

S.N. OCT. 14, 1973 A.M. -

ARE YOU DULL IN SPIRITUAL THINGS

Hebrews 5

INTRODUCTION:

There are two things that Paul will tell us in the chapter. One is, he is going to make an appeal for more spirituality. And the other thing is he is going to give you a brief preview of Christ's priesthood. He will make reference to an early period in the Hebrew history when Abraham had been called from the era of the Chaldees. And had been promised to be the father of a great nation - Genesis 12. And then we will discover that there was a strange figure known as Melchizedek, who has been introduced by prophesy in Psalms 110:4 and was based on the historical event that happened in Abraham's life in Genesis 14:17. And of course there will be further interpretation of this in Chapter 7 - the book of Hebrews.

But there is a span of almost 4,000 years. We span almost 2,000 years from the time of the writing of this Scripture here. And this Scripture deals with an event that was probably 2,000 years past that. So the writer of Hebrews would have us see that Jesus is an eternal high priest. With the rank of Melchizedek, that he has passed into the holy of holies to make an atonement. And that he continues this work of interceding in Heaven today. And as we stand almost 2,000 years away from the interpretation of the book of Hebrews, that is a long span of time. And yet the truth of this study is still contained. The very expanse of this time helps us to understand the relationship of this event in Genesis and the prophesy in the book of Psalms. Plus the interpretation in the book of Hebrews, in the person of Christ - we have the reality of this great high priest.

Now the Hebrews had a custom of looking upon themselves as Heaven's exclusive favorites. And to regard their priesthood, and it's rights, and sacrifices as that

which was the only answer. Now Paul might have talked of other things about the atonement. Until the end of time, without gaining a single convert. But when he comes back to talk about the priesthood of Aaron, and the priesthood established in Israel, then he immediately captures their attention. And he is going on to point out that how Christ really did possess these very qualifications that the priest in their time possessed.

I. THE HIGH PRIEST

1- V. 1- First taken from men. For every high priest taken from among men is the way this begins. Every true priest must be taken first of all from among men for this office. It is human interest that is concerned. None but a man is admitted into the presence of God in man's behalf. So none but a man that has been identified with man, of the same nature, had also transgressed could come and do this job in this office.

This helps us to know that the Gospel will bear a great resemblance to the prophets - than to the priests. Like the prophets, the preacher must speak to men for God. But he makes no sacrifices. Jesus has already done that. Now one of the major tasks of the priest was that he should make offerings.

A. J. Gossip used to tell his students how he felt when he was ordained to the ministry. It was if the people said to him, "we are forever involved in the dust and the heat of the day. We have to spend our time getting and spending. We have to serve at the counter, toil at the desk, and make the wheels of industry go round. We want you to be set apart so that you can go into the secret place of God and come back every Sunday with a word from God to us."

The real priest is the link between God and man. Now in Israel the priest had one special function. He was the person who was to offer sacrifices for the sins of the people. And sins disturbed the relationship that existed between man and God. It put up a barrier. It estranges man and God. And the sacrifice is meant to restore that relationship which should exist.

So we see that the priest is taken from among men and is ordained for men in things pertaining to God. That he may offer both gifts or sacrifices for sins.

~~This he does on behalf of men - in behalf of God.~~ Every true priest must be ordained from among men. Here we have a clear definition of the priestly office. The priest must be ordained - he must be set apart for the purpose of this office. The house of Aaron, the sons of Levi were set apart for the most common ceremony and they must be taken from among men. None but man could do this job. And then you see that the priest was to minister as a representative of his fellows. He stands between the simple world and the angry God.

Another thing we notice is in his providence is essentially confined to religion. He is to do the religious transactions - the devotional exercises. This is to be part of his work. And the Jews were to bring their sacrifices and their offerings and he was to offer them. The gifts spoken of in this text were those of gratitude, as well as those sin offerings that were made for atonement. So the chief business of the priests was to offer.

And therefore, as the preacher said, that he felt men were looking to him to come from God with a word for them each week. And how true it is that the true servant of God, though he is taken from among men, he is clay like all other men.

And yet he has been separated for this ministry, this call which God has given him.

This could be so illustrated by a multitude of ways. You remember in the mountains many years ago, a young men had prepared himself to be a school teacher, and had studied and thought about being a lawyer. And these were his ambitions. But he was converted, and when he was converted - upon his conversion, they asked him to give a testimony. And when he gave a testimony, which he thought was truly the worst thing that ever happened to him - many people after that said, you must become a preacher. God needs you to deliver his word. And of course, George Truett was taken from among men and was appointed to afficiate in this position. God still takes those who will listen to his voice and will use them to afficiate his word and the ministry where it is needed.

