

Through the Bible - Hebrews - Part 2

by Zac Poonen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding the difference between the old covenant and the new covenant, and how the new covenant penetrates to the thoughts and intentions of the heart, allowing us to become truly spiritual and overcome sin and temptation.

Duration: 57:03

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Hebrews 4:11-13, Hebrews 7:1

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Faithfulness To God"

Description

In this sermon on Hebrews chapter four, the preacher emphasizes the importance of entering into God's rest and warns against disobedience. The Word of God is described as a living and active sword that can discern the thoughts and intentions of the heart. The sermon encourages discernment between soulish preaching and spiritual preaching, urging listeners to focus on pleasing the one person they are answerable to - God. The sermon also touches on the concepts of milk and meat in spiritual teaching, and highlights Jesus as our high priest who was called by God.

Transcript

Let's turn today to the Word of God in Hebrews chapter 4, where we left off last night. We were thinking about entering into rest. That's where we finished.

Let us be diligent, 4.11, to enter the same rest, lest anyone fall through the same example of disobedience. Then we turn now to verse 12. For the word of God is living and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrows, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

Now, God's word is that which he has spoken, and here it's spoken of as a sword that penetrates right inside and sees the thoughts and intentions of the heart. I told you that the book of Hebrews refers to, deals with the new covenant, showing how the new covenant is established on better promises, it's a better covenant. We have a mediator, and everything is better than the old covenant.

And in the new covenant, the important thing is what we read in the last part of verse 12. The thoughts and intentions of the heart. In the old covenant, the thoughts and intentions of the heart had no value at all.

I mean, as far as the law is concerned, you could never find out what were the thoughts and intentions of the heart. How could you punish a person under the law for what he thought or what he intended? So long as he did everything right on the outside, the law said okay. But not in the new covenant.

The word of God in the old covenant under the law only tested you on the outside. It's like a doctor examining you superficially. But in the new covenant, the word of God penetrates inside.

Like a scan or an x-ray. And it's more interested in what's inside. And sometimes when everything looks nice on the outside, maybe terribly wrong inside.

You know, just like physically, a lot of people who look very healthy have got cancer inside or tuberculosis or something like that. So the word of God is now, in this new covenant age, penetrating to the thoughts and intentions of the heart. So if you hear the word of God, now I don't mean just read it.

But when you read it, if you hear God speaking to you through it, it will always penetrate to the thoughts and intentions of the heart. If you read God's word and you just see whether you're obeying it externally, you can say pretty clearly God didn't speak to you at all. How do you know whether God spoke to you? Whether that which I read and heard was the word of God? How do you know whether in a meeting what was spoken was an anointed word from God? This is the test.

Did it penetrate into the thoughts and intentions of your heart? Notice the emphasis again on the heart. Not on the head. On the heart.

You've seen that again and again throughout the New Testament. If the word of God which you read or which you heard in a meeting did not penetrate to the thoughts and motives of your heart, it wasn't the word of God. Well, it was, but it didn't have any effect on you.

It didn't accomplish what it was meant to. And it was probably not spoken in an anointed way. I always believe that an anointed prophetic word will accomplish what we read in 1 Corinthians 14.

That a man comes in, the thoughts of his heart are revealed, and he falls on his face, 1 Corinthians 14, 25, and says, God is here. And the same thing happens when you read God's word. Or even when in ordinary conversations somebody shares a word and it's a prophetic word from God.

It always penetrates to the thoughts and intentions of the heart because it's like a sword. And if you want to be an anointed servant of God, you've got to make sure that the sword is sharp. Don't try to blunt the edge of the sword like a lot of preachers do.

Don't try to soften the effect of the word of God to make it more acceptable, present it in a nice, polished, diplomatic type of way, so that everybody is happy. You know what happens then? The edge of the sword is so blunt, it doesn't penetrate. Have you ever tried cutting meat with a blunt knife? It just goes on and on and on, nothing is cut.

And any preacher who seeks to compromise the sharpness of God's word ultimately ends up with nobody getting anything. We have to proclaim it exactly like it is, a two-edged sword. Two-edged because it first of all cuts me, the preacher, and then cuts the other person.

If it hasn't cut you, forget it. Don't try to cut other people. A lot of preachers have got only one edge on that sword.

They never judge themselves. They only judge other people. The word of God is a two-edged sword.

It penetrates. It's able to judge what your motive is. And if we live our life exposing ourselves to God's word, wherever it is spoken in an anointed way or in His written word, we will ultimately have a totally clean heart.

We will cleanse ourselves so thoroughly because all the time the thoughts and motives of my heart are being exposed. And I believe that a Christian should live like that every day, like they receive the manna every day. I must receive this word every day which reveals to me the thoughts and motives of my heart, every day, so that I can be cleansed.

The other thing that the word of God does is it divides between soul and spirit, it says in verse 12. Now this is a little deeper. It's more than just a bad motive.

