

Let us move toward Maturity

Hebrews 5:1-6:20

Key Verse 6:1a “Therefore let us move beyond the elementary teachings about Christ and be taken forward to maturity”

In the last passage, we learned that we must fix our thoughts on Jesus and hear his voice with trust as a response to what God has done for us through Jesus Christ. We need to repent of our sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God through examining our hearts with the word of God. We also learned that Jesus was fully divine, yet fully human. He experienced temptation and human weakness, yet without sins. Because of Jesus’ unique nature and experience, He can relate to our struggles as He performs the priestly duties required by the Law for the forgiveness of our sins. Therefore, we can approach God’s throne of grace with confidence. We can receive mercy and find grace to help us in the time of our need. What a wonderful grace we have in Jesus! Mercy and grace are available all the time in Jesus.

In today’s passage, the author introduces Jesus as the Great High Priest and the source of eternal salvation. At the same time, he rebukes the audience’s spiritual immaturity and encourages them to hold fast to God’s promises as an anchor for our soul, firm and secure. When we do so, we can be steadfast in every situation, reaching our destination safely even in the midst of life’s storms. I pray that through studying this passage, we may learn how we can grow in our faith and be mature in the Lord.

I. Jesus, the source of eternal salvation (5:1-10)

The context of chapters 4 through 10 explains how the Levitical priesthood and temple are no longer on earth but in heaven and how Jesus serves as our perfect, final, and eternal high priest. And in this part, the author explains how Jesus became our great high priest. Look at verse 1. “Every high priest is selected from among the people and is appointed to represent the people in matters related to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins.” This verse explains the role of the high priest. The high priest is appointed to represent the people in matters related to God. A prophet stands on the side of God and proclaims the word of God to men, but a priest stands on the side of men and goes to God for them. As a representative of the people, the high priest wears special garments in addition to normal priestly garments. One piece is the ephod, an apron-like garment with two stones worn on the shoulders that were engraved with the twelve names of the tribes of Israel. Another piece is the breastplate with 12 stones, each

engraved with one of the names of the tribes of Israel. These stones on the ephod and the breastplate signify the High Priest carrying Israel near his heart and bearing Israel on his shoulders. What does he represent to God? It is people's sin problem. He offers gifts and sacrifices to God for the Israelites' sins. But it includes his own sin as well. He is also a sinner who needs to be forgiven. That's why he can deal gently with those who are ignorant and are going astray.

The High priest's duty is honorable. But no one takes this honor on himself. This was not an office that was achieved through developed intellect, personal choice or self-exaltation, nor was it acquired through a democratic vote or as a result of the will of man. They are just appointed when called by God, just as Aaron who was the first high priest in Israel's history. Look at verses 5-6. Like Aaron, Jesus did not take on himself the glory of becoming a high priest. God appointed Jesus as our high priest. But Jesus was different from Aaron. First, Jesus is the son of God. God declares in Psalm 2:7, "You are my son; today I have become your father." Aaron was Moses' older brother and spoke for Moses in front of Pharaoh. But Aaron was just one of the sinful men. He was the one who made the golden calf when people demanded. He also opposed Moses along with his sister Miriam. But Jesus is the holy son of God. He was fully human and fully divine, without sin. Second, Jesus is a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek. Aaron died at Mount Hor and had to give his priestly garments to his son Eleazar. Aaron couldn't continue his priesthood when he died. But God raised Jesus from the dead and appointed Jesus a priest forever on God's throne. Jesus is and will be our high priest forever.

In verses 7-10, the author explains how Jesus carried his priesthood on the earth. Look at verse 7. "During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission." Before Jesus was arrested, he prayed repeatedly on the Mount of Olives, "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done." And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground (Lk 22:44). And even on the cross, Jesus prayed for those who were mocking him, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Lk 23:34). Like this, Jesus offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to God to fulfill the will of God. Because of Jesus' reverent submission, His prayer was heard and He could save people from death.

