

Chapter 5

For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins: Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity. And by reason hereof he ought, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins.

And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron. So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, 'Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee.' As he saith also in another place, 'Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.'

Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him; Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec.

Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing. For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

Commentary

{ 1 } – For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins:

When God laid out the elements of His covenant with Israel He chose Moses as His mouthpiece and deliverer. As he stood before the burning bush, Moses contended with God that he was not eloquent, but slow of speech and slow of tongue. In His anger, God declared that Aaron the Levite, Moses' brother, would be the speaker for them both (Exod. 4:14). And, despite our celluloid memories of Charlton Heston boldly confronting Yul Brenner, it was actually Aaron, not Moses, who told Pharaoh, "Let my people go!" (Exod. 5:1).

After the Exodus, as the people waited at the foot of Mt. Sinai, Moses learned the details of the covenant that was to be enacted between God and the Israelites. Detail by detail, God explained how He was to be worshipped, how He was to be revealed, and - importantly - how He was to be approached. Not just anyone could run into God's presence. An individual needed an intercessor - a priest - to go before the Lord and sacrifice on his behalf. The first of these priests was Aaron –

“And take thou unto thee Aaron thy brother, and his sons with him, from among the children of Israel, that he may minister unto me in the priest's office, even Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron's sons.”
(Exod. 28:1)

That one man, as a representative of all the people, would stand before God on their behalf. And, his descendants were to continue the job. Only a Levite who was a descendant of Aaron could stand in this position. But, it was not without peril. They were instructed to wear gold, pomegranate-shaped bells around the hem of their garment (Exod. 28:34). As the people waited outside the tabernacle they would hear the bells and know that God was pleased with the service being performed inside. But, sometimes the bells stopped. Once, two of Aaron's sons decided that the particular incense God had prescribed could be improved upon. They took their new concoction into the tabernacle and were instantly killed for approaching and worshipping God in their own fashion (Lev. 10).

Again, how we approach Him is very, very important.

Even though this line of priests was handpicked and ordained of God, instructed on every detail of their service, wore the consecrated garments and offered a continuous flow of blood upon the altar, the priesthood had a major failing - it was performed by mere humans. To be truly effective it had to culminate in a sacrifice of such value that it could once-for-all cleanse men of their sin.

And, it had to be offered by a spotless, sinless priest who could stand before God with no fear that his service would be anything less than perfect.

“For”- Hebrews 5:1 starts with the word “for” - indicating that this verse supports an earlier statement. To really get the gist of the author’s thought we have to view the larger context. Just a few verses ago we read this word of comfort –

"For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." (4:15)

Why was that important to God? Why was it necessary that Jesus be touched with our frailty and share the struggle of temptation? Well, Christ's ministry would fulfill every aspect of the Aaronic priesthood. And, one important aspect of that ministry was that "every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God."

The lineage of Aaron was made up of common, flesh-and-blood men. Our Great High Priest also became a man. God chose Aaron from among men. Christ also was taken from among men. And - here's the really exciting part - the office of high priest was ordained for men in things pertaining to God.

The children of Israel were incapable of comprehending the God who led them and they needed someone to commune with God on their behalf. They needed someone to wear the ephod, breastplate and turban. They needed someone who knew where to spill the blood. They needed someone God had hand-chosen, who would be accepted in their place.

Likewise, left to ourselves we are incapable of figuring out the least thing concerning God. It is essential, if any of us are ever to live in His presence, that someone tell us about Him and perform for those things pertaining to God that we, ourselves, are unable to do. We need someone to carry our weight on His shoulders, and our names over His heart. We need someone who has the perfect mind of God. We need someone who has an entrance into the Most Holy Place to spill the eternal blood. We need someone God has chosen to stand in our place.

We sinful men need a very special man to approach God on our behalf.

And, what we really need is someone who understands us and empathizes with our low estate, yet isn't ashamed of our inability. So, Israel's priests were taken from among men. And, our High Priest was taken from among men. Being flesh and blood, the priest could know the desperation of our need and take pity on the lost and bewildered –

{2} - Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity.

Now we begin to see the importance of having someone "touched with the feeling of our infirmities". The priest must be able to have compassion on those who truly don't know any better. And, since "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way" (Is. 53:6), it's good to know that he intercedes with God for those who are "out of the way." And, why would he have such compassion? Because the priest is himself subject to the same flesh. He is troubled by the same bodily infirmities.

{3} - And by reason hereof he ought, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins.

