

Milk is Not Enough

Christ is Enough Series

Hebrews 5

Pastor Bryan Clark

So how many notifications, alerts, warnings do you think you get a day? Probably a lot. Your phone, your i-Pad, your computer, your watch, your food, your beverages, the radio, the television—we're bombarded with warnings. At some point we stop listening; it's nothing more than background noise. I mean honestly, "How many of you this morning drove here in a car with the check-engine light on...and you're just pretending it isn't on?" What does the tornado siren mean in Nebraska? It means, "Run out in the yard and see if you can see it!" (*laughter*) But here's the deal: At some point you're going to ignore a warning and the consequence will be devastating. That's what we want to talk about. If you have a Bible, turn with us to Hebrews, Chapter 5.

So the writer of Hebrews has introduced this concept of Jesus as the Priest or the High Priest. In chapter one he didn't use the word, but he clearly communicated that Jesus made purification for sin, returned to the Father and is seated at the right hand of the Father. And then we were introduced to the concept that Jesus is the ultimate High Priest who made propitiation for sin. Then last week Jesus as the High Priest who's not unsympathetic with the pain and the struggles and trials that we go through. So now starting in chapter 5—and this will be a lengthy conversation into multiple chapters, which really is kind of the heartbeat of the book of Hebrews—is Jesus as the Priest and the High Priest and the details related to that. So in chapter 5, verses 1 through 4 are just general qualifications for a high priest:

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; (*NASB, Heb. 5:1)

So it's a human representing other humans before a holy God to make sacrifice for sin. Verse 2:

...he can deal gently with the ignorant and misguided, since he himself also is beset with weakness;

That word **gently** is an interesting Greek word. A lot of scholars refer to it as a philosopher's term. It had the idea of someone who is not indifferent toward sin, but also someone who is not harsh, does not go off on the sinner. So the idea of gentleness...control, and the reason is because the high priest himself is a sinner beset with weaknesses, surrounded by his own weaknesses. So that's what verse 2 says. The idea of **ignorant** and **misguided** is language that comes from the Old Covenant Law that if your behavior was out of ignorance or was misguided (meaning out of confusion), there was a sacrifice made for your sin. But the Old Covenant Law also said if your sin was willful, if it was intentional, if it was rebellious, there was no sacrifice for sin. That's why Paul in a sermon in the book of Acts clearly identifies that today in the new covenant that the sacrifice of Jesus—the blood of Jesus—even covers willful, rebellious sin. It's another reminder why the new covenant is so far superior to the old covenant. Verse 3:

And because of it (because of his own sin) he is obligated to offer sacrifices for sins, as for the people, so also for himself.

So if you look back in the book of Leviticus, on the Day of Atonement the high priest was required to sacrifice a bull for his own sins, and only then could he enter into the Holy of Holies behind the veil and offer sacrifice for the sins of the people. Verse 4:

And no one takes the honor to himself, but *receives it* when he is called by God, even as Aaron was.

So verse 4 is saying someone can't just decide, "I want to be a high priest." You don't just apply for the job and go through an interview process. You had to be appointed by God—chosen by God—and he uses Aaron as the example of that. Eventually, after Aaron, it would become the tribe of Levi but to be a high priest you were specifically chosen by God. So to put all that together: it was a human that was called to represent his fellow humans before a holy God, to make sacrifice for their sins. He would respond to sinners with gentleness because he himself is a sinner; therefore he would have to offer sacrifice for his own sins as well as the sins of the people, and the high priest was appointed by God Himself. So starting in verse 5, it's how Christ then fits that description and essentially it works its way backwards. It starts from verse 4 and works backward up to verse 1.