Let's read verse 8. "Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered." Jesus was the infinite Son of God. As God, Jesus did not need to learn anything, especially obedience; yet, at His incarnation, He "learned" obedience on earth by experiencing human suffering. Through incarnation, he experienced the limits of space and time and life as we do. He chose the weak position of having to learn and grow (Luke 2:52). Jesus fully entered the human experience from birth to adulthood to death. All His life, Jesus completely obeyed to fulfill

the Father's will (John 8:29; 15:10; Hebrews 10:9). Here, suffering refers to enduring unpleasant experiences or a challenging process. Jesus chose to endure an unpleasant, challenging process because it was the will of His Father for His time on earth. Especially through obedience, He chose to go on the way to Calvary and drink the cup of the death of the cross. When tempted to come down from the cross and save himself, he endured the pain and shame. He endured abandonment by His Father and remained on the cross until death and finally said, "It is finished."

Let's read verse 9. "and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him." Through all his life of obedience on the earth, Jesus perfectly completed everything to be our eternal High Priest. Now, Jesus is fully qualified to be "the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him." Since the first Adam transgressed God's commandments, people were in the wrath of God. But the second Adam, Jesus, bore suffering and obeyed to the point of death on the cross. He died as the Lamb of God for reconciliation. His obedience healed us and changed the course of history, from the curse to blessing and death to life and condemnation to the Kingdom of Heaven. His obedience made us a new creature, and we gained the power to become God's children and co-heirs with Christ.

Praise Jesus who is our great high priest and the source of eternal salvation! He is the only one who is truly qualified to mediate between God and men. It is because he is the only one who perfectly completed the will of God through obedience; who is the holy son of God and a man just like us but without sin. Therefore, God designated Jesus to be the High Priest forever. When we believe in him and obey his word, we have eternal salvation! Let us put our trust and obey in our great high priest Jesus. As children of God, He wants us to learn obedience by what we suffer and join God's salvation plan together. I believe that God will designate us the kingdom of priests and holy nation through our obedience.

II. Move forward to Maturity (5:11-6:12)

Look at verse 11. "We have much to say about this, but it is hard to make it clear to you because you no longer try to understand." In the previous passage, the author explained that Jesus is our great high priest in the order of Melchizedek. Now the author is about to do a deep dive into a discussion about the order of Melchizedek and how it is related to Jesus. But it was difficult to teach when the readers were not ready to understand. Therefore, the author first addresses their need for spiritual growth and then begins chapter 7 with an explanation about Melchizedek. Here, he says that they no longer try to understand. Another translation says, they were "too lazy to understand (CSB)" or "dull of hearing (ESV)." It means they listened but didn't retain the knowledge. They became lazy and sluggish in understanding spiritual truths. They are

like students who attend the class but don't pay attention to the teaching so they just waste their time.

This reveals that they had stopped struggling to meditate on God's word, truly understand it, and apply it to their lives. Then their hearts became like a rocky and thorny ground before the Word of God. Instead of fixing their thoughts on Jesus and entering his rest, they were distracted by the present situation such as hardship or worries of life and stumbled by all kinds of temptations and snares of Satan. When the Jewish believers became too lazy to understand and hold the word of God, they faced a spiritual crisis. They were even about to lose elementary teachings about Christ and go back to Judaism. Look at verse 12, "In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food!" The term "By this time" tells us that a considerable period of time has passed since they became Christians. They should have been Bible teachers who help others to understand and hold the word of God. But because of their spiritual laziness, they became spiritual babies who need milk, not solid food. This shows the danger of spiritual laziness. When we lose our spiritual desire to grow in Jesus, we gradually wither and become useless. We can even fall away from Christ. According to 6:4-6, those who have fallen away even after they have once been enlightened, tasted the heavenly gift, shared in the Holy Spirit, tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age, cannot be brought back to repentance. They are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace.

Look at 6:7-8, It is a very serious warning for those who lose spiritual desire to grow. When we listen to the word of God, we must personally take it to our life and produce a good crop. But when we don't struggle with the word of God but only produce thorns and thistles, we will be worthless and thrown into the fire. Satan is always looking for someone to devour (1 Peter 5:8). We can be Satan's target when we become spiritually lazy. Therefore, we must repent our spiritual laziness and be taken forward to maturity.

