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MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL

Sermon

Analysis of Hebrews: Chapter 6 & 7



Part 9/23

God's Last Word: An Exposition of Hebrews By Derek Prince

We have been looking in Hebrews 6 and in verses 4 and 5 which you will find dealt with in your outline at the top of Page 6/2. We have spoken about people who have had five experiences. Every one of the experiences I think in some measure is supernatural. They have been supernaturally enlightened. Christ has been revealed to them, the Bible has been made a living book. They've tasted the heavenly gift which I believe is really Jesus himself. Third, they become partakers of the Holy Spirit. They've related directly and personally to two persons, Jesus Christ the Son of God and the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God. They've tasted the good word of God. The Greek word there is rhema, the word that's alive, that's quick, that's personal. Not just theology but they've known what it is for God to speak to them directly and individually through his word. And they've tasted the powers of the age to come through, I believe, the Holy Spirit. I believe through the supernatural infilling of the Holy Spirit we are lifted up into the next age. We begin to taste something of what it will be like to be living totally in the Spirit. And even to have a glorified body.

Now the tragic and solemn thing is that the writer of Hebrews says that people who've had all these experiences, if they deliberately turn away there is nothing more that anyone can do for them to renew them again to repentance. They've lost the ability to repent. I don't want to dwell on this but I believe I mentioned in my last session that I have personally dealt with people who I believe were in that category. I mean, I am not the final judge, God is.

Once we lose the ability to repent, there is no way to God for us. Because without repentance we cannot get back to God.

Let's look in Hebrews 12:15–17 for a moment. I believe we did touch on this, I'm not sure, I can't remember. But it says there, and it's in the middle of a sentence:

> "Watching carefully [or taking care] lest there be anybody who comes short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble [trouble you understood], and through this the many be defiled. [It just doesn't say 'many'; it says 'the many.'] Lest

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> there be any fornicator or godless person as Esau, who for one morsel of meat [or one meal] sold his rights as the firstborn. For you know that afterwards, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected [considered unfit], for he did not find a place of repentance, although he sought it with tears."

And it is the blessing, not the place of repentance. Greek is a language with genders and the word that's translated "it" makes it clear it was the blessing he was seeking, not the place. They're different genders. We can't go into the grammatical implications of that. If you know what genders are, you do know, and if you don't, well, keep on living happily without knowing!

But there was no way back for Esau. When he sold his birthright it was a final, irrevocable transaction. The writer of Hebrews says, "Be careful there isn't among you anybody who does that, who gives up the eternal for the carnal and the temporary."

I have to point out that by contemporary church standards, Esau would have qualified for membership in a lot of churches. I mean, he wasn't a fornicator. It's amazing that he's put in that same category. But he was somebody who just did not appreciate the eternal—the riches of God.

See, if there's one thing that God ultimately cannot and will not tolerate it is despising His eternal riches. That, I think, is the real problem. We can be difficult to deal with, some of us are. We can make a lot of mistakes, but as long as we still value what God has to offer, God'll keep dealing with us. He'll bring us through. But when we just say, "I'm really not that concerned; there's other things in life besides what God has to offer," it seems to me we're in a very, very dangerous place.

As I understand Scripture, the only agent who can bring us to repentance is the Holy Spirit. Apart from the Holy Spirit we are incapable of repenting. This is my personal understanding. That's why Jesus says, "If you blaspheme against the Holy Spirit there's nothing more God can do. He's the last. If you reject Him, there's nothing more."

See, historically, the Jewish people rejected Jesus the Son of God. God still sent them the Holy Spirit. That's amazing. But when they rejected the Holy Spirit, then there was nothing more that God could do for them. And if you look at the prophetic pictures, especially in Zechariah, of the restoration of Israel, you'll find that the first person they're going to come in contact with is not Jesus the Messiah, but the Holy Spirit.

I want to emphasize this. The way we treat the Holy Spirit determines our destiny. You cannot snub the Holy Spirit and prosper. He's the Lord.

Going back to Hebrews 6 we have a picture taken from agriculture which is not one of my strong points. When I went to East Africa to be the principal of a teacher training college for African teachers in 1957, I discovered to my horror that I was expected to have something to do with the teaching of agriculture. So I thought, I am not the right person. I discovered it didn't mean too much. It meant that you had to cultivate your soil, plant in lines, space your plants, use fertilizer or manure, and mulch. So when I got those five or six simple rules, I was a teacher of agriculture too! I just want you to know the kind of person that's behind the pulpit tonight instructing you in these areas!

Verse 7:

> "For the soil [or the ground] that has drunk in the rain that comes frequently upon it and brings forth vegetation suitable for those for whom it has been cultivated [or is cultivated], receives blessing from God; but the soil which brings forth thorns and thistles is rejected and is near to cursing, of which the end is burning."

Thorns and thistles, bear in mind, are a mark of cursings. You know that. Perhaps I better just confirm that out of Scripture. Keep your finger in Hebrews 6 and turn to Genesis 3:17–18 for a moment. This is the result of Adam's transgression and disobedience.

> "Then to Adam [the Lord] said, 'Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat from it'; cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field ...'"

So you see that thorns and thistles are associated with God's curse. And where thorns and thistles are, the ultimate end is burning. And this speaks particularly here in Hebrews 6 of soil that has been carefully cultivated and it has received frequent rain. If it still brings forth thorns and thistles, then the only final solution is burning. And that is applied to the Christian life. If we have been cultivated, if we've received the rain of the Holy Spirit, if we've had every opportunity and all that God finds in us after all that is thorns and thistles, we are near to being rejected.

I hear a lot of people, and some of them could be here tonight, complaining about the way the world has treated them and sometimes the way the church has treated them, the pastors. I'm not thinking in particular of any one situation. I have children that are members of my family, some may be my grandchildren (not here tonight, let me add hastily), who have sometimes spoken to me in such a way that implied they didn't get a fair deal, they didn't have enough chance. I would only observe: If there's anybody here tonight who thinks that you haven't had a fair chance, I believe you've probably had far greater opportunities for good than 95 percent of people anywhere in the world. If you haven't had a fair chance, then believe me, the world is going to go without a fair chance. So be careful.