Now if I preached with a bad motive, I will know it. But the division of soul and spirit is more subtle. Division of soul and spirit deals with that which is human and that which is divine.

They could not do that under the old covenant. Under the old covenant there was no such thing as division between soul and spirit. I told you in the tabernacle there were three parts and the soul and spirit, what was represented in the tabernacle, the soul and spirit's representation were the holy place and the most holy place.

And there was this thick veil. You couldn't penetrate into the most holy place. So they could not understand the difference between soul and spirit under the old covenant.

And if you live today without distinguishing between soul and spirit, you are living again like an old covenant Christian. The word of God will show you what is soulish and what is spiritual. A lot of so-called good Christian work is soulish.

Soulish means they are human ideas, good ideas, but soulish. It's not evil. It's not fleshly.

There are three types of Christians we can say. Fleshly Christians who live in carnality and are interested in sinful pleasures now and then and money and things like that. Then there are people who have gone beyond that but who still haven't become spiritual.

They are soulish. They think in a very human way. They are good people.

They've got plans to serve the Lord, evangelism and all. But it's all human ideas because they don't know God's ways. The Bible says that God says this.

My ways are not your ways. As the heaven is higher than the earth, so my ways are above your ways. Now, your ways or our ways may be sometimes good ideas, but they are very human.

We've got human methods of trying to reach lost souls or human methods of serving God. Something like David carrying the ark on a bullock cart. It was a good idea.

It would save the Levites carrying it on their shoulders for a long journey, but it wasn't God's way. And that's why death came there. And whenever we adopt human ways instead of the way God has laid down in the scriptures, we'll find there's confusion.

I mean, there may be externally a lot of results, but the glory of God will be missing. You remember in the tabernacle, it says Moses did it exactly like God told him to do. He did not do it like he had studied in the academies of Egypt where they built massive pyramids.

This tabernacle was a very simple structure. And Moses had to give up his human understanding of how to build God's house. He thought God's house must be grand, but he had to give up that.

And that's one reason God had to take him into the wilderness to get rid of all these human ideas. That's one reason why God had to take Paul to Arabia to get rid of all the human ideas he had got from Gamaliel. And so that he could understand God's ways, pour out his soulish ways to death.

It also, soul also refers to human power where I depend on human resources, where I feel God's work depends on a lot of electronic gadgets, money, influence, then we can do God's work better. That's a lot of garbage. It's the power of the Holy Spirit by which God's work is accomplished.

The early apostles did not have money, did not have gadgets, did not have influence. Human resources was pretty close to zero. And yet they accomplished much, much more than today's Christians with all their gadgets and all their money and all their human resources.

This is soul power. That was spiritual power. And it's so clear when we see the difference.

Soul and spirit is something that we need to divide between if we are to become truly spiritual. For example, a lot of meetings where they say the Holy Spirit is moving, it never fools me when I go to those meetings. Because I can see this is not spirit at all, it's just soul.

It's not a baptism in the spirit, it's a baptism in the soul. That means emotions. Emotions are part of our soul.

You can whip up emotions, emotions, emotions, emotions, emotions, and you think it's Holy Spirit. More than 90% of Christians have no discernment, so they think it is Holy Spirit. It's not Holy Spirit, it's soul.

It's the human soul being whipped up. You can go to a Buddhist prayer meeting, it's exactly the same. We have a Buddhist prayer meeting next door to our house and I listen to it.

They are speaking in tongues all the time for hours. And their emotions are whipped up and they say we come to rest and things like that. I hear it every week.

And it's not just Christians who whip up their emotions. All religions have the whipping up of soul power. And I want to tell you, my dear brothers and sisters, if you don't distinguish between soul and spirit, you will be thoroughly deceived.

A lot of healing today is healing through the power of the soul. It's not the power of the Holy Spirit. There's a lot of, an atmosphere is built up in a meeting with a lot of singing and emotions are whipped up.

And then you suddenly release what they call your faith. It's got nothing to do with God. It's just soul power.

The preacher up there is like a big hypnotist, hypnotizing people. Jesus never did it like that. Jesus did it very quietly without whipping up emotions, without singing, Lord I believe, Lord I believe a hundred times.

That's not how we produce faith. It's very, very important, not just that you don't get deceived, because if you don't understand this, you will copy it, thinking this is the way to serve God and you will go and reproduce the same soul power in many, many places and confuse a lot of other people. Allow the word of God to show you what is human and what is divine.

And if you want to know, just look at Jesus. When you look at a healing meeting, just ask yourself, is this the way Jesus did it? When you look at a meeting, a tarrying meeting for the baptism of the Holy Spirit, go to the Acts of the Apostles and see if they ever had a baptism of the Holy Spirit like the way that people are having it today. You get the answer straight away.

