

Through the Bible - Hebrews - Part 3

by Zac Poonen

Zac Poonen emphasizes the necessity of spiritual maturity and the dangers of remaining in a state of immaturity in the Christian faith.

Duration: 55:43

Scripture: Matthew 10:42, Hebrews 6:10, Hebrews 8:5-13, Hebrews 10:35-36, Hebrews 12:1-2

Topics: "Christian Living", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of not being lazy in the Christian life. He shares a poem by A.B. Simpson that highlights the need for diligent work for God. The speaker also discusses the struggle of trying to live a victorious Christian life and the realization that we cannot do it on our own. He encourages reliance on God's filling and acknowledges his own dependence on God when speaking. The sermon concludes with a call to press on to perfection and warns against the danger of not doing so, using the analogy of a foundation that can be destroyed if not built upon properly.

Transcript

Hebrews chapter 6, and we saw here that the burden of the writer to this letter, the writer of this letter, is to lead Christians beyond the milk level to solid food level, beyond foundation to superstructure, beyond the nursery class to higher education. In our earthly life, none of us want to be babies, none of us want to stop our education with the nursery class, and none of us will want to have a building with only the foundation. Why is it then that in the Christian life, so many believers seem to be satisfied with just drinking milk, laying a foundation, and living in the nursery class all their life? And we saw in our last study what the nursery class is.

Repentance, faith, water baptism, baptism in the Holy Spirit, spiritual gifts and healing, the hope of the future of resurrection, and eternal judgment in heaven or hell. Don't you realize that most believers are occupied with only these things? And if you have these things, and you go to some place and you preach the gospel, the gospel you preach will only be these things, how you can lay a foundation. And you bring people to birth, that means you're bringing them to being born again, and then never let them grow.

They are babies forever and ever and ever, and you have a church full of babies, whether they are fifty years old or two years old. Retarded children, this is the problem with multitudes in Christendom today. Maybe one pastor who is mature, sometimes he's also a baby.

And this is not the Christianity in the New Testament. Let us press on to perfection. And if you yourself have never gone beyond the nursery class, how can you lead other people beyond the nursery class? If you're still drinking milk, how can you lead other people to drink more than milk? So this is the challenge that comes to us.

There is a doctrine that determines how we lay a foundation, and there's a doctrine that leads to perfection. And if you are only gripped with one, and we think that is everything, we will go everywhere producing babies. And we may think, well, the important thing is just to get them out of hell and take them to heaven.

If that was the only important thing, there would never be an exhortation in the Bible like we read in Hebrews 6, 1, saying, let us press on to perfection. It would have said, let us go and produce more babies. No, it says you should be mature.

Every believer should grow to maturity, not just bring more and more people to the level of babyhood. And it's because so many believers are babies that so many churches are full of quarrels and court cases and fighting and leaders fighting with each other. And the leaders fall into adultery and running after money and so many things like this, because they're all babies.

The leaders are babies. Babies will always fight. When we grow up to maturity, we don't fight.

That's one proof that we have grown up to maturity. We don't covet positions of honor in the church. If you covet positions of honor in the church, you're a baby.

And you see the amount of babyhood there is among leadership in Christendom today, seeking empty honor from each other for silly little things. And we see the state of Christendom. It's a pathetic testimony to the world.

And if you're concerned about that, you will seek to press on to maturity yourself and seek to lead every convert to maturity. You'll never be satisfied with laying a foundation. You'll want to complete the structure.

Some of you, if you go somewhere and you preach the gospel and a few people are gathered together and you want to build a meeting hall, how many of you will be happy with just laying the foundation of the meeting hall and say, OK, we've got a place to meet here. We bought a plot of land. We've laid a foundation and there's a floor here.

It doesn't matter if there's no roof, no wall. We get wet in the rain and we sit in the sun, but we've got a floor. I've never seen anybody happy with that anywhere, anywhere.

But, you know, many times I think of people who have only laid a foundation and then they teach a lot of things in those meetings. It's like a man who hasn't built a house. He's only laid a foundation and he decides to move in.

He brought his furniture and his beds and his sofas and dining table and kitchen equipment and everything. And he set it up in this house where there are no walls, no roof, nothing. It's just foundation.

This is the condition of a lot of churches. There's a lot of teaching and knowledge and this, that and the other. But all the knowledge is like the furniture in a house which has only got a foundation.

And there are a lot of problems. Of course, there'll be a lot of problems. If you want to solve those problems, teach people.

First of all, press on to perfection yourself and lead others to perfection, my brothers and sisters. That is the answer. And that was the burden of the man who wrote this letter.

Let us press on to perfection. And he goes on to speak about the danger of not pressing on to perfection. See, if you lay this foundation like that for a long time, spiritually anyway, the foundation itself will be destroyed after a while.

