



Chapter Five

The author has spoken several times already in this epistle concerning Christ as a priest. Christ is our priest because He has purged our sins. That is part of His more excellent name. In this He was the sin-offering as well as the administering officer. His identification with His people is seen only in His tasting death for all men but also in His being made like them in all respects. Because Christ has suffered and been tempted, He is a merciful and faithful high priest, able to help those who are tempted.

As high priest, Christ is faithful to God as well as sympathetic to man. In this He is like Moses, though by position He is far superior to that man of God. His sacrificial death has been accomplished and Christ is now in heaven. As our great high priest, He sympathizes with our plight and supplies mercy and grace to meet our needs. Chapter five presents Christ once more as priest, this time in terms of His divine appointment, and with a word of introduction to the particular kind of priesthood into which He has entered.

5:1 The way in which chapter five begins with the word “for” indicates that it is basing its remarks on the ending remarks of chapter four. Every high priest in the Jewish order is taken from among

men and is a man himself. The high priest's ministry involves both God and man. He is ordained, set apart, appointed, or divinely named for the sake of mankind. That is, he works on behalf and, we might even say, in their stead. He also serves in things pertaining to God. The high priest's central function is making offerings to God for sins. This is the contrast that Jesus represents. He was not only selected from men, for He is fully man and fully God.

This really begins to get to the main thrust of the argument of Jesus being a greater High Priest. This section is not intended to be a manual or a lesson on the work and ministry of the high priest, but to simply prove again why Jesus is better. This is a continuation that Jesus is a high priest that is sufficient to meet our needs and that we can with confidence approach that throne of grace.

Hebrews 5:1 (1) For every high priest taken from among men is appointed on behalf of men in things pertaining to God, in order to offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins;

If we remember in the Old Testament God instituted the priests be descendants from the tribe of Levi, and the high priest even more

specifically came from the family of Aaron. **Exodus 28:1** And you, bring near to you your brother Aaron and his sons with him from among the Israelites, so that they may minister as my priests – Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron's sons. But we would also do well to remember that by the time of the Romans and their rule in Palestine, the high priesthood was no longer based on heredity, but was purchased with money and Moses' law was discarded especially with the priesthood. This really came to the forefront when Jesus went on trial before Caiaphas a high priest that was corrupt.

God ordained priests and high priest not because He needed them, but because man needed them. This was done on behalf of the needs of mankind. The high priest came from man on the behalf of man. Priests went to God on behalf of mankind. The prophets went to man on behalf of God. Jesus served as both prophet and priest.

Here in this first verse we see three qualifications that was necessary for the high priest to have in order to serve in this capacity. First, there was to be a oneness with the people he represented. He must come from those that he represents. Secondly, he must have a compassion or

sympathy for man's position with God. This deals with God's plan for redeeming man. He could not change or alter what God had set out to be followed. Thirdly, there is the appointment by God. Having a desire to serve was not enough. He was designated to offer gifts and sacrifices. Some say there is a difference between the two, such as gifts were bloodless and sacrifices required the shedding of blood. But in scripture, many times the two words are used interchangeably. Some believe that "gifts" are free will giving's. While a sacrifice is prescribed for the removal of sin. Either way our gifts, best efforts, and sacrifices brought before God are worthless if they are not done through faith in Jesus our High Priest.

5:2 This verse deals with the compassion that is needed to deal with the likes of people. Literally this portion of the text means he "measures his feelings" with people. Not being overwhelmed with excessive judgment or moved with indulgent pity. He does this by measuring on one hand the feelings and responsibilities of the people, but on the other their circumstances and weaknesses. The Levitical high priest served in a very exalted and holy position. His was a representative role: representing God among the people and representing the people before God. **Exodus**

28:29-30 (29) Aaron will bear the names of the sons of Israel in the breastpiece of decision over his heart when he goes into the holy place, for a memorial before the LORD continually. (30) “You are to put the Urim and the Thummim into the breastpiece of decision; and they are to be over Aaron’s heart when he goes in before the LORD. Aaron is to bear the decisions of the Israelites over his heart before the LORD continually.

