

# Not getting spiritually dull

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Date: 11 October 2020

Preacher: Philip Wells

[ 0 : 00 ] Well, good morning and welcome to this pre-recorded service for the 11th of October 2020, at The Calvary Church here in Brighton on the south coast of England. We're still meeting by YouTube, as you can see, but we're doing our best to plan and prepare for slowly, slowly, limited meetings together in our building in some shape or form. So welcome to you if you're regular or if you're dropping in. My usual introduction, if this is your first time to see us here, we're based in the UK. We're an independent Baptist church belonging to the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches and there's usually somewhere like 70 or 80 of us back in what used to be normal times. My name's Philip Wells. I'm an elder at the church here and I'm going to be leading and teaching God's Word this morning. And let me just say, if you are dropping in, it might be helpful for you to know that at the time of this recording we are in a state in which we're very conscious of our weakness and dependence upon Almighty God and we come seeking his wisdom and comfort. And the things that we're going to be doing this morning are up on the screen, just there. We're going to sing and pray and have a talk on not getting spiritually dull, something like that. But first let's pray to Almighty God. You who are the heart knower, look upon our hearts.

We come seeking you and your wisdom and your comfort. In our sin grant us your forgiveness through the blood of Jesus Christ. In our weakness grant us your power which is made perfect in weakness.

In our perplexity grant us the wisdom that comes from heaven to those who ask. In our emptiness and need fill us with the fullness that comes from your glorious abundance and riches through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. Amen.

In a moment we're going to sing Psalm 46. I'll just read you a few verses from it. We've read it a few times in the past few days as a church but it's really something that we can get into our hearts and minds and feed on. Psalm 46 says, God is our refuge and strength and ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging. Even though those things happen, we won't fear. And it says there is a source of refreshment. There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells. And may we find refreshment from the water and river that flows in the city of God. God is in the midst of her. She will not fall. God will help her at break of day. God is the helper of his people. Perhaps not a moment too soon, but not a moment too late either. So let's sing Psalm 46. God is our strength and refuge.

[ 3 : 55 ] God is our strength and refuge, our present help in trouble. And we therefore will not fear, though the earth should change. Though mountains shake and tremble, though swirling floods, the earth are raging. God the Lord of hosts is with us evermore.

There is a flowing river within God's holy city.

God is in the midst of heaven. God is in the midst of heaven. She shall not be moved. God's help is swiftly given. Thrones vanish at his presence. God the Lord of hosts is with us evermore.

God is in the midst of heaven. Come see the works of a maker. Learn of his deeds all-powerful. Wars will cease across the world. When he shatters the sphere.

Be still and know your creator. Uplift him in the nations. God the Lord of hosts is with us evermore.

[ 6 : 11 ] So having sung God's praise. The Lord Almighty is with us. The God of Jacob is our fortress. Let's come to pray to this God. Let us pray. And afterwards we're going to pray the Lord's Prayer.

And the Lord's Prayer is just up on the screen there. But first let me lead us in prayer. We come in praise to Almighty God. You are the creator of the ends of the earth. You don't grow weary. You're



Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread and forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever and ever.

[13:08] Amen. I've several times referred to the weakness of Christ's church at this time. That's not a new thing. That's not a new feature of the church's life.

Down through the centuries, the servants of God have been conscious that they operate in the background of weakness. And the Apostle Paul says, We have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.

God loves to work when his people are conscious of their weakness because it shows that the power comes from God. You remember the story of Gideon, who, before a mighty battle, God said, You've got too many soldiers there.

You've got to cull some of them, send some of them home, because everyone needs to be convinced that it's God who's done these wonderful things and not human power.

And as we think about that, just perhaps slightly changing the theme of it, the church is not yet in the promised land.

[14:19] We are not yet in the place of glory and immortality and strength. We're in the wilderness. We're not yet in the promised land. And the wilderness is the place of being tried and tested and tempted.

