

“How to Strengthen Weak Conviction”

Fixing Our Eyes On Jesus, Our High Priest

Hebrews 5:11-6:3

Rev. Jeff Stivason

June 1, 2018

Jeff: Our Father and our God, we're thankful for the opportunity to gather on this Friday morning and be together, and not only to be together and fellowship with one another and hear about the things that You're doing throughout the world and how You're reviving ministries and using them through Your people. But we are also thankful that we can gather here and open Your word and know that Your Spirit is among us, and that You'll be working in our lives to bring about conformity to Christ. And Father, we thank You that You are indeed conforming us to the image of Your Son. And we pray that You will do that day by day, moment by moment.

Father, as we gather here this morning, we're mindful that there are more needs upon the hearts of these men than we can possibly count. And yet we do number a few, and we think about our brother Don. We pray for him. We ask that Your hand would be upon him. Father, we're thankful. We rejoiced with him in his recent marriage. And now we pray with him in this time of trial, and we ask that you'll see him through it safely. And we pray that he'll grow deeply in his relationship with you as a result of it. Father, we pray that You'll unite his heart to his wife's in the midst of this difficult situation and that you'll strengthen their marriage through it.

Father, we pray for Ian and we pray for Bruce. We ask that your hand would be upon them. And Lord, in the difficulties of cracked vertebrae and hernia surgery we know that You are there, and You're more than able for their needs. And so we commit them to you.

Lord, we pray for Reed and for such a young man going through so many trials and difficulties, and certainly not only him, but as his family watches and supports him as he goes through them. We lift him up to you, asking for his healing. We know that You are more than able to do all that we ask. And Father, we commit him to You, asking that You'll heal his body. We pray, Father, that You'll do that and we have confidence that You will. We pray, though, that in the midst of this trial that You would draw him ever nearer to yourself and his family as well.

Father, we pray for Rita, and we're thankful for her faith in the midst of her trial. We pray that You'll continue to strengthen that and Matthew as well. And Father, we commit these people to You. For some of us they're names. And yet for those who are near and dear to them they are so much more and obviously so, but to You even more so, for You created them in the womb. You knit them together in the darkest parts. And Father, You know them better than they know themselves, and so we commit them to You. And we ask these things, all of them, in the precious name of Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

Men: Amen.

Jeff: Well let me ask you to turn in your Bibles to Hebrews chapter 5. And we're going to be looking at 5:11-6:3. And this is a bit of a digression in some ways and I'll mention more of that here in a minute. But we're really going to take 5:11 through the beginning of 7—sorry, through the end of 6—in three parts. So Don, do you have it?

“How to Strengthen Weak Conviction”

Don: Yes.

Jeff: Don, would you read 5:11-6:3?

Don: Sure.

Jeff: Thank you.

Don: *“About this we have much to say. And it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food. For everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness since he is a child. But solid food is for the mature, for those who have had their powers of discernment trained by constant practice, to distinguish good from evil.*

“Therefore let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, and of instruction about washings, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment. And this we will do, if God permits.” This is the word of the Lord.

Men: Thanks be to God.

Jeff: Today I want us to think about three aspects of what is going to amount to a lead-in into this particular section of the book of Hebrews. And though there are things here that we are curious about, I think it’s important for us to establish, to set up for our thinking as we move forward, the condition of the church. So after I say a few introductory things I want us to think about the condition of the church as we see it in the book of Hebrews. And I think, without being anachronistic, we’re going to find that their condition oftentimes mirrors our own condition. And so we’re going to think about ourselves in light of having thought about them.

But then what I want us to note is that there is a cure in the text. There’s a help for each one of us as we think about our own condition in light of having thought about the people in the letter to the Hebrews. So it’s a very simple outline today. And it’s a very simple entrée into the text. And yet I think it is a profoundly searching one. So let’s look at it. Let’s begin with some introductory points.