That's the great danger. Now, earthly solid foundations, you may say they last for a long time. But spiritual foundations, if you don't build a superstructure on it, if you don't press on to perfection, even the foundation will be eroded.

And after some time, they would have lost their salvation. They would have lost their baptism in the Holy Spirit. They'd have lost their faith.

They'd have lost their repentance. They'd have lost everything. There's nothing left.

That's the danger. And we see that again and again and again, everywhere of people who just make people converts and don't lead them on. They have a lot of problems in those churches.

And the churches where people are urged to press on to perfection, there are less and less problems because we are dealing with mature people. That's the answer. And he speaks about the problems that come when you don't press on to perfection in verse four onwards.

Chapter six, verse four. In the case of those who once been enlightened. Now, read these words carefully.

Like I said, we can come to scripture with a preconceived idea of what scripture should say. And that is the best way to remain ignorant of what the Bible says. If you want to know what the Bible says, when you come to the Bible, get rid of all your ideas and all the theology you heard and studied and say, Lord, open my eyes.

Maybe what I've studied is all wrong. Please, this is written for simple people. This is not written for scholars.

This is written for fishermen. This is written for babies. God has hidden these things from the clever and intelligent.

Come like a baby and you'll understand it very easily. What are the words used here? These are all words to describe a person who is born again. First of all, enlightened.

That means in his darkness, in the darkness of his heart, the light of God has come. He's a born again person. Second, he has tasted the heavenly gift, the gift which God gave of his son.

He has received his son. He's tasted Jesus. Third, he has been made a partaker of the Holy Spirit.

He's not just a superficial Christian. He's received the Holy Spirit. Four, he has tasted the good word of God.

He has responded to God's word. Number five, he has tasted the powers of the age to come. That means he's also tasted something of supernatural power in his life.

He has tasted something of the miraculous. He has tasted supernatural answers to prayer in impossible situations. He has prayed and God has produced an answer to that prayer.

He has tasted answers to prayer. This is a really born again person. All these five things characterize a born again person.

I believe that healing in our body comes under the category of tasting the powers of the age to come. In that future age, I will have a resurrection body, perfectly healthy without sickness. I can't have that body today, but I can have a taste.

It's like some new biscuit manufacturing company sends you one biscuit as a taste of the quality of biscuits we are producing. A little sample. And healing is a little sample.

One biscuit. I'll get the full packet one day when Christ comes again. I believe we can taste it when we are sick.

This is what I pray when I'm sick. I say, Lord, I want a taste in this body of that resurrection power, which will one day transform my whole body into the likeness of Jesus' body. I know I can't have it all fully today, but can't you give me a taste of it? A little taste.

One teaspoon is enough. You know the crumbs that fall from the table. I can't get the full bread, but the crumbs that fall from the table was enough to heal that girl.

It can heal me too. One day I'll have the full bread, total perfect resurrection body. But here is a person who has experienced all this and then he falls away.

Is it possible for such a person to fall away? It's not just falling and getting up. There are many believers who fall and get up. We all have that experience.

This is not talking about falling and getting up, which all of us have. It's falling away completely. If you come to the Bible with an open mind, you realize that is possible.

If God says it is possible, it is possible, whatever your theology may say. You just admit that your theology is wrong and God's word is right, that you can fall away. And these people, why do they fall away? First of all, they crucify the Son of God afresh.

How do you crucify the Son of God afresh? I remember seeing a Christian movie. It was an evangelistic movie where it described the conversion of a young man who was a godless young man. One of the things that converted him was in this movie they showed somebody hammering the nails into the hand of Jesus.

And this boy, this young man wondered, who is this hammering? And when he turned around, he saw it was his own face. He was hammering the nails into the hands of Jesus. Have you seen that? Absolutely true.

Have you seen that you were the one who said, crucify him, crucify him. You say, I never said it. Every time you sin, that's what you're saying.

Do you know that every time you sin, what you're saying is crucify him? Because why was he crucified? He would never have had to be crucified if man had not sinned. He was not crucified because man was not educated. He was not crucified because man didn't have any clothes or food or any such thing.

He was not crucified because man's social conditions were bad. These are the things a lot of people are interested in today, social conditions, food, clothing. Okay, that's all important.

But he was crucified for some other reason. Jesus would never have had to come to earth if man's only problem was there was not enough food or not enough clothes or his social conditions were not good. He would never have had to come and die.

He came and died only because of one reason, because man had sinned. He was crucified only for one reason, for sin. And when I explain the gospel to Sunday school children, I tell them, do you know that even if you were the only little boy and girl in the whole world who did something wrong and everybody else was good, Jesus would still have come for you? That is the gospel.

If I was the only sinner in the whole world, everybody else was holy, Jesus would still have come and died for me. For whose sins would he have died then? My sins. As long as you believe that just Jesus died for the sins of the world, you may be a nominal Christian.