But if you neglect the word of God and you say, yeah, it looks nice, sounds nice, I guarantee you'll be deceived. Let the word of God divide between soul and spirit. I thank God that God has given us His word and the example of Jesus and the example of the Apostles to show me what is truly spiritual, and I'm not deceived.

I hope you won't be either. Verse 13, it says, There is no creature hidden from Him, and everything is open and naked to Him, with whom we have to do. That's a lovely verse there.

Verse 13, the last phrase, Him with whom we have to do. That means, as a human being, there's only one person in the universe with whom I have to do. That's all.

Only one person in the universe I'm answerable to. If you live your life like that, you'll be a godly person. But if you have to deal with so many people, what does this person think, what does this person think, what is that person saying about me, what is the other person saying about me, and you're always, your ears are open to what somebody is thinking and somebody is saying, and you're disturbed by what that person says and disturbed by what that person says and greatly encouraged by what this other person says, you'll be a slave.

I might as well tell you right now, you'll be a slave of men. If you want to be a servant of God, think of this phrase, Him with whom we have to do. There's only one person in the universe I have to give an account of my life to.

I don't have to get a certificate from you that I'm a godly person. It's valueless. Even if all of you say, Oh, he's a very godly person.

I've got to take all those certificates and throw it in the garbage bin. It's worth nothing. Why? Because how much do you know of me? Do you know anything about my private life? Do you know how I handle my finances? Do you know what goes on in my thoughts when I'm not standing in the meeting? What do you know of my life? You know 1% of my life.

But you see me in public. And with that 1%, you form an opinion, it could be totally wrong. That's why I say the opinion of men is fit for the garbage bin.

Good opinions or bad opinions? Throw it there. That's what I've done for many, many years. And that's freed me to serve God.

If you want to be freed to serve God, throw the opinions of men, the good ones and the bad ones, in the garbage bin. And say, Lord, you're the one with whom I have to do. And every day I want to stand with you.

And there's nothing hidden in your eyes. Verse 13. Everything is open and laid bare in my life before you.

I can fool people that I'm spiritual. But I can't fool you. You live like that, my brothers and sisters.

And boy, you'll see the difference in your life. That's how you enter into the new covenant. Okay.

And now we go to verse 14 to 16, where it speaks about Jesus, the Son of God, who has passed through the heavens. When it says passed through the heavens, the Bible says there are three heavens. One is the heaven which we see here, the sun, moon and stars in the universe.

Massive space. Millions and millions and millions of light years. That's the first heaven.

The second heaven is above that, where demons and Satan have their headquarters. And the third heaven is above that, where God dwells. When Satan was thrown out of the third heaven, he was not thrown to hell.

He was thrown to the second heaven. That's why in the book of Job he could stand in the second heaven and speak to God. He cannot enter the third heaven ever.

When we die, we go to the third heaven. Paul was taken up to the third heaven. Jesus passed through the heavens into the third heaven of God.

And we have a high priest, verse 15, who can sympathize with our weakness. I'm sure God can sympathize with us and could have sympathized with us even if he never became a man. See, just like we can sympathize with a person going through a difficulty even if we have not gone through the difficulty ourselves.

For example, here is a mother who has lost her only son. Now, I've never lost an only son. But I can comfort her and I can feel a little bit how she feels.

And if I can do that, I'm sure God can do it a million times better. So God can sympathize with our weaknesses. But if I have also lost an only son, then my sympathy with that mother who has lost her only son is far deeper.

I can understand 100% what she's going through because I've gone through it myself. And that's why God had to become a man so that he can enter into everything we go through in order to sympathize with us. That is fellowship.

And if Jesus was to be our bridegroom, he wanted to go through everything that the bride goes through. See, it's like if my wife is going through a very deep, difficult path, I don't want to sit on the outside and watch her and encourage her. Come on, come on, be faithful.

I would like to go with her along that path and help her across. Jesus is like that. Are you going through some difficulty, depression, discouragement, trial, pressure, temptation? Jesus is your bridegroom.

He doesn't want to sit there and just encourage you. A good husband will never do that. He wants to help you.

Will I allow my wife to lift a heavy suitcase and I just stand there and say, yeah, come on, lift it, lift it, encourage her? No, I like to help her. And you must remember that Jesus also wants to do that. Don't ever

think he's so far away.

I have to carry this heavy weight and he just encourages me. No, he comes and helps me. He's gone through it himself.

It's a wonderful verse. What is the biggest problem we face? Trials and temptations, pressures, temptation. Those who want holiness in their life, the greatest problem they face is temptation.

Some of us may think our financial difficulties are our greatest problems. They are not. What we call financial difficulties are because we compare ourselves with the other person.

You may say, that sister has got 20 pairs of clothes. I have only got six. So I say a financial difficulty.

Do you know there are other people in the world who got only one? They think you are rich. You think the other person is rich. The person who's got 20 looks at some rich sister who's got 200 and thinks she has got financial difficulty.