And let me just introduce it by talking to you about a particular book that I read a couple of years ago. It’s by Nicholas Carr. It’s called *The Shallows*. You have probably read it. Some of you have probably picked it up at some point. If you’re concerned about how technology affects us, then this is the book to read.

And this book is not necessarily surprising in one sense. And by that I mean that if you know anything about history, you know that every time there was new technology being developed, somebody was saying, “This isn’t any good. This is a problem.”

For instance, when Plato was talking he was critiquing writing. He said that writing is no good for us. *(Laughter)* This new technology of writing is a bad thing. *(Laughter)* We need to be talking. We need to be in dialogue.

And you know that in the 15th century when the printing press was developed, there were those who critiqued that. And if there weren’t those in the 15th century, there are certainly now with Walter Omm and others like him. There are those who are critiquing the printing press, saying that this is what that technology has done to us. It has taken us

“How to Strengthen Weak Conviction”

away from an oral culture and it’s turned us into a print culture, a written culture. And so we need to understand that what we read in a book like this is not that surprising.

Well what do we read in a book like this? Well, we read a guy critiquing the phone and things like this, right? He talks about the iPhone prayer. (*Laughter*) You know, head down, looking at your phone all the time, that sort of thing. (*Laughter*) No, what he really talks about is how technology has rewired our brains. He talks about the plasticity of the way we think.

And basically what he says is this. He says that we are becoming a people who cannot pay attention. We’re becoming a people who can no longer read.

You know, I’m an editor for an online magazine. And when I first got the job I had my higher-ups tell me this. They said, “When you get your writers to write for you, do not get them to write more than 750 words.”

I said, “There are guys who are sending me articles that are 1500 words, 2000 words, 2500 words. What do you want me to do with those?”

“Reject them.”

I said, “Why?”

They said, “Because after 750 words—we’ve done studies!—after 750 words people lose interest.” In our scan-type culture people lose interest after that many words. So there’s a rewiring of the brain that takes place. And the result of that is a lack of attention.

Now this is a transcendent problem. It is not a problem that occurred back in Plato’s day because of writing, or in the days of the 15th century because of the printing press, or even today because of the iPhone. It is a transcendent problem. All you have to do is look back in chapter 2 verse 1 of the book of Hebrews. And what does he say? I don’t even need to read it because I have it up here on the screen. *“Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it.”*

Now lest you think that this is just an isolated thing that the preacher says, let me walk you through a couple of things. Hebrews chapter 3 at verse 1. Notice what he says. Notice what he says to them, and I don’t have this one written down. He says, *“Therefore, holy brothers, who share in a heavenly calling, consider Jesus.”*

Now what is he saying to them? We may read that and it may seem innocuous to us. But when you look at that word, he is saying to them, “Think about Jesus. Set your thoughts on Jesus.” He’s talking to them about paying closer attention to what he has said about Jesus.

And then chapter 12. You get to chapter 12 and he says, *“Fix your eyes on Jesus.”* You get the sense that what we are seeing throughout this particular letter or this particular sermon is an author who feels that they are being distracted. And they need their minds and their whole selves to be set on one thing. And that one thing is Jesus.

It’s not hard to be distracted, is it? This is a transcendent problem. I mean we don’t need to be first-century Christians to be distracted. We know that it’s easy for us to be distracted now.

And you know what I mean by that. If you take apart etymologically the word *distract*, that first part *dis-* means *away*, and *trahere* means to lead or draw. And so it’s to draw away from something. So to be distracted is to be drawn away.

“How to Strengthen Weak Conviction”

And one of the ways in which we are drawn away is when we’re trying to listen to someone, when we’re trying to listen to someone speaking. Do you know what listening is? If you go to the dictionary and look up the word *listen*, you’ll notice that it is related to the word *list*. You know what the word *list* is. It’s to make a series of things. And you know that if you look in the Oxford English Dictionary that it talks about and uses the idea of *furrows*. It’s an agricultural idea, making a list, a furrow, a row.