When you believe that Jesus died for your sins, that's when you get born again. Have you seen that? That he was crucified, your sins crucified him. So every time you sin, you're crucifying him afresh.

I'm not talking about accidental falling into sin. You know, accidentally you can stamp on somebody's foot. You know there's a difference between accidentally stamping on somebody's foot and deliberately stamping on somebody's foot? There is a difference.

How often we accidentally, you may be traveling in a bus and you step back and you accidentally stamp on somebody's foot and you say, oh I'm sorry, you didn't do it deliberately. But there are other things we do deliberately. Sometimes we accidentally lose our temper.

We didn't want to. But then there's other types of sins where we plan and scheme and want to really harm somebody and write a letter and hurt people. Those are much more serious than the accidental ones.

If you accidentally nail into the hands of Jesus, that's not so serious. But when you deliberately nail it, that's much more serious. Accidentally falling into sin, we all fall perhaps every day.

Accidentally, maybe you could even lust. You know you didn't expect that filthy picture there and you just were tempted, suddenly you lusted. But it's quite another thing when you go and you buy a pornographic book and begin to look at it.

That's different. It's not of accidental sin we all fall into, but it's very different from deliberate sin. And when you keep on deliberately sinning, you're nailing, nailing, you're crucifying the Son of God afresh.

You think believers can't do it? So many, when you refuse to forgive somebody, Jesus hung on the cross and said, father forgive them. You say no, don't forgive him, don't forgive him. Hammer the nail in.

What's going to happen to you? I'll tell you, you will fall away. I guarantee you'll fall away. Because you're crucifying the Son of God afresh.

And you're putting him to an open shame. It's a terrible shame to be crucified. Jesus hung there with the underwear hanging there, shameful.

And you do it? That's what sin is. And when a person sins like that deliberately, I'm not talking as I said about accidental sin, deliberately keeps on hammering the nails, a time will come, whatever believer, whatever spirit baptized or speaking in tongues, whatever he calls himself, he'll fall away. And then if he continues like that, keeping on hammering the nails, it is impossible it says in verse six, to renew him again.

You know, a person can cross a line because he's rejected the grace of God so much that is impossible to renew him again. It's very dangerous for a believer to keep on sinning deliberately. And verse seven indicates that such a believer keeps on, he's interested in blessings, but he's not interested in fruitfulness in his life.

He keeps on drinking the rain, but instead of bringing forth vegetation that is useful, he brings forth, verse eight, thorns and thistles. In other words, here's a believer who's interested in blessings. He goes for every meeting where there's a promise of blessing.

He hears there's some meeting about healing, he'll go there. He hears there's some meeting about prosperity, he'll go there. He's interested in such messages, rain, blessing, prosperity, physical healing, and God is going to do this for you and do that for you.

He wants to drink all the rain, but what does he bring forth from his life as a result of receiving all this rain? Not fruit, not love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, humility, self-control, not those things. He brings forth bitterness and unforgiving spirit, keeping on taking advantage of the grace of God, sinning sexually, keeping on doing that and never repenting. I want to say it's a very dangerous path, anybody who takes advantage of the grace of God like that in secret.

See, the blessings of the New Covenant are greater than the blessings of the Old Covenant, but when you fall from the New Covenant, it's much greater too. See, we can say the Old Covenant was like a little six-inch platform from the ground. If you're standing on a platform which is six inches from the ground and you fall down to the ground, it's not very serious, you don't get hurt very much, because you fell only six inches.

But if you fell from a ten-story building, a hundred feet high, that's serious. The New Covenant is something that takes you way up, but if you fall from there, it's much more serious than people who fell in the Old Covenant. Solomon's fall is nothing compared to your fall, even if he had a thousand wives and concubines.

He was only six inches above the ground. Where have you got Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit who lifted you so high from there when you fall? It's very serious. When an angel fell, he became a demon.

When the highest angel fell, he became Satan. If a donkey falls, he's not going to become a demon or Satan. It depends on how high you are.

The higher you are, when a leader falls, like Moses, once he falls, he cannot enter Canaan. When lower believers fall, after ten times God says you can't enter Canaan. That's what he told the Israelites.

Even today, when an ordinary believer falls, God allows him to fall. When a leader falls into some serious sin, I don't believe he can ever come back into a ministry again. He can be a believer, he can break bread, sit in the church at the back, but I don't believe that he can come back into that ministry.

But it happens. People commit adultery and then one year later they are back in the ministry. I don't agree with it.

I'm not saying they can't be restored to fellowship with God, but I don't believe they can come back into the ministry. They have a lot of knowledge, but what can they testify to? They can testify that after 25 years of following the Lord, you can fall into adultery. Is that the message we want to preach? Something is wrong with that type of following the Lord.

You're not following the Lord at all. Something is wrong with that type of Christianity. So I don't believe such a man can be a leader.

