

Hebrews

Chapter 5:11 – 6:3

Hebrews 5:11-14

¹¹ Concerning **him** we have much to say, and it is **difficult to explain**, since you have **become poor listeners**.

Pink > At the close of our last article we pointed out that the 10th verse of Hebrews 5:0 forms the juncture of the two divisions of that chapter (¹⁰ being designated by God as High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek.). In the first section, verses 1-9, the apostle has shown how Christ fulfilled that which was typified of Him by the Levitical high priests, and also how that He excels Aaron in His person, His office, and His work. The second section, which begins at verse 10 and extends, really, to the end of chapter 10, continues to display the superiority of Christ over Aaron, principally by showing that the Lord Jesus exercises a priesthood pertaining to a more excellent order than his. In substantiation of this the apostle, in verse 10, makes reference to **Psalms 110:4**. His purpose in so doing was twofold: first, to allow that Christ was not a high priest according to the constitution, law, and order of the Aaronic priesthood; second, to remind the Hebrews there was a priesthood antecedent unto and diverse from that of Aaron; which had also been appointed of God, and that for the very purpose of prefiguring the person of our great High Priest.

him > (notice the non-capitalized “H”) > Utley > This pronoun can be either masculine or neuter. I think the neuter fits better (cf. NRSV, TEV, NJB, NIV). Therefore, it would refer to Jesus' Melchizedekian priesthood. Hebrews 5:11-6:20 is a theological parenthesis. The author will return to Melchizedek in Hebrews 7.

Constable > “Him” refers back to Melchizedek.

Robertson > *ou* can be either masculine or neuter (genitive). It is the likeness of Jesus as high priest to Melchizedek that the author has in mind. He is ready to discuss that but for the fear that the reader may fail to grasp his meaning, for he will run counter to the usual Jewish ideas. Hence he pauses to stir up the interest of the readers

Vincent > Not Melchisedec, but the topic that Christ is a priest after the order of Melchisedec, a topic to which great importance is attached.

Difficult to explain > Strong's > hard of interpretation

Become > Pink > They were not always so. Time was when these Hebrews had listened to the Word with eagerness, and had made diligent application thereof.

Poor listeners > Strong's > sluggish, slothful

Wiersbe > The word translated "dull" (*poor listeners*) in Hebrews 5:11 is translated "slothful" in Hebrews 6:12. It refers to a condition of spiritual apathy and laziness that prevents spiritual development.

Barclay > The word he uses (nōthros) is full of meaning. It means slow-moving in mind, sluggish in understanding, dull of hearing, stupidly forgetful. It can be used of the numbed limbs of an animal which is ill.

Wuest translates this verse very candidly > *concerning which there is much that we can be saying, yet when it comes to the saying of it, one finds it difficult to explain, because you have become those who are in a settled state of sluggishness, yes, of stupidity, in your apprehension of the same.*

¹² *For though **by this time** you ought to be teachers, **you have need again for someone to teach you** the **elementary principles** of the **actual words of God**, and **you have come to need milk and not solid food.***

By this time > Vincent > Rend. for when ye ought to be teachers by reason of the time. A.V. entirely obscures the true meaning, which is that, because of the time during which the readers have been under instruction, they ought to be able to instruct others.

Wuest > "Time" is from *chronos*, speaking of time contemplated merely as the succession of moments, not from the word referring to a definite portion of time having limits. The word is in a construction which refers to extension. Thus because of the length of time in which these Hebrews had been under the instruction of teachers presenting New Testament truth, they ought to be teaching the same.

You have need again for someone to teach you > Constable > when we fail to pass on what we know we begin to lose what we know. Eventually we may need to relearn the most basic teachings of Scripture. When we stop growing - we start shrinking. We do not simply stay the same.

Elementary principles > Strong's > stoicheion > one of a row, a letter (of the alphabet), the elements (of knowledge)

Again > Barnes > This shows that they "had been" taught on some former occasion what were the first principles of religion, but they had not followed, up the teaching as they ought to have done.