We're going on in Hebrews 6. The writer says after these very, very solemn warnings, verse 9:

> "But we are convinced, concerning you beloved, of things that are better and relate to salvation, even if we speak like this."

In other words, we are giving you these solemn warnings but we trust that nobody really needs them.

Verse 10:

> "For God is not unrighteous [or unjust] to forget your work and the love which you have shown to his name, in that you ministered to the saints and continue to minister."

That, I think, is a significant passage. I think, in a way, we can lay up credits with God. I think we can so conduct ourselves that if we come to a time of weakness or need where we especially need God's mercy, we have some credits to draw on. I think that's the meaning of this passage. But what really impresses me is the way we can lay up credits. I wonder if you've picked it out? What is it that the writer says these people have done that is going to make God be very gracious to them if they need His grace in the future? It's ministering or supplying the needs of God's people. I think that's a point we really need to take to heart. A great deal of God's estimate of us will depend on how we deal with His people.

Let's look at two passages which are quoted here in your outline. The first is Psalm 112, but I'm going to read it from the NIV because it's somewhat clearer. We're going to look at verse 1, then verses 3–6 and verse 9.

> "Praise the LORD. Blessed is the man who fears the LORD, who finds great delight in his commands."

The whole psalm is a description of the man whom God blesses. And it also explains both why God blesses him and how God blesses him. Verse 3:

> "Wealth and riches are in his house, and his righteousness endures forever."

He's never going to backslide.

Even in darkness light dawns for the upright, for the gracious and compassionate and righteous man.

Three words there: gracious, compassionate and righteous.

Good will come to him who is generous and lends freely, who conducts his affairs with justice. Surely he will never be shaken; a righteous man will be remembered forever. [verse 9] He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor, his righteousness endures forever; his horn will be lifted high in honor.

What do you see in that description of that man that particularly causes God to view him with favor and with mercy? I would say really it's the way he's treated the poor and he's treated his brothers in need. And because of that, it says "his righteousness endures forever." There are ways you can so conduct yourself that you become unshakable. And it seems to me that we don't sufficiently appreciate the importance that God attaches to dealing rightly with our fellow believers, especially when they are in need. It seems, in a way, it's a kind of guarantee for yourself. I hope I'm not misrepresenting that.

There's another passage in Ecclesiastes 11. This one has always been very vivid to me for years. Ecclesiastes, which is just before the Song of Solomon, which is just before Isaiah or just after Proverbs. Ecclesiastes 11:1–2.

> "Cast your bread on the surface of the waters, for you will find it after many days."

I have to say that in recent years I have proved that true so many times in the spiritual realm. I have preached, I've sent out tapes, I've written books, and they've gone out on the surface of the water, and in the last few years they've been coming back to me. I hardly ever go anywhere now to preach without somebody coming up to me and saying, "Brother Prince, in 1969 you preached in such-and-such a place. It changed my life; I've never been the same since." I think Ruth—I don't know whether I need a confirming witness, but she would bear witness. Wherever we go there are people like that. People I don't even remember. It's like the bread that I cast out has started coming back. And really, it is a blessed experience to meet that bread returning.

Then the next verse:

> "Divide your portion to seven, or even to eight; for you do not know what misfortune may occur on the earth."

Do you notice the connection? "For you do not know what misfortune may occur." As I understand it, seven is duty and eight is going a little beyond. So give out on the basis of duty and then go a little further. Why does the Word then say "for you do not know what misfortune may be on the earth"? Because one day you may stand in need of mercy and God has got a record somewhere of the acts of mercy that you have shown. The Bible says, "Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy." It's really what I call "enlightened self-interest" to be merciful. It's going to come back to you.

But, Ruth and I have been reading the epistle of James and it says, "He that shows no mercy shall have judgment without mercy." So there's a kind of guarantee, as I see them, in the Word of God, that you will hold out to the end, that God will uphold you, that these things that are written about here in these earlier verses in Hebrews 6 will not happen to you. What is the guarantee? It's the way you treat others, especially others who are believers, when they're in need.

The longer I live the more I see that God's principles work. When you're a young preacher you can inveigh on people and belabor them and say, "Whatever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. And if you'll sow to the flesh you'll reap from the flesh." Threaten them. I don't threaten people now. I'm too convinced to threaten. I know it will happen. I don't have to argue. I've seen it too many times. What you sow you will reap. Don't worry. You don't need to lose sleep at night wondering whether it will come back. It will come back. Be sure. Sow the right, reap the right. Sow in righteousness and reap mercy. That's exactly what this passage says here. "Sow righteousness and you'll reap mercy."

All right, we must go on. Why must we go on? Because we have to get to the end of something! Verse 11. Now this passage is just two verses, it's the third passage of practical application. Do you understand what we're talking about? Just turn back in your outline for a few moments to some of those 0/ pages. 0/2, passages containing solemn warnings. Are you there? You'll notice there are five, we've dealt with three. And then passages indicating positive, practical applications, we've dealt with two, we've just come to the third. Hebrews 6:11–12. You see that? What does it say the positive application there is, what are the things we need? Zeal, faith and patience.

While we're about it, let's just look at the passages of comparison and contrast that begin at the bottom of 0/2, go on of the top of 0/3. We've done the first comparison between angels and Jesus. We've done the comparison between Moses and Jesus, and we are about to get launched into the third comparison between the Levitical priesthood and the priesthood of Melchizedek.

Then, just glancing at the "let us" passages, we have dealt with the first five, the last one being at the beginning of chapter 6, "Let us press on to maturity." All right. So you see where we are.

So, going back to your outline on Page 6/2, this that we're going to read now is the third passage of practical application. As I pointed out, but it's probably worthwhile to say it again, most of Hebrews is revelation. It's telling us things we wouldn't know if God's Word didn't reveal them. The whole area of the high priesthood, of the heavenly services, is revelation. But every now and then in the midst of revelation the writer comes out with some important practical application of the revelation that he's giving.

Verses 11–12:

> "But we desire that each of you continue to show the same diligence [or zeal] to the full obtaining of the hope [or to the fulfillment of the hope] unto the end ..."