No type or shadow of Christ is perfect or complete. Every analogy breaks down at some point. There is a major difference between the fleshly, Aaronic priesthood and the great High Priest. Because the descendants of Aaron were of Adam's race they were under the curse of sin. So, before they could approach God to sacrifice for the people they had to sacrifice for their own sin. But, a sin sacrifice was unnecessary for our perfect Priest.

{4} - And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.

That's a vital distinction where the priesthood is concerned. It wasn't ever left up to any individual to decide for himself that he would like to ascend to the highly honored station of high priest. Only the man God specifically designated could approach Him. It's God who calls, and it's God who does the "honouring."

Let's dwell on this "honour" thing for a moment –

God went to great lengths in the Old Testament to portray Himself as utterly unapproachable. For instance, at Mt. Sinai He made statements like –

“And thou shalt set bounds unto the people round about, saying, Take heed to yourselves, that ye go not up into the mount, or touch the border of it: whosoever toucheth the mount shall be surely put to death: There shall not an hand touch it, but he shall surely be stoned, or shot through; whether it be beast or man, it shall not live: when the trumpet soundeth long, they shall come up to the mount.” (Exod.19:12-13)

He continued –

“And the LORD said unto Moses, Go down, charge the people, lest they break through unto the LORD to gaze, and many of them perish. And let the priests also, which come near to the LORD, sanctify themselves, lest the LORD break forth upon them.” (Exod.19:21-22)

Once the tabernacle was built, God forbade anyone to enter except the Levites. Even then, none of the Levites could approach the Holiest Place except the High Priest, and he could only enter once a year - under pain of death! But, to the common folk - people like you and me - God was completely unapproachable.

The remarkable part of this equation is that this same God chose to approach Moses. He even called Moses by name. He beckoned Moses to come talk with Him. This was an unprecedented honor. Then, God chose Moses' own brother to be his High Priest. The verse under consideration calls this assignment an honor. And, it certainly was.

Now, fast-forward a few thousand years. One day the unapproachable God approached us - we believers. As we were stumbling along our merry way, unconcerned with our eternal destiny or things pertaining to salvation, the very same God who approached Moses approached us! While we were paying no attention, the God who instilled such fear in the hearts of Israel spoke kindly to our hearts and introduced Himself.

This is a great honor.

Then He introduced us to His Son, our Elder Brother, and helped us to understand that He had chosen our Brother to be our Great High Priest. He provided an intercessor, an advocate, to enable us to approach without fear.

And, ultimately God intends that Christ should receive the highest honor. He sits at the right hand of the Everlasting Father and is crowned King of kings and Lord of lords. He didn't take this honor to Himself. He was designated by God to be the Great High Priest to His elect, His chosen, His body, His brethren. So, all the glory, all the honor - I'm going to press this point - ALL the honor goes to Him.

You know, it's funny the things that men consider "honor." The world is full of huge church buildings bedecked in gold where men in flowing multi-colored robes move mysteriously around beautifully appointed religious objects, all the while collecting large paychecks, driving fancy cars, living in elegant homes and basking in the awe and respect of their congregation and peers. They love the honor that comes from men.

What a contrast to the honored priests who God chose to serve in His tabernacle. Their honor was to serve God in obedience. Their life was continual sacrifice. They received commands from God and were required to complete them diligently. They lived to serve those who were frail, ignorant, and out of the

way. They were given no land as an inheritance in Israel - God was to be their sufficiency. The opportunity to serve God in private, within the walls of the tent no other men could attend, without an audience, without witnesses to behold their splendor, was considered an honor. It was God's honor - and, that's plenty.

Let me just wrap this up by saying that we are highly honored, my friends and brethren. The God of Ages, the Ancient of Days, the only True God has reached down into our helpless mortality and invited us to approach Him. He has provided us both the way and the means to stand uncondemned in His presence. He did it by providing us the Intercessor that could (and would!) sacrifice on our behalf. He called us, He drew us and He saved us. Now, we are bought with a price and placed into the body, gifted to our calling and honored – at the risk of being redundant - honored to serve Him.

{5} - So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, 'Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee.'

Let's start by placing this verse with its predecessor. The entire thought is -

"... No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron. So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, 'Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee.'"

The author was honing in on one particular aspect of Christ's ministry that demonstrated the uniqueness of this Son of Man - His utter humility. Orthodox Christian theology states categorically that Jesus was the fleshly incarnation of one third of the eternal Godhead. The eternal Word became the Word in flesh. He left His former estate and stepped down from His heavenly glory. He was always seated with the Father, always face to face with the omnipotent God. Yet, in accordance with His Father's decree, He put off that light unto which no man can approach and took on an earthly tent to walk and talk with the very creatures He had come to save. That's a very long step down.