Actual words of God > Guthrie > The phrase translated 'of God's word' (*tōn logiōn tou theou*) literally means 'of the oracles of God' and is elsewhere used in the New Testament to describe the Old Testament (cf. Acts 7:38; Rom. 3:2).

Here, however, it appears to mean the basic teaching of the gospel since it is used in conjunction with 'principles' (*stoicheia*), a word which is commonly used to describe the A.B.C. of a thing.

You have come > Precept Austin > *Become (ginomai)* means to come to acquire or experience a state. "Become" as in the previous verse is in the (Greek grammar) indicating that they *had become* and *still were* in a state of need for "baby food"! The point is clear that at one time they were more advanced but now have slipped backward. It bears repeating that failure to move forward in the Christian life invariably will result in slipping backward.

Wuest translates this verse as follows: *In fact, when at this time you are under moral obligation to be teachers by reason of the extent of time, again you are in need of someone to be teaching you what are the rudimentary things of the very beginning in the oracles of God, and have become and still are such as have need of milk, not of solid food.*

¹³ **For everyone who partakes only of milk is unacquainted with the word of righteousness, for he is an infant.**

Partakes > Strong's > *metecho* > to partake of, share in

Precept Austin > The writer had used *metecho* in Heb 2:14 in his explanation that Christ willingly took on Himself humanity in order that He might die in our place as our substitute, defeat the devil and death and enable us to take hold of the divine nature which did not belong to us

Precept Austin > Beloved, may I ask you - are you still on a "milk only" diet spiritually? Are you still reading devotionals which have a few tidbits of Scripture? Are you reading "Christian books" instead of The Book? Are you primarily listening to tapes rather than your primary Teacher, the Spirit?

Unacquainted > Guthrie > The milk-Christian is one unskilled in the word of righteousness, an expression which deserves comment. First the word 'unskilled' (*apeiros*) means literally 'untried', hence inexperienced, and would suggest that the lack of skill was linked with lack of practice. This is distinct from a state of complete ignorance.

HELPS > *ápeiros* (from *a* "not" and *peíra*, "a test, trial") – properly, *not tested* or *not successful* when tested (tried). In classical Greek *ápeiros* refers to people *lacking adequate skill* (knowledge) – and hence *fail* due to their lack of *familiarity* (practice).

Word of Righteousness > Guthrie > In the Greek there are no articles and the phrase must be taken to mean, not any specific body of doctrine, but the kind of *word* (logos) which has the character of righteousness. This would agree with the use of the same term (logos) in Hebrews 6:1 where it refers to doctrine.

¹⁴ **But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to distinguish between good and evil.**

Mature > Strong's > *teleios* > having reached its end, complete, perfect

HELPS > *téleios* (an adjective, derived from *télos*, "consummated goal") *mature* (consummated) from going through the necessary stages to reach the *end-goal*, i.e. *developed* into a consummating *completion* by fulfilling the necessary process. process (*telos*). [This root (*tel-*) means "reaching the *end* (*aim*)."

Because of practice > Guthrie > The thought is still further developed as the mature are defined as those who have their faculties trained by practice. There is a reference to habit in the Greek here. In fact the words by practice (*dia tēn hexin*) could be translated 'by habit', which would bring out perhaps more clearly the building up of experience through a continued process in the past. The word occurs only here in the New Testament.

Because of practice have their senses trained > Utley > This is (Greek grammar) which speaks of repeated action that has become consolidated into a settled state of being—practice makes perfect! The same VERB is used of God's disciples in Heb. 12:11.

Trained > Guthrie > Another word without parallels in the New Testament is that used here for faculties (*ta aisthētēria*), which denotes those special faculties of the mind which are used for understanding and judgment

Distinguished > Robertson > For deciding between

HELPS > *diákrisis* (from *diakrínō*, see there) – properly, a *thorough* judgment, i.e. a *discernment* (*conclusion*) which distinguishes "look-alikes," i.e. things that *appear* to be the same.