2 - Second, the high priest must be capable of dealing with V. 2.

First, ignorance

Second, erroring ones.

It was significant was to deal with the sins of ignorance. That he could atone and make sacrifice for them. But there was very little provision made for those with eyes wide open rebelled and sinned against God. And the Hebrew Christians were to note that. There was really no sacrifice for a presumption - a sin of presumption. Moses warned the Israelites in the wilderness and the priests shall make an atonement for the souls that sinneth ignorantly. When he sinneth by ignorance before the Lord - to make an atonement for him. And it shall be forgiven him. But the souls that doth aught presumptuously, the same reproacheth the Lord.

And that soul shall be cut off from among his people. His iniquity shall be upon him. Numbers 15:28, 30, 31.

Therefore, there was a limit to what the priest could sacrifice for. He could sacrifice for ignorance - that was pardonable. There was a sacrifice that the priest could make. But presumption - there was none.

What are these sins of ignorance - they are sins committed on an impulse. Sins committed in anger. Sins committed in passion. It could be when one is mastered by a sudden overpowering temptation. When one repented in sorrow. And the priest offered the proper sacrifice, then that type of sin could be forgiven.

On the other hand, presumption is cold, deliberate, calculated sin. It is the open-eyed obedience - or rather disobedience to God.

That is why you my friend had better search your heart about your deliberate careless sin. And about the sin that you willfully commit because there remaineth no more sacrifice for that sin. Hebrews 10:26. Over and over again - Lev. 4:2, Numbers 15:22, Deut. 17:12 - it says that the soul that sins presumptuously because he despises the word of God shall be cut off. Now the man that does that, Deut. says, that man shall die. Now the sin of ignorance is pardonable. But the sin of presumption is not.

They meant that the sins of ignorance were committed simply for the lack of knowledge. They included the sins that when a man was swept away in his passion, a man was mastered by some temptation, but when a man repented in sorrow for some thing that he had done - but sin of presumption meant cold, deliberate, calculated sin. In which a man was not the least bit sorry. And with his eyes wide open, he

disobeyed God. Therefore, the priest existed to open the way back to God. So long as the sinner wanted to come back to God.

V. 3 - The priest was to also make sacrifice for himself - for his own sins. Before he could sacrifice for his sins of others. So this proves that he was taken from among men. And the priest would have passions - compassion for sinful men. It means that he too could feel gently. And this is kind of an untranslatable word here. That is by virtue to extremes - a word that kind^{OF} describes one that makes the middle of the road. The extravagant grief and between the extravagant indifference. The priest was the one who had the right feelings about men. And he needed the ability not to lose his temper with someone who was foolish and would not learn. And he was not to lose his temper at a fault because he was not to condone. The effective priest was to have sympathy in such a way as to mould the sinner back into the right way. And this was his appointment. Being able to enter into the feelings and wants of those -- the ignorant, the erring, and those who had a wrong view of God.

People often blame and denounce each other from not breaking off from certain vices or evil practices. A priest having a common nature with the people, would have the knowledge, the feelings, and the wants to press the intercession of being encompassed with infirmity.

3 - Third, honor bestowed by God - V. 4. Now no man taketh this honor unto himself. But he that is called of God - as was Aaron. This is the divine call. And no man would take this upon himself. Any man who would take up the job of Aaron, or of being a priest, or take up the job of being a preacher without the divine vocation or call -

to minister between man and God. Disappointment if this call is not of God. This appointment is not by an individual who says I'll voluntarily say, I'll take this job.

It is not by individual appointment. First, because man is not the injured party. Man is the (offender) And Almighty God is the one who is to say who will be the mediator. Between himself and man.

And second, that God is the sovereign over this world and he will say what is acceptable to him. Men made the selections of their own priests - then they would have had little regard for what God wanted done. But Aaron who was the first and the greatest high priest under the Mosaiac covenant, we know was appointed by God.

Every man did not have the right to chose for his vocation, the priesthood. God chose the ones to serve at his altars And today preachers, ministers of education, and workers in the ministry - do not really chose their job or career as a vocation. It is a calling. A man ought to be able to look back and say, not I chose this work - but rather, say God chose me and gave me this work to do. Just as God reserved the rights to call the prophets, and to call the priests to serve him - I think he reserves the right today to call men into his ministry.