Throughout His ministry He demonstrated an almost unfathomable humility to men who could never deserve it. And He testified of Himself that without His Father He could do nothing. But He always did His Father's will. Always (John 5:30). So, He did not take to Himself the highest religious position on Earth without His Father's command and consent.

Within the context of the verse, the author - as was often his penchant - reached back into Psalms 2:7, to be exact and pointed out that it was by the Father's choosing that His one-and-only Son became the ultimate priest for mankind. Just as Aaron was chosen on Sinai, Christ was chosen in Heaven.

{6} - As he saith also in another place, 'Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.'

This was a second supporting reference, this time to Psalm 110:4. When we reach Chapter 7 of this study we will approach this Melchisedec connection in much more detail. But, for the moment, the author was pointing out that the Messiah's High Priestly work was foretold long before it became an earthly reality. Notice, as well, that once this Priest assumed His office, it was a done deal. It was a "forever" priesthood.

Let's take a second and discuss this word - *forever*. How long is that? The popular notion is that forever extends from this moment forward out into eternity. That's half-right. But, to truly qualify as *forever*, a thing would also have always been! If it had a starting place, it would be temporal. It would be less than *forever*.

Now, apply that notion to our Great High Priest. He has always been our mediator. He has always been our sacrifice. He was "the lamb slain before the foundation of the world" (Rev.13:8). His ministry to us - "ordained for men" - did not begin with His fleshly incarnation or baptism. He has always been at the altar of God, pleading His blood and demonstrating His compassion on our behalf. And that makes sense. Our sin is of such gravity that it would condemn us *forever* in the courts of an eternal judge, so we need an eternal advocate. We need a *forever* sacrifice.

The heart of the gospel is that we have one! Thus, we have an eternal security based on the eternal nature of our eternal Priest..."a priest forever."

But, back to the matter at hand, which is Christ's humility. I must admit that I disagree with the number placement in the next verse. Remember that the translators added the numbers and punctuation. They are not God-ordained. So, I disagree with their choice, here. I think the passage should contain the whole thought, which is -

{7,8} - Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered.

This is clearly a reference to Christ's passion. In the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus prayed until His sweat became as drops of blood (Luke 22:44). The sweat of His agony dripped down His sacred brow long before the centurions pierced it with a thorny crown. He took His three closest apostles with Him - Peter, John, and James. They overheard Him in the garden and wrote of His impassioned prayer:

“And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me. And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt. And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.” (Matt. 26:37-42)

The Son of God was in dire fear. Imagine. The central event around which all of human history revolves was about to unfold. God would take the mass of guilty, blood-soaked sin that had accumulated against His elect people and place it on the body of His beloved Son. But that was barely half of it.

This One who had never known anything except the presence, fellowship, and communion of God would be heard to cry out, "My God, my God! Why hast thou forsaken me?" (Mat. 27:46). This One who had lived as Eternal Spirit had taken on a body that would be so racked with pain that Isaiah would declare, "His visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men" (Isaiah 52:14). His body was torn and distorted as God poured out the cup of Holy wrath. He was beaten, bruised, and abused by men and God.

As it loomed before Him, He feared.

The more amazing side of this story, though, is that He knew it was coming. He cried out to the One who could save Him, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me" (Mat. 26:39). Yet, He submitted Himself. In humility and obedience to the will of His Father, knowing the horror that lay ahead of Him, our eternal Priest acquiesced, "Nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Mat. 26:39).

I can't let this rest. Do you want to see faith personified? Look at Him hanging on the cross - beaten, disfigured, bloody, agonizing, and totally alone. Everyone, including the Father, abandoned Him. Yet, at the moment of death, He looked toward Heaven and cried out in submission and faith to the very One who had forsaken Him, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit" (Luke 23:46)! He trusted God to raise Him from this desolate, abject misery to an eternal glory unmatched in Heaven, Hell, or Earth. Though He'd been broken and forsaken, yet He believed! What faith! What submission! What obedience! Is it any wonder the author would later write, "Jesus the author and finisher of [our] faith" (Heb. 12:2)? The word "our" found in many versions of that verse is in italics. The translators added it. But, it doesn't belong there! Jesus is the author and finisher of **ALL** faith! Wherever you find faith in any realm or dimension, under any circumstances, it was Christ who authored it and completed it.