That phrase "unto the end" occurs a number of times. It's one of the thrusts of Hebrews. Moving on, there's a goal to attain to, don't stop. Verse 12:

> "... that you may not be lazy ..."

I heard myself preaching on the radio I think last week pointing out that Christians tolerate certain sins. They reject others. They reject drunkenness but tolerate laziness. If you were to look at the Bible, I think the Bible is far severer in its condemnation of laziness than it is of drunkenness. And yet, you know, I think the church sometimes is full of lazy people, to say the truth. They're too lazy to read their Bible, sometimes too lazy to pray. We don't see, we've got our own prearranged set of values and we don't see what the Bible says. But there it says, "Don't be lazy." Don't be lazy. Going on in verse 12:

> "... but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises."

Faith and patience. You see, anybody that teaches that faith alone will do it is in danger of misleading you because when you've had faith what do you need next? Patience. Wouldn't it be nice if you didn't? How nice that would be.

When Brother Charles Simpson was here recently he set out with a text from Ecclesiastes. I really didn't see the relevance of it at the time but, believe me, I've come to see it since. "Better is the end of a thing than the beginning and better is the patient in spirit than the proud in spirit." You know, as I give oversight to men in ministry and congregations, I find a tremendous number of problems are caused by impatience. We want results too quickly. We want to be there and we're here and we are not prepared to plod through the intervening steps to get there. And the result is some sort of a crisis.

I don't know whether you've ever dealt with sheep, but I have. You might be surprised, it's one of the lesser-known episodes in my life. I discovered if you want to stop sheep going through the gap in the hedge and get them through the gate, you have to think ahead. You have to know where you want them to go long before they know where they're going. And if you don't and it's all a matter of last-minute ideas, they'll be through the hedge. I also discovered—which I'll share free of information—in every flock of sheep there are some that will always go through the wrong gap. I'm not speaking, of course, about anybody here, I'm just talking about sheep. But that's a fact. I learned to keep my eye on those sheep and the moment I saw them heading off in the wrong direction I was there stopping them. Most of the time.

Another of my ministries was building up gaps in hedges! They're closely related. If you don't stop the gaps, you'll chase the sheep that go through them. You may find it hard to believe but that was really what I did for quite awhile.

I don't know whether the Lord had in view something in my future ministry. I really tell you this. Impatience is too expensive. It costs too much. It was Smith Wigglesworth who said that in a fit of temperament in five minutes you can lose something that you can't get back in five years. So bear in mind it's faith and patience. We're going to have in this chapter a real good example of patience.

In fact, that's right where we go next, the example of Abraham. You know, if you and I with our natural mind had been asked to pick out the really great men of the Bible I wonder whether we would have given Abraham as high a position as God gives him. There wasn't an awful lot that was dramatic in Abraham's life. And in many respects the results were rather small. We preach about "You've got to have your family in order." That's good, but Abraham had a lot of problems with his family, even with his wife. Let that encourage some of you!

Seriously, I don't think that we would have estimated Abraham nearly as highly as the Lord did. One of the things in Abraham that the Lord valued was his patience. It really blesses me, because I see how much I need patience. I see how great the rewards of patience are, too. I would like to get off this but I just want to warn you. You can get impatient, and God will forgive you, but you'll pay a price. As Bob Mumford says, "Another trip 'round the mountain!"

All right. Going on in verse 13:

> "For God having promised to Abraham [or having given a promise to Abraham], since he did not have anyone greater to swear by, swore by himself, saying, In blessing I will bless you, and in multiplying I will multiply you."

You need to understand—how do they translate that in here? "I will surely bless you," it says in the New American Standard, "I will surely multiply you." You need to understand that this comes from Hebrew. In Hebrew the way to emphasize a verb is to repeat it. Like Exodus 15:26:

> "If listening you will listen ..."

So God says, "Blessing I will bless you, multiplying I will multiply you." Although in the original it says "your seed." So where that's translated "surely," you need to know that that's the English way of rendering this repetition of the verb. "Blessing I will bless you, multiplying I will multiply your seed." I personally like the original way of saying it, it's more emphatic. It isn't really good English, but it gets the meaning across.

One of the interesting things that Ruth and I have been impressed with lately is that so much of the New Testament is written in Greek by Jewish people. And although they're writing Greek, they think like Hebrews. Time and time again—it would be too complicated to try and go into this—but that's it. The language is Greek, the thought is Hebrew. Here it is. "Blessing I will bless you, multiplying I will multiply you."

Let's turn back to that for a moment, it's in Genesis 22:15–16. This is the scene on Mount Moriah where Abraham has been instructed to offer up his son and heir, Isaac. He's come to the place, gone up the mountain, built the altar, tied Isaac to the altar, lifted up the knife and is ready to sacrifice his son when God speaks to him from heaven and arrests him. We will not read all that God says, we will just begin at verse 15.

> "Then the angel of the LORD ..."

Now this is no ordinary angel. This is, I believe, the second person of the Godhead, the eternal Son.

> "Then the angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven, and said, 'By Myself I have sworn,' declares the LORD, 'because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son, indeed I will greatly bless you [blessing I will bless you], and I will ... multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens ...'"

I want you to notice that God said He would bless Abraham but He would multiply his seed. His seed—his descendants—his son and his son's sons. Notice what he multiplied. He multiplied what Abraham offered to him. See, you can hold on to something and have it, but if you want God to multiply it, you have to let it go. Whatever God is going to multiply you have to release to Him. If you don't release it, you can have it but it's like the little corn of wheat. It abides alone. You've got it in your tight little hand, it's all yours; you can do what you like with it. But it'll never produce more while it's in your hand. You've got to release it, let it fall into the ground, disappear out of sight, be there where people might even walk over it. And when you've let it go and God has had time to deal with it, out of that husk will come a new life. But only when you let it go.

I don't believe that happens just once in the life of most believers; I think every stage of progress is a stage of releasing something to God.

> "Blessing I will bless you, multiplying I will multiply you."

Let's go back to Hebrews 6:15.

> "And so when he had been patient, he obtained the promise."

Let's look at Abraham's patience just for a moment. It's just the figures about Abraham's age.