The wilderness is the place where the church finds God's protection in marvellous ways, even though she's very vulnerable. And the place where the manna is given.

It's the place where his provision comes just at the time when it's needed. Not a moment too late and perhaps not a moment too soon. And there are some very noteworthy promises that are along the same lines.

Not quite in the same context, but in the blessing of the tribes that Moses gave back in the time of Exodus. About Asher, he said, most blessed of sons is Asher.

Let him be favoured by his brothers. Let him bathe his feet in oil. The bolts of your gates will be iron and bronze and your strength will equal your days. Well, I'm not quite sure whether we would relish a promise that our feet will be bathed in oil.

[15:31] We've probably got other methods of bathing our feet. But the promise that is at the very end of that verse, your strength will be equal to your days, seems to resonate with Christian people.

In our English authorised version, it says that not your strength will equal your days, but as your days are, so will your strength be. That's a very resonant promise, isn't it?

Whatever particular need we have at any particular day, God will supply the strength for that. As your days are, so will your strength be.

Now we've got a song on that subject, Afflicted Saints to Christ draw near. I'm sorry, it's in the singular actually. Afflicted Saint to Christ draw near.

And the chorus says, As your days are, so shall your strength be, or some poetic version of that. So that's what we're going to sing. As you can see on the screen behind me, Afflicted Saint to Christ draw near.

[16:32] It's one of these Sovereign Grace songs where they've taken an older song, added a chorus to it, and sort of made it have a particular sort of contemporary musical style to it.

So we've had a go at singing that for you. And in this particular recording, you get a verse and chorus with no words, just so you can get the tune.

And you might be able to see the words on the screen so you can see what words supposed to fit to the tune. And then it starts again with the first verse and carries on through.

Afflicted Saint to Christ draw near. Afflicted Saint to Christ draw near.

Afflicted Saint to Christ draw near. Afflicted Saint to Christ draw near. Afflicted Saint to Christ draw near. Thank you.

[18:17] Thank you.

Your days, your strength shall be. Your faith is weak, your foes are strong.

And if the conflict should be long, the Lord will make the tenter flee.

That as your days, your strength shall be. So sing with joy, afflicted one.

The battles miss, but the victory's won. God shall supply all that you need.

[ 19 : 48 ] Yet as your days, your strength shall be. Should persecution rage and flame, Still trust in your Redeemer's name.

In fiery trials you shall see. That as your days, your strength shall be.  
So sing with joy, afflicted one. The battle's fierce, but the victory's won.  
God shall supply all that you need. Yet as your days, your strength shall be.  
When called to bear your weighty cross, Or sore affliction, pain or loss.

[ 21 : 17 ] Or deep distress or poverty. Still as your days, your strength shall be.

Still as your days, your strength shall be. So sing with joy, afflicted one. The battle's fierce, but the victory's won.

God shall supply all that you need. Yes as your days, your strength shall be.

The message of Hebrews that we've been looking at is this, that if we stick to the path, we are totally safe.

We walk in the light, as John would say. The blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin. That's walking in the light. That's walking along the path. But there is an unfenced boundary to the path.

[ 22 : 38 ] And people who stray off the path find there is a cliff edge just nearby, rather like at Berlin Gap here in Sussex. And there is a sheer drop, a deadly sheer drop.

And that warning ought to scare us. And the elect, the truly elect, are scared of that. And there's no way they're going to experiment with seeing how close to the edge they can get before they drop off.

We would rather do anything than drop off the edge of that cliff, or indeed cause anybody else to drop off the edge of it. And in my understanding of it, the clue to sticking on the path is keeping our eyes on Jesus, fixing our eyes on Jesus.

And Brenda's going to read to us, and then we'll sing something about keeping our eyes on Jesus. 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. Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered, and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him, and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek.

[ 24 : 08 ] 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 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. Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness.

But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil. Therefore, let us move beyond the elementary teachings about Christ, and be taken forward to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, instruction about cleansing rites, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.