Exodus 28:36-43 (36) “You are to make a plate of pure gold and engrave on it the way a seal is engraved: “Holiness to the LORD.” (37) You are to attach to it a blue cord so that it will be on the turban; it is to be on the front of the turban. (38) It will be on Aaron’s forehead, and Aaron will bear the iniquity of the holy things, which the Israelites are to sanctify by all their holy gifts; it will always be on his forehead, for their acceptance before the LORD. (39) You are to weave the tunic of fine linen and make the turban of fine linen, and make the sash the work of an embroiderer. (40) “For Aaron’s sons you are to make tunics, sashes, and headbands for glory and for beauty. (41) “You are to clothe them – your brother Aaron and his sons with him – and anoint them and ordain them and set them apart as holy, so that they may minister as my priests. (42) Make for them linen undergarments to cover their naked bodies; they must cover from the waist to

the thighs. (43) These must be on Aaron and his sons when they enter to the tent of meeting, or when they approach the altar to minister in the Holy Place, so that they bear no iniquity and die. It is to be a perpetual ordinance for him and for his descendants after him. **Leviticus chapter 16**

Hebrews 5:2 (2) he can deal gently with the ignorant and misguided, since he himself also is beset with weakness;

The high priest did not want to be apathetic or indifferent towards the sin of the people, but neither did he want to become too harsh. Priestly offerings were for the benefit of the ignorant, that is, those whose sin was unknown to them at the time they committed it, and for those who were out of the way, which literally means misguided or erring. In the original text these two words are read together as those who err in ignorance. Those that are misguided need to be put back on the narrow way. If the sin was unintentional or out of ignorance that is one thing but for highhanded open rebellion that sin is much different. The priest could offer on behalf of sins of weakness but not on sins that were presumptuous. **Number 15:30-31** (30) “But the person who acts defiantly, whether native-born or a resident foreigner, insults the LORD. That

person must be cut off from among his people. (31) Because he has despised the LORD's message and has broken his commandment, that person must be completely cut off. His iniquity will be on him." The Hebrew author will later give a similar warning to those under the new covenant. **Hebrews 10:26-29** (26) For if we deliberately keep on sinning after receiving the knowledge of the truth, no further sacrifice for sins is left for us, (27) but only a certain fearful expectation of judgment and a fury of fire that will consume God's enemies. (28) Someone who rejected the law of Moses was put to death without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. (29) How much greater punishment do you think that person deserves who has contempt for the Son of God, and profanes the blood of the covenant that made him holy, and insults the Spirit of grace? There are many ignorant and misguided in the world today and it is our responsibility to help get them on track. Remember Apollos, he was misguided and confused on some doctrinal issues. He was not cast out but rather brought in and taught more accurately the better way. Oh how careful one needs to be not to move from being unguided and ignorant into a willful rebellion. That is where the blood of Christ will be insulted and we fall from grace. If the hearts of people are honest it

will be made known and repentance will follow. If the hearts are wicked that then must be dealt with as well. **1 Corinthians 5:9-12** (9) I wrote you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people. (10) In no way did I mean the immoral people of this world, or the greedy and swindlers and idolaters, since you would then have to go out of the world. (11) But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who calls himself a Christian who is sexually immoral, or greedy, or an idolater, or verbally abusive, or a drunkard, or a swindler. Do not even eat with such a person. (12) For what do I have to do with judging those outside? Are you not to judge those inside? To those that turn their backs on God and high handedly sin we are to be much more harsh in our judgment and conduct that with those that sin out of ignorance.