So also Christ... (Vs. 5a)

So the writer of Hebrews uses names very strategically. When he was talking about the creator God, he talked about the Son—chapter 1—and the Son has come and taken on human flesh. When he's talking about God in the flesh on earth, he has used the name Jesus. Now he's talking about someone who is anointed or appointed by God and uses the name **Christ**. This is the first time he uses this name which is a title. The Greek word means *Anointed One—Christos*. So Jesus didn't choose Himself; Jesus is the chosen One, the anointed One of God. Verse 5:

So also Christ did not glorify Himself or choose Himself) so as to become a high priest, but He who said to Him,

"YOU ARE MY SON,

(So he's quoted in Psalm 2: we saw this in chapter 1. Just a reminder, for example, at the baptism of Jesus, God the Father basically quoted these words: "THOU ART MY SON." So God the Father chose Jesus)

TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN (or chosen) YOU"; Verse 6:

...just as He says also in another *passage*, (which is Psalm 110)

"YOU ARE A PRIEST FOREVER... (Vs 6 a)

Now he has talked about Jesus as the High Priest in that particular term; he's also talked about Jesus making purification for sin, which is priestly duty, but this is the first time he's used the Greek word for priest. Now one of the reasons that is significant is because in the entire New Testament that term is used thirty-one times—fourteen of those times in the book of Hebrews. So it's a significant term that goes to the core theology of the book of Hebrews—that Jesus is that ultimate mediator between a holy God and sinful men and women. We learned in chapter one Jesus wasn't the *next* word from God; He's the *last* word of God. There's no successor after Jesus. He completed the assignment and He *sat down*. Every priest before Him was merely a shadow, a foreshadowing of the ultimate Priest to come. And so because of that, Jesus now sits as Priest forever, meaning there's no one to follow Him; there's no successor. There is no need for a priest today. There is no

human mediator between a holy God and sinful people. Jesus finished the work—He’s the priest forever!

... **ACCORDING TO THE ORDER OF MELCHIZEDEK.**” (Vs 6 b)

So those of you that are young couples still in your child-bearing years—again a name to put on the list as a possible name for one of your children—“Come here little Melchizedek!” (*laughter*) Melchizedek’s a mysterious figure in the Bible; he’ll get discussed quite a bit in the chapters to come. In the Old Testament he shows up in two places—in Psalm 110 which this is quoting, and the other is Genesis, chapter 14. Melchizedek really comes out of nowhere. He’s the king of Salem; he rescues Abraham. As a result of that Abraham pays him a gift (a tithe). Melchizedek then blesses Abraham and Abraham receives the blessing, therefore affirming Melchizedek is both a king and a priest. We know nothing about those who came before him; we know nothing about those who succeeded him. He just comes out of nowhere and is a king/priest and that is the order of Melchizedek. There will be a lot more discussion about that in the weeks to come. Starting in verse 7, then, he turns to the idea that Jesus was indeed human—one of these qualifications.

In the days of His flesh (as a human), He offered up (that’s priestly language) both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears... (vs. 7a)

Now those terms are very graphic—**loud crying and tears**. Most scholars for sure route this to the Garden of Gethsemane where Jesus agonized. He agonized over the reality that soon He would hang on a cross and take the sins of the world upon Himself. That ultimate agony was not the physical suffering, as horrendous as that was, but rather the fact that a holy God would take upon Himself the sins of the world. He would indeed be the recipient of the wrath of God in order to satisfy the wrath of God to offer salvation—to make propitiation for sin as we learned about. It’s specifically stated when Jesus says to the Father, “*If it be Your will, take this cup from Me.*” *Cup* is Old Testament prophetic language for *the wrath of God*. That’s what He was agonizing over. But at the end of that He said, “*Not My will but Thy will be done.*” But it’s also true that many scholars think there’s no reason to limit these words to Gethsemane. Oftentimes in the Gospels we’re told that Jesus went away by Himself to pray, and most likely those were times of agony; those were times of loud crying and pain. Imagine what it would be like to walk through this world as the Creator who had taken on human flesh. You understand what paradise was supposed to be. You saw it when You created it. You understand what You intended for people made in Your image and yet, what you see is pain and suffering and hate and despair and all that He encountered. What would it be like to experience all that as the Creator and see the devastation and destruction to Your creation?