Let's read 6:1a, "Therefore let us move beyond the elementary teachings about Christ and be taken forward to maturity." Once Jesus asked his disciples, "Who do you say I am?" Then Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." Jesus was happy with Peter's confession and promised to build his church on that confession. But he did not stop there. Jesus wanted his disciples to grow in maturity so he taught them the way of the disciples, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me." Believing Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of the living God is the foundation of our faith. Believing Jesus' forgiveness of sin, resurrection, and second coming are elementary teachings about Christ. But to grow as Jesus' disciples, we must move beyond these teachings. We must deny ourselves and take up our crosses and follow him. We must join Jesus' suffering and learn

His obedience. The way of discipleship is like eating solid food. Self-denial, obedience, and mission are solid food. Committing to Jesus and suffering for following Jesus is solid food. And by eating solid food, we can grow in Jesus' image.

Look at verse 14: "But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil." Even though you get a drivers' license, if you never drive after all, you cannot grow in driving skill. Likewise, even though we listen to the word of God, if we don't put them into practice, we never grow in maturity. In 1 Tim. 4:7,8, Paul encourages, "Physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come." When our bodies are trained through exercise, they become stronger and stronger. Likewise, through constant spiritual discipline, we can grow into the spiritually mature. Spiritual disciplines such as going out fishing, doing early morning prayer, writing a deep testimony, receiving leadership training, serving sheep with food and the word of God, require self-denial and obedience. When we are faithfully trained with such disciplines, we can grow in maturity. M. John accepted Jesus' command: "You give them something to eat," and he constantly tried to obey this command by finding his 5 loaves and 2 fish for the world mission. Then God raised him as a director of NJ UBF and blessed his business for world mission. Years of church attendance do not bring us maturity. Spiritual growth is not a matter of age. Only those who learn obedience through suffering and discipline will grow mature.

Look at verse 9. Even though the author gave them a serious warning message, he expected better things from them. He also encouraged them to remember God's justice. God never forgets your work and love for him. God never forget how much you sacrificed your time and energy to serve one sheep. God never forgets how you have denied yourself and struggled to prepare messages, testimonies, book reports, and lectures for the 2022 GLEF. We need to keep this diligence to the very end. Please keep your passion and vision as shepherds for Jesus' flock from beginning to the end so that what you hope for in God may be fully realized. Look at verse 12, "We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised." Please don't lose spiritual desire and become lazy because of what you are going through now. Let's remember those who already went through hardships with faith and patience and won the victory. Let's imitate their faith and patience so that we may have the same victory.

Through preparing the message, I was reminded to repent of my spiritual idleness. I felt that my attitude toward God's word has grown habitual as I got busier with more duties in life. Instead of trying to grow more in Christ, the amount of time or depth of personal meditation or reflection on God's word slowly decreased instead. My mind and heart was easily occupied with an increased amount of work and earthly matters. As the passage points out the problems of the

Jewish believers, I need to see my spiritual problems with a sense of urgency. When I become spiritually idle, I can forget elementary teachings about Christ and even fall away from Jesus. Not only that, when my spiritual problems are overlooked and not repented of sincerely, serious consequences will be awaiting. I pray that I may not live according to my sinful desires and become idle, but keep a learning mind toward God's word more and more.

I pray to continually train myself with spiritual disciplines and struggle to obey the word of God by faithfully doing daily bread, writing a testimony, and having personal prayer time. JBF is planning to resume its own worship service from September for their spiritual growth. For a long time it was put off due to the smaller number of students and the pandemic. My prayer is to have spiritual revival among JBF students and growing children so that they may be raised up as Jesus' disciples and next generation leaders. I pray that I may deny myself, and serve JBF souls with the word of God and prayer. As God gave me a vision to serve 2nd generations and house churches all over the world, I pray to remain patient and faithful so that God's hope and vision for me and for the world may be fully realized.

III. The Certainty of God's Promise (6:13-6:20)

In verses 13-15, the author mentioned Abraham as a model of faith in God whom all Christians should imitate. God called Abraham when he was 75 years old and promised to make him a great nation. Even though this promise was vague and too big to believe, Abraham held on to it. Whenever Abraham struggled, God encouraged him to hold on to his promise. And after waiting patiently for 25 years, Abraham finally received a promised son Isaac as a reward. Obviously, God's promise meant more than the birth of Isaac; he was just a sign of the promise. God's promise is much bigger. It is the Messianic hope, which was to send the Messiah through Abraham's offspring and to fulfill his salvation purpose. God confirmed his promise by swearing by himself when Abraham obeyed and sacrificed his son Isaac (Gen 22:16). And he received what was promised through Jesus Christ. God's promise is sure.