And God permitting, we will do so. It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age, and who have fallen away, to be brought back to repentance.

To their loss, they are crucifying the Son of God all over again, and subjecting him to public disgrace. Land that drinks in the rain, often falling on it, and that produces a crop useful to those for whom it is farmed, receives the blessing of God.

[ 25 : 55 ] But land that produces thorns and thistles is worthless, and is in danger of being cursed. In the end, it will be burned. Even though we speak like this, dear friends, we are convinced of better things in your case, the things that have to do with salvation.

God is not unjust. He will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them. We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, so that what you hope for may be fully realised.

We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who, through faith and patience, inherit what has been promised. So before we think about that passage, let's return to one of these twin themes of Hebrews, keeping on the path and fixing our eyes on Jesus, or more particularly, the nearness and the help that is available in and through Jesus Christ, depicted, portrayed as our

great high priest.

Now, high priest is not really vocabulary that we're very familiar with, most of us, but it's a very similar idea to that of the heavenly friend, the person who is in the place of power in heaven and yet who is compassionate because he is our friend.

And that is certainly encapsulated in this next song, 614 in praise. What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear.

[ 27 : 40 ] What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer. As we come to him in prayer, he helps us. He is our help and strength, as we read earlier.

So let's sing number 614, What a Friend We Have in Jesus. What a friend we have in Jesus For our sins and griefs to bear.

What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer.

Oh, what peace we often forfeit. Oh, what needless pain we bear.

Oh, because we do not carry everything to God in prayer.

[ 29 : 02 ] Have we trials and temptations?

Is there trouble anywhere? We should never be discouraged.

Take it to the Lord in prayer. Can we find a friend so faithful?

Who will all our sorrows share? Jesus knows our every weakness.

Take it to the Lord in prayer. Jesus is the Lord in prayer.

[ 30 : 36 ] Jesus is our mighty Savior. He will listen to our prayer. Do your friends despise forsake you?

Take it to the Lord in prayer. In his arms he'll take and shield you.

Find your strength and comfort there. And having sung, let's hear God's word.

As we think about this particular topic, this particular subject, let's ask God's help. Lord, we absolutely cannot live without your touch upon our lives, without your touch upon our lives, without your strength being given to us day by day, without walking in living communion with you.

So please, as we come to your word, don't let us be distracted. Don't let us have any barriers between ourselves and yourself. but please, by your Holy Spirit, minister to us and let us drink in the things of your word.

[ 31 : 58 ] May they be food and drink to us, to enable us to keep on the path and march all the way home to Zion, and that none of us, having been left this promise, would fall short of it.

We pray in Jesus' name. Help us as we hear. Amen. Well, we've prayed and we've been thinking together before the Lord, and let's now come to consider this part of God's word that we have read to us.

We have much to say about this, but it's hard to explain because you're slow to hear. We've been looking at the letter to the Hebrews, and this is the picture that sticks in my mind of a Berlin Gap with somebody.

You can see the path that they're supposed to be on, but they've gone off the path close to the edge of the cliff. It's a picture to send shivers down your spine, really. That's... How stupid!

You say, what danger! I'd like to warn you, don't go so near the edge. And that's really one of the main themes of the letter to the Hebrews.

[ 33 : 03 ] Now, it's an in-house issue, really, for people who say they're Christians. If you've tuned in and you're not a believing Christian, by all means, listen. This will tell you the sort of things that you'd be signing up for if you became a Christian.

I put it there as a little picture, the warnings to people near the cliff edge. It's supposed to be a cliff edge. People in the frame. Somebody on the path. Person A.

Person wandering off the path. Person B. Somebody in real danger, right on the edge of the cliff.

And then a person C. Person D.

Somebody beyond rescue, just to show they're on their way down. And they're beyond rescue. So that's the scene in this letter.

And of course, we all ask ourselves, which one of these am I? Which one are we? And we really want to be A, on the path. And that question, how can I be sure that that's what I am?