So think of it this way: For those of us who are parents, the deepest pain that we ever feel is when we watch our children suffer. I would take it on myself a hundred times over if I could take my kids’ pain on myself. Every parent feels that way. So imagine what it would be like if every single person in the world had that level of connection to You as the Creator? Every one of these people is My child. “I created them on purpose for a purpose and so the level of devastation, the level of heartache, the level of pain, the level of hatred, the level of rejection—and each one of those feels like your own child—imagine what that would be like?” In these moments when Jesus would pull away with the Father and just cry out and agonize over what He was experiencing. It’s easy for us to convince ourselves we’ve experienced far more pain and suffering than Jesus did. That concept is ludicrous! We only get the slightest taste of the level of pain and devastation He must have felt on earth, and that’s what this is referring to—fully human in every way but feeling the suffering and the struggle of this world.

...with supplication and loud crying and tears to the One able to save Him from death...

(probably better translated *out of death*. Jesus did die but He rose from dead— saved out of death),

...and He was heard...

(That Greek word for heard doesn't just mean heard, it means heard in the sense of answered; the Father heard His prayer and the Father delivered Him out of death.)

...heard because of His piety.

...because of His devotion to the cause which is what he talks about then in verse 8:

Although He was a Son... (vs. 8a)

Now just stop and think about this for a minute. Let's imagine you don't know the story of Jesus at all. What the writer is saying is, "Imagine God sending His Son to take on human flesh on earth." Knowing that's who He is, what would you expect? Where would you expect Him to be born? Where would you expect Him to live? How would you expect the world to receive Him? If we didn't really know the Jesus story we'd think: probably born in a palace, live in a mansion, travel in a limousine, be like a rock star with huge cheering crowds everywhere He would go, with lots of security to keep people back so no one could touch Him. That's what *we* would expect. He was the Son!

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

Again the language can get confusing. It doesn't mean He was disobedient and learned to obey, but **learned** means experienced. In other words He didn't talk about obedience; He obeyed. He didn't talk about suffering; He suffered. It wasn't just that He was willing to obey or willing to suffer; He actually *did* obey; He actually *did* suffer. Verse 9:

And having been made perfect (complete, having finished the assignment), He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation,

So as a result of His completing that mission as the ultimate High Priest, making the ultimate sacrifice, He has become **the source of eternal salvation**. Now the writer of Hebrews has been very clear on this—that to disbelieve is to disobey; therefore to believe is to obey. So when he says here **those who obey**, he's saying those who believe. As we learned last week: *those that cease from their own self-righteous works and rest in the finished work of Jesus on the cross experience His salvation.*

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

So this gets complex; there's a lot more to talk about which we will in the weeks to come. But now the writer interrupts this conversation for what people refer to as *the third warning* of the book of Hebrews. Warning number 1: Chapter 2, verse 1: "*Pay more attention to the truth lest you drift away.*" That was the warning: Anchor down to the truth or you are going to drift away. Second warning was the cost of disbelief: *If you don't believe God tells the truth, disbelief leads to disobedience and you're going to make a mess of your life.* So this is the third warning—verse 11:

Concerning him we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, (Why?) since you have become dull of hearing.

Now **dull of hearing** has nothing to do with intelligence...nothing to do with intelligence! **Dull of hearing** means *lazy*. It means *unmotivated*. It means *indifferent*. It means they just don't really care; they're not listening to what He has to say. So the concern is there's so much more you need to know and you're not interested. Now sometimes people are **dull of hearing** because they are lazy; sometimes it's because people don't care. They've got a hundred and one other things they're far more interested in—"Got my ticket to heaven; that's all I need!" But it's also true that some people are **dull of hearing** because they are mad at God. They're mad at God because the story hasn't gone the way they think it should, "Therefore I'm ticked off at God; I don't want to hear what He has to say." It'd be like you being mad at me this morning saying, "I don't want to hear it; I don't want to listen—I'm mad at you!" That's how a lot of people respond to God. Out of their frustration and their anger they're **dull of hearing**. "I don't want to hear it." Whatever the cause, that's the concern. Verse 12:

For though by this time you ought to be teachers (Enough time has passed; they ought to be teaching the new, young, growing believers.) **you ought to be teachers you have need again...** (So they've been taught this before and now they have need to be taught it again.) **...for someone to teach you the elementary principles (the ABC's) of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food.**