I remember that there was a time when I worked for my father-in-law on his farm. And I wasn’t a city boy, but I certainly wasn’t a country boy. And my father-in-law decided that it would be great for some reason—and I guess this is how you do it out in the country!—to put me on a C. tractor. (*Laughter*) This is nothing to do with what we’re talking about right now. (*Laughter*) But I’ll get to it.

Participant: You were distracted.

Jeff: I was distracted. (*Laughter*) So my father-in-law puts me on an old C. tractor and he says, “Here’s what I want you to do. I want you to plow the stalls out.”

So I said, “Okay; no problem.”

He says, “Here’s this stall and you go down through the middle, and you push the manure out onto the manure spreader.”

I said, “Well, what about this stall?”

He said, “Well, you’ve got to drag it out. Then you’ve got to back in and you’ve got to push it out and then push it over. And then you’ve got to push it down.”

I said, “Oh, this tractor’s a piece of junk.”

He said, “Just do it.” I said, “Okay.”

So I pull it out and push it over and pull it down. And as I’m going super slow, and as I’m going by this stall, there’s a bullock. And the bull decides that as I’m going by, he wants out of the stall. (*Laughter*) And so he starts kind of getting out and putting his feet down, and I’m scared. So I’m up on the seat, ready to jump. (*Laughter*) He finally works his way out and goes up to the end of the platform where the drop-off is to the manure spreader. And then, just as that was happening, a cow backed out of the stall and walked to the end.

And I get off. I shut the tractor down. “Here, cow!” (*Laughter*) And just as I’m saying that, the cow, not the bull,—the cow walks off the end. (*Laughter*) She catches her udder on the little thing, teeters a little bit, and then right down to the cement.

The milk truck driver was there and saw the whole thing as he was talking to my father-in-law. My father-in-law never saw a thing. He said, “aaaaaaa!”, you know.

We all go running down there. Anyway, I digress. (*Laughter*) I got distracted.

Participant: You make mistakes. Is that what you’re saying?

Jeff: I did not kill the cow! (*Laughter*) The cow had no fever and was blind. That’s why I walked off the edge of the—

Participant: That was udderly disgusting. (*Groans and laughter*)

Jeff: But when my father-in-law was teaching me how to plow, he would stand at the end of the field and he would say, “Now just watch me!” Do you remember back in chapter 2, where I said that a man who was taking a ship into the harbor would pick some static point on the shore and he would guide the ship in? My father-in-law, who knew

“How to Strengthen Weak Conviction”

nothing about nautical things, would say, “Now I’m going to stand at the edge, and you watch me. And you keep your eye on me.”

Now if we were to have an aerial view of what my furrow looked like, it would look something like this, you know?

Transcriber’s Note: Crooked.

Jeff: And you could tell where I had taken my eyes, where I had drifted in my attention. I was distracted. It’s not hard for us to become led away, distracted. And I’m sure that every one of you can think of places where you’ve become distracted.

Now listen. Distraction is the context for our text. If we miss the fact that he’s saying, “Do not drift. Consider Jesus. Fix your eyes on Jesus”—if you miss all of that from this sermon, you’ve missed the context of some of these admonitions, especially the ones we’re thinking about now. You can’t miss that.

I want you to see something. I want you to see this. Somebody said that I was distracted in telling my story. But I want you to know something. Isn’t it interesting that the writer of the Hebrews is distracted. If you move from 5:10 to 7:1, it’s seamless. *“Being designated by God a High Priest after the order of Melchizedek.” “For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God.”* Seamless!

Chapter 6 and part of chapter 5 is a digression. He is distracted by their inattentiveness. And he says that it is so distracting that I’ve got to deal with this. I’ve got to take you guys to task on it.

