy grants us forgiveness for our past failure but that is not all having received mercy we also find grace and this is the word that we need to understand it doesn't mean the same thing for we are told in John 1 17 that the law came by Moses but grace came by Jesus Christ now mercy did not come by Jesus Christ mercy was found even in the old testament God's unmerited favor, his mercy upon sinful people right from the day of Adam he has extended mercy to all of us but grace is strength to overcome sin 2 Corinthians 12 9 the Lord says to Paul my grace is sufficient for you for my strength is made perfect in weakness grace is strength and when we come to the throne of grace we find strength for the future to help in time of need what is our time of

need not after we have fallen into sin but before we fall into sin when we are tempted we are told in Hebrews 2 18 that Jesus comes to help us when we are tempted not just after we fall he comes to help us when we are tempted so that we do not fall and so when we come to the throne of grace we find mercy for forgiveness and grace strength to help us in the moment of temptation if we will call out for it to overcome sin victory over sin is through grace not by our own ability and so if we turn to God in the moment of our need we can receive that grace we turn now to Hebrews chapter 5 and verses 1 following this is following on from verses 14 to 16 of chapter 4 where the apostle has been speaking about Jesus Christ as our great high priest who has passed through the heavens a high priest

who can be touched by the feeling of our infirmities because he was tempted like us in all things without sinning and one who stands at the right hand of the throne of God today to make intercession for us and to whom we can come boldly to receive grace to help us in the time of our need and then in verses 1 to 5 the apostle speaks about the high priesthood of Aaron 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 is also compassed with infirmity he is speaking about the Aaronic high priesthood he was taken from among men ordained for men in things pertaining to God so that he can offer gifts and

sacrifices for sins he has compassion on the ignorant and the wayward because Aaron himself falls into sin and therefore he has to offer verse 3 as for the people so for himself an offering for sins now in contrast to Aaron we are told Jesus was made a high priest verse 6 after the order of Melchizedek he does not have any sins of his own for which he has to offer a sacrifice like Aaron did we are told in verse 27 of chapter 7 Hebrews chapter 7 verse 26 we are told of a high priest whom we have who is holy harmless, guileless undefiled, separate from sinners made higher than the heavens who does not need daily as those high priests to offer up sacrifice first for his own sins and then for the people for this he did once he offered up himself for the people and then the contrast is brought

out in verse 28 the law makes men high priests who have infirmity Aaron had the infirmity of falling into sin but the word of the oath which was since the law under the new covenant has given us a high priest in Jesus who is consecrated forevermore or perfected forevermore and so in Hebrews chapter 5 a contrast is drawn between the high priesthood of Aaron and the high priesthood of Jesus which is after the order of Melchizedek.

There are only two priesthoods recognized in the Bible.

One is the priesthood of Levi under the old covenant and the other is the priesthood of Melchizedek under the new covenant under the old covenant Levi was made a priest we are told in Hebrews 7.16 after the law of a carnal commandment but Jesus has been made a high priest after the power of an endless life. It is by life and not by mere carnal commandment we are told further in Hebrews 5 verse 4 no man takes this honor unto himself but he who is called of God as was Aaron Aaron was appointed by God to be a high priest.

He didn't make himself a high priest and likewise with Jesus we are told in verse 5.

He did not glorify himself to be a high priest but he submitted himself even though he was equal with the Father he did not take this position of high priest by his own choice he submitted himself as a man should to God the Father and God the Father said to him thou art my son today I have begotten thee that's a quotation from the Old Testament Psalm 2 verse 7 thou art my son today I have begotten thee and he says to him in another place another quotation from the Old Testament Psalm 110 verse 4 thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek and the significance of this is brought out in Hebrews chapter 7 and verses 1 to 3 where we are told the word Melchizedek means verse 2 king of righteousness and the fact that he is the king of Salem means that he is also the king of peace

righteousness and peace are brought together in the priesthood of the new covenant and in Romans 14 verse 17 we are told that the kingdom of God is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit a righteousness produced by the Holy Spirit not a righteousness of our own for that is dead works and a peace a rest that we considered earlier in chapter 4 of Hebrews brought by the Holy Spirit this is the high priesthood of Jesus Christ this is the significance of his being called a high priest after the order of Melchizedek Melchizedek was the person we read of in the book of Genesis who came to Abraham after Abraham had defeated the people who captured his nephew Lot we read of it in Genesis 14 verse 18 following Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine for he was the priest

of the most high God and he blessed Abraham he suddenly appears on the scene as though from nowhere and then having done his ministry he disappears again and he is a type of the Lord Jesus Christ who had no beginning and no end the eternal God who came down to earth in flesh fulfilled his ministry and went back to the place that he had from eternal ages with his father and this is why Jesus is called a high priest after the order of Melchizedek one who comes in from eternity into time fulfills a ministry and then goes back into eternity again to dwell with the father and also because he has instituted a new priesthood for us whereby we too can be priests under the high priesthood of Melchizedek in Jesus Christ we too can be priests of righteousness and peace like Jesus himself was

this is what it means to enter into the new covenant to enter into the kingdom of God by the power of the Holy Spirit and so in Hebrews 5 a contrast is drawn between the priesthood of Aaron and Melchizedek this will be expanded further when we come to Hebrews chapter 7 but it's briefly mentioned here in Hebrews 5 verses 1 to 6 as we considered in an earlier study one of the main functions of the book of Hebrews is to highlight the contrast between the new covenant and the old covenant and we considered in the first study of this book that the word better occurs 13 times in this book the word perfect occurs 14 times in this book the new covenant is better than the old covenant the new covenant leads us to be perfect whereas the old covenant did not lead us to be perfect and in this

contrast between the new covenant and the old covenant the contrast is also brought between the leadership of the old covenant which was under Moses and Aaron and the leadership of the new covenant which is under Jesus who is the antitype of Moses and Aaron and so we see here this contrast brought out between the high priesthood of Aaron and the high priesthood of Jesus Christ just like in chapter 3 the leadership of Moses of Israel is contrasted with the leadership of Jesus in the church and in Jesus we have something far more than the Old Testament people had under Moses or Aaron this itself shows us that the privileges of the new covenant are far greater than the privileges of the old covenant.

In the old covenant they were tempted and they fell all they could get was forgiveness of sins. David says bless the Lord oh my soul who forgives all your sins but under the new covenant we can follow Jesus and enter into a life of victory over sin

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