See, this financial difficulty is always a relative thing. A person who desires holiness in his or her life sees that the greatest problem is not that I have so few clothes or my food I can eat is very simple. That's all nothing.

This is what is there. If I have two pairs of clothes, it's enough. I can wash one and wear the other.

And if my food is just enough to keep me living on this earth, that's enough. The greatest problem a person who's seeking after godliness faces is not any of these things. It's temptation.

Lord, how can I be pure? How can I be holy? None of these things. I remember reading a testimony of a brother who was preparing to be a missionary. He didn't have money to buy toothpaste.

And he says, I discovered that I can brush my teeth with just a brush without toothpaste. Who said you need toothpaste? You can use soap to clean up your teeth. See, these are not the essential things of life.

A man who's seeking godliness does not feel, oh, I'm so poor I can't buy toothpaste. Do you know the number of people in India who live without toothpaste? We are used to a certain standard. And when we don't have that, we think, oh, I'm so poor.

Rubbish. If you come to my church, you'll hear that word very often. I believe all this is rubbish.

True godliness. A man who's seeking after godliness, he doesn't care if he doesn't have toothpaste. He doesn't even care if he doesn't have a toothbrush.

He can brush. He can brush with his hands like most of the people in India do. A little salt.

A little coal powder. Anything or nothing. Like the monkeys do.

Just bite the outside of a coconut. That's how they clean their teeth. My point is this.

That a person seeking after godliness is concerned because he's not able to overcome sin. That's his greatest burden. And he says, Lord, I hope you understand, not that I don't have toothpaste and a toothbrush, but that I'm struggling to be holy.

That's what it says in verse 15. He was tempted in all points as we are. That's why he can sympathize with us.

He was tempted. That means he felt the pull of temptation. Otherwise, he couldn't be tempted like us.

When Satan tempted him, he felt a pull. And he said no. If he didn't feel that pull, it's no temptation.

Temptation means you feel a pull. If there's no pull, there's no temptation. It's like a tug of war.

You know tug of war? People holding a rope. If nobody's pulling at the other end, there's no tug of war. There's no war.

But even if one person is pulling at the other end, I feel it. Temptation is like that. You know, when you're trying to hold on to a holy life, you feel a pull in the other direction.

That is called temptation. And when it says Jesus was tempted, in other words, it's the same as saying he felt a pull. And he said no.

If you say he did not feel any pull, then you have to say he was not tempted. Then you have to say the Bible is a lie. In Matthew chapter 4, it says the devil tempted him.

Forty days, it says. And here it says he was tempted in all points as we are. And temptation is always a temptation to commit sin.

There's no temptation to go to sleep or temptation to eat food. Because eating food is normal. If you eat too much, that could be a temptation.

If you sleep too much, that could be a temptation. Even sexual relationship in marriage is not a temptation. That's normal.

Outside marriage, it's temptation and sin. So, these are normal desires. To say that Jesus was tired and he felt sleepy, that's what it means here.

That's also rubbish. He was tempted like me to sin. But he didn't sin.

Never. Is that an example for me? Yes. Because we saw in chapter 2, 17, he was made like us in all things.

He was not an angel with wings. He came without his wings. So that he can teach us to swim.

He can teach us to overcome the law of gravity because he felt the law of gravity. When Jesus walked on the water, he actually overcame the law of gravity. If an angel walked on the water, that would not be a miracle.

Because an angel can fly. Jesus did not have wings. It was a miracle because he overcame the law of gravity.

And when he told Peter that you can also walk, he was saying you can do the same as I do if you trust in me. The father in heaven is not partial to his eldest son. What he did for Jesus, he'll do for you.

So, he was tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin. And he's our example. So, whenever I'm tempted today, I can look to Jesus and say, Lord, sometime in your earthly life in Nazareth, you were also tempted exactly like I'm being tempted today.

Are you tempted to be discouraged? Jesus was tempted, but he didn't get discouraged. I say, Lord, I want to look at your example and follow you. And then I realized that he lived like that through the power of the Holy Spirit.

So, I seek for the power of the Holy Spirit to live like that. That's why it says in verse 16, Let us therefore. Therefore means what? There's a little proverb which says that whenever you see the word therefore, you must see what it is there for.

Why is it there? It's there to refer to the previous verse. That Jesus was tempted like us and didn't sin. Therefore, what can we do? We can also go to the throne of grace like he went.

That we can receive mercy and grace. Now, Jesus did not need mercy. Do you know there's a difference between mercy and grace? I met multitudes of Christians who've never been able to define for me the difference between mercy and grace.

Let me explain it to you in a very simple way. Mercy deals with our past. Grace with the future.

Mercy deals with the sins I've committed. Grace to help me overcome sin in my life. Mercy they had in the Old Testament.

Grace came only in the New Testament through Jesus Christ. We read that in John 1, 17. We need mercy and grace.