V. 5 - So Christ glorified (not) himself to be made a high priest. But he that said unto him, thou art my son, today I have begotten thee. This tells us that God made the choice. God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son. It was God's choice, not Jesus, who made the choice, to become the high priest.

4 Fourth, he belonged to the rank of Melchisedec. Jesus was appointed and ordained not just to the rank and priesthood of Aaron. He was appointed to that higher priesthood of Melchisedec. Christ was chosen not to be a priest after Aaron but after Melchisedec. And they were dulled of their hearing to understand what he was talking about here.

5 Fifth, he demonstrated his power through intercession. V. 7, 8. When the days of the flesh when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears. Now he is talking about Jesus as the great high priest here. On earth, he was poor, despised, rejected of men, homeless, friendless. Subjected to the brutal, cruel folds - Satan even tried to bring him to the depths of despair. And even to the point of sweating blood as he prayed Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me. This is a reference to Gethsemane as he is about to climb Calvary. You know there are three times our Lord Jesus wept. First, at the tomb of Lazarus. Second, over the unbelief of Jerusalem. And third, in Gethsemane. And who can doubt his Gethsemane crisis - that sorrowful, agonizing prayer which was unto death. The night he was betrayed with strong crying tears he interceded. They used to say there are three kinds of prayer. Prayer, crying, and tears. Prayer is made in silence. Crying with a raised voice. Tears overcome all things. There is no door tears do not pass.

✓ Dr. Andrew Bonar a saintly man, wrote in his diary. "Tonight I gave myself to a time of waiting upon the Lord. I had not been much in the spirit of prayer but now several things have become clear to me. I realize I have not communed enough with the Lord. I have not come to him as often as I should. Little forethought has been given to the requests I've made. There has been much conversing and outward engagement with men. I have not been occupied enough with God himself. I also realize that a closeness to him gives abundant strength and it is like the sunshine shining through the clouds on a gloomy day."

Now the prayer of Jesus and his intercession, was something of waiting upon God. That this godly man was talking about.

✓ A little girl visited her grandfather in a distant city. Unlike the worldly home from which she came - his was a godly one where prayer, Bible reading were a daily practice. When the time came to return home the youngster was hesitant to leave. Her mother was displeased by this and asked, don't you want to go home with me. Yes Mama, was the reply. (But God isn't at our house)

Grandpa has him here and I like to stay where God is.

✓ Satisfaction for the soul cannot really be found apart from fellowship with the Lord. (There is a garden where Jesus is waiting. There is a place that is wondrously fair. For it glows with the light of his presence. Tis the beautiful garden of prayer.)

Prayer is the nearest approach to God and the highest enjoyment of him that is possible in this lifetime. He demonstrates this in intercession.

Next, he provided endless salvation } V. 9 and 10. Being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation. Unto all them that obey him. My, that puts a lot of responsibility upon you. He is called a great high priest. He is the pattern, the one - the Messiah that fills that pattern. And many of you find this discussion very dry and uninteresting. And you look to the pulpit for something lively, moving, or entertaining. But here is a man who has drained the greatest

quantity of tears given over to the feelings of man. And you have erred because here he has proved that the work of the Christian ministry and the priest's office was set up by God himself. Under the law of Moses, a preacher or priest must be a Jew. The priest must be called to his office, in the prescribed way. But here is Jesus who has been called to this office, and this does not prove that there is anything like a session of popes and bishops. Because it all must be of God. It is a direct independent approach that God makes. That God appoints the priestly office. In Christ is the priest for ever. Though other priests change - here is one that changes not. He is the author of the only salvation - the eternal salvation for them that obey him. Which simply means that he is the Saviour of those who believe him and obey him. With Christ, a man is saved forever and forever.

II. AN APPEAL FOR MORE SPIRITUALLY

Are you dull spiritually?

First, dull spiritually - V. 11 Paul says, we have many more things to say unto you. There is much more that needs to be said unto you. But you are dull spiritually. Second, because of the dullness of your hearing, he says, I can never make it clear unto you. Now this is the main point of consideration in this last section here. And it has connection with your eternal welfare. He has many things to say about this deep profound mystery. And the high priest, Jesus Christ. And he says - some of these are exceedingly hard to be uttered. That is the feeble intellect spiritually is incompetent. He has pointed out and proved to them that Jesus Christ is a priest divinely appointed. And now, he is telling them that there is a lot more - that they seem spiritually dull to all of this. They have a dullness

of hearing. They do not go on to perfection.