And so what we have here is that we have something. And this is why I said to you that what we’re going to do over the next three weeks is that we’re going to look at this digression of sorts that Paul has. I keep saying Paul! (*Laughter*) I don’t believe that Paul wrote this. But if you do, then for moments I’m right with you. (*Laughter*) 5:11-6:20 is a digression.

So let’s think about *the church’s condition*. And as we think about the church’s condition I want you to think about the Pastor for just a minute. I’m trying to reiterate this as we go. I want you to understand that this pastor is a wonderful diagnostician.

I don’t know if you can find doctors like this anymore. I don’t know; it was over ten years ago; it must be twenty now. I went to the doctor. I had reoccurring bronchitis. I’ve never had a doctor do this. He sat me down. He talked to me. He examined me. And then he gave me his hypothesis. And he said, “We’re going to test that.”

I’ve never had a doctor do that to me. I thought, *This is great!* And his hypothesis turned out to be right. He said, “I think you have asthma.” He said, “We’re going to test you and see if you have asthma.” I did. I had asthma.

But I thought to myself, *What a great diagnostician!* This pastor is a great diagnostician. He is diagnosing these people.

Now I want us to think about this. This is what he says. He says, “They have become dull of hearing.”

Remember what I said to you? I’m not going to make much of it this time. Remember what I said to you? This book is built on what we call inclusios. And an inclusio is a literary device where you have a word, a phrase or a thought, an idea of some sort, that

“How to Strengthen Weak Conviction”

begins the section and then it closes out the section. It’s like having two book ends. And this is a book end.

Now the interesting thing is that you don’t see this in verse 12 of chapter 6. You see that he says “*dull of hearing*” in verse 11. But in 6:12 it’s translated differently. But it’s the same Greek word. And what he’s doing is, he’s talking to us about how they had become dull, inattentive in their hearing. So he’s diagnosed them.

Now the question is *how does this happen?* This is where the diagnostic comes in. How does it happen? We drift. That’s how we become dull in our hearing.

Now wait a second! We need to ask ourselves a question. We need to ask ourselves. What’s the root of any problem that we have?

You know, Jonathan Edwards, probably one of the premiere theologians that American soil has ever produced, had resolutions. And he read those resolutions regularly. One of those resolutions was this. “*I’m going to think about my sin until I can get to the root cause of that sin, so that I cannot treat the symptoms of the sin, but uproot the root.*”

And that’s the idea here. I’m asking you. What’s the Edwardsian root of drifting? What is it?

Well, let’s think about it a second. First of all, let’s think about *the cycle of drifting*. The cycle of drifting is not too hard to think about. You know how it happens. You get a little careless, a little idle, right?

Look, all right, let’s just get a little candid here, okay? You’re in church and you become disengaged.

Participant: Oh yes.

Jeff: We’ve got an amen here. (*Laughter*) You become disengaged. And then what happens is that the next time you’re in church you become disengaged again. And so the third time you’re in church you become disengaged, and what do you do? You take out your Bible and you decide that you’re going to read something different than what’s happening on the floor and what’s coming from the pulpit, right? And then pretty soon, maybe a couple months down the road, you begin to pick up the Bible and read something else. Now you think about what you’re going to do when you get home, or what your work week’s going to look like, okay? A little careless, a little idle.

And then what begins to happen is this—little excuses instead of effort. You get home and your wife says, “Are you listening? When the pastor is preaching up there are you listening?”

And you say this. “I can’t follow him. He just doesn’t seem to feed my soul. He doesn’t do it for me.”

I’m a pastor. I don’t want you to think I have an edge to me here. (*Laughter*) And then pretty soon, or maybe not pretty soon, your resistance leads to your justification. Now all of a sudden you’re not making excuses. You’re actually resisting, even if it’s inwardly, and you’re justifying your resistance. And dullness sets in.

Now why? What’s the root? Yes, Ted?

Ted: The situation is funny—

Jeff: I knew I shouldn’t have used that situation the moment I—(*Laughter*)

“How to Strengthen Weak Conviction”

Ted: I’m going to put a bit of an edge on it, because the situation you described over a number of weeks and maybe months could happen in the space of just two or three Sundays.