It was necessary for the priest to be compassionate, for he also was compassed or surrounded with infirmity or weakness. We need to learn to be gentle with sin especially considering we all sin, and this is the very reason that the high priest was to have that compassion and gentleness, because he was beset with weakness himself. **Galatians 6:1** Brothers and sisters, if a person is discovered in some sin, you who are spiritual restore such a person in a spirit

of gentleness. Pay close attention to yourselves, so that you are not tempted too. A play on the word me be intended here, for the same word which means "surrounded" at other times means "clothed." The priest was separated from his fellow Jews and was distinguished from them by the holy robes of his office. Yet he was one of them in weakness and sin. Here was an imperfection of the Old Testament priesthood. The priest, like every other man, was clothed in weakness. The fact that he also wore priestly robes did not change that! It remained for Christ to serve as perfect priest through His own sinlessness and to offer a perfect sacrifice which could remove sins forever.

5:3 The Levitical priest was obligated to offer a sacrifice for himself as well as one for the people. Though he was called by God and was appointed to a sacred office, he was still a sinner himself. As one of a sinful race he needed to approach God in his own behalf, as well as in behalf of men. He offered "atonement for his own sins and for the sins of the people."

Hebrews 5:3 (3) and because of it he is obligated to offer sacrifices for sins, as for the people, so also for himself.

The phrase “Because of it” speaks of the weakness of the human high priest. This does not mean that Jesus offered sacrifices for His sin, for He had none. This is another way in which Jesus is not like the high priest, He is better because He is without sin. On the Day of Atonement, the high priests would offer a sacrifice for himself and pray for forgiveness for himself, his household and for the other priests before he offered sacrifice for the people.

Leviticus 9:7 Moses then said to Aaron, "Come near to the altar and offer your sin offering and your burnt offering, that you may make atonement for yourself and for the people; then make the offering for the people, that you may make atonement for them, just as the LORD has commanded."

5:4 No man among the Jews took the position of honor of the priesthood by his own initiative. The priests were appointed or set apart by God. He gave this divine appointment signified by Aaron their head. **Exodus 28:1** Then bring near to yourself Aaron your brother, and his sons with him, from among the sons of Israel, to minister as priest to Me—Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron's sons.

Hebrews 5:4 (4) And no one takes the honor to

himself, but receives it when he is called by God, even as Aaron was.

The office of the high priest, it was not an office that someone sought, campaigned for, or could desire. One could not obtain the priesthood by their own declaration. They were called by God to do this particular task. **Numbers 16:40** as a reminder to the sons of Israel that no layman who is not of the descendants of Aaron should come near to burn incense before the LORD; so that he will not become like Korah and his company—just as the LORD had spoken to him through Moses.

There were Old Testament examples of people who tried to take that role on themselves. Korah was a Levite, but not of the family of Aaron. King Saul was of the tribe of Benjamin and tried to handle the tasks of the priests. King Uzziah, burned incense after his pride elevated his mind beyond what God had ordained. This shows the third qualification for the priesthood, the person had to be appointed. In the same way today, people cannot just declare themselves to be a priest (a Christian), he must come by the terms or qualifications set by God. Salvation is not in the mind of man, but occurs in the mind of God. This is not speaking of some type of miraculous

calling but by obedience to the will of God.

5:5 Christ did not glorify Himself by taking the office of high priest presumptuously, but He was so honored or glorified by God the Father. Two Messianic psalms are quoted in these next two verses and applied to Jesus Christ as Son and priest. The first is Psalm 2:7, used to prove the Sonship of Christ.

Hebrews 5:5 (5) So also Christ did not glorify Himself so as to become a high priest, but He who said to Him, "YOU ARE MY SON, TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN YOU";

Jesus will be measured up against the qualifications of the high priest to show that He is the great High Priest and that He is better. Christ was appointed from men, in the sense that He became human. We see that Jesus had a greater glory. We see that Jesus had a greater humility. **John 8:50a** But I do not seek My glory; The glory and honor He received was not something He sought for selfish gain, it was pronounced upon Him. This word "begotten" comes with the idea of His resurrection.