So we see here that the higher we go, the greater our fall. Depends what we bring forth with all the blessings we receive. Verse 9, having said these strong words, you see he has told us the Old Testament people were only following Moses.

We are following Jesus. Those who followed Moses, if they fell, okay, it's not so serious. Those who follow Jesus and fall, it's much more serious.

That's the basic point. Because what is the difference in height between Moses and Jesus? So much higher. So the fall is so much greater.

We all say we are following Jesus. It's safer to follow Moses. But if you are planning to fall in your life, better to follow Moses.

If you follow Jesus, you've got to take it very seriously. Very, very seriously. But he says, having said all this, beloved, we believe better things concerning you.

Things that accompany salvation. We don't believe this is going to happen to you. I have faith for you, brothers, that you will not take lightly this matter of sin.

And he says, God is not unrighteous. Verse 10, to forget your work. He says a few encouraging words.

He feels that he's spoken a bit strongly, but it's necessary. But along with those strong words are words of encouragement. But I want to tell you also, he says, God is not unrighteous.

He has not forgotten your work. He has not forgotten the love that you have shown to his name in serving other believers. Jesus said, even if you give a cup of cold water to someone, you won't lose your reward.

Haven't you done all that in the past? You've served other believers, you've worked for the Lord. He says, now all I'm saying is, we desire that all of you will proceed in the same diligence, the same hardworking attitude, till the full assurance of hope until the end. Don't just start like that, end like that, he says in verse 11.

Don't be sluggish. There's no time in the Christian life where we can afford to be lazy. It doesn't matter how much we have followed the Lord, I don't want to be lazy.

I don't want to be lazy even if I'm 90 years old, I don't want to be lazy. Not a single day of my life must be wasted. I remember as a young man reading a poem written by A.B. Simpson which said, there's no time for trifling in this life of mine, because this is not the path my blessed master trod, but strenuous toil, each hour and each hour employed always and all for God.

No time for trifling. I don't have time to fool around. I don't have time for many things other worldly people are interested in.

That's not the way Jesus walked on this earth. Every moment of his time, every bit of energy in his body was devoted 100% for God and that's how I want to live till the end of my days. I hope that's how you want to live till the end of your days.

Where there's sluggishness, you will never come into this new covenant life. Nobody can ever come to this new covenant life who's lazy, sluggish. You've got to be radical, you've got to be wholehearted, you've got to give up many things other people are interested in.

You've got to concentrate on the things which are most essential for eternity, because we are dealing with eternal life and eternal death. I'm not saying you can't go for a picnic or you can't have a little entertainment, but just make sure everything is kept in their proper proportion. So many people do not study the scriptures because they are not serious about their time.

They say we don't have time. There's plenty of time. If we look for it, don't be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

Faith and patience are always linked together in the new covenant. And he gives the example of Abraham. When Abraham, when God made a promise to Abraham, you know it took 25 years for Abraham to get that promise of a son? 25 years.

It says he waited. Verse 15, he patiently waited and he obtained the promise. What did God tell him? Verse 14, I will surely bless you and I will surely multiply you.

I want you to notice something here in this verse. In the Old Testament, if God blessed a man, he had children. Always.

It was part of the old covenant promise. I will bless you, I will multiply you. God told Adam, he blessed Adam and said, multiply, be fruitful.

In the new covenant, the same thing is true spiritually. If God blesses me, he will give me spiritual children. That's one proof that God has blessed me.

I bless you and I will multiply you. Now, when Abraham, if God said to Abraham, I'll bless you, but you won't have any children, he would have been terribly disappointed. And if God says to me today, I'll bless you, but you won't have any other people brought to the Lord through your life, I'd be terribly disappointed too.

More disappointed than Abraham. I want all of you to be disappointed when God does not use you to lead other people to God. Something is wrong.

I will bless you, I'll multiply you. That means Abraham got a son like him. And I believe that if God blesses me, he will give me through my labors at least a few brothers who have the same vision and the same

passion and the same desire and the same longing that I have.

Okay, even if I get two or three, I'm happy. Jesus had eleven. He was very happy.

But you say God is blessing you and you don't even produce one person like yourself, brother, something is wrong with that blessing. You've got to say, Lord, what's wrong? I'm not saying that it can happen overnight, but God's will is that through our life, we multiply. We produce spiritual children having the same desire that we have.

You know, like our children, people look at the children and say, he looks like daddy or mommy. Same color, same features, same thing spiritually, same passion, same longing, same desire. That must be our longing in our local church.

Don't say what to do, brother, nobody's interested in spiritual things. Well, that's probably because you're not interested in spiritual things because you produce somebody just like yourself. When God blesses us, he multiplies us.

Just think if all of us are gripped by this and we go to different parts of India and say, well, Lord, bless me and multiply me. He's going to multiply me. Do we produce children? No, God gives it.

Children are his gift, the Bible says. That is the mark of God's blessing. And we've got to patiently wait and we'll get it.