So he's saying, "You're still babies; you're still infants. All you can eat is milk. By now you should be eating solid food, but actually all you can eat is milk 'cause you're still spiritual babies." It is a reminder that just because you've been a Christian for twenty years doesn't mean you're spiritually mature. I meet Christians that have been Christians for twenty years—they're still babies. I've met other Christians who've been Christians for two years and they're very mature. There isn't some magic to it. You don't just automatically mature. They've been taught the basics, the ABC's, the most elementary principles of this deep, rich theology that defines their life but they don't listen; they don't want to hear it, and so He has to teach to them again.

In the preaching world we have kind of these three levels that we think about: Level number 1 is *understanding*. Does somebody understand this truth? If not, then I need to explain it. The second level is they understand it but they don't really believe it, so then I have to prove it or defend it in some way to help them to believe it. And once we believe it, then we need to live it, and sometimes we just have to help people understand, "What does that look like in life?" But there's a realization that nobody is going to live what they don't believe, and they can't really believe it if they don't understand it. So we're trying to think through where we're at in the process with all of these truths.

The challenge is that what's happened to the American church is, in order to cater to the consumers, we've kind of skipped the understanding and the believing, and we've gone right to the living. And so what you get is not a deep, rich theology; what you get is kind of a pop psychology that is more like behavior modification. It's like external kind of management systems: So it's, "Five Ways to Fix Your Marriage;" it's, "Three Ways to Raise Your Kids;" it's, "Ten Ways to Get Over Anxiety;" it's, "Three Ways to be Happy." It's stuff like that. So rather than this deep, rich theology that's understood and then believed and then life flows out of that, it's more of an attempt to just modify behavior. We as fundamentalists, historically, have struggled with this. That's where legalism comes from. Rather than teaching the truth...understand it...believe it...and then live it out, we skip one and two and we go right to, "Here's the rules; here's the lists; here's the do's and don'ts, and here's how you are supposed to live." So rather than it be an outflow of life, it's just kind of an attempt to modify behavior.

Think of it this way: How many Christians do you think attend church regularly and seek to live out the expected behavior of a Christian but have virtually no idea how to go into the Scriptures and explain and defend why we live the way we live? I would suggest it's probably pretty high. There's nothing more powerful than understanding these magnificent truths, and then believing them, and then that changes the way we live our lives.

Think of it this way: How many people in the room this morning spend way too much time in the dark room—day after day—shame, guilt, fear, anxiety, despair, hopelessness—day after day after day after day? When everything's driven on the basis of behavior modification—when that behavior doesn't measure up—you go straight to the dark room, but because you don't really understand the deep, rich theology that sets us free, you live in bondage. If you really understood the truth, if you understood the ABC's, if you understood really what God has done for us, you wouldn't live that way. You would understand that when you know the truth, the truth sets you free! But you have to be motivated; you have to want to learn; you have to want to grow; you have to want to understand it and be set free from that which holds us in bondage! That's what he's talking about. Verse 13:

For everyone who partakes *only* of milk is not accustomed (has not experienced) to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant.

In other words, spiritual infants really don't know how to live righteously 'cause their still **infants**. So think of it this way: How much care, guidance, and attention do infants require? Answer is, "A lot." That's what makes parenting so exhausting. You can't just turn them loose. You have to watch over them; you have to protect them; you have to guide them; you can't just set them out the front door for several hours. How many parents in the room would drop your five-year-old off at the mall and say, "I'll be back in three or four hours"? They're just simply not equipped for that. The world is a scary place; it's a dangerous place. There are so many things that could happen. That's the problem with a young child or an infant. They're just not mature enough to understand the world and navigate their way through it. It's exactly what he's saying. When spiritually you are still a baby, you don't really understand how to navigate your way through a very dangerous world; it's only a matter of time till you make a mess of your life. Verse 14:

But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice (very interesting word) have their senses trained to discern good and evil.