5:6 This second quotation comes from Psalm 110:4, and will prominently work into the

discussion in the next two chapters of this book. Just as we read in chapter two of Psalms where the position of the Son and the King are combined, so now Psalm 110 joins the functions of the King and Priest. By referencing both of these scriptures the author uses them to show that Christ is the Son. God said to Christ in His resurrection, that Jesus was His Son and He had begotten Him. At the same time, according to the present passage, He constituted Him High Priest. Here the emphasis will be on the eternal nature of Christ's priesthood, a priest forever. This is Hebrews first mention of Melchizedek. The eternal priesthood means continual salvation for His people.

Hebrews 5:6 (6) just as He says also in another passage, "YOU ARE A PRIEST FOREVER ACCORDING TO THE ORDER OF MELCHIZEDEK."

Aaron was not only called of God he was also confirmed as God's chosen one by a miracle of new life. When Korah, Dathan, Abiram questioned Aaron's authority and office, the ground opened up under them and their families, swallowing the alive, and a fire from God consumed their followers, **Numbers 16**. God then confirmed Aaron's appointment by making

his rod come to life again, bear buds, bloom blossoms, and yield almonds, **Numbers 17**.

Christ was called by God to be High Priest. He, too was confirmed by a miracle of new life. His dead body, wrapped in burial clothes and entombed for three days, was given life by the power of God. He now lives to make priestly intercession for His people, through the merits of His own sacrificial blood.

Jesus' priesthood will be proven better than Aaron's and that His is in the line of Melchizedek. Jesus did not have the human ancestry to be a priest in the order of Aaron, but He is of a different type of priesthood. The emphasis of His priesthood here is the word forever.

Woe to anyone who questions Christ's divine appointment or loses confidence in His sacred work of redemption! The first readers of Hebrews were to put their confidence in Christ as God's appointed High Priest, divinely appointed, all sufficient, and everlasting. That exhortation is no less needful today among those claiming to follow Him.

5:7 We must understand that the "He" here is Christ and not Melchizedek. This is referring to

the earthly portion of Christ's life in human form. Chapter ten will detail the significance of Christ's fleshly body. Here the intent is to demonstrate what was stated in verse five: Christ did not take the office of high priest to Himself but was given the position by God. It was not attained by arrogant assumption but by obedient suffering. Suffering and obedience are joined in the verses which follow and together are related to salvation, first in the life of Christ and then in the lives of those He saves.

Hebrews 5:7 (7) In the days of His flesh, He offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the One able to save Him from death, and He was heard because of His piety.

As we look into this verse there are four terms used to express the intensity of Christ's suffering in the face of death. The first two we find in **Philippians 4:6** Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. No doubt many prayers were offered by Christ as He would often slip away from the crowds to pray. Most likely the prayer referred to here is the one in Gethsemane.

1. **Prayers-** signify pleading or begging, with a reference to a specific need.
2. **Supplications-** stress the act of imploring or asking.
3. **Loud Crying-** shows the depth of these calls for help.
4. **Tears-** not mentioned in the Gospel accounts at Gethsemane, but were certainly visible on that occasion as an external indication of utter agony of soul within the Lord.

These prayers were offered to the One that was able to save (Christ) from death, the Father. Please notice that there is no mention of conquering the grave in the resurrection. This may not seem important, but some say that God the Father would protect Him from death meaning God would raise Him up. Even though He did, this is never the prayer or thought of Christ. Praying the Father's will be done it was asked to take the cross and suffering away. God could have saved Him from the cross by twelve legions of angels if so desired. But that was not in accordance with the Father's will to do that, nor was it in accord with Scriptures, as Jesus Himself had pointed out to His disciples in **Matthew 26:54** "How then will the Scriptures be fulfilled, which say that it must happen this way?"

The statement that Christ “was heard” in these prayers is confusing to some, but need not to be when thought is given to the actual prayer of the Lord. Christ did not pray simply that the cup of suffering would pass from Him, though that was included in His request. His primary prayer, and this the writer’s main point in this verse, was for the will of God to be done! That prayer was answered, by the death, yes, and by the resurrection of the Son who willingly submitted to the Father’s sovereign will!