Abraham patiently waited and trusted and it happened. And then it says here that God had given not only his word, but an oath. It says in verse 17, God, by two things, two unchangeable things, verse 16 to 18, verse 18 says, what are the two unchangeable things? One is God's word.

And on top of God's word, he gave an oath, a promise. I swear you're going to have, like Jesus said, verily, verily, I say unto you, I will give you a promise. Verily, verily, I say unto you, God's word and God's promise.

With those two things, we have a strong encouragement to lay hold of the hope that's set before us. And this hope we have as an anchor of our soul. What is the hope of the Christian? Many people say the hope of the Christian is the second coming of Jesus Christ.

I say that's half the hope. What's the second half of the hope? You read in 1 John chapter 3, verse 2. There are two parts to this hope. One, he's coming again.

Second, when he comes again, I'll be like him. Don't forget that part. 1 John 3, 2 says that.

And 1 John 3, 3 says, everyone who has this hope purifies himself. So we know that that's the hope of the Christian. The hope of the Christian is double.

Christ is coming again, and when he comes, I'll be like him. And if I have this hope, when Christ comes again, it's actually one, it's like a coin. You can't get one side of a coin, you get both together.

When Christ comes, I'll be like him. If that's your hope, it says it's like an anchor of the soul. You know, when a ship drops an anchor, it cannot move.

We saw earlier in Hebrews chapter 2 about drifting. Here it says how you can stop drifting. Drop an anchor, and then the ship will never drift.

What is the anchor we must drop in the Christian life? I'm going to be like Jesus one day. I'm stuck to that. Not I'm going to be a millionaire one day.

Not I'm going to be a great man in the world one day. That's not my anchor. You got all these other things as your goal in life, you'll drift.

Let this be the anchor all your life. Not I'm going to bring so many souls to Christ. No, no, no, no, no.

I'm going to be like Jesus one day. That's the only anchor. From that anchor, God may use me to bring five souls to him or a hundred souls to him.

That depends on you. You may be a mother looking after children, or you may be an evangelist who brings hundreds of people to Christ. That's different.

God will multiply all of us, but not necessarily in the same way. That depends on our calling. But the anchor for the mother and the evangelist must be the same.

What is that? I'm going to be like Jesus. Not even I'm going to bring souls to Christ. Don't evaluate an evangelist with a mother and say evangelist brought a hundred people and the mother brought only two.

That mother may get a bigger reward than the evangelist because her anchor was to become like Jesus and the evangelist anchor was not that. So don't evaluate by numbers. Your anchor is the hope that I shall be like Jesus.

And Jesus has gone in there inside the veil as a forerunner. Now this is a title of Jesus which is not very popular. In fact most Christians have never even heard of it.

A lot of Christians have heard of Jesus as the good shepherd, the door, the way, the truth and the life, the resurrection and the life, savior, lord, master, king, healer, but forerunner? Have you ever heard of Jesus as a forerunner? My guess is that ninety percent of Christians have never heard of Jesus as a forerunner. They don't even know there's such a verse in the Bible. My personal conviction is that the book of Hebrews is one of the most important books in the New Testament next to the Gospels.

I believe it's one of the most important episodes. Romans and Hebrews are very very important episodes. And only Hebrews we read of Jesus as a forerunner.

Only Hebrews we read that Jesus was tempted like us in all points and did not sin. Only in Hebrews do we read that Jesus was made like his brothers in all things. Only in Hebrews it says we can press on to perfection.

Only in Hebrews it explains to us what is the foundation and what is perfection. It's a very very important book. And if the devil does not allow you to study it, I'm not surprised.

The devil is clever. He doesn't want you to study it because he doesn't want you to press on to perfection. He doesn't want you to walk like Jesus.

He doesn't want your life to be effective for God on this earth. He doesn't want you to have an anchor. He wants you to drift.

So it says here that Jesus is a priest according to the order of Melchizedek, a high priest. And if Jesus is the high priest according to the order of Melchizedek, we are the junior priests of the same order. And then it goes on to describe Melchizedek in chapter 7 onwards, verse 1 onwards.

Melchizedek was the king of Salem or Jerusalem. So you see, we come back again to Jerusalem and Babylon. False religion, false counterfeit Christianity, just occupied with religious activities.

And Jerusalem, which is the priesthood of Melchizedek. And it says, this man, he's trying to prove that Melchizedek was even greater than Abraham. And that the priesthood of Melchizedek is a far greater priesthood than the priesthood of Levi.

And the way he proves it is, a very interesting way he proves it. He says, do you know that when Abraham met Melchizedek, in verse 4, he gave Melchizedek 10% of all that he had collected in the war. And he says, in Abraham's body was Isaac, and inside Isaac was Jacob, and inside Jacob was Levi.