This is typically not how we think of spiritual growth. We think of it like some mysterious thing where you walk in the building and there's some Jesus cloud that settles on you and you walk out the door more spiritual than when you walked through the door. But what that verse is saying is very practical: You learn it; you understand it; you **practice** it; you're trained in it. It's a word used to describe an athlete or like a musician practicing. It doesn't happen magically. You learn it; you practice it; you get better at it. You learn how to discern better between good and evil; so then you learn a little bit more and you practice it and get better at it; and then you learn a little bit more and you practice and you train. That's how you grow spiritually, but you have to be motivated to listen and to learn and to practice and to train in order to get better and better. To not do that—to ignore the warning—is to just bide your time until you eventually make a mess out of your life.

So let me illustrate it this way: About eighteen years ago Patti and I moved out to the country and I saw it as an opportunity to buy a horse. I am a cowboy wannabe—not a cowboy—a cowboy wannabe. And so we got a couple of old safe horses and that was great. And then we went with

some friends and Kim was going to pick out a yearling and raise it, train it, and break it herself. That's all I needed that day to be exposed to going, picking one out, bringing it home and I remember saying at the end of that day, "I want to do that. I want to get my own yearling and I want to train it and break it myself." "Well, what do you know about horses?" "Nothing, absolutely nothing...but I want to!" (*laughter*) So I did. I bought a yearling, understanding this is twelve hundred pounds of raw muscle. They can hurt you badly. But I said, "I want to do this." So I talked to friends; I read books; I watched videos; I went to clinics. What would take a good horseman probably weeks, took me months and months to do. But it was one step at a time. And so I'd learn it; I'd figure it out; I'd go out and I'd practice. I'd do it! And once I thought I had it, I'd go to the next thing: I'd learn it; I'd practice it; I'd do it until I had it figured out. I'd go to the next thing—step by step by step by step by step. If something didn't work, I'd go back, figure it out, learn some more, figure it out—step by step. Then there is this unbelievably wondrous moment when you climb on the back of this twelve hundred pound horse and you know that you are the first human being ever to sit on this magnificent animal. There are not many things in life like that! It is an absolutely glorious moment! He's a great horse; I still ride him every week today—but that's what the process looks like.

It's not magic; it's not mystical. It doesn't just happen because you walk through the doors. It's: learn it; practice it; train and get better in it; then learn some more; practice it; train in it; get better—layer upon layer upon layer until you have this deep, rich theology that drives how you live every single day. There is no way in your most difficult moments in life that Christ will be enough for you if you do not understand the ABC's, the elementary principles of life. He is enough—you just won't know it...you won't get it! If we don't listen to the warning, if we don't take it seriously and continue to grow as believers, we simply lack the maturity we need to live righteously in a very confusing and dangerous world. If you don't listen to the warning, it's only a matter of time until you make a big mess of your life. So the only question we have left this morning is, "Will you listen to the warning?"

Our Father, we are thankful that You have warned us, and also You have not left us to struggle in the darkness. You've given us the truth if we're willing to listen and learn and practice and train and grow. My prayer is that we would have ears to hear this morning, lest we become dull of hearing and suffer the consequences of not listening. For this I pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

(Video):

I was in seventh grade in middle school and I found myself kicked out of class and ended up in the principal's office. The principal started to lecture me about my behavior and what I was doing and he told me, "Zach, I don't understand why people like you—you're not good at sports; you're not good in the classroom—I don't understand it."

I believed what he said and I believed it because I'd felt that many times before—feeling worthless! That middle-school boy grew up with a very deep wound in his heart.

Fourteen was the first time I ever had a drink. I don't know that I was self-aware that I was taking away my pain, but it made life much easier. It seemed like it made relationships easier. It made me funnier. It made me more likable. I felt like I had value.

I grew up in a Christian home, so I knew what was right. I knew the gospel; I knew the truth, but I chose to drink because I felt like I could never measure up with God either. I knew He loved me enough to save me, but that was about it.