Christ was heard because of His reverent fear. The NASB says, piety. Jesus had a human will. This is pointed out to show that Jesus came from among men to serve as High Priest just as the Old Testament high priests did. Although He cried and shed tears saying, “let this cup pass from Me,” but it was with the same intensity that He respectfully and fearfully climaxed the prayer, “nevertheless, not My will, but Thine be done.” When the Father hears a prayer, it indicates that He has answered that prayer in the affirmative. **1 John 5:15** And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him. God’s answer was not to keep Jesus from the cross, but perhaps giving Him the strength to endure the cross. **Luke 22:43** Now an angel from

heaven appeared to Him, strengthening Him. I believe the confidence and strength given was that such as we saw in Abraham's faith. That even if Isaac was offered, that he would be raised back from the dead. Something to consider from the prayer of Christ is that He was not immediately brought out of death, but was ultimately delivered from death.

We are dealing here with the perfect obedience of the Son of God. This is an obedience unto death, and obedience perfected only in suffering. In the face of such absolute dedication to God's will, and that at the cost of all personal claims and human ambitions or even life, in the face of this divine obedience angels weep, demons shudder and sinful man must cry out in abject remorse, "God be merciful to me, a sinner!"

How inadequate all our obedience is in this light! How meagre our dedication to the Father's will! How far short of God's glory and the Savior's example we see our own self-willed lives! Our Lord did not presume anything of His own accord. He did not hold back anything in His obedience and submission to the Father's perfect will. With every ounce of His deepest feeling He threw Himself in His Father's arms, there to depend on the Father's strength as He

exclaimed simply, "Thy will be done!"

5:8 Yet being the Son, that more excellent Son of chapter one, Christ learned obedience. Just because Jesus was a Son does not mean that He did not suffer. He did not use His God power to stop His death on the cross from happening. He became human and did so in such a way to preserve His deity. Jesus was fully God. Jesus was fully human. **Philippians 2:6-8** (6) who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, (7) but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. (8) Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. His deity has been made fully clear in this book of Hebrews.

Hebrews 5:8 (8) Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered.

Everything He did was by the Father. **John 5:19** Therefore Jesus answered and was saying to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father

does, these things the Son also does in like manner. **John 5:30** I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.

His teaching was not His own. **John 7:16** So Jesus answered them and said, "My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me. **John 14:10-11** (10) "Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works. (11) "Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me; otherwise believe because of the works themselves.

Jesus was confident that the disciples recognized that God was the source of His miraculous deeds. **John 17:7** Now they have come to know that everything You have given Me is from You;

The point being made is that His position as the Son, a part of the Godhead did not make Him exempt from the cross. He was called Son, but still had to suffer. **Hebrews 1:5** For to which of the angels did He ever say, "YOU ARE MY SON, TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN YOU"? And again,

"I WILL BE A FATHER TO HIM AND HE SHALL BE A SON TO ME"?

The Greek here says “the” obedience, as if to underscore the thought. Christ learned obedience in experiencing absolute submission to God’s will. This does not mean that His life even contained any element of rebellion or disobedience, for it did not. He came for the purpose of doing God’s will. **Hebrews 10:7** **"THEN I SAID, 'BEHOLD, I HAVE COME (IN THE SCROLL OF THE BOOK IT IS WRITTEN OF ME) TO DO YOUR WILL, O GOD."** and that He finished what He came to do. **John 17:4** **I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do.**

Learned here translates from which we have “disciple” and “discipline.” Christ was the disciple, par excellence. He experienced the full discipline of obedience, even in suffering. By His suffering He learned experientially what full obedience means. In this He learned and qualified to sanctify those who should put their trust in Him. He is not perfectly able to help them when they are tempted.

How does one who had always been perfectly obedient need to learn obedience? We learn to

be obedient through the negative consequences of disobedience. Jesus did not need the disobedience driven out of Him through the discipline of suffering. Jesus was never disobedient. The obedience that is spoken of here is not general obedience that He displayed through His whole life, but obedient to the will of the Father to go to the cross. This speaks of the degree of obedience that was required by the cross. He certainly had to learn the fact that obedience was costly. He learned obedience not only to God's commands, but also to His will for His life. The point being made is that even in the wake of incredible suffering Jesus continued to be obedient.