Genesis 12:4.

> "So Abra[ha]m went forth as the LORD had spoken to him; and Lot went with him. Now Abra[ha]m was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran."

Okay? The next Scripture is Genesis 16:16.

> "And Abraham was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to him."

Seventy-five to eighty-six is eleven years. Take off nine months for conception. Ten years Abraham waited and didn't see any evidence, took things into his own hands. The result, as always, was not an Isaac, but an Ishmael. Every time you take things into your own hands, you are creating problems for yourself. If ever there was a warning in history, here it is. Four thousand years later, the great source of problems for the promised seed of Abraham is the seed of Ishmael. Four thousand years of problems because he went ahead and did his own thing. He waited ten years. He said, "God isn't doing anything, so I might as well."

Now let's look in chapter 21:5.

> "Now Abraham was one hundred years old when his son Isaac was born."

So from eighty-six to one hundred. Take off nine months, and you get ninety-nine. You see my reckoning? Eighty-six to ninety-nine, thirteen years Abraham never heard from the Lord. Thirteen silent years because he stepped out into his own initiative. It took him thirteen years to get back. It's a really solemn lesson. You can take things into your own hands but when you've finished don't ask God to take them out on your schedule because He won't do it.

Going on. I believe we could almost finish this chapter. We're back in Hebrews 6:13–15, then 16–17.

> "For men swear by the greater, and the oath for confirmation for them is the end of all argument. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to demonstrate to the heirs of the promise the immutability of his counsel interposed with an oath."

Or guaranteed with an oath. But I like "interposed himself with an oath." That's my preferred translation. He said, "By myself I have sworn, here I am. I'm the guarantee." Verse 18:

> "In order that by two ..."

I like the word immutable. That's King James. But there's no substitute for those good Old English words.

> "... immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong encouragement, we who have fled to lay hold of the hope that is set before us."

First of all, let's notice the theme of encouragement for a moment. I'd like you to turn to Romans 15:4–5. These are some very beautiful verses.

> "For whatever things were written beforehand ..."

In other words, all preceding Scripture.

> "... was written for our instruction, in order that through perseverance [or endurance] and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope."

So why was the Bible written? For our instruction and that we might be encouraged and have hope. But notice the hope comes only through perseverance. We have to hang in. Then Paul goes on in Romans 15:5:

> "May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you ..."

We don't need to read the rest. Notice, He's the God of endurance and encouragement. But it seems to me that you've got to have it in that order. If you want the encouragement you've got to have the endurance first. He's the God of endurance and encouragement. Endurance or perseverance. I personally prefer the translation endurance, I think it brings out the nuance of the Greek a little better. Now we've got one more thing we can look at, going back to Hebrews 6:18:

> "In order that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong encouragement, we who have fled to lay hold of the hope set before us."

Now that is a metaphor taken from the Old Testament. In the Old Testament if a man's life was in danger and he wanted a place of refuge, he fled to the altar. The altar had four horns, one in each corner. He took hold of the horns of the altar. And generally speaking, once you've got hold of the horns of the altar, you were safe. No one would pull you away from there.

We can look at an example of this in 1 Kings 1:50–51. Now Adonijah was the older brother of Solomon and he had tried to usurp the kingdom and been frustrated and he felt that Solomon was going to take vengeance on him, so he fled to the altar and took hold of its horns.

> "Adonijah was afraid of Solomon, and he arose, [and] went and took hold of the horns of the altar. Now it was told Solomon, saying, 'Behold, Adonijah is afraid of King Solomon, for behold, he has taken hold of the horns of the altar, saying, 'Let King Solomon swear to me today that he will not put his servant to death with the sword.'"

So that's the picture. The altar and its horns are your place of refuge.

Now we have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope that is set before us. The hope is like the horns of the altar; it's that which comes out of the place of sacrifice. But, you've got to hold onto it. Don't let it go. So the picture is running there to the altar, arriving with the pursuer on your heels and grabbing hold of this and saying, "I'm not letting go, you're not going to pull me away." I think it's a picture of someone in desperation. I'm sure none of you have ever felt like that! You don't know where to go or what to do and you just get to the altar and you catch hold of the horns and you hold on. That's part of the spiritual life. If it happens to you, don't think it's necessarily a disaster. It's just one of those things that happens to God's people.

Going to verse 19 and 20. In verse 18 it's spoken about laying hold of the hope which is compared to the horns of the altar, our place of refuge from which no one can drag us away if we hold on. Then it takes this concept of hope and it uses a second very vivid picture of hope. I'll translate it and then I'll make some comments on it.

> "Which hope we have as an anchor for the soul, secure and firm and which enters in within the veil [or the curtain, the second veil], where a forerunner on our behalf has entered, Jesus, a high priest having become forever a high priest in the order of Melchizedek."

Now this theme of hope is very, very rich to me. I have to be careful I don't start to preach a sermon on hope. But many years ago I wrestled with a problem that I know none of you have ever had to wrestle with. But just be patient with me, it was depression. I had it in an acute form. I was a preacher, I was a pastor, I was supposed to have all the answers for everybody I thought. But I had this problem of depression which would come over me, weigh me down, shut me off from people and give me a sense of hopelessness. I did everything I knew to do in those days and the problem got worse.

Then one day reading in Isaiah 61:3, I read this phrase, "The garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." And as I read that phrase "the spirit of heaviness," the Holy Spirit spoke to me and said, That is your problem. It's not you, it's not a mental condition, it's not a fixation, it's a spirit. I had a revelation. I had a revelation of my past. I had a revelation of my home, my family—my father, in particular. I could say that was a kind of familiar spirit. It was something that dogged the family. The great relief was to realize it wasn't me, it was another person. Then I saw I needed deliverance. I found one Scripture in Joel 2:32:

> "It shall come to pass that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered."