Jesus needed only grace because he never sinned. There was no trace of sin in him. By the grace of God, he tasted death.

Now, when we look at this verse, we can look at it like this. What is our time of need? It says in verse 16, grace to help us in our time of need. What is our time of need? Our time of need is when we are tempted.

It's like if you're climbing a mountain. And you're trying to climb a rock and you slip. And you're hanging there by your fingers.

That's your time of need. And if you don't cry for help at that time, what happens? You fall. And you break your bones.

And then you cry for help. That is also your time of need. And then the ambulance comes.

Picks you up. Takes you to the hospital. Fixes your bones.

That is mercy. That's good. We fall into sin.

We break something in our life. We ask God for help. The ambulance called mercy comes.

Picks us up. Cleanses us. Forgives our sin.

And we are okay. But it would have been much better if you had called for help before you fell. Right? While you're hanging there.

If you say, Lord, I'm slipping. Please help me. That would be grace.

To help you. Arms would come under your armpits and lift you up and put you on the rock. That is grace.

So when should you ask for help? After you've fallen? That is second best. Ask for help before you fall. To ask for help after you've fallen is to ask for mercy.

To ask for help before you fall is to ask for grace. Sin shall not rule over you because you're under grace. Most Christians only ask for mercy.

They fall, ask God to forgive them. They go climbing again. Again they fall.

They ask for the ambulance. And every time the ambulance comes. Is that the way you want to live? Always fall.

Have your bones broken. Go to the hospital. Come back again.

Again fall. A lot of Christians live like this. That's not God's will.

God's will for you is next time you're tempted. In your time of need. Before you fall.

Ask for help. Lord, give me grace now. And God gives you grace to stand.

You try it next time. When you're tempted to be angry. Tempted to lust.

Tempted to dirty thoughts. Don't... Okay, you resist it, resist it. And then you find you're slipping.

Lord, give me grace. And after some time you'll find. Hey, I didn't sin.

I didn't lose my temper there. I didn't lust. That's wonderful.

That is the message here. Then he goes on to speak about Jesus as our high priest. In verse chapter 5. And just one thing I want you to notice here.

That no one can take this honor. Verse 4. To be a high priest. Except one who is called by God.

Even as Aaron was. In Israel, somebody couldn't say. I'd like to be a high priest.

I'm sorry. God has to call you. No one could even say.

I'd like to be a priest. Sorry. God has to call you.

Even Jesus. Verse 5. It says. He did not glorify himself to be a high priest.

In the. Fullness of time. It says he came.

That means he waited 4000 years in heaven. Then the father said go. He went.

Wasn't there a need on earth for 4000 years? If we were in God's place. We'd have sent Jesus the very next day after Adam sinned. But God is not like us.

His ways are not our ways. We see a need. And we say we must go immediately.

God sees a need. And he can wait 4000 years. Even after Jesus came to earth.

What a need there was in the world. And he sat making stools and benches and tables for 30 years. He was never moved by the need alone.

He saw the need. And he went before God. The father.

And the father said wait. Came back. He saw the need.

He went before the father. The father said wait. 4000 years he waited in heaven.

30 years he waited in Nazareth. Then the father said go. And in three years.

He did more than what we can do in 3000 years. Running around here and there trying to meet the need. He could say I finished my work.

There are a lot of people today who can't say that at the end of their life. Because they move by need. They don't move by God's call.

I want to say to you. One of the things I learned very early in my life. Was to look at the need.

That's important. Lift up your eyes and see the harvest. But not to be moved by the need.

To be moved by God's call. No one can take this honor unto himself. I can't say Lord I'd like to go and do that.

Okay that's good. Has he told you to do it? Even Jesus waited. Okay then we read here in verse 6. About Jesus being a priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

That's a very deep subject. Expands on it in chapter 7. And it says here. We'll go into it a little later when he expands on that.

Verse 7. In the days of his flesh. When Jesus was on earth. Not on just one day.

He doesn't say one day when he was on earth. He offered up prayers with supplications with loud crying and tears. To the one who was able to save him from death.

If it had said he did that on one day. Then we'd have to say we know that happened in Gethsemane. But no.

It says in the days of his flesh. That means during his earthly life. He offered up prayers.

He did it often. He offered up many prayers and supplications to God. Do you know how Jesus prayed? Shall I tell you how Jesus prayed? Read verse 7. With loud crying.

And tears. When was the last time you prayed? With loud crying and tears. Some of you are born again many years.

Have you prayed like that even once in your life? No wonder. When you are tempted. You fall into sin.

And no wonder. When Jesus was tempted just like you. He did not fall into sin.

Because there's one big difference. You say the difference was he was the son of God. And I'm not the son of God.

No. The difference is he prayed with loud crying and tears. And we are too lazy to pray with loud crying and tears.

He hated sin like anything. We don't hate sin like that. That is the reason.