Wiersbe > It is a characteristic of little children that they lack discernment. A baby will put anything into its mouth. An immature believe will listen to any preacher on the radio or television and not be able to identify whether or not he is true to the Scriptures.

Hebrews 6:1-3

¹ ***Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God,***

Therefore > Pink > That in taking up our present passage it is also of first importance to study its connection with the immediate context, is evident from its very first word, "Therefore." The apostle is here drawing a conclusion from something said previously. This takes us back to what is recorded in **Hebrews 5:11-14** (the passage we just concluded) , for a right understanding of which depends a sound exposition of what immediately follows.

Zuck > 6:1-2. Somewhat surprisingly, despite his estimate of their spiritual state, the author declined to go over old ground. Instead he urged them to go beyond the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity. To have reviewed the fundamentals would only have left them where they were. The author preferred "radical surgery" and decided to pull them forward as rapidly as he could. Indeed this was the solution to their problem. If they progressed properly, they would avoid the danger of laying again the foundation of repentance.

Leaving > Strong's > to send away, leave alone, permit

Precept Austin > (*aphiemi* from *apo* = prefix implies separation + *hiemi* = put in motion, send) conveys the basic idea of an action which causes separation and means to send from one's self, to forsake, to hurl away, to put away, let alone, disregard, put off. It conveys the basic idea of an action which causes separation and refers to total detachment, total separation, from a previous location or condition.

Pink > The verb is in the past tense, not the present. Bagster's Interlinear correctly gives "(Wherefore, having left the of the beginning of the Christ discourse." This difference of rendition is an important one, for it enables us to understand more readily the significance of what follows. The apostle was stating a positive fact, not pleading for a possibility. He was not asking the Hebrews to take a certain step, but reminding them of one they had already taken.

Wuest translates this phrase as > *Therefore, having put away once for all the beginning word of the Messiah*

Elementary > Strong's > *arche* > beginning, origin

Teaching > Strong's > *logos* > a word (as embodying an idea), a statement, a speech

Let us press on > Utley > This is (Greek grammar) "let us be borne." The focus is on the continual provision by a divine agent! They will advance toward maturity if they allow the Spirit the freedom to motivate them.

Wiersbe > The phrase, "Let us go on," should be translated, "Let us be carried forward." It is God who enables us to progress as we yield to Him, receive His Word, and act on it.

Guthrie > The second positive injunction, go on to maturity, is expressed in the Greek rather unexpectedly in a passive form, in the sense 'let us be carried on to maturity (or completeness)'. This form suggests an element of yieldedness to a nobler influence, as if the maturing process is not a matter of our ingenuity.

Wuest ties the Greek grammar of *leaving* and *let us go on* with his comments > "Thus we could translate, "abandoning once for all...let us be carried along."

Pink ties his earlier comment ("Wherefore, having left the of the beginning of the Christ discourse.") to this one stating > "Wherefore having left . . . let us go on unto perfection."

Maturity > Strong's > *teleiotes* > completeness, perfection

Utley > This is a form of the Greek term *teleios*, which is used only here in the NT. It is the contextual opposite of *archē* of Heb. 6:1a (basic principles). These believers must move beyond those theological topics which they have in common with their Jewish friends and co-worshipers.

Guthrie > The contrast between the mature man and the child is next developed by a description of what the spiritual child must leave behind if he is to mature. The writer introduces a twofold exhortation: let us leave and let us go on. These include, therefore, both a backward and a forward look.

Repentance > Utley > The Hebrew term reflects a *change of action* while the Greek term reflects a *change of mind*. Repentance is the turning from a self-centered, self-directed life to a God-centered, God-directed life.