[ 34 : 05 ] That's where I am. And I guess the simple answer is, have you got your eyes fixed on Jesus? But we're going to go a little bit more into this passage.

There's a lot going on here. And I just struggle to try and pace myself on this. This passage has a number of difficulties. So I think what we're going to do this time is just chisel away at those.

We won't get all the way through it. But let's just chisel away at some of these points. And again, my warning to avoid applying it to specific people unless it really fits what the writer's saying.

That's always a wise thing, isn't it? So what's the plan? So my zeroth point is to try and bring to the surface what our problems might be with this passage. Always helpful to just bring that to the surface.

What do I find difficult to grasp here? And I've got five of those. And then to ask this question, what does the writer think about his hearers?

[ 35 : 10 ] What does he think about his hearers? And I'm going to say two things. That he thinks they have problems hearing. So the ear. And secondly, they have problems teaching.

So a problem with the mouth. And both of those, of course, have in common. They're to do with word. Both of them are to do with word.

So that's the plan. So let's do the zero thing and just bring to our minds what we might be having as a problem as we come to this passage.

So I've got five suggestions on this. So one thing is, does it does he really think his readers are infants? He says that they need milk, not solid food.

Now, does he really think that that's what they are? Because the problem is he's been teaching them loads of difficult stuff already. And he's going to continue to teach them difficult stuff. So if he really thinks they're infants, what's he doing with such difficult stuff?

[ 36 : 14 ] So that's one thing. And we'll have a little look at that. What condition were his hearers in? That's an important point. That's really what we're going to look on, look at this time.

He uses a word, nothros. I hope I'm pronouncing that correctly. Nothros, probably. And he uses it twice. It's translated slow to learn in verse 11.

And it's translated in verse 12, lazy in my international version. So those two references sort of bookend the references to nothros. What does this word mean?

Well, it's hardly ever used. I think these are the only two times it's used in the New Testament. So we want to try and get a bit of an understanding of what it doesn't mean that they stay in bed too late.

He means something, doesn't he? And we think this is to do with their discernment. They are unable to distinguish good from evil, verse 14.

[ 37 : 19 ] They're not mature, mature people who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil. Well, that's one of the things, presumably. And in around chapter 6, verse 11 and 12, we want each of you to show the same diligence to the very end in order to make your hope sure.

We don't want you to become lazy. So there's something about persevering and keeping on. So that's something to do with the condition of their heroes, but it's worth coming back to in the future. And then in chapter 6, verses 1 and 2, he talks about leaving aside, I think, well, actually leaving in place, probably, elementary principles.

Now, that's a bit of a puzzle. So what are these elementary principles? The foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, okay?

And of faith in God, well, that's a fairly general principle. Instructions about baptisms, never thought that would be an elementary principle. Laying on of hands, never thought of that at all.

[ 38 : 24 ] The resurrection of the dead, well, that's mainstream, isn't it? And eternal judgment. I mean, what could be more mainstream than that? So it seems a very strange choice of things that he calls elementary principles.

So that's a bit of a question, isn't it? And then perhaps another question that haunts us as we come to this, can genuine Christians fall away?

So in verse 4 to 6, which we looked at last time, this impossibility of those who have been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift and shared in the Holy Spirit and so on, it's impossible to renew them to repentance.

So that was very well worth looking at. I'm not going to touch on that, but I'll just raise that. I'm not going to touch on it just now, but just raise that issue. The system of understanding the Bible, which gets called Calvinism, not that Calvin invented it, and certainly not that that's the only thing Calvin taught.

But it gets given that label, not entirely unfair. It's a system of thinking that says we're saved because God decides who's going to be saved.

[ 39 : 39 ] He saves them. And having saved them, he keeps them because he's decided to do that all along. And that seems to fit in with what Jesus says when he says, I give them eternal life.

They shall never perish. No one can snatch them out of my hand. So he's going to keep them in his hand. So that seems fairly clear.