I think there is another real truth here - but it takes time to teach. And it takes real effort to learn.

Now doesn't this say something to us about what we are trying to do in our church today. And some of you are so dull appearing that you do not want to learn anymore. And so you can easily pass up the opportunities that God has made available here in your church to learn more and to study. Wasn't it marvelous last Sunday night the large number of people who came to make an effort to learn. It takes time to teach - and to learn. It is one thing to teach, but it is another thing to grasp and to learn.

Now Paul says that his hearers were dull. Now that word is full of meaning. The word that he uses for dull - in Greek means (slow moving) of mind. It means, dull of hearing. It means senseless forgetfulness. It can be used as the (numbed limb) of an individual or an animal which is ill. It can be used of a person, who has the nature of a stone.

Now here is something - this has something to say to everyone whose ignorance and duty it is to teach and preach. It has something to say to everyone whose business it is to think. And that is to say, it has something to say to everyone who is a real person.

Doesn't it happen - we dodge teaching something because it is difficult. We never face trying to explain it because exposition or explanation are hard. It often happens that we defend ourselves by saying that our hearers, or our congregation, or our pulpits will never grasp or understand that.

Now that's one of the tragedies of the church. There is little attempt to teach people new knowledge, new approaches, and new thoughts. It is true that the task of such teaching is difficult. It is true that often to try and teach in such a way is to meet the lazy mind, and also the prejudice mind that is shut. But nevertheless, the task remains.

Now the writer of Hebrews did not shirk from bringing the message of God to these men. Now that message was difficult and the minds of his hearers were slow to learn.

And his complaint is that his hearers have been Christians for many years now. And that brings me to the second point.

✓ Second, (elementary understanding) - V. 12. It says they are still babies, and no nearer maturing. The contrast between the immature Christian and the child - between milk and solid food - often occurs in the New Testament. I Peter 2:2. I Cor 2:6, 3:2, 14:20, Eph. 4:13.

He said that (by now they should be teachers). It is not necessary to take that literally. But saying that a man was able to teach was the Greek meaning that he had a real and a mature grasp of the subject. He says, they were still - he needed someone to teach them the simple elements of Christianity. The word, which means the letters of the alphabet - the A, B, C's. In geometry, that could mean the elements of proof. The point and the straight line. Now it is a sorrow to this man but after many years of Christianity his people had never gotten past the elements - they were like little children. They hardly knew the difference between right and wrong. And here he writes to these Hebrews - face to face with the problem which haunts the church in the 1970's. And in the (next generation) it will be the same.

He faces these people with the problem that there are Christians who refuse to grow up. Their real condition - they are infants.

Everyone that uses milk and nothing else is but a baby. And he has not grown spiritually.

✓ Third, we need to be full-grown Christians - V. 14. But strong meat belongs to them that are full age. Even though by reason of use, have their sense exercise. So solid food belongs to those who are not spiritually dull. And they need constant use in order to know that which is right and that which is wrong.

How old are you? Now many people impress you about this subject. Especially when it comes to grading in Sunday School. But I am not asking you how old you are by the calendar. A person may count how many years he has been on this earth, only when he has nothing else to count. Now a child starts to school when he is six. But any first grade teacher will tell you that some children at six are two years old in social development. Some may be ten. A 21 year old man or woman may be old enough to vote - but some of them wait for their mother or father to persuade them to register. A girl, 18, and a boy, 21 - may think they are old enough to be married. Now I am not talking about measuring by the tick of the clock, or the page on the calendar - because every boy and every girl wants to be grown up.

But why shouldn't the same thing apply in Christians - why shouldn't you grow. Why should you be dull in the understanding of spiritual things.

It takes time to study, to work, to give attention, to visit - and to be a good Sunday School teacher. Too many quit because they find something hard about it, or they are too lazy, or they do not want to study to understand what they are

supposed to be teaching. Some refuse to teach because they do not want the burden and responsibility. Some accept the job and then will not work at it.

There are people who have been Christians for (30 years) And if they were called upon to quote a verse of Scripture, the best they could do, would be, Jesus wept. They are people who have had no experience with the Lord since they have been saved. And they understand not more than they did the first year when they became a Christian. But what Paul is pleading with here is - for you to grow and for you to grow in behavior. Not as a child but to grow up. Nothing reveals a man's state of maturity like his religion. You tell me how your religion works and I will tell you what your spiritual age is. A child may feel guilty for doing bad. A grown-up feels bad for not doing good. A child prays when he is scared. And he may say prayers at other times.