Dead works > Guthrie > The expression repentance from dead works is unique. It is, however, applied

- to faith (**James 2:17** > ¹⁷ *In the same way, faith also, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself.*)
- to the body (**Romans 8:10** > ¹⁰ *If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness.*)

- and to men (Rom. 6:11; Eph. 2:1, 5; **Colossians 2:13** > ¹³ *And when you were dead in your wrongdoings and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our wrongdoings.*)

In each case the deadness indicates a state of non-functioning. When faith is dead, it is not performing its true purpose. It might as well not exist at all for all the use it is. Dead works, on the same analogy, would be works which had only the appearance of works, but which lacked any effective power. In the present case there may be an allusion to the Jewish idea of attaining justification through works, which from a Christian point of view would be regarded as 'dead' because ineffective.

² of ***instruction*** about ***washings*** and ***laying on of hands***, and about the ***resurrection*** of the dead and ***eternal judgment***.

Instruction > Strong's > *didache* > doctrine, teaching

Washings > Strong's > *baptismos* > (the act of) a dipping or washing

Barnes > The Jews made much of various kinds of "washings," which were called "baptisms;"

- **Mark 7:4** > ⁴ *and when they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they completely cleanse themselves; and there are many other things which they have received as traditions to firmly hold, such as the washing (baptismos) of cups, pitchers, and copper pots.)*
- **Hebrews 9:10** > ¹⁰ *since they relate only to food, drink, and various washings (baptismos), regulations for the body imposed until a time of reformation*

Wuest translates this phrase as > *of the teaching of ablutions*

Utley > The plural is never used for Christian baptism, but for OT ceremonial ablutions

Laying on of hands > Barnes > The Jews practiced the laying on of hands on a great variety of occasions. It was done when a blessing was imparted to anyone; when prayer was made for one; and when they offered sacrifice they laid their hands on the head of the victim, confessing their sins; Leviticus 16:21; Leviticus 24:14; Numbers 8:12. It was done on occasions of solemn consecration to office, and when friend supplicated the divine favor on friend.

Resurrection > HELPS > from *aná*, "up, again" and *hístēmi*, "to stand") – literally, "stand up" (or "stand again")

The resurrection ... and eternal judgment > The Pharisees and Essenes (i.e., the Dead Sea Scrolls community) held these eschatological doctrines in common with Christianity

Pink > The Hebrews had confessed their faith in Christ, and by so doing had forsaken the shadows for the Substance. But hope had been deferred, faith hath waned, persecutions had cooled their zeal. They were being tempted to abandon their Christian profession and return to Judaism. The apostle shows that by so doing they would be laying again "a foundation" of things which had been left behind. Rather than this, he urges them to be carried forward to "perfection" or "full growth." That meant to ...

1. Substitute "repentance unto life", for "repentance from dead works;"
2. Trust in the glorified Savior, for a national "faith toward God;"
3. The all-cleansing blood of the Lamb, for the inefficacious "washings" of the law;
4. God's having laid on Christ the iniquities of us all, for the Jewish high-priest's "laying on of hands;"
5. A resurrection "from the dead," for "a resurrection of the dead;"
6. The Judgment-seat of Christ, for the "eternal judgment" of the Great White Throne.

Thus, the six things here mentioned belonged to a state of things before Christ was manifested.

³ **And this we will do, if God permits.**

Permits > Strong's > to turn to, entrust, to permit, allow, give leave (from *epi* > on, upon + *trope* > a turning)

If God permits > Robertson > He means that he will go on with the argument and not attempt to lay again the foundation (the elements).

Constable quoting an unnamed author > "What does a stagnant, sour believer need? He or she needs to mature. How does growth toward maturity take place? It happens when, by God's grace, the believer responds positively to further revelation beyond the basics. We see examples of the danger that the writer warned his readers about all around us. Many Christians attend churches where they only hear the basics repeatedly. Their ears become dull, they stop growing, and many of them turn away from the faith. Some of these people follow cultic leaders who claim to offer deeper spiritual truth. Those who put themselves under the challenge of more advanced sound teaching and respond properly to it by applying it in their lives, grow more mature."

Wuest translates this verse as > *And this will we do if only God permits*