But the problem, or the apparent problem, it looks like a problem that the writer seems to say that his readers may not be kept. So is that actually what he's saying, or is it just what it seems to be saying, or what?

And the, it might say, well, this proves that that system of thinking is wrong. And the system of thinking that is correct is the other one called Arminianism. It's the idea that human beings are not chosen by God.

That's not the proper, the bottom line. God only chooses them because they have freely willed first to choose him. So this system says that human beings have got this unalienable freedom to choose God or not.

[ 40 : 52 ] But of course, that runs into huge problems from the text, doesn't it? Because it says it is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who shared in the Holy Spirit, to renew them again.

So here, the writer is saying, well, no, there's no freedom here for their will. It is impossible. There is no way that human beings are going to get themselves out of this.

So it's a problem for the Arminian system, at least as much as for the Calvinistic system. And let me just, spoiler alert, I think the Calvinistic picture is exactly right.

And as I think I've said on a number of occasions, the mark of the elect is that they believe the promises and heed the warnings. But anyway, it's a thing there, isn't it? It's probably in the back of people's minds.

And then a fifth question, well, what is his real point? These are the warnings, but what's the positive teaching? And at the end in verse 12, we don't want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who, through faith and patience, inherit what has been promised.

[ 42 : 04 ] There's a whole lot there about faith and patience, meaning sort of long suffering. There's something there about inheriting and possessing something. And there's something about what's been promised.

So all of those need unpacking. And we'll do that, God willing, sometime to come. And you also notice that the writers of the Hebrews seems to like to give you a little bit of a spoiler as to what he's going to come back to later.

So here is, he mentions those who, through faith and patience, inherit what's been promised. And he won't actually tell us about those people till we get to chapter 11.

And he gives a big list of them for us to imitate. So those are just to clear the ground. You might have those questions going on in the back of your mind. And at least we brought them to the surface and we can deal with them in due course.

But having done that, let's look at the positive teaching that we can manage this morning. And I'd like us to think of this question, what's the condition of his hearers?

[ 43 : 08 ] And I'm going to say two things. They were having problems hearing. So there's something about hearing. And they are having problems teaching. So let's look at the hearing problems, first of all.

And he says in verse 11, we have much to say about this, but it's hard to explain because you are lazy to hear, nothros to hear, or nothros in hearing, lazy to hear.

Maybe your translation doesn't quite say that, but that's what it's got in the original. And he says, I've got a lot to say. And there was another spoiler because in verse 10, he says, I'm going to tell you about being the high priest in the order of Melchizedek.

And he wants to get on to that subject. But he stops to say, this is my subject. And I want you to listen up because you're not very good at listening.

We have much to say about this, this matter of the priesthood like Melchizedek. But it's hard to explain because you become lazy in your hearing.

[ 44 : 13 ] And as I said before, in verse 12, he says, they're lazy in their imitation of the people of faith. So let's stop and think for a little bit about the problems of hearing.

How important is hearing in the Christian life? How important is hearing for people to walk along the path and not go over the cliff edge?

It is, of course, related to the word, the word that we'll look at as we go through. So what does it say about hearing, actually? And as it happens, the writer has a lot to say about hearing. How important is hearing? Our lives depend on our hearing. What God says through his son. Our lives depend on our ability to hear what God says in his word. So just casting back to chapter one.

[ 45 : 15 ] Remember how he blasted off. In the past, God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways.

But in these last days, he has spoken to us by his son or in his son. And he goes on to explain the splendor of the son.

So God has spoken to us by his son. And it's in a timetable. Previously, it was in prophets and in various ways. But now in these last days, in this span of time between Christ's coming and speaking and his closing the world, these are the last days.

In these last days, what have we got? We've got God's speech to us in his son. That's what we've got. And that is the speech we're to listen to. So notice, please, then the finality of this word through his son.

There is no place in the timetable for another extra superior revelation to come. These are the last days. This is it. The sufficiency of what's said.

[ 46 : 30 ] How can God say anything more wonderfully than through his own son, who is the exact expression of his being? There's no better revelation.