I put those two Scriptures together, Isaiah 61:3, Joel 2:32. I called on the name of the Lord and I was delivered. I didn't know anything about the ministry of deliverance; I didn't get into that ministry for another ten years. But I was delivered. I didn't tell anybody except my wife because I thought it was a disgrace for a Pentecostal pastor to be delivered from an evil spirit. So I just kept quiet about it and didn't tell anybody. But once I was delivered I realized that my weakness was in the area of my mind, my thought life. I would say this: I had a very highly-trained, cultivated mind because of my background in philosophy. The more trained your mind is, the more vulnerable it is, in a certain sense. The more you rely on your mind, the more it is your point of weakness. And God showed me that He had done for me what I couldn't do for myself. He'd delivered me from this spirit of depression. But that after that, it was my business to protect my mind.

And then I thought, How do I protect my mind? I read in Ephesians 6 about the helmet of salvation. I said "Helmet, that must be it. That's what protects the head." Then I thought about the phrase "helmet of salvation" and I thought, What is the helmet of salvation? I'm saved, does that mean I have the helmet of salvation or if I don't have it, what is it? And there was a cross reference in my Bible to 1 Thessalonians 5:8 where it says:

> "For a helmet take the hope of salvation ..."

And then I had another re-illumination. I saw that the helmet that protects your mind is hope. Faith, biblical faith, is in the area of the heart. But the protection for the mind is hope.

Then I got a sermon on hope from the Holy Spirit. I'd heard a lot of sermons on faith, some sermons on love, but never had I heard one sermon on hope up to that point. But Paul says, "Now abideth faith, hope and love, these three." And I have to say, it's worked. Today my mind is protected. It doesn't mean that it's never assailed, but basically it is no longer vulnerable. God showed me that I had to change my whole pattern of thinking. I kind of saw that like everybody's born either a Republican or a Democrat, everybody is born either a pessimist or an optimist. There was no doubt about

which I was born. I was born and trained to be a pessimist. In my family that was the training you got. If you weren't worrying, then you needed to worry about the fact that you weren't worrying! God showed me I had to change, that He wasn't going to do that. I had to replace the negative with the positive. It was a matter of discipline and it took quite a number of years for me to achieve it. But of all the pictures of hope—and there are many in the Bible, many statements about it, there is none more beautiful than this passage here in the end of the 6th chapter of Hebrews: "The hope is an anchor for the soul." Remember, the soul is the emotional part of you, amongst other things, that's not the whole of the soul. But it's the part where you have the tempests. It's the part where you're up one day and down the next. It's the part that has theology but it also has doubts. And God has provided an anchor which is ... what? Hope.

Now this anchor extends out of time into eternity. It goes right inside the second veil into the Holy of Holies into the immediate presence of God where Jesus Himself has already entered on our behalf. It's secure and firm.

Then, being a logician or a philosopher, having a complicated mind, I sat down and I said to myself, "What needs an anchor?" The answer is a boat or a ship. "Why does a boat need an anchor?" The answer, because a boat floats in a totally unstable element. There's nothing in its element to make it secure. Consequently, it needs an anchor to reach out through that unstable element and fasten into something that is stable.

And then I saw that's what hope is. In this world, in the temporal life, there is no stability. And you'll grope and seek in vain for anything in this world that will give you stability. There is nothing. You can have the best life insurance, but it does not give you stability. You can have a job and a home and a car and a salary and everything, but that does not give you stability. Stability is not available in this element in which we live. If you want it, you have to have an anchor. The anchor has to reach out through the temporal into the eternal and fasten there. And when your anchor is fastened there, the boat may be tossed but it'll be held. And that anchor is hope.

Another thing I saw is faith is in the now, hope is in the future. We sometimes mix them up. Faith in the future doesn't work. I was praying for a lady Sunday night. I don't know whether I should tell this story, God bless her dear heart. It was in a Pentecostal church. I had preached Sunday morning in an Episcopal Church, or Anglican, and Sunday night Pentecostal. If there are two groups of people I know from the inside, that's those two groups. So I'm praying for these people in the Pentecostal church and this lady has arthritis and I say to her, "Listen, I believe that's an evil spirit. If I cast it out, will you let it go?" which is the way I usually speak. She said, "Oh yes, I've been a minister for ..." I don't know how many years, but a lot. So I ministered to her, and I could feel God's power touch her and I said, "Now, I'm going to cast this spirit out." Then I said, "How are you doing?" She said, "By His stripes I am healed." I said, "That's not where it's at." I knew that was how she was going to come out. I said, "You'll always have tomorrow, but faith is for today." She would go on saying "By His stripes I am healed" until she gets to the grave. You see what I'm saying? She had faith into the future. That's not faith. Faith is now. Hope is for the future. And hope will not do for you what's promised to faith. See?

But there is a place for hope. Now I have a hope. I believe that when I die, if I make it through by God's grace, I'm going to leave this world and I'm going to go to a beautiful place, a glorious place, an eternal place, a place where there's no sin, no sickness, no sorrow, no death and no crime. You may say I'm naive but I believe it. I have a hope. I'm looking forward to something beyond the grave. That's my anchor. I don't know whether you've ever noticed, maybe you haven't had opportunity. God's people are often most joyful when they have least in this world. You don't go to the people with two Cadillacs to find people that are necessarily joyful. But the people that don't know where their next meal is coming from and don't have any shoes on their feet are often filled with he joy of the Lord. Do you know why? Because all they've got is the anchor. Other people have got so much sometimes that they've let the anchor slip. They don't realize there is no stability in this life.

So there's your anchor. It's hope. Without Christ we are without God and without hope. That's the most miserable condition. It's death while we live.

Now we're going back to Hebrews 6 and we're going to look at the last verse of the chapter as a jumping off point for the next chapter.

Where [that is within the veil] a forerunner for us ... I love that "for us." Jesus didn't do all that for Himself. He was all right; He belonged up there. He left it, came down and went back—not for Himself but for us. He's our representative. He's arrived ahead of us to make sure that we find the way.

> "... he [Jesus] has entered having become a high priest forever in the order of Melchizedek."

Now we're back at the theme of the high priest. If you want to turn just for a moment back to your outline, 2/6, you'll notice that the third passage begins at chapter 6:20 and goes on through chapter 10:25. We are now really into this theme of the high priesthood. It goes on for four chapters basically.