5:9 Christ was made perfect, not in a moral sense but for the business of saving. So do not think that He was anything but morally perfect. He then became the author and source of eternal salvation to those that obey Him. Through the obedience learned only by suffering, Christ was made complete as Captain of salvation. "Captain" signifies "pioneer," and Christ has already gone ahead to enter the eternal glory which will be shared one day by the "many sons."

Hebrews 5:9 (9) And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source

of eternal salvation,

The word “source” means the “author of.” Christ is the author, or cause, or source of salvation to them that obey Him. It is always the case that blessing follows obedience, though sometimes the obedience of one man secures blessing for another. Abraham’s obedience was the basis on which God blessed his descendants. How much more does Christ’s perfect obedience result in perfect salvation of all that share sonship with Him. This is not a one-time obedience but rather what we would call habitual obedience.

Romans 5:19 For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous. Yet those that share in Christ’s sonship and His righteousness must and will share also with Him in faithful obedience to God, and obedience in which He led the way, set the example, and obtained salvation for those who follow. Salvation is available to all; however, it can only be claimed by those that obey Him.

5:10 Because Christ did not glorify Himself to be made a high priest, choosing instead the submissiveness of suffering, He was called or greeted by the Father as high priest after the

order of Melchizedek. Melchizedek held the double office of priest-king, a privilege denied the priestly offspring of Levi or the royal heirs of Judah, that is, until Christ came. Now He, the prophet-Son, serves also as high priest and as king.

Hebrews 5:10 (10) being designated by God as a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

The word “designated” in this case means to give someone a name publicly. There are several words used to speak of Christ being made a High Priest. Appointed (5:1), Called (5:4), Become (5:5), Designated (5:10). Once again, we see the repeating of the idea that Jesus’ priesthood is by way of the order of Melchizedek.

5:11 Having introduced Melchizedek, our author immediately leaves him for the moment. He will be discussed at greater length in chapter seven. He attributes this digression in thought to the dullness of his hearers. After a warning and exhortation upcoming in chapter six, he will return to a detailed analysis of Melchizedek’s priesthood in chapter seven. There he will show Melchizedek’s office to be unlike that of Aaron’s sons, but of the same sort as the Son’s which it

prefigures.

Hebrews 5:11 (11) Concerning him we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing.

We have many things to say literally “the discourse or conversation is much or long.” Hard to explain or utter does not mean that the writer had difficulty expressing himself, but that his discourse concerning Melchizedek would be interpreted or explained only with elaboration, for which his readers were not prepared. The transmitter was working well but the receivers needed repairs.

Dull of hearing is literally “to be sluggish or numb in ears or hearing.” It has been said that “unbelief closes the ears and unbelief dulls them.” These readers had not fallen into apostate unbelief but were apparently drifting in that direction. Our author pauses long enough to point this out to them and to sharpen their dull ears.

When he says. “we have much to say about this,” it is in reference to Jesus being from a new priesthood by the order of Melchizedek. There is no doubt that the priesthood of Jesus is difficult to explain and takes a great amount of teaching

to make the point clear. However, the real difficulty was not simply in the subject itself, the difficulty was with the readers.

Perhaps sometimes we are limited from going in depth in the things of God not because the subject matter itself is so difficult, but because the hearers are not willing to put in the time and thought required to grasp the concepts. As new Christians we were limited not on subject matter but on knowledge. The reason we learned much was because we studied, listened, and engaged much. As we grow many times, we feel we have it all figured out and that is when our learning begins to wane. Our learning grow deficient not because the subject is hard, but rather we do not look into it as hard as we once did. Dullness of hearing or listening hinders spiritual growth. The Hebrew writer mocks his readers for desiring to go back to the Old Covenant. When in fact they did not truly understand that. It becomes difficult to move forward in learning if we have not comprehended our previous lessons.