You know, no prophet to come afterwards. To think there would be somebody who can improve on what Jesus revealed is a gross, terrible insult to the grandeur of the son.

And here is the grand word which has now been delivered to us through Christ and through his apostles. And that is the word we're to listen to.

And if you're not quite sure where that is, let me just be absolutely clear. It's in the Bible. Let me hold up my Bible. It's in the Bible. That's where it is. That's where God has spoken to us in his son through the prophets in various ways.

Now through his son. Please don't think that God speaks better in visions or dreams or in inclinations or things that you might sense.

[ 47 : 29 ] If you want to know what God says, you go to the Bible because that's where he said it. So they're having problems hearing that. Chapter two, verse one. We must pay more careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard so that we do not drift away.

For if the message spoken by angels was binding and every violation and disobedience received its just punishment, how shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation?

This salvation was first announced by the Lord and was confirmed to us by those who heard him. God also testified to it by signs, wonders, various miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.

And that's the process. Christ came. Christ came. People heard him. And those who heard him were able to speak that on. And their role in this is confirmed by signs and wonders or was confirmed by signs and wonders as the word was coming into the world in Jesus.

So that word is superior. It's important. There is no word more important. There is nothing more vital. That's the word we have to pay careful attention to so that we do not drift away.

[ 48 : 48 ] There are many things that are important in this world. But the thing that is most important is this word. This is the word that will save us from hell.

This is the word that will guarantee us a glorious future. And we must pay careful attention to this word. Just going on on things to hear.

Chapter 3, verse 7. Today if you hear his voice, do not harden your heart. And that's repeated in verse 15.

Today if you hear his voice, do not harden your heart. It's repeated in chapter 4, verse 7. Today if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts. And here is listening, hearing, and the importance of taking it to heart.

And I stop to point this out. The heart is the core of our thinking and planning. It's a place where fears arise. It's the place where motivations arise.

[ 49 : 56 ] It's the spring of our reactions and actions. This is where sin comes from. This is where rebellion comes from. This is where anger comes from.

This is where joy comes from. And the heart is the place where the word needs to go to. So not just on the surface external behaviour, but down into the motives and intentions of the heart.

This is actually what he says, isn't it? The word of God is living and active, sharper than any double-edged sword. It penetrates to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow.

It judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

He's saying the word of God goes right down into those deep places. And we need to let it do that. We need to ask God to do that. As we hear God's word, we need to not just say, oh, external obedience, but internal reorganisation of the heart.

[ 51 : 04 ] And chapter 3, verse 16, it is, So, who were they who heard and rebelled?

Weren't they the ones that Moses led out of Egypt? And with whom was he angry for forty years? Those who sinned, whose bodies dropped in the desert.

So there's a hearing, without rebelling, there's a hearing that says, if that's what it says, that's what I want to do. If that's what it says I should be like, that's what I want to be like.

I want it to work that in my heart, to hear and not rebel. And chapter 4, verse 2 says, We have had the gospel preached to us, just as they did, but the message they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard it did not combine it with faith, and therefore they didn't enter his rest.

So here's something again about hearing. The problem with those people was they heard, but they didn't combine it with faith, and they didn't then act upon that faith.

[ 52 : 17 ] It just points out that being well taught is actually the opposite of an asset. It's something that will harm us, if you like, put us in a poorer position if we've been well taught, but haven't acted on it.

Being doctrinally accurate is useless unless we have faith and put the teachings into practice.

These people heard, but they fell in the desert because they didn't believe and act on what they'd heard.

So that's my first thing about these people. They had problems hearing. And let's make sure that we're hearing God's word in the full sense that the writer wants us to hear it, so that we don't fall short on the promise of salvation.

Okay, second thing, teaching. They had stopped teaching anyone. He says in chapter 5, verse 12, In fact, though by this time, at this point in 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. Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness.

[ 53 : 50 ] But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil. So he says, teachers, you ought to be teachers at this point.