So now we go into chapter 7 and here we begin the third passage of comparison. The comparison is between the priesthood of Melchizedek and the Levitical priesthood. For me, Melchizedek is one of the most exciting persons in the Bible. I never think about Melchizedek without getting excited.

Let's read a little and then we'll go to our outline. Hebrews 7:1–2.

> "For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham as he was returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, to whom also Abraham apportioned a tenth of everything [or a tithe], being first of all, by the translation of his name, king of righteousness, and then also king of Salem, which is king of peace."

Let's pause there, it isn't the end of the sentence, but let's digest that. Now we need to look at the historical record of the passage on which it's based which is in Genesis 14:18–20. A careless reader could read Genesis 14 and scarcely even notice Melchizedek. There's only three verses there and there's only one more verse in all the rest of the Old Testament about him, which is Psalm 110:4. And yet, in a sense, he's one of the main themes of this epistle.

> "And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; now he was priest of God Most High."

That's one of the titles of God, "God Most High." In Hebrew, el Elyon.

> "And he [that is Melchizedek] blessed him [Abraham] and said, "Blessed be Abram of God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth; and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand."
>
> [end of the blessing] And he [Abraham] gave him [Melchizedek] a tenth of all."

That's the entire passage. Now we turn back to Hebrews 7, let me just take some of the things that are in your outline on Page 7/1. First of all, we take the name Melchizedek. In Hebrew, malkiy tsedeq. malkiy, king; tsedeq, righteousness. His name means "king of righteousness." Keep your finger in Hebrews 7 and turn to Jeremiah for a moment. Jeremiah 23:6.

> "In His days [that's the days of the righteous branch of David who is the Messiah] Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely..."

That is something they desperately need right now.

> "... and this is His name by which He will be called, 'The LORD our righteousness.'"

In Hebrew, Adoni tsidkenu. And then in Jeremiah 33:16:

> "In those days Judah shall be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell in safety; and this is the name by which she shall be called [that's Jerusalem]: the Lord is our righteousness."

Adonai tsidkenu. You'll notice that the bride takes the bridegroom's name. It's a beautiful picture. So

Adonai is the Lord, tsidkenu is our righteousness.

I was with a group of tourists in Israel and we had our Jewish guide, Dorit, there. And these people were singing this chorus which goes "Jehovah Jireh ..." You know? Which is taken from Genesis 22, "the LORD will provide." Our guide, who speaks good English, looked at me and said, "What are they talking about?" She said, "What is that?" I said it's Adonai Jireh. She just said, "These people, there's nothing you can do with them!" But you see, where we say Jehovah, it's not really a name at all, it's the vowels of one name and the consonants of another. The Jewish people say Adonai.

So, "the LORD our righteousness" is Adonai tsidkenu. Tsidkenu means the same as tsedeq with the ending for "our."

Now we're back in our outline, that was just a little excursion. Remember, Melchi–zedek, "king of righteousness." Then he's also king of Salem, which is the

same as shalom. How many of you know what shalom means? Peace. Probably reappears in Jerusalem. Jerusalem is probably ?ear shalom?, "the city of righteousness." The Arabs call it ?uru shaleem? which is really, in a way, closer to what we have here.

I want you to notice the two-way relationship between Melchizedek and Abraham. First, Melchizedek provided bread and wine. That was tremendously significant. Just look in Matthew 26 for a moment. Verses 26–28. At the Last Supper.

> "While they were eating, Jesus took some bread, and after a blessing, He broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body.' And He took a cup and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you; for this is My blood of the covenant, which is to be shed on behalf of many for forgiveness of sins.'"

The bread and the wine are the outward symbols or evidences of the New Covenant. They were never offered by the Levitical priesthood. But long before the Levitical priesthood, 400 years before the Levitical priesthood, Melchizedek, when he met Abraham, gave him bread and wine. When Jesus gave the bread and wine to His disciples at the Last Supper, I don't know whether they realized at the time that He was saying, "Here I am in the order of Melchizedek. This is the New Covenant. The priesthood of Melchizedek is being restored." Or reappearing, shall we say.

On the other hand, Abraham offered tithes of everything to Melchizedek. So, there are two practices of the church which are very ancient. The one is receiving the bread and the wine, the other is bringing our tithes. In this particular fellowship, habitually we tend to bring them together and I never wish to make a law out of that, but I believe we have a beautiful precedent. We're following a tradition which is as old as almost any tradition in the history of God's people. We're receiving the bread and wine, and we're bringing our tithes.

By that we are acknowledging Jesus as the high priest after the order of Melchizedek. There's a tremendous significance to it. I don't like to be legalistic about tithing; I don't believe the New Testament makes tithing a command. But, I believe it is a very sacred privilege. I believe what we do with our tithes should not be done casually. It should be done reverently, it should be a part of worship and we should bear in mind it is the way to acknowledge our high priest. Very simple. The basis: Receive the bread and the wine, give tithes of all.

As far as I understand the tithe, it's something very holy. Anybody that misuses tithes is in danger from God.

So, you see here we go back to something that's very, very ancient. A lot of liturgical churches are proud of their traditions which go back eighteen or nineteen centuries or fifteen centuries, whatever it may be. Here's a tradition that goes back four thousand years. I believe that if we would remember this when we take from the Lord's Table we would have a sense of holy awe and reverence which would bless us. I'm not saying this is the only way to do it but I am saying I'm glad we do it this way.

It says of Melchizedek, verse 3 of chapter 7:

> "Without father, without mother ..."

It doesn't mean he didn't have them, it just means they're not named. Or, it could mean he didn't have them. How many of you believe that God could bring a complete priest into the world just any way He wanted? I do.

> "... he was without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but he was made like to the Son of God, and he remains a priest perpetually."

Continually, forever. So that's a picture of Melchizedek. That's contrary to the whole normal practice of the Bible. In the Bible we nearly always find out who somebody's father is, who their son is.