So Levi, he says, was inside Abraham, even though it's 3-4 generations down. And he says, when Abraham gave 10% to Melchizedek, Levi was inside also giving 10% to Melchizedek. So he says, who is greater? Melchizedek is greater.

Levi was giving a tithe to Melchizedek. And that's the way he proves, you see from verse 4 to 10. Levi, he says in verse 10, was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him.

And he says, if Jesus is the order of Melchizedek, he's a far greater priest than the priesthood of Levi. Because Jesus did not come from the tribe of Levi, he came from the tribe of Judah. And here he's trying to establish this priesthood is far greater.

You see, Melchizedek, he received gifts, but it was not according to law. There was not a law. Melchizedek did not preach to Abraham, you must give me your tithes.

Levi would teach people, you have to give me your tithes. When a pastor gets up and tells people, you got to give me your tithes, which priesthood is he in? Levi. Melchizedek received gifts, but he never told anybody.

He never told people, you got to give me, you got to support me, you got to do this. But he received. And when Abraham gave, he took it.

That is the priesthood of Melchizedek. That's how Jesus was. Jesus didn't tell people, you must support me, you must give me 10%.

When people gave, he took. If people didn't give, he was just as happy. Whereas Levi lived according to rules.

God will curse you if you don't pay your tithes. You see how so much of Christendom today is under the priesthood of Levi. When Levi had to wear special clothes as a priest, when people wear special clothes, even if it's a jibba to show that they are different from everybody else, what's it? It's back to the priesthood of Levi.

Why can't we dress like ordinary people and ordinary human beings? That's how Jesus dressed. So many things you find in Christendom today, we build a building and we call it the house of God. Is the building the house of God? That's back to the old covenant.

I could make a list of the things in today's Christianity which is all old covenant. And that's why we keep Christians under the old covenant and we don't press on to perfection. The priesthood of Levi is totally different.

In Levi's, the priesthood of Melchizedek is totally different. He came because God led him to bless Abraham, said a few words, gave him some food and disappeared. And Abraham gave him something, he said, well praise the Lord, thank you and he went off.

He was not dependent on Abraham's gift. Do you think Melchizedek was dependent on Abraham's gift? That's another thing we can learn from the priesthood of Melchizedek. Melchizedek was a king.

What did he want Abraham's 10% for? He took a gift from Abraham to bless Abraham. That was his attitude. Like Paul said to the Philippians, when I receive a gift from you, I take it so that God will bless you.

What an attitude. That's the priesthood of Melchizedek. Melchizedek said, I trust God for my needs.

If somebody gives me something, I take it and I hope God will bless him for it. Levi was different. Levi said, I'm dependent on you fellas.

If you fellas don't give me your tithe, I'm finished. There's a lot of difference between the priesthood of Levi and the priesthood of Melchizedek. You can learn a lot about financial principles in Christian work today by comparing Levi with Melchizedek.

You see how so much of Christian financial principles is all back in the priesthood of Levi in the old covenant. Not the priesthood of Melchizedek. Melchizedek had a dignity.

He trusted God for his needs. If he took a gift from Abraham, it was so that Abraham would be blessed. Not because he coveted something which Abraham had.

Don't ever desire. If you want to have the dignity of the priesthood of Melchizedek, of which Jesus is the high priest, don't descend to the level of the Levitical priesthood. It's not only in offering sacrifices, it's in their attitude to money.

The attitude of Melchizedek to money was fundamentally different from the attitude of Levi. Both received gifts, but in a completely different way. And it's the same thing happening today.

There must be a complete change in our attitude, if we are full-time Christian workers, to receiving gifts, if we want to be a part of the priesthood of Melchizedek. The dignity of a king. Levi was not a king.

He was a man who was dependent all the time. He was more like a beggar. And when the people didn't support him, it says in the time of Nehemiah, he said, well, then I'm not going to be a priest anymore.

I'm going to do something else. And that's how it is, even today. Somebody doesn't support you, and then I say, okay, then I can't serve God.

I've got to do something else. What type of calling did such people have? Melchizedek was not dependent like that. He says, God's called me to be his priest.

Now I'm going to do it. And he'll provide my need. And he did.

Be one like that. Keep that vision before you of the priesthood of Melchizedek. He came and he blessed even a great man, a rich man like Abraham.

Think of that, that we can go around blessing people with food, materially, spiritually, help them as we saw in Genesis 14. That is the priesthood of Melchizedek. And it says here, it's a picture of Christ in this way, verse 3. First of all, verse 2, he's king of righteousness, which is the meaning of his name.

And Salem means peace or Shalom, peace, Jerusalem. He's king of righteousness and king of peace. Righteousness and peace met together in Jesus Christ.

So Melchizedek is a picture of Christ. Secondly, Melchizedek appears in the book of Genesis. And in the book of Genesis, every man of God, whether it is Enoch or Joseph, the last one, that genealogy is there.