It is even among church members today, they have opinions about dreams, witches, goats - and they think that something is too it. And the foundation of all of this is knowledge. And Solomon called it wisdom. But how can a man love an object without knowing of his existence and his character. There must be a knowledge and a love and a basis for it. But who can serve God acceptably without an acquaintance with his will. Solomon says the fear of God and the obedience to his commandments is the whole duty of man. But how can we fear and obey a being of whom we have no knowledge. And all religion which is not based upon such knowledge is no better than the blind rights of paganism.

Ignorance of sacred things is entirely incompatible with the Scripture. The great business of Christ's ambassadors is to teach. And no man can become a Christian without first being instructed. He must first have a knowledge about Jesus Christ the high priest.

How much knowledge does it require to make a Christian. Why is it that many of our most intelligent people are not disciples of Jesus. The first is it does not take a great deal if it is the right kind. But in every case - so much as well enable him to have a clear view of his obligation and his duty - his sinful condition and the plan of the salvation of Christ.

Now as to the other question - a man may be learned. He may have traveled all around the world, know science and literature. He maybe not be educated in the things of God.

Peter says, to be ready always to give an answer always that asketh us a reason of the hope that is in us.

Paul says, earnest contend for the faith that was once delivered to the saint.

There is no reasonable excuse for the Christian not being acquainted with all that is in the word of God. I know that people try to frame excuses. They may say that I have a bad memory. I do not retain what I read. Or that the Bible is a large book and it requires the patience of Job, to go through this volume. But what I am trying to get you to do this year is to try and get you to read all of it. It contains about 1189 chapters. And some of them consist of no more than 2 or 3 verses. Now if you read two pages every day and five pages every Sunday - or if you read 54 verses each week - and twice that number every Sunday, or three chapters every day, and five every Sunday - you will get to the book of Revelation before the year is out. Certainly that is no difficult task.

They tell me it requires only an average of 10 minutes each day of the year to do this.

But the Bible must be studied. And people need not say they do not have time when they think about the time spent in the stores, in the workshops, reading nonsense. I can assure you, it will be better for your head and your heart to do this.

It is like a Doctor saying the new drugs might be good, but what I learned 50 years ago is good enough for me. In religion, it is still worse. God is infinitely rich and Christ is unsearchable. And to the end of your days, knowledge will be going on concerning spiritual things. Now it is unforgiveable that a child should sulk and have an uncontrollable temper. And refuse to do this unless he gets his own way. But there are adults in the church, as Paul puts it here, who are as childish in their behavior as any child.

George Whitfield wrote in his diary as a young man, I prayed, God this day to make me an extra ordinary Christian. I think the best thing we can do is to look again to the perfect man, Jesus Christ, and look to the high priest. And to follow Hawthorne's boy - who looked at the great stone face and strived to become like him.

✓ One of our missionaries, Mrs. Jane McBrae, in Gaza Strip had received a bundle of clothes in America to her school children. She had to unwrap each package. And take out the little New Testaments that had been enclosed because there was a severe penalty attached for distributing religious literature unless it was requested. She placed all the Testaments in a gunny sack to carry them home from school. On the way home from school, some boys snatched the sack from her - and after running away - dumped them in the street. Because it was not food, they scattered the Testaments down the street. Mrs. McBrae was arrested for distributing Christian literature. And was ordered to appear in court the next day. At 2 o'clock at the next morning - there was a knock at her door.

When she opened it, she found a woman and a beautiful young girl who was a pupil at the school. The girl told her that her father who was a captain in the Arab army wanted to talk to her at once. There was such urgency and fear in the girl's voice. - Mrs McPee dressed immediately & went to the captain's tent. He asked her to tell the whole story -

He said you are a woman, it will disgrace you to appear in court, lose your usefulness & respect of anyone in city - they will soon forget - walked thru -

"I will stand in your stead"

Mrs McPee did not realize it would disgrace him too. Later learned he was demoted in rank because he helped her. She never saw him or lonely daughter again. By saying a word on his behalf, he was banished from his country -

His voice choking with emotion she said,

"He stood in my stead"

That is what the Savior means to me He stands in my place, to save me from shame & disgrace. - 12.21 He is the High Priest who pleads my case before God.