We always make an excuse for our sin by saying. Oh he was the son of God and I'm not. Never again make that excuse.

If you want to make an excuse. Say this. He prayed with loud crying and tears and I don't.

He hated sin and I don't. He loved righteousness and I don't. That is the reason.

That is the only reason why we fall into sin. We read that in Hebrews. He prayed with loud crying and tears.

That's why he went into lonely places. Because he didn't want to disturb other people. And sometimes you know it's very difficult for us who live in the cities.

To go to lonely places. We don't find wildernesses nearby. It's a long way to a wilderness now.

In the cities in which we live. And I've discovered for myself that. You can have a loud cry without making a noise.

In your heart. Many many times I've done that. When you're alone somewhere.

When you wake up in the middle of the night. Everybody else is asleep. Or when you're in the bathroom.

There's nobody else. Places where you're alone. For me those are the wildernesses in the city.

Where I'm alone. There's nobody there. When I wake up in the middle of the night and everybody's asleep.

When I'm in the bathroom or toilet and nobody's there. Those are the places where I'm alone. Not a single soul.

That's a wilderness for me. In the jungle of the city. And there I can have a loud cry in my heart to God.

Oh God please keep me pure. Keep my thoughts pure. Keep my words pure.

Let even the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight. Oh God. I want total purity from head to foot.

Just like under Adam I had total sin from head to foot. Now I want total purity. A cry.

A longing. And when I fall. Tears.

Jesus never fell. And he still had tears. That really humbles me.

I say Lord. How earnest you were. How sluggish I am.

That's why he accomplished the will of God on earth in three and a half years. And I struggled for fifty years and I still can't do it. It's earnestness.

Zeal. There's a verse there in John which says the zeal of God's house ate him up. It consumed him.

It burned him up. Zeal. For purity.

That's what the Holy Spirit brings. The baptism in fire. Brings a zeal for purity.

There we can follow him. And we can also pray Lord. Father save me.

Like it says there. Save me from death. Save me from spiritual death.

There was only one death that Jesus prayed for salvation from. It was not physical death. Jesus was never afraid of physical death.

He never prayed oh father please don't let me die. He came to die. He never prayed that he should be saved from physical death.

What does verse seven mean? There was only one death that Jesus was afraid of. Spiritual death. He never wanted the smell of sin.

What was he praying in Gethsemane? Father this break of fellowship with you for three hours on the cross. That is spiritual death. I don't want it.

And he never wanted it all through his life. If he had sinned that would have also broken fellowship with the father. He hated sin.

Just like he hated that break of fellowship on the cross. And he said father please. But in Gethsemane the father said you have to face it if you want to save others.

He accepted it. But all through his life he resisted any break of fellowship with the father. That's what he prayed for.

I never want my fellowship with the father to be broken. The slightest thought of sin which you yield to breaks your fellowship with the father immediately. If we value that we will also pray with loud crying and tears that there should not be the slightest bitterness in my heart against anybody.

Not the slightest amount of spiritual pride. Not the slightest amount of impurity. Not the slightest amount of jealousy.

Not the slightest amount of the love of money. Not the slightest amount of hatred to my enemies. Not the slightest amount of anything that is outside the will of God.

We don't have such a passion to live in God's perfect will. And that's why we take sin so lightly. And holiness is not such a major subject.

Service, service, service is the major subject for us. We must do something for the Lord. We must do this and do this and do this other thing.

That's a worldly concept. It's holiness that makes our service effective. Although he was a son, verse 8, he learned obedience from what he suffered.

Jesus had to learn obedience. Learn is a word connected with education. Jesus had to get an education in the days of his flesh.

Because God has never obeyed anybody. And when Jesus was in heaven, whom did he have to obey? So if you have never done something in your whole life, and you do it for the first time, you're learning it. And when Jesus, the only time he had to obey was when he came as a man.

Then he had to obey not only God, he had to obey Mary. And Mary was a sinful woman. Not perfect.

And sometimes, I'm sure, just like we parents, Joseph and Mary must have made mistakes. And Jesus obeyed. It wasn't easy for him to obey.

He suffered in that obedience. And that means he denied his will. And he obeyed.

And he obeyed all through his life. And he learned how to obey when obedience meant suffering. You know, there's some obedience which is good for us.

You tell a child, Now eat up that ice cream. Is that suffering for that child? No. That type of obedience a child enjoys.

But when a child is playing out there with his friends and mummy says, Okay, stop playing now, come in and do your homework. That's suffering. That's not like eat up your ice cream.

So in our life also there are certain things where we obey readily because it's good for us, it's easy. But the real test comes when we have to obey something that causes us suffering. Something we don't like to do.

Something we have to deny our will. That is where your obedience is tested. Come to the meeting and listen to the word of God.

That may not be suffering. It may be enjoyable. But somewhere God says, you've got to give up that.

You're interested in marrying that girl. Give it up. That may be painful.