You know the connection between Joseph and Adam. You know the connection between Enoch and Adam. All the family tree is there, except one man of God, whose family tree is not there.

No record of his father or his mother, how he's connected to Adam. That is Melchizedek. And he says in that way also, he's a picture of Jesus, who did not have an earthly father or mother.

He lived in eternity from all eternity in heaven. He was God. He came into, he did not come into existence in Bethlehem.

He existed from eternity. He entered Mary's womb in Bethlehem, we can say. But he existed without beginning of days, verse 3, without end of life.

The death of Enoch is recorded in the Bible in Genesis. The death of Joseph is recorded in Genesis. But Melchizedek, no record of his birth, no record of his death, no record of his genealogy.

And he says in that way, verse 3, he's a picture of the Son of God, who had no beginning and no end. Okay, and he says now, if perfection, verse 11, came through the Levitical priesthood, then we should go back to the old covenant, where a special group of people are full-time workers and all the others have to support them with their tithes. That's Old Testament.

He says in the New Testament, it doesn't have to be like that. Paul, the greatest apostle, was not supported by others most of the time. He worked with his own hands most of the time.

Occasionally he received support. Barnabas was like that too. So he says, this is different.

If perfection came through the Levitical priesthood, let's go back to the old covenant. But now there's a change of priesthood, there's a change of law as well. And he goes on to speak again about the priesthood of Melchizedek and Jesus.

And he says, finally, in conclusion, verse 26 to 28, Jesus is different in another way. Those high priests had to regularly offer sacrifice for sins every day. Those priests had to do it.

Jesus offered it up once, verse 27. Those priests, when they offered a sacrifice, they offered sacrifices not only for the sins of the people, but for his own sins also. Jesus offered only for the sins of the people, not his own sin.

There's a lot of difference, he says, between Jesus and those high priests, verse 27. Verse 28, the law appoints men who are weak. But our high priest is not a weak person.

One who is made perfect forever. Now one or two interesting verses here that I'd like to look at before I move on. First of all, the total purity of Christ as a man is described in verse 26.

This high priest of ours is not like other high priests on earth. He's holy, innocent, undefiled, completely separate from sinners. There was not a trace of sin in him, in unconscious, conscious, in any way.

He lived on earth in perfection. The other thing I want you to notice here is that there is a fundamental difference in the way these two priesthoods function. One is by a commandment, you know, it says a carnal commandment by which the priest became according to the order of Levi.

But Jesus, verse 22, has become the guarantee of a better covenant. And he has, verse 16, not by the law of a physical requirement like the Old Testament law, but by the power of an indestructible life. That's another difference between the priesthood of Levi, verse 16, and the priesthood of Melchizedek.

The priesthood of Levi was depending on certain earthly characteristics, earthly qualifications. If you think that you can serve God with earthly qualifications, you know, you get a Bible school degree and you can serve God, you're back to the priesthood of Levi. How do you serve God in the priesthood of Melchizedek? It's not by any earthly qualification.

Verse 16, it is by the power of an indestructible life, a life that cannot be destroyed. The life of Jesus coming in you, that is what qualifies you to be a servant of God according to the priesthood of Melchizedek. One is a physical requirement, earthly requirement, the other is a heavenly life.

The more heavenly life you have, the more you can be a priest in this new covenant priesthood. The other thing it says here in verse 25 is that Jesus ever lives to make intercession for us. Jesus is always interceding.

That's another mark of the priesthood of Melchizedek. They are people of intercession. What is intercession? Intercession is like this.

I preach to people and then I say, Lord, that doesn't do the job. I've got to pray. Lord, you bless it, otherwise the words are useless.

Jesus intercedes for people. The Levitical priesthood was a formal thing. If formally they would pray and do their jobs and go.

Whereas Jesus, his whole life is devoted to intercession for his people. How many people want to be priests after the order of Melchizedek? This is the real priesthood in the new covenant today. Take time to study Hebrews chapter 7 and see the difference.

Now we go to Hebrews chapter 8. In Hebrews chapter 8 it speaks about the difference between the old covenant and the new covenant. Again, he says we have a high priest of the right hand of the heavens and all that was happened on earth in the tabernacle is only a shadow of the heavenly things. In other

words, he is saying, just like God told Moses in verse 5, Hebrews 8 verse 5, make sure that everything you do in building the tabernacle must be exactly according to the pattern given you on the mountain.

And he says this is a shadow, a picture of the heavenly things. So how must we build the church and do our ministry today? Exactly as God has taught us in the new covenant. What a tragic thing when people call themselves new covenant priests and go back to the priesthood of Levi.

Then the glory will not come. In the old testament it says Moses did everything exactly according to the pattern God showed him. He did it, he didn't change it, he didn't modify it, he didn't bring his human ideas into it and the glory came.