He finds fault with them that they're not teaching anybody. They ought to have been teachers. So this is the mouth, and that's the word. So let's spend a few minutes thinking what's gone wrong here.

What sort of teaching ought to have been happening, but wasn't, or ought to have been happening, but isn't. So what's gone wrong here? He says, I think sarcastically, What are you? Oh, de-dums.

Oh, look at you. Oh, dear, oh, dear. Little children. He uses sarcasm. Do you need teaching kiddy stuff, do you?

Do you want your milk? The milk, he says, is that you need somebody to teach you the elementary things of the beginnings of God's word all over again.

[ 54 : 55 ] I think he's being sarcastic. You can't you tell the difference between good and bad like little children, are you? So my granddaughter, we relive the experience of children walking up and down and putting wood lice into their mouth.

And what's that wood louse? Little children don't know what to eat, do they? They do all sorts of things that are going to harm them. They don't know how to go down the stairs. They don't know what to put in their mouths.

And I think the writer of the Hebrews said, you little children, you can't you can't be trusted to walk in the garden without putting wood lice in your mouth. But I don't think he thinks that's actually what they are.

I think he's being a bit sarcastic with them. Ironic, perhaps, to put it kinder. And he isn't going to teach them all over again, the elementary things. He's going to say in chapter six, let us leave the

elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity.

Let's go on to the mature things. We're not going to regress back to that. And when he says leave, I like to suggest that he means leave in place rather than forsake.

[ 56 : 07 ] We're not going to jettison those teachings, but we're going to build on them and go further because we're not going to go back to them, but we're going to go on further. We'll leave them in place.

So, well, this bit about needing to be teachers. Well, number one out of three here, they should have had leading teachers. And these people are referred to in 13, verse seven, where he says, can remember your leaders who spoke the word of God to you.

Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. So these are the church leaders who are leading and speaking God's word of God's word.

That's what they do now. And it looks as though these are the people who started things off in their Christian life by speaking the word of God. And he says that these are these are key people.

And notice it is important that their lives match their words. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.

[ 57 : 15 ] So it's an important qualification for leaders. There ought to be these people whose lives match their teaching. And it would be possible to say there's a good example to follow.

This is by no means saying these people are sinless, but it is saying they're not unreal. They teach things. They teach confession of sin.

They teach apologizing when they've got things wrong and they live it. And that's what there ought to be. Number one, there should be leading teachers who teach the word of God.

And of course, that's important for us. And we're praying earnestly that our church would not be without these people as we go forward, because our church will be absolutely crippled if we don't have teachers who can teach the word of God and do so credibly because they live it themselves.

So number one, there should be leading teachers. Number two, they should have been able to teach one another. Chapter three, verse 13 and other places, many other places in the letter.

[ 58 : 26 ] Chapter three, verse 12. See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God, but encourage one another daily as long as it is called today.

So there's a teaching of one another. You ought to be teaching one another. So one another sort of it could imply one to one, you know, over coffee, as it were, or smaller in informal conversations where there's just a few people interacting.

But it's not, so those two things mean not, not a big one way discourse of preaching and teaching. It's a one another thing here. And he says that's really important.

And if they are letting one another slide and drift and slip and stop, then they are in a very precarious situation.

And churches like that are en masse near the cliff edge. And it's very important that we do the one to one, that we are being mature, as he says here, that you ought to be mature, having taken solid food, to be an example, and to be an encouragement.

[ 59 : 48 ] I don't mean encouragement in a sort of just being jovial, slapping people on the back and stuff, but actually giving courage to people. And it might include warning them.

It might include saying, come on, guys, this is a bit out of order, isn't it? Or come on, let's make an effort on this to encourage one another in that sense.

And I remember a long time ago hearing a preacher refer to Abraham who was going to be blessed and be a blessing. I think it's an excellent summary of what the church should be, a community of people who are being blessed and who are being a blessing to others, too.