May not be God's will. That's where your obedience is tested, not in your activity. Jesus learned obedience by denying himself things.

Anything God said no, he said no immediately. He learned obedience through the things he suffered. And at the end of this education, it says, verse 9, he was perfect.

Perfect means complete. He completed his education. He got his degree.

That's the degree we need to get. Through numerous temptations, we pass, we pass, we pass, we pass, we pass. And what happens if you fail? You've got to do that paper again.

Right? Okay. You get to do that paper again. And you pass.

And you pass, you pass, you pass. Finally you get a degree. Yeah, I overcame.

I'm an overcomer. That's God's will for you. That is the most important degree in life.

That we all need to get. All the other degrees are rubbish. This is the one we need.

To be an overcomer in God's eyes. There's absolutely nothing on earth that can equal this. This is the degree Jesus got.

Tempted. In temptation, he cried out for help. He got that help.

He overcame. And he says to us, follow me. Do what I did.

I'm your captain. I'm not asking you to do what I didn't do. I did it.

You follow me. Let us go to the throne of grace and get grace and complete our education. If we have to suffer, we suffer.

But we're going to learn obedience. And now that he has become perfect, it says in verse 9, he has become to those who obey him the source of eternal salvation. That means he has become now a professor in this college of obedience.

How many of you want to join the college of obedience? That's the most important college to join. You know who's the professor there? Jesus Christ. And you know how he became the professor? Because he himself went through the same college, right from the lower class to the upper class, and obeyed in everything.

How do you begin to teach other people? You know what a servant of God is? A servant of God is maybe not a senior professor, but a junior lecturer in the college of obedience. But if you have not even passed in these different classes, how can you be a lecturer in this college? You got a degree from somewhere else. That's no use here.

What you need here is a qualification from this college of obedience, obedience, obedience. And the more you have obeyed, the more you can lead other people to obedience. That is true Christian ministry.

He has become to all those who obey him the source of eternal salvation. Now there is a salvation from sin, from the penalty of sin. This is talking about salvation from the power of sin in daily life.

And therefore he's been designated by God as a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek. Melchizedek was a man in the Old Testament. We saw that when we read Genesis 14, a man who obeyed.

When God said do this, he did it. Even though he didn't understand. And he says in verse 11, how are you finding by the way what I'm saying? Look at verse 11.

Concerning this Jesus who is according to the order of Melchizedek, we got a lot of things to say. But he says it's very hard to explain this. Because you people don't seem to be so interested.

In what? Interested in overcoming life. Interested in godliness. Interested in holiness.

Can you imagine trying to teach godliness to somebody who is not interested in godliness? It's like trying to teach science to some students who are interested in football. When some important cricket match is going on, it's very difficult for the teacher to teach any subject in the class. Because they are always wondering what the score is.

Is India winning or is Pakistan winning in that cricket match? Everybody sitting in the classroom is thinking of that. And the teacher is trying to teach mathematics or science and nobody is paying attention. This is how a lot of believers are.

He says it's very hard to explain these things to you because you are interested in a lot of other things. You are interested maybe in ministry or building a house or you are interested in getting married to someone. These are the important things in your life and there is nothing wrong in all these things.

But I say if you are not interested in godliness, it's very hard to explain these things. Only a man who has got a passion. Can you see these research scientists? How they have a passion.

They sit late into the night doing their research in their laboratories. Because they have a terrific passion to pursue that research in that field. And when you have a passion like that, to study the word of god, because you want to be godly, then we can understand.

He says but you Hebrews, it's been so difficult to explain all these things to you because you don't understand. And you are still in the level where you need milk and not solid food. But we have a lot of things to explain to you.

Everyone who partakes of milk is not accustomed to righteousness. Some people just want milk. They are babies.

They can't eat solid food. And spiritually there are many babies who are 25 years old. They can't eat anything solid.

They have been believers for 25 years. They are still drinking milk. That means forgiveness of sins, repentance, faith in Jesus.

That's all. Baptism. Baptism in the Holy Spirit.

This is all milk. They live there all their life. There is nothing more of righteousness.

They are not getting more and more light on areas in their life where there is sin. And he says actually, verse 12, by this time you should have become teachers in this college of obedience. But you are not teachers yet.

You are still sitting there. You are 25 years old and you are still sitting in the kindergarten learning ABCD. Isn't that sad if you see a 25 year old sitting in a kindergarten class still struggling with ABCD? That's how it is with a lot of believers.

What would you think if you went to a house and you saw a 25 year old man lying on the floor with a milk bottle? And what would you think if you went to a house and you found 10 children all lying with the milk bottle, 25 years old, 20 years old, 15 years old with a milk bottle? This is exactly how many churches are. You see 200 people all with a milk bottle lying on the floor kicking their legs. They are babies.

You can't teach them the deeper truths of God's word. No, no, no, no. This is all perfection and all.