5:12 The writer indicates that some time has passed, and that time is more than sufficient to become teachers. But rather than teaching, they still have need for someone to teach them. They need instruction in first principles, the

rudimentary matters, the spiritual ABC's.

Hebrews 5:12 (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 oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food.

Unfortunately this indictment fits too many Christians. Consider among any group of Christians, how many should be teaching versus how many actually are teaching. Some people are dull of hearing, some are ever learning and never come to the knowledge of the truth. **2 Timothy 3:7** always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. The first need is to be sharpened. The second is for them to be rejected. **2 Timothy 3:5** holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these. The recipients of Hebrews were at the first point but not yet to the second. As we grow in Christ we need to move off of the spiritual milk and onto the solid food. The reason people do not advance in their growth in Christ is simple. They do not want to. They are dull of hearing. They wish to have their ears tickled. They want to understand what they want to and they want to believe that is enough.

They needed milk, not strong meat, or solid food. Milk is pre-digested food, suited for one who lacks ability to receive and digest his own nourishment. The spiritual milk-baby is not able to learn and digest his own spiritual food. He depends on someone else to do most of his learning and thinking for him. This is the way things should begin, but not stay this way. For by this time you ought to be teaching others!

There is no doubt a certain amount of blame does fall to the teachers, preachers and overseers who have not led the babes to stronger food. If the same bottle is used every feeding time, the hungry souls cannot be expected to develop into maturity. Let each teacher and preacher learn from this context as well, to follow our author's example as he himself leaves the first principles to carry his readers on the maturity and perfection.

5:13-14 The spiritual infant who still partakes milk is unskilled or inexperienced in the word of righteousness. As an infant is without experience in eating strong food so long as he remains with milk along, so the believer who never has experience in teaching other will remain in need of simple nourishment himself. That is not condoned but condemned.

Hebrews 5:13-14 (13) For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. (14) But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.

Strong meat is for the one who is of full age, the perfect or mature person. The mature Christian by reason of use or exercise has his senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

Senses translates a word which gives us "aesthetics," though here it has a figurative meaning. Exercised is from a word family which gives "gymnasium," and suggests perhaps that maturity in spiritual discernment comes only through regular workouts. This training is as an athlete trains. He trains for strength and muscle memory. Our training in the Word should be much the same.

To discern good and evil represents the ability and/or the authority to make independent moral choices. **Genesis 3:5, 22** (5) "For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." (22) Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us,

knowing good and evil; and now, he might stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever"— **Deuteronomy 1:39** Moreover, your little ones who you said would become a prey, and your sons, who this day have no knowledge of good or evil, shall enter there, and I will give it to them and they shall possess it. **2 Samuel 14:17** "Then your maidservant said, 'Please let the word of my lord the king be comforting, for as the angel of God, so is my lord the king to discern good and evil. And may the LORD your God be with you.'" **2 Samuel 19:35** "I am now eighty years old. Can I distinguish between good and bad? Or can your servant taste what I eat or what I drink? Or can I hear anymore the voice of singing men and women? Why then should your servant be an added burden to my lord the king? **1 Kings 3:9** "So give Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people to discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?" **Isaiah 7:16** For before the boy will know enough to refuse evil and choose good, the land whose two kings you dread will be forsaken.

The Christian is to mature to the point of making his own moral judgments; he is to learn to discern the Lord's will in each circumstance of his own life. **Romans 12:2** And do not be

conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. **Ephesians 5:10, 17** (10) trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. (17) So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. **1 Thessalonians 4:1-4** (1) Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us instruction as to how you ought to walk and please God (just as you actually do walk), that you excel still more. (2) For you know what commandments we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus. (3) For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality; (4) that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor,

We cannot naturally discern good and evil. But we must train ourselves to do that, with the Word of God. **Proverbs 14:12** There is a way which seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death. A regular diet of the Word of God is so essential so that we can train ourselves. **1 Timothy 4:7-8** (7) But have nothing to do with worldly fables fit only for old women. On the other hand, discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness; (8) for bodily discipline is only of little

profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.