{9} - And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;

Christ's obedience to the Father was part of His perfection as a man. As our substitute, He perfected us. And being a "forever priest," he was able to perfect us forever –

"For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified."
(Heb.10:14)

We are, by nature, disobedient. The Hebrew audience that first read this letter was descended from the Israelites who attempted to achieve righteousness through their obedience to the Mosaic Law. But, where the law could not create a perfect, continuous, righteous obedience, Christ learned perfect obedience on our behalf, gaining that complete righteousness which is imputed to us!

“For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.” (Rom. 5:19)

Is it necessary to point out the word *eternal* in verse 9? How long is *eternal*? That's "always was, always is, always will be." The salvation we receive was always in the mind of God. It was decreed and ordained in time and it will be celebrated ceaselessly in the ages to come. There was never a time when our salvation was in doubt. It was as sure as God's faithfulness to His Word, and as certain as the obedience of the Lamb slain. He's the author! He wrote it! He laid down His will before the Father and gained the souls of His sheep through His willing sacrifice.

What's the upshot of all this? Well, our obedience to Him. Notice that last phrase in *verse 9* – “He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.” God searches our hearts and minds, and He knows our intentions and desires. We cannot achieve perfect obedience, but our Elder Brother did! And because He agonized over us, we are called to spend ourselves on Him. Our best efforts will never scratch the surface of the labor He invested in us - "Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin" (Heb.12:4). But, we will strive.

As we are conformed into the image of the Son, we will "press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:14).

Pay attention also to what Hebrews 5:9 does not say. It does not say that **if** we obey Him He will save us eternally. That's a popular misreading of it. No, in order for the salvation to be genuinely "eternal," the obeying is simply an outgrowth of the fact that we are eternally saved. That's an important distinction. Jesus did not labor in vain. He did not suffer in hopes that someone would obey. He did not spill His blood just in case someone decided to get in line with Him.

He accomplished everything He set out to accomplish, and He eternally saved those who are obedient in reaction to that fact. It is sad how those concepts have dissolved in the current church atmosphere.

For instance, there is a controversy afoot concerning "carnal Christians." It is a natural outgrowth of the popular notion that people *choose* Jesus and "make Him your Lord and Saviour". These are repugnant notions to Scripture. Jesus never declared that our choice of Him was the deciding factor in our eternal destiny. Contrariwise, He stated that it was His acceptance of us that would seal our future.

We do not make Him Lord - He IS Lord! We do not make Him Saviour; He makes us saved!

Anyway, out of this confusion has grown the notion that in the steps of spiritual "decision-making" some people may have made Jesus their Savior, confirming their salvation, but they haven't yet made Him "Lord of their life." Hence, they live a carnal life, but are saved Christians. I say again, the Bible knows nothing of this sort of talk.

Jesus said His redeemed would bear good fruit (Matt. 7). He said His sheep hear His voice and follow Him (John 10). He said they would pick up their cross and follow His lead (Matt. 16:24). He said they would deny themselves, their flesh, their lusts, their desires, and they would "seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness" (Matt. 6:33). I refuse to believe that Christ learned perfect obedience through His suffering with the intent that His followers could then live according to every fleshly whim without conviction or conscience.

Another errant movement in "pop" Christianity is the proliferation of the letters "W.W.J.D." They stand for "What Would Jesus Do?" I understand the original intent and have read the history of the movement. While the widely merchandised wristbands, necklaces, earrings, T-shirts, hats, etc., are designed to remind the wearer of Christ's presence in their everyday situations, the question really misses the point. None of us are capable of doing what Jesus would do at any given moment. He was likely to raise dead folk and heal blind eyes. He might decide to feed 5,000+ with 2 fish and 5 loaves. He bore the brunt of our shame and sin, paid the price of our slavery, and guaranteed our heavenly estate. Your average wristband wearing 15-year-old isn't likely to do any of these. So then, the proper question would be: "What would Jesus have ME do?"

And the answer of course is: "obey."

“What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto

death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.” (Rom. 6:15-17)

The wind obeys Him. The seas obey Him. The demons obey Him. The angels obey Him. The heavens obey Him. Every part of His creation bows in submission to the One who is Lord of lords - - - except men! Frightening, isn't it?

Only stubborn men fight against the only means of salvation. Only men raise their fists against the Great Eternal Judge. And so would you. And so would I - had it not been for the intervention of the Perfect One who obediently purchased us from ourselves to gift us to the Father. Our eternal High Priest intervened on our behalf and drank the cup of wrath dry, leaving not a drop to be poured on our heads.