We want milk. They want to lie there and kick their legs in the air and drink milk the whole day. Paul says, you Hebrews are like that.

What to do? He says, I can't teach you. But solid food, verse 14, is for the mature. Those who have, by practice, exercised their senses.

That means in different situations they have exercised their senses to find out, is this soulish or is this spiritual? That's the meaning of verse 14. Is it good or is it evil? Is it spiritual or is it just human? Not just is it sinful, but is it just a human way of reacting to people? Is it just a human way of speaking or is it the divine way? Is this the Christ-like response or is it a human response? Have you heard sometimes people say, after all, we are only human. That's all right for an unbeliever to say that.

Paul said to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 3, he said, you people are walking like other men. Is that a sin? Of course it's a sin. You should walk like Christ.

That's the challenge that a godly person considers when you get up to speak God's word. Do you speak like men or do you speak like Jesus? Anyone who stands in a pulpit to preach God's word must say, Lord, I want to preach like Jesus preached. When I was a young man, I had this passion in my life.

I said, Lord, if you ever call me to preach God's word, I want to preach like Jesus preached. Not like men preach. It doesn't interest me.

I did not make any man in the world my model. I studied the Bible to see how Jesus preached. And that became my model.

I want to encourage you. Discern between soulish preaching and spiritual preaching. Between a soulish life and a spiritual life.

You have to exercise your senses, it says, to discern that. In chapter 6 verses 1 to 3, he goes on to speak about this so-called milk and meat. But he uses a different illustration.

Milk and meat is one type of illustration. Milk for babies and meat for those who are mature. Another illustration is what we have used before of foundation and superstructure.

Foundation for the babies, superstructure for those who are mature. And he says, let us, or the elementary teaching. That's another way he puts it.

There are three pictures he uses here. One is milk and meat. And the other is elementary teaching and mature teaching.

Maturity. That means like primary school, nursery class and college education. That's the difference.

Both is education but two different levels. Milk and meat, primary education, college education. The other picture he uses in the latter part of verse 1, chapter 6, 1 is foundation and superstructure.

So all these pictures speak about babies and mature Christians. And the difference is that in time of temptation, you discern. Is this the Christ-like response? Or is it a human response? And the more you ask yourself that question, don't ask yourself how other believers behave.

Because most other believers behave in a human way. Is this the way Jesus... When you crack a joke, for example, when you're sitting together and you joke that hurts somebody. Ask yourself whether Jesus would ever crack a joke like that.

And if you never ask yourself that question, you will always be a baby. If you spend your life and the end of each day, you don't ask yourself, did I behave like Jesus today? What are the areas today where I did not behave like Jesus? I didn't speak like him. I didn't think like him.

I didn't talk like him. I was not interested in the things he was interested in. You never examine yourself in the light of Christ.

You'll never be able to discern what is soulish and what is spiritual. You'll always be in foundation. You'll always be in the nursery class.

You'll always be drinking milk. But if you compare yourself with Jesus, the professor in this College of Obedience, and you're serious about your education in the Christian life, you will press on to maturity. Like it says, press on to perfection.

It's like a mountain. I have to climb the 30,000 feet to become like Jesus completely. Right now I'm the foot of the mountain.

I'm going to press on. I don't care how long it takes. I'm going to reach the top.

And so, he says, what is the foundation? What is the milk? What is the nursery class? Here it is. Repentance. Repentance is nursery class lesson.

Milk. Repentance not only from sin, but from dead works. Dead works are works which are good works, but done with a wrong motive.

In the Old Testament, they had only good works and bad works. In the New Testament, we have good works, bad works, and dead works. Dead works are good works done with a bad motive.

For example, if I preach, it's a good thing to do. But I'm preaching for honor or for money. It's a dead work.

I do something for God, but I do it unhappily. I give money to God, but I'm feeling unhappy. I have to give away so much money for God.

Giving the money to God was good, but it was a dead work because you gave it unhappily. There are many, many examples of this. Anything you do without joy, without faith, dead work.

Repent from sin and repent from dead works. That's the first thing. Secondly, faith.

That's kindergarten lesson. Believe in Jesus. Third, baptisms.

Two baptisms. Baptism in water. Baptism in the Holy Spirit.

Washings or baptisms means the same thing. Immersions. Baptism in water.

Baptism in the Holy Spirit. Elementary lesson. Laying on of hands.

Spiritual gifts. Healing. Nursery class.

Resurrection. Jesus coming again. We're going to be raised from the dead.

Nursery class lesson. Eternal judgment. We'll be judged.

We'll go to heaven or hell. This is all nursery class. People who are interested in only these things are still in the nursery class.

Leaving all this, let us press on to perfection. To become like Jesus in every area of our life. And this we will do.

If God permits. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, help us to press on to perfection.

And not to live at the low level that we have lived for so long. And that many others around us live. We pray in Jesus' name.

Amen.

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