Brother Loren Cunningham is a friend of mine, a founder of YWAM, Youth With A Mission. He has a sermon he preaches on knowing your roots. He starts by reading the genealogy of Jesus from Matthew 1, and that's his text. He illustrates by the testimony of a Hindu who found faith in Jesus Christ out of the genealogy because he said, "With us Hindus, our gods disappeared. We never knew where they came from, what was their background. When I discovered with Jesus, He had a background, He had a genealogy; that drew me to Him." Melchizedek in this respect is a deliberate exception. We are directed to the fact that his genealogy is not stated and that's done because he's to be a picture not of the earthly Jesus but of the eternal high priest.

Okay. Going on to verses 4–10 we find there four marks of Melchizedek's superiority. We'll read the passage, then we'll look back. Hebrews 7, beginning at verse 4:

> "But consider who great this man was to whom Abraham, the patriarch, gave a tenth of the best of the spoils. And those of the sons of Levi who receive the priesthood have a commandment to take a tithe from the people according to the law, that is, their brothers, although they also proceeded out of the loins of Abraham. But here the one whose genealogy is not reckoned from them received a tithe from Abraham, and blessed him [that's Abraham] who had the promises. [Verse 7] And without all dispute the less is blessed by the greater."

In other words, the reasoning is if Melchizedek blessed Abraham, then Melchizedek was greater than Abraham.

> "And here [that is in the law] men who die receive tithes, but there he of whom it is witnessed that he lives. And as you might say, through Abraham even Levi, who receives tithes, paid tithes, for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him."

Let's just look at our outline, which I think will make it a little easier to pick out the salient features.

Four marks of the superiority of Melchizedek over the Levitical priesthood.

Number one, Abraham gave him tithes.

Number two, he blessed Abraham, the great father of God's people.

Number three, he continues forever. He lives, he doesn't die. And the reference there in the margin is Psalm 110:4, where we've been probably half a dozen times already.

Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

And four, through Abraham even Levi gave tithes because Levi was still in the loins of his father Abraham at that time. He had not yet been born. There are four points to establish the superiority of Melchizedek and his priesthood over the Levitical priesthood.

Now, verse 11:

> "For if perfection was available [or was obtainable] through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the Law), what need is there for another priest to arise in the order of Melchizedek, and not to be named in the order of Aaron?"

The point there is that the need for another priest subsequent to the Levitical priesthood points out that the Levitical priesthood is not the ultimate, it's not the end. You have to bear in mind as we pointed out earlier, this epistle is addressed to people who were in danger of going back to the old order and settling for that. So much of the stress of the letter is that was not the ultimate. You cannot stop there and have perfection or completion. Completion, perfection, maturity doesn't come through the Levitical priesthood; there has to be another priesthood to bring us into that.

Going on in verse 12:

> "For with a change made of the priesthood, of necessity there is also a change of the law."

You see the reasoning behind that? The law was inseparably bound up with the Levitical priesthood. It assumed the existence and operation of the Levitical priesthood. If the priesthood is to be changed, then the law must be changed too. They are bound together. It's a very profound argument, and it's very cleverly directed to the Jewish mind. If you don't happen to have a Jewish mind, you may not see all the need for it. But believe me, if you've dealt with a Jewish mind you can see it's very relevant.

Verse 13:

> "For the one of whom these things are spoken came from another tribe, from which no one gave attendance at the altar [or served at the altar]."

In other words, not only is there a change of the priesthood and a change of the law, but there's a change of the tribe,

too. We're not any longer talking about the tribe of Levi. Verse 14:

> "For it is already clear [or clear in advance] that our Lord arose from the tribe of Judah, of which tribe Moses said nothing about priests."

No priests came from the tribe of Judah under the Law of Moses. Furthermore, no kings came from the tribe of Levi. This is one of the important facts about the Old Covenant. Kingship and priesthood were separated; they could not come from one and the same tribe. The kingship came from the tribe of Judah, the priesthood came from the tribe of Levi; and any attempt to switch was punished by God. For instance, when King Saul offered sacrifice, which was a priestly function, he forfeited his position as king.

Incidentally, we have to point out since I'm on that subject and I didn't intend to get into it—but if you have a logical mind you're already asking: Why was Saul a king when he was from the tribe of Benjamin? Maybe none of you had that kind of alert mind to arrive at that problem. The answer is very interesting, I cannot give you the Scripture references because I didn't prepare to say this. But, it's stated in the Law that an illegitimate child or one who is born illegitimate will not enter into the congregation of the Lord until the tenth generation. You'll find that in the book of Deuteronomy. And, Judah had an illegitimate son named Perez and for the next nine generations Judah was ineligible to provide a king. David was the tenth generation. See, the absolute accuracy of God's Word even when there is no apparent link up. And so, they had to find a king from the tribe of Benjamin, which was next to Judah until that judgment of God had been, shall we say, expiated. But actually the ordained purpose of God was always that the king should come from Judah.

Let's look at two Scriptures that reveal this. Genesis 49:10. This is Jacob's blessings and prophecies concerning his sons just before he died. Have you ever heard that—I think it comes from Shakespeare— "Truth sits on the lips of dying men." Well, here is really an example. Jacob is at the end of his life and he tells each one of his sons their destiny. Speaking to Judah—we won't go to the whole passage—but in verse 10 he says:

> "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until Shiloh comes."

Shiloh is usually taken as a title of Messiah and the most probable explanation of what Shiloh means is "the one to whom it belongs." Until the One to whom it belongs comes.

Then in Isaiah 11 we have this clear prophecy of Messiah.

> "Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, and a branch from his roots will bear fruit. And the Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him ..."

This is a portrait of Messiah. So Messiah the King was to come from the tribe of Judah.

But, it is already predicted also in Psalm 110 that the Messiah was to be a priest after the order of Melchizedek. We better look there again although we have looked there, I'm sure, at least half a dozen times. Psalm 110:1:

> "The LORD says to my Lord: 'Sit at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies a footstool for Thy feet.'"

That was applied by Jesus to Himself. So there's the Messiah as the King exalted at God's right hand.

But verse 4 says of the same person:

> "The LORD has sworn and will not change His mind, 'Thou art a priest forever [after] the order of Melchizedek.'"

It was already arranged prophetically in the Old Testament that the Messiah, the King, was to come from the tribe of Judah but also He was to be a priest after the order of Melchizedek. We have, as the writer of Hebrews says, a setting aside of the old order of the Law of Moses with a new order in which the roles were different.