I got married when I was twenty years old and I had an opportunity to kind of face things at that point in life. I was in marriage counseling with Bryan and I remember him specifically asking me if there was any drugs or alcohol, and I told him, “No.” The reason I said that was because of two things: guilt because I knew what I was doing was wrong, and shame because I couldn’t stop and there was something wrong with me. I was always afraid of being exposed for being who I thought I was, which was “not good” and being exposed as “worthless”

After eleven years of guilt, shame and lies, my marriage failed. It got so bad that I quit eating for ten days and all I did was drink until the point I woke up one Monday morning and I couldn’t function anymore. I couldn’t go to work, and so I desperately—by a miracle God just reached out to my brother who came down and said, “What do you need?” and I said, “I don’t know; I just need somewhere safe.” And he took me to the hospital and that day in the hospital I found out I was .4 blood alcohol content. That is five hundred percent over the legal limit. I should have been dead a long time ago.

I didn’t know what to do, but I was willing to do anything it took not to drink another drop. So once again I found myself in Bryan Clark’s office and I’m there with my sponsor, a counselor, and my boss and the question is posed if this is the last house on the block for Zach? Meaning, “If I go out and drink again, am I going to have a job; am I going to be employed at Berean anymore?” And Bryan interrupted me and he said, “No, we’re not going to look at it that way because Zach is worth it.” And when he said that, it was a really real thing for me—a tangible moment that I grabbed hold of. I really understood God’s love for me in that moment and that if I would screw up again, He wasn’t going to give up on me, and He didn’t love me because of what I did; He loved me because I’m His!

And it’s just a moment I look back to when times get hard. I reach back for that, ‘cause that’s the truth that I live out today is that God is enough, that He loves me just because He does.

It’s been eight years since I’ve had a drink and that’s a miracle. Recovery from alcohol is hard work and it takes time. The warning signs are a lot easier to spot and I can choose to believe God’s truth a lot faster today. But, ultimately, I still have to make that choice. I can choose to do things my own way and believe that God’s lying to me...and I know where that leads. Or I can choose to believe that I’m valuable and I’m worth it! I choose to believe what God says is true and that He loves me!

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Warning: Milk is Not Enough!

Christ is Enough

Hebrews 5:1-14

Pastor Bryan Clark

Opening Discussion

1. What are some of the alerts and warnings you receive regularly? What about a check engine light in your car or a tornado siren or weather alert. What about warnings about this food and that food or this product and that product. At what point do you start ignoring the warnings? What might be the consequence to ignoring a warning?
2. What are the significant differences between a child and an adult?

Bible Study

1. Read Hebrews 5:1-10. What were the requirements to be a high priest according to verses 1-4? How were they to deal with the ignorant and misguided and why?
2. What have we learned about Jesus in Hebrews that lines up with those qualifications and descriptions in verses 1-4?
3. Read Genesis 14:17-24 for background on Melchizedek. The writer will fill out more of what this means in chapters to come. What is his point in 5:5,6?
4. While Jesus was God's Son on earth, he did not live in a mansion and ride in a limo everywhere He went. He wasn't just willing to obey but He actually did obey at great personal cost. He was characterized by suffering and prayers with loud crying and tears. Talk about what it must have been like to see the pain and suffering and heartache in the world from Jesus' perspective. What was the real agony of Jesus in Gethsemane?
5. Read Hebrews 5:11-14. What does it mean to be "dull of hearing?" What is the result according to the text?
6. What is the writer's concern as he issues this warning? Describe the spiritual infant today. Why do some Christians get stuck as spiritual infants?
7. How does the writer describe the spiritually mature in 5:14? What then is the danger of being a spiritual infant? The word "practice" means to be trained, like an athlete or musician. How do we train and get better at discerning good and evil?

8. This is the third warning in Hebrews. In 2:1 we were warned to pay closer attention to the truth so we don't drift away. In chapter 3 we were warned of the danger of disbelief. Now we're warned about getting lazy and remaining spiritual infants instead of equipped adults. What are the common themes in all three warnings?

Application

1. How does the teaching of Hebrews 5:1-10 help us to "rest" in what the King/Priest did for us?

2. Are you a spiritual infant or a spiritual adult? Why? What practical things can you do to keep growing as a Christian?

3. How can you get better at discerning good and evil?