Humility and obedience. The servant is no better than his Master. May God teach us to follow obediently, and may He bring us to true humility. I once heard an old preacher say, "You need to take sides with God against yourself." It has taken me a while to learn what that means, but it's true. God is working in our best interest and we're working recklessly to mess Him up. Fortunately, He's bigger than we, and our faithful High Priest has attained for us those things we could never accomplish on our own.

One aspect of the Bible I've always marveled at is its universal ability to address every reader, regardless of his or her social status or intellectual capacity. The simplest mind can grasp, "this is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent" (John 6:29). A child can have such faith; a mentally challenged person can believe on Christ. Christ can bring the most wretched drunk to faith. A wounded, legless Viet Nam vet, grown dependent on pain-killing drugs, can get to this Savior. The dying thief knew only this - look to the Savior and plead, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom" (Luke 23:42). The true gospel reaches all the way down to the simplest and lowest of us.

But, the Word of God is also capable of challenging the most intellectually proficient of us. Ingenious men through the centuries have grappled with the truths laid out in Scripture, and yet none have been able to proclaim absolute expertise. The Word is too far-reaching, too in-depth, for any man to command in one lifetime.

So, the question arises - what is our responsibility where these theological depths are concerned? Is it enough to understand the simplest construct and rest on what little we know? Or, is there an expected, even mandated, growth from our original point of understanding to a more complete knowledge? Well, that's the question the author takes up next.

{10-11} - Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec. Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing.

After as startling a notion as the idea that God became flesh and was in fear, crying to the Father to save Him from death, but gaining perfection through His obedience, it was hard to imagine that the author had even more difficult things to say about this Christ. But, he was going to stretch their thinking. Later in this letter, he would draw a connection between Jesus and Melchisedec that would challenge even the deepest thinkers.

However, he was not going to take the time to review the doctrinal basics of the Christian faith. Indeed, he never systematically laid them out in this letter. Rather, he pulled detail after detail from their Hebrew history and prophetic Scriptures, showing how they related to, and were fulfilled by, Jesus. These were new interpretations and new ideas, to the first century audience. But, it was difficult to press these issues. His audience has to be brave enough to question their traditions and accept these revolutionary concepts. Throughout His ministry Christ proclaimed, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear!" (Mat. 11:15, 13:9, 13:43, etc.). But, it was uncommon to find men and women whose eyes, ears, and hearts were tuned to His words. Nevertheless, the author had a depth of knowledge he wished to impart to them - many things to say, hard to be uttered.

{12} - For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.

From the time of Moses, these people had been blessed with God's Word. They had prophets; they had priests; they had the temple and the Scriptures. They should have been more educated in the ways of God than any nation on Earth. They should have been able to teach openly the things which God had said and done for His chosen people. But, no...

They had become entrenched in the repetitions of religion. They had slain their sacrifices with no recognition of the One they represented. They waited as the High Priest entered the Holy Place every Day of Atonement, and they missed the One who was being prefigured. They had heard about the blood on the doorposts in Egypt. They knew about the unbroken law that had been placed within the ark and covered with the mercy seat. They knew about the promised seed and the coming of Messiah. But, they had failed to understand the fulfillment when it rose up in their midst. So, rather than move into the deep things of God, it was necessary to remind them of the basics presented in the oracles of God. They were spiritual infants who needed to mature.

{13} – For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe.

It's amusing that such an obvious example was necessary to convey this idea to these people. Babies crave mother's milk. That's all they knew. Their system could not tolerate food that needed to be chewed and digested. But by means of this simile, the author has labeled these people as "unskillful," lacking experience in the Word of God. So they required the milk of elemental Christian doctrine. They needed to be taught again the "first principles." But, equally important, they needed to be lead into the deeper doctrines of Christ – the "strong meat."

{14} – But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

Good, substantial food is for those who can tolerate it. The point is, of course, that this audience should have been able to understand the deeper things concerning Christ and should have grown to a spiritual maturity. The only way to achieve such growth is through consistent study of God's Word. Experience in the Word creates a knowledge base that will guide us in our earthly decisions. On the deepest level, this sort of insight into the Word would have guided these people into the "good" of Christ and the "evil" of religion run amuck. Had they lived in the Word, and been exercised thereby, they would have known and been able to teach the very things they were reading here. They would have guided others along the paths of righteousness had they been skilful "in the word of righteousness." That being the case, the author is going to press on into the deeper things, prodding his readers to go on with him.

And, that's the focus as we delve into Chapter 6.