Based on God's work with Abraham, the author explains the certainty of God's promise in verses 16-18. Usually, to settle an argument, people swear by someone greater than themselves. This oath is the final word that puts an end to all arguments (16). God used this method to encourage Abraham. No one is greater than God, so he swore by himself. This oath made the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear (17). Here we can find two unchangeable things: God's promise and God's oath. God's promise alone is completely trustworthy. Yet he confirmed it with an oath in order to make it doubly sure. Both God's promise and God's oath are unchangeable because their source is God, who cannot lie. God did this, not only for Abraham's sake but to encourage all the heirs of his promise. Anyone who has faith in Christ and follows Abraham's footsteps of faith can claim this promise (Gal 3:7).

Let's read verse 19a. "We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure." The certainty of God's promise is an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. An anchor is invisible in calm time. But in a storm, the safety of a ship depends on how strong and stable the anchor is. We face many things that threaten us in this world, such as misunderstanding, persecution, broken relationships, financial difficulty, serious diseases, unforeseen accidents etc. What can be a firm and secure anchor for us in such troubles? Things of this world can never be a strong anchor for us. Wealth, high-paying jobs, good reputation, or trusted people cannot guarantee our life. All of these are perishable. If we hold on to the things of this world, we will never feel secure in this unpredictable world. But Jesus is our firm and secure anchor. No matter what kind of trials or challenges may be there for us, when we live under the certainty of the promise of God, our soul is firm and secure.

In 2018, when I had my fourth baby Eliana, my family was struggling financially. On top of that, due to the type of medical insurance we had and much lower income after changing Msn Anna's job, I was under a lot of pressure. But Jesus' word in Matthew 6:8 became my firm anchor, "for your Father knows what you need before you ask him." Instead of worrying about what to eat or what to wear and how to survive, M. Anna and I held onto this promise and decided to seek first God's kingdom and his righteousness by trusting in Him. Then, God provided everything we needed, as we prayed, and we experienced God's abundant provision in so many ways. Praise God! As children of God we did not need to worry about anything but trust in God even in the storms of life. So we named our child, Eliana "Yireh," which means God will provide. Thank God for some of the sufferings that He put in my life so that I can set my hope in His kingdom and experience a secure anchor through Jesus.

Recently, I went through some hardships in the workplace. From a human point of view, it's hard to understand why certain things happened the way they happened against me. It's not pleasant to experience humiliation and misunderstanding from people. But Psalm 23 became my secure anchor so that I could endure difficult times by holding to God's perfect leading. Through many different sufferings and hardships, God was molding me and sanctifying me to be a holy man of God. He was growing me to be a useful and compassionate servant of Jesus for world mission. Whenever I think of the certainty of the promise of God, I can have a true peace in my heart. So even though I am raising 5 children without much help from parents, I do not worry or get exhausted, but enjoy God's blessing and his purpose every moment. Thank God for this grace of Jesus for me! What a blessing it is that we are living in the certainty of the promise of God. We are safe and secure in the Lord all the time.

In this passage, the author emphasizes the promise that Jesus is our great high priest forever. God declares this promise in Psalms 110:4, "The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind: "You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek." This promise is sure because God swore

by himself. Jesus is now sitting at the right hand of God and serves as our eternal great high priest for us. Through Jesus, we can enter the inner sanctuary, God's holy presence every moment even in the midst of storms of life. Therefore, we must be deeply anchored in this truth and grow in maturity. If we hold fast to the anchor, we will not be shaken by any storms of life, and our souls will be at peace like the calm sea.

Today, we learned Jesus became the source of eternal salvation and anchor of our soul through his obedience. I pray that we may learn Jesus' obedience and move forward to maturity. Let us repent of spiritual laziness and hold firmly the certainty of God's promise in the time of trouble. May God help us raise 7000 Spiritual leaders through 1:1 Bible Study and Disciple Making and pioneer campuses in NJ and America so that America may be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.