

Finishing Well

Lesson #9 Warning #3 Hebrews 5:11 - 6:12 March 17, 2021
The Danger Of Spiritual Immaturity - GROW UP

Hebrews: The Supremacy of Jesus Christ

- Written to Hebrew believers who had trusted Jesus Christ for their salvation.
- Danger in returning to the Temple and Jewish religion to escape increasing persecution

Hebrews' 5 warnings are a unit which build upon one another and intensify until warning #5.

Warning #1: Danger Of Drifting > Because of Neglect > Leads to

Warning #2: Doubting and Disbelieving God's Word > develop hardness of heart

Warning #3: Danger of Spiritual Immaturity

The writer is gravely concerned about the Jewish Christians of his day. The implied threat is that these believers would stumble & not appropriate to themselves the Glories of Jesus Christ.

Result: They would depart from their confession and fall back into Judaism. He gives them

4 "Let Us" statements to admonish and encourage them to remain steadfast in Jesus Christ.

- Heb. 4:1 Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.
- Heb. 4:11 Let us labor [be diligent] therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.
- Heb. 4:14 Let us hold fast our profession [confession].
- Heb. 4:16 Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

Heb. 5:1-10 The writer begins his explanation of the heavenly priesthood of Christ, but he was not sure his readers were ready for what he had to teach.

He wants them to have a deeper understanding of Scripture, but he now pauses between

Heb. 5:11-7:1 to rebuke, warn and admonish those who would cease from growing spiritually.

Question: Why were they tempted to back into legalism?

- They were not going on to maturity in Christ. The answer: Grow Up

Important: The emphasis in this section: Make Spiritual Progress Time To Mature

Heb. 5:11 There is much more we would like to say about this, but it is difficult to explain, especially since you are spiritually dull of hearing [poor listeners]

- The problem was not that he is a dull teacher, but they were Dull Hearers!

Heb. 6:12 That you be not slothful [dull, lazy], but followers [imitate those] of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

- Summarizes the main message of this difficult section.

Truth: All believers begin as babes in Christ. Command

I Pet. 2:2-3 Like newborn babies you should crave (thirst for, earnestly desire) the pure (unadulterated) spiritual milk, that by it you may be nurtured and grow unto [completed] salvation, ³ Since you have [already] tasted the goodness and kindness of the Lord. [amplified]

Truth: Spiritual Maturity Is God's Objective For All Believers

Eph. 4:13-14 Until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature [perfect, complete] man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive

Heb. 5:12 Spiritual Maturity Is Lacking in Many Believers

Not Because We Have Not Had Time > We Have Not Applied Ourselves

Truth: You are either drifting with regard to your salvation because of neglect, or you are growing because of deliberate effort and attention. But nobody grows by accident.

Marks of Spiritual Immaturity Heb. 5:11-14

Heb. 5:11 Concerning Him we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing.

1. Dullness Toward The Word

Result: Dull of hearing = Slothful; condition of spiritual apathy and laziness that prevents spiritual development; to have no push

- Greek = nothros = person who has the imperceptive and lethargic nature of a stone
- Unable to listen to the Word, receive it and act on it > Immaturity

Gal. 5:7 Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?

Started their "backward journey" by Drifting from the Word.

Heb. 2:1-4

Drifting led to Doubting the Word.

Heb. 3:7-4:13

Rom. 10:17 Faith comes by HEARING and hearing by the Word of God.

Contrast with attitude of the Thessalonians in I Thess. 2:13

"For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the Word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the Word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe." [Ears to hear]

2. Inability To Share

Heb. 5:12a For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God;

- Regression; failing to advance; lack of development
- Instead of helping others to grow, these believers were in need of learning again the simple teachings of the Christian life. A 2nd childhood!

3. Failing To Use Time Wisely

Heb. 5:12a For though by this time you ought to be teachers...

- By this time: They had been believers for a time - not recent new Christians
- Every Christian who has been a believer for a few years should be knowledgeable enough in the teachings of Scripture to instruct a younger believer.

4. Constant Diet Of Milk With No Meat > You have a Restricted Diet

Heb. 5:12b are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat

- Milk is predigested food suited for babies.
- Milk = first principles of the oracles of God; refers to what Jesus did on earth >
 - His birth, life, teaching, death, burial and resurrection.
 - We begin our Christian life on the basis of His finished work on earth.

II Pet. 3:18 But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

- Meat = What Jesus is doing in heaven; His ministry as our High Priest - We GROW in the Christian life based on the basis of His unfinished work in Heaven.
 - Meat can only be handled with growth & development > with teeth to chew it.
 - Handling the meat of the Word needs to be "worked up to." Need foundation first
 - The meat of God's Word is not something that can be read and understood at a glance.

Quote: Surface level Bible reading will create a surface level Christian.

- Meat requires study, research, thought, reasoning and some struggle to understand.
- To understand, look at it in its context.

The writer of Hebrews is attempting to get them to see Jesus as our High Priest.

- He has previously shown them Jesus the Son of God, Jesus our Savior, Jesus the Word, Jesus the Shepherd, Jesus the Mediator.

Underlying problem: Jesus Christ is not from the tribe of Levi; he is from tribe of Judah.

- He describes Jesus as a priest after the order of Melchizedek.
- This takes some study and thought. Must understand OT characters and dates.
- One must study it to understand how Jesus Christ was a High Priest like Melchizedek.

5. Unskilled In Using The Word > Failure to Apply What We Learn

Heb. 5:13-14 For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe [infant].

Consider: An immature believer will listen to any preacher on the radio or television and not be able to identify whether or not he is true to the Scriptures.

Research indicates that upwards of 70% of the contemporary church are spiritually immature/carnal. Is this why the church seems to be so ineffectual? Is this one of the reasons the false prophets are basking in the spotlight while true teachers are ignored? The most obvious case in Scripture is found in I Cor. 3:1-3. Paul rebuked the Corinthian saints.

I Cor. 3:1-4 "And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it [bear it]. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, for you are still fleshly [carnal = set on worldly things]. For since there is envying [jealousy] and strife and divisions among you, are you not fleshly [carnal], and are you not walking like mere men? For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not carnal?"

Two kinds of Brethren in the Church: Carnal & Spiritual

Note: Being in The Body of Christ does not shield one from being carnal

Spiritual Brethren in the Church

- Capable of eating meat = food for the mature
- Rom. 8:5 Mind the things of the spirit