Jeff: Sure.

Ted: And where we say, “God has just not given me anything,” and I start to get distracted about ungodly things, like my grocery list or whether or not I should get the lawn mowed. So I think this happens very quickly because we’re looking for a quick fix, a quick kick from going and hearing the Word preached.

Jeff: Why? What—Yes, Bill?

Bill: I believe that’s why you see change in the American worship structure, going to much shorter periods of the message, and much more in the way of music or other activities. It’s because once again the concept of actually sitting and listening to the word of God preached for something as burdensome as an hour is beyond the ability of most people today to be present.

Jeff: Yes, especially if there’s a bit of cognitive action going on in that furrow making, right?

Okay. So what’s the root? The root is that they stopped listening to the Word. They stopped listening to the Word.

Now how do we know that the Hebrews stopped listening to the Word? Well, all we have to do is go back to chapter 3. Do you remember what he said there to the Hebrews? *“Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as they did in the rebellion.”*

Do you see how this letter is tied together, really intricately tied together? It’s not that we’re going to take this theme today and this theme tomorrow. In order to look at the book of Hebrews, you need to look at it in all of its constituent parts and how it is that they’re woven together.

How do we know? We know because we’re already given a clue back in chapter 3. Their drifting, their dullness is because they stopped listening to the Word.

Let me say this as an aside. The next section that we’re going to look at—6:1-20 or thereabouts—is often taken up with a question. People say that 6:1-20, or at least that little section beginning in chapter 6, is a really tough passage because the question in view is this. *Can a genuine believer lose his salvation?* That takes a lot of sweat. Is that really what it is?

Let me just talk to you a second. What they’re asking is this. They’re asking this. Can a genuine believer commit apostasy? Can a genuine believer walk away finally from the faith? That’s what’s being asked. Can he walk away finally? *Stasia* is the idea of walking. Can they walk away finally from the faith? That’s what’s being asked.

Now that’s not the right question. I’m preparing you for what’s to come. When you look at the text, that’s not the right question to ask, because look. I just want to tell you something. As a full-blooded Biblical Paulinist who gave birth to a Calvinist, if you’re a genuine believer you do not fall from God’s grace.

Participant: Amen.

Jeff: Thank you for that. I appreciate that.

Participant: Amen!

“How to Strengthen Weak Conviction”

Jeff: Amen! (*Laughter*) Right! The better question is this. What’s the difference between somebody like Judas and somebody like Peter? Because if you were to have met Judas and Peter on the same night, the question in your mind would have been this. Are either one of these guys in the faith?

The question is, what’s the difference between full apostasy, a full walking away from the faith, and a partial walking away from the faith? In other words, what’s the difference between Judas and Peter? And I’ll tell you what the difference is: *repentance*. The difference is repentance.

So we need to have that in mind as we look at the next thing. But here’s the question. It’s a practical question. *How’s your hearing?* This is a vital question. How is your hearing? You say to me, “Describe for me what it looks like to be hearing, because you know what, Jeff? I have a job. I’m going to leave here and I’ve got a job to go to. You get to go and play with your books and read your Bible. (*Laughter*) And you get to hang around the church and you get to pray. You get to do all these things. Can you tell me what it looks like for *moi?*” (*Laughter*)

Let me tell you what it looks like. Do you know when you’re going on vacation and it’s a vacation you’re excited about? Do you know what I mean?

Transcriber’s Note: Jeff speaks in a sing-song voice.

Jeff: There’s a lightness in your step. (*Laughter*) Right? You’re at work, and you’re going, “I’ve got to do this. But I’m going on va-ca-tion!” (*Laughter*) Do you know what I’m talking about? It’s never quite far from your mind. You know what it’s like; I know it!

That’s what I’m talking about. When you love Jesus Christ with all of your heart, when your eyes are fixed on Him, you may be doing your accounting. You may be doing your hammering. You may be doing whatever you’re doing. But He’s always there and you know it.

Participant: Amen.

Jeff: That’s a simple way for me to tell you. That’s what it means not to drift. All right?

So what’s the cure? Well, the cure is what we’re going to look at next. But I want to tell you that this guy is the best pastor in the world! If there was an award for best pastor, this guy gets it!

Now why do I say that? Because not only is he pastoral, he’s a good physician.

Now why am I saying this? I realize that we’re running out of time, but before I go on, let me just say this. Look at our text. You guys can probably pull this out quicker than I can. I’m wasting my time here. Can anybody put his eye on the verse, “I think better things of you?” Where does he say that?

Participant: Hebrews 6:9. “*Though we speak in this way, yet in your case, beloved, we feel sure of better things.*”

Jeff: That’s right, things that belong to salvation. He has better thoughts about them than he’s going to have words for them. And it’s important for them to know.

We need to know, though, what is the cure for this. What’s the cure for this spiritual drift? Well, it’s the pattern of growth that we find in the Scriptures. And we find that in all

“How to Strengthen Weak Conviction”

of the Scriptures. But we certainly find it here. And that pattern for growth—and I’m going to talk about it in just a couple stages—that pattern of growth is *putting off*.

Now when we talk about putting off, we talk about laying aside sinful habits, sinful practices. Now I want you to think about that in a little different way. I want you to think about that in terms not just of the negative about how we put off negative things, but I want you to think about this in terms of positive putting off.

You know what I mean? Let me put it like this. So you’re teaching your little one the ABC’s. And how do you do it?

Transcriber’s Note: Jeff sings.

Jeff: You sing, “A, b, c, d, e—“ I hated to do that to you men. (*Laughter*) I hated to do it. But you sing to them.

Now you expect at some point for them to put off the singing. You don’t expect them to be at 25 years old at their jobs going, “Now how do you spell it? A, b, c, d,” right? (*Laughter*) “Let me see if I can pick the letters.” You don’t expect them to do that. You expect them to put off the things that lead to maturity, even things that are helpful and right and good.

And I think that’s one of the things that we need to think about when we think about this particular letter. But he has in mind, later on, things that are sinful, not just those things that will help us grow to maturity and that are good. But he also has in mind things that are sinful. He says in a very familiar text, “*Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus.*” In this case we need to put off what we’re thinking about today in *hearing inhibitors*.

Now what are they? Well let me give you some. Let me give you some questions that will help you to ask yourself. What is a hearing inhibitor? What is the thing that inhibits me from hearing? Well, let’s just look.

Does what I’m doing reflect the wisdom of God’s word? In other words, have I heard such that what I’m doing as a result of what I’ve heard reflects the wisdom of God? That’s first.

Does what I’m doing enslave me? In other words, have I not listened? And so is what I’m doing actually enslaving me to some sin, some sinful practice or habit?

Does what I’m doing build or tend toward maturity? You know how it is. We’re talking about doing. But our doing arises out of our hearing or our not hearing. And so have I heard in such a way that tends toward maturity in my life?

And then *does what I’m doing help others?* You can think of other questions. But these are some questions that help you to ask yourself, “How am I hearing?”, because when I ask myself how I am hearing, I don’t go—

Transcriber’s Note: A blank stare.

Jeff: Let me put it this way. When you say to your kid, “Did you hear me?” And he goes, “Yeah.”

And you go, “Repeat it back to me.” (*Laughter*) Now that’s the first test, right? And if he can say, “Ba-ba-ba-ba-bah,” that’s good, right?

“How to Strengthen Weak Conviction”

Now you say, “Put it in your own words. What do you think I meant by that?”

Participant: Do you understand?

Jeff: Do you understand me, right? Somebody asks that, right? You’re wanting to know this. Did this cross the continental threshold? And did you understand how it’s going to affect your life? That’s what these questions are doing, okay?

But he says that we need to lay aside every encumbrance to our hearing. So let’s go back to the example that we gave earlier. You know, you’re sitting there listening. And it could be that you’re sitting there listening at work. Maybe you just have a habit of not listening to your boss, you know? You tune him out. If you’re your boss and you’re not listening to yourself, maybe you have other problems. (*Laughter*) But anyway the point is that you’re not listening.

And you can create triggers, right? And maybe one of your triggers is your cell phone. I’ll never forget the first time I saw a guy on his cell phone at church. I was absolutely indignant. I’m like what is that guy doing out there? He had his Bible on his phone. (*Laughter*) Ah, you know, I’ll tell you what. That just shows you your age, you know? (*Laughter*) But if your cell phone is an encumbrance to you, don’t take it with you.

Then you need to engage in *practice*. And listen to me. I want to tell you something. I know people who are concert level musicians. And you know what they tell me? They say that in an actual performance statistics show that you’ll only get 80% of your best practice performance. So practice, practice, practice, practice, practice, because if you’re only going to reach perhaps 80% of your best practice performance, you need to practice, practice, practice, practice, practice. And we need to practice our hearing and our listening.

And then we need to *put on*. We need to put off, but we need to put on. Think about it like this. And the reason I bring this up is because there’s something neat here in the text.

Let me tell you. When you think about feeding an infant, you think about how you do it. You know, you give him some soft food. You have to put the spoon in his mouth. And when he’s a teenager, you’re going, “Get that spoon out of your mouth!” (*Laughter*) They’re eating you out of house and home, right?

Well, think about this. He says, “words of righteousness.” And he talks about that in the midst of the fact that they ought to know righteousness. They ought to know the things that he’s talking about here in the text, but they don’t seem to. In other words, they ought to know right speech. In other words, they ought to be beyond infantile talk, but they’re not! And so they need to put on things.

How does growth come about? Let me ask this real quick. I’m going to abbreviate this because I know we’re running hard up against our time. How does growth come about? He says, “Let’s press on to maturity.”

Now I know there is going to be a point here where Bill is going to be strutting the feathers. He’s going to be saying, “Get this!”, right? (*Laughter*) But let me just say this to you. Let’s press on to maturity.

Participant: Obaker or McCoy?

Jeff: This is McCoy. (*Laughter*) Obaker likes me. (*Laughter*) Bill doesn’t crack a smile; he laughs. (*Laughter*) Okay.

“How to Strengthen Weak Conviction”

Let's press on to maturity. So we're asking this. How does one mature? How does one reach the aim of the goal? Well, this is where we've got to concede that the word *pass on* looks like it's in the divine passive, which means *allow yourself to be pressed*. But the word *propelled* or *pressed* has the synergistic idea that I have to engage.

So here we find what? Here we find this idea that if I am in Christ, I am going to be led from birth to glory. And it won't be by my own doing.

This takes us back to the idea of can a person finally lose his salvation? Absolutely not! If I am in Christ, *“He who began a good work in me will bring it to the day of completion.”* But I've got to listen along the way, don't I, because I have a tendency to drift. I've got to listen. I've got to ask myself tough questions. I've got to listen. I've got to press on toward maturity.

And I'll just say this. I need to have the confidence of my God who is in me, saving me, who has saved me. And I need to practice a constancy in these things. In this case I have to practice a constancy of listening.

And the question is this. Am I a man adrift, or am I a man propelled? You see, that's really the question when you think about a text like this one. Am I a man adrift, or am I a man propelled? Which man are you? That's truly the question. Okay, do you have any questions before we wrap up? Don, go ahead.

Don: It's interesting, and I don't know if you're going to get to this next week. But it's interesting that he says, *“Let us leave the elementary doctrines.”* A lot of times a lot of people don't even get past those. Like things about repentance and the final judgment, and everything. Some people even deny those or think that those are really advanced doctrines. It's interesting.

Jeff: Yes.

Don: So many people are dumbed down as it were, as Ted pointed out.

Jeff: Yes. Next week we'll talk about that some more.

Don: Okay.

Jeff: Bob?

Bob: This is not exactly in line, but I've got to tell you about this example of listening. I don't accomplish much as a grandfather. But it's taken me a month and I want to tell this quick story.

Jeff: Yes.

Bob: I've got two grandkids. One is seven and one is nine. And one is on the iPad all the time and one is on the iPhone all the time. And I get up in the morning when I'm at their house. And I go to them and I say, “Good morning, Harrison. Good morning, Anabelle.” And they don't move. They don't look up. They don't do anything whatever.

So what I've done over the last month,—and I've finally accomplished this!—I hit the back of the sofa and I said, “Listen, kids. When I come out in the morning and I greet you, I want you to put those phones down. I want you to look me in the eye. And I want you to say enthusiastically, ‘Good morning, Pops!’”

Now it's taken me a month to do that. But I finally got it done. *(Laughter) (Cheers and applause)*

Jeff: Anybody else? Sig?

“How to Strengthen Weak Conviction”

Sig: I—

Participant: Wait!

Sig: I am waiting.

Jeff: The man is being propelled over to you. *(Laughter)*

Sig: This would take a class in itself and you don't have to answer it today. But when you brought up Peter and Judas, that's always like a knife in my heart, because I think those two were so dramatically linked. And I want to feel that Judas is in the kingdom of heaven. And Don Maurer doesn't agree with me. *(Sighs and groans)* But that's a different thing. But you said, “Can a person lose his salvation?” So I need you to answer that question about Judas at some other point.

Jeff: Okay.

Sig: Thank you.

Jeff: Bill?

Bill: Since he brought up Judas and Peter, you said that the difference between the two was repentance.

Jeff: Yes, right.

Bill: Do you really believe that Peter had a choice?

Jeff: I think Jesus said to him, “*And when you turn back,*” because he was propelled passively forward. And I do think Peter had to repent. *(Laughter)* Tom?

Tom: I think that the difference between Peter and Judas is that I think Peter lived the life. Judas acted the life. He had the money and he spent the money on himself sometimes. So He knew the difference in character right there.

Jeff: Okay. Sig sparked a lively discussion. *(Laughter)*

Participant: (Unclear)

Second Participant: In this case I think that Judas did listen to Jesus and Peter didn't, because Jesus said to Peter, “You will deny Me,” and he didn't believe it. But to Judas He said, “Go out and do your thing,” and he did it. *(Sighs and groans)*

Third Participant: I just wanted to make a simple comment. And that is that if you're trying to row up stream and you quit rowing, you drift.

Fourth Participant: There you go.

Jeff: Thomas Manton said that a dead fish can't swim upstream. *(Laughter)* Go ahead, Don.

Don: Mark this day in history. Bill McCoy and I are going to agree on something.

Participant: Oh my! *(Laughter)*

Don: I think the ultimate reason that Peter repented and Judas did not was that Jesus said to Peter, “*I have prayed for you.*”

Jeff: Yes. “*And when you turn back.*” Right.

Participant: Before that he said, “*Satan has desired to sift you like wheat. But I have prayed for you.*”

Jeff: Yes. Even that is a great way to put it when you think about it, right? I'm sure that Satan didn't go up to Jesus and say hypothetically, “Hey, I want to draw the impurities from Peter.” *(Laughter)* Or “I want to purify the grain,” right? You know, it's

“How to Strengthen Weak Conviction”

Jesus who puts that in the context of “*Satan has asked to sift you as wheat.*” Jesus puts that in a positive context.

All right. Let’s pray and then we’ll adjourn. Father, thank you for this day and for the time You’ve given us in Your word. Bless us now we pray, for we ask it in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Men: Amen. (*Applause*)