Turning back now to Hebrews 7:15–17.

> "And it is also much more clear [that is, that our Lord rose from the tribe of Judah], if another priest is to arise in the likeness of Melchizedek, who is not appointed according to the law of a carnal [or fleshly] commandment, but according to the power of an indestructible life. For it is testified of

> Him, You are a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek."

Let's look at the requirements for the Levitical priesthood. There were two and they were fleshly, they were in the physical body. Number one, he had to be descended from Levi. That was a matter of the physical body. Number two, every Levitical priest had to be without physical blemish. Let's look in Leviticus 21 just for a few moments. We only need to read from verse 17, a few verses.

> "Speak to Aaron, saying, 'No man of your offspring throughout their generations who has a defect shall approach to offer the bread of his God. For no one who has a defect shall approach: a blind man, or a lame man, or he who has a disfigured face, or any deformed limb, or a man who has a broken foot or broken hand, or a hunchback or a dwarf, or one who has a defect in his eye or eczema or scabs or crushed testicles. No man among the descendants of Aaron the priest, who has a defect, is to come near to offer the LORD'S offerings ...'"

So that was a matter of physical condition. That was the basis of the Levitical priesthood. Descent from Levi and having a body that was physically sound.

But the requirement for the priesthood of Melchizedek was an indestructible life. In that connection I would like you to turn to Revelation 1:17–18. I think I'll go there in Greek. This is how the resurrected Christ appeared to John on the Isle of Patmos. I think it was when Charles Simpson was here, he made this rather significant remark—I don't know whether you noticed—that when John knew Jesus in the flesh, he could rest with his head on His bosom. But when he met the resurrected Christ in His glory, he fell at His feet as one dead. Revelation 1:17:

> "When I saw Him I fell at His feet as a dead person. And He placed His right hand upon me saying, 'Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, and the one who lives; and I became dead, and behold, I am alive for the ages of ages [for all eternity], and I have the keys of death and of hell.'"

That's the power of an indestructible life. He could go down into the grave, His whole body could be mutilated and marred beyond recognition; but He came up resurrected in glory and power. That's His qualification to be the priest after the order of Melchizedek. We'll look, I think, at verse 18 and 19 and close for this session. You really need to read this through for yourself. I probably don't need to tell you. Because, the reasoning is very condensed and breaking it up and commenting on it, in a certain sense, you lose some of the continuity. If I do this for you, you can read it for yourself in a more continuous way. Verse 18:

> "For there takes place a setting aside of the commandment that went before because of its weakness and uselessness (for the law made nothing perfect), but then there is the bringing in a better hope, through which we draw near to God."

All right? What the writer is saying is in replacing the Levitical priesthood with the priesthood of Melchizedek, there are many implications. A new priesthood means a new law. A new law requires a new covenant. A new covenant is based on better promises. He says the whole of that system was set aside. Why? Because it couldn't do what was needed. It's now been replaced by a better hope through which we draw near to God.

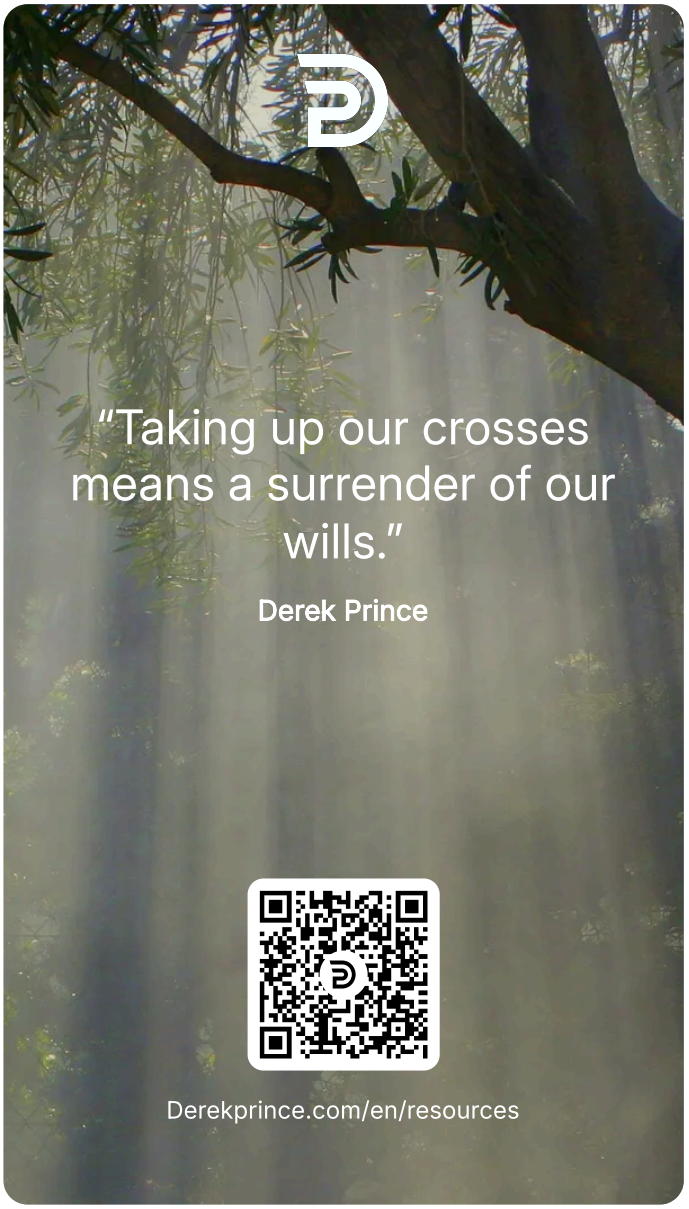
Then it says "the Law made nothing perfect." You'll remember, perfect [perfection, mature, maturity, completeness] is one of the keys. We have to have something that can do the whole job, that can make us perfect, that can bring us to perfection and that can bring us near to God. See, the law did not bring people near to God. In a sense, it kept them away from God. It was inadequate for the total needs of humanity.

We've run out of time and to go any further demands taking another deep breath and starting all over again.

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Sermon

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