And, folks, that includes the introverts. It includes the people who don't like Zoom very much and prefer just to be a little bit quiet. But even people like that need to teach and admonish one another, need to encourage one another, and ought to be able to do that.

They should be able to teach one another. And thirdly, you should be teachers, he says to these people. They should have been teaching the non-Christian world of their day, perhaps the Jewish world, the Gentile world.

[ 61 : 07 ] And this I link with the confessing of faith. And several times he uses this sort of expression, chapter 4, verse 14. Since we've got a great high priest who's gone through the heavens, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess, to our confession of faith.

The fact that we say and teach people, yeah, we're Christians. This Jesus, whom we believe in, let me teach you about him.

Let me tell you some of the truths about him. They should have been teaching the non-Christian world. Like Peter, when he was asked on that fateful evening, you're one of his followers, aren't you?

He should have taught and said, yes, I am. And let me tell you some things about this Jesus. But he didn't. And, you know, in the New Testament, that is the absolute worst thing to do, to deny Christ, to back off at that point.

That is a complete failure. It is not overcoming. It is letting the dragon overcome us. So we ought to be, they should have been, teaching the non-Christian world.

[ 62 : 26 ] And there were a number of reasons why they might have backed off. Chapter 13, verse 13, for example, they say, Let us go to him outside the camp, bearing the disgrace he bore.

Being a Christian can lead us perhaps into persecution, although in our society that's not really the main thing, isn't it? But disgrace, being made fun of, being told that we're homophobic or bigoted, for holding to some, just some very basic mainstream teachings from the Bible.

In some places in the world, of course, the church is martyred. People are put to death for their faith. And we need to hold to the confession of our faith beyond death.

I mean, we'll all die anyway, won't we? So we should have a faith that goes beyond death. Perhaps they were tempted into conformity. Just going back to ceremonial foods, earthly priests, back to the synagogue.

But our faith should go beyond earthly rituals. We should not be squashed into conformity so that we're no longer teaching the non-Christian world. Well, maybe they'd just drifted into silence.

[ 63 : 51 ] And they would have gone into some sort of hermit-like isolation, out of touch with the world around them, a bit like a cult. Or maybe they'd just stop bothering. But they weren't teaching anyone.

And he says, you ought to be teaching. You should be teachers. So what was the condition of his hearers?

They needed a kick. Even a sarcastic kick. They had problems hearing. God had sent the prophets and his son.

And they should not be hearing without it contacting right into their lives. If they had a problem there, they really did have a problem. Outward obedience is important.

But heart working is important too. All of that is the target of God's word if we're to hear it and harden not our hearts. They had problems teaching.

[ 64 : 52 ] Actually, this is one of the letters in which the teacher leaders are not criticised. They seem to have been okay guys.

So I'm going to put an okay there. They should have been teaching one another. That's very vital. Let's be teachers of one another. And they should have been teaching the non-believing world.

And I wonder why they weren't. Something had gone wrong there. You ought to be teachers. Let's make sure that we haven't got ourselves in a position where somehow or another we've stopped teaching people.

We don't take the opportunities to teach people in the unbelieving world. But rather, but rather, the point that he's coming to, imitate the great folk of faith.

Keep an unashamed hope. Not being ashamed of Jesus, but confessing him. Looking forward to the world to come. Looking forward with strength to keep believing.

[ 65 : 55 ] To keep enduring. To heed the warnings. To keep our eyes on the promises that are there for us in Jesus Christ, our great high priest, who is there to help us day by day, hour by hour, and moment by moment.

Amen. Amen. Well, we've heard God's word. And these words of exhortation. And I don't want to lose that sense that God is exhorting us.

But I do want to close by reminding us where the power really comes from. It isn't from us, but from Christ, our risen Savior. And specifically, the power that raised Jesus from the dead, which is at work within us.

So we're going to sing, see what a morning gloriously bright, the dawning of hope in Jerusalem. And the song references the historical one off morning of resurrection when Jesus Christ came alive from the dead.