Let's build the new covenant church and serve God exactly as it says in the new covenant. Today our pattern is not some details like Exodus chapter 25 to 40. Today our pattern is, thank God, it's not a book, it's Jesus.

There they had a book, a scroll with all the details of the pattern of the tabernacle. Today our pattern is a person exactly according to the pattern when it says in verse 5, today that pattern is Jesus Christ. That is my pattern.

He is the high priest according to the order of Melchizedek. He is the mediator of the new covenant and I have to pattern my life and my ministry exactly according to his. Then I can do his work.

In other words if you want to be a new covenant servant you must look at Jesus more and more and more and more. Consider him, that's what he is saying. Look at this high priest, look at him.

Pattern your life and your ministry after him. You want to know how to serve the Lord, look at how Jesus served his father. You want to know how to preach, look at how Jesus preached.

You want to know how to live, look at how Jesus lived. You want to know how to live at home, look at how Jesus lived in subjection to his mother for 30 years. You want to know how to do your work, think of how Jesus worked in the carpenter shop.

That is our pattern in every area and make sure he says that you make it exactly according to that pattern. That's how it applies to us. Because Jesus has now obtained a more excellent ministry.

And then he describes in verse 7 to 13 this new covenant. And it's very important to understand this. Because this is the burden of the letter to the Hebrews.

There is no letter like that in the New Testament. Even Romans does not explain it so clearly as Hebrews. If that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion sought for a second.

What does that teach us? That the law was faulty and then God gave a second covenant. Now this is not like some car manufacturer making one model and discovering some fault in it and then producing a better model. It's not like that.

God knew it was faulty, but he gave it to teach man one lesson for 1500 years. He kept man under the old covenant to teach man one lesson. No matter how hard you try, you will never come up to my standard.

No matter how hard you try, you can never manifest my nature. And they tried. Many of them tried very hard.

But Elijah got depressed. Moses got angry. David committed adultery.

John the Baptist lost his faith in prison, the greatest of them all. They couldn't make it. And one failure means you're finished.

100% you don't get and then you can't get God's standard. So one purpose of the law was to show man his inability to reach God's standard. So the law had a purpose.

God didn't make a mistake. And for us also, just like God, the Lord sent the disciples to fish, fish, fish, fish, fish, fish, fish for 11 hours. Then I'll come because in 11 hours you finally learn you can't get anything.

In the same way he allows us, all of us, our initial experience after being born again is to live like old covenant people. We hear a message about victory and we try. And we try.

Thank God we are not going to try for 1500 years. And I hope it'll finish quicker than that. That we try and we fail.

We try and we fail. We finally learn the lesson which the Israelites had to learn in 1500 years, which the disciples learned in 11 hours of fishing. What is the lesson? I cannot make it.

I cannot get victory. I cannot serve the Lord. Some of you think you can serve the Lord.

God have mercy on you. I learned long ago that I cannot serve the Lord. I say, Lord, you got to fill me.

You know, even today, let me give you my honest testimony. When I come to speak, I say, Lord, I'll make a fool of myself if I depend on my past experience. If I say, oh, I preached that message before, I can preach it.

It'll fall dead. Even if it's the same words. The anointing of the Holy Spirit is something we must experience for every meeting, every message, every day, every life.

Even if you have preached the same message a hundred times. The anointing may be missing the 101st time. The new covenant is not depending on human ability or human experience.

It's different. He says, in this new covenant, it's not like the old one. I will put my laws into their minds.

I will write them upon their hearts. What is the big difference between the new covenant and the old covenant? It was, thou shalt, thou shalt, thou shalt, thou shalt, thou shalt not, thou shalt not, thou shalt not. The new covenant is, God says, I will, I will, I will, I will.

Verse 10. Isn't that much better? It's like a father saying, you must do that and you must do the other things on and you must keep the house tidy and you must clean the lawn and you must clean the scooter and you must cook the food and telling his wife, perhaps, and doing all these things. And the wife says, how in the world can I do all this? And in the new covenant, the husband says, I will do it.

I'll do this. I'll do this. I'll do this.

I'll do this. I'll do this. And I will help you to do it.

How much easier? Or it's like telling a child, come on, write that ABCD perfectly. And the three-year-old child is struggling. And the father said, don't worry, I'll do it.

I'll hold your hand and I'll make you write that ABAB perfectly. That is the new covenant. The old covenant is me struggling to keep God's law on my own and it's all crooked and wrong.

The new covenant is God holding my hand and saying, I'll do it. Secondly, the new covenant is knowing God personally as my father, verse 11. And verse 12, being completely forgiven with the old, my old life completely blotted out so that there's no memory of it.

Brothers and sisters, let us enter into the new covenant. It's much better than the old. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, it's easy to understand these things in the head. Help us to have revelation of the Holy Spirit in our heart so that we can enter into this glorious new covenant and the priesthood of Melchizedek. We pray in Jesus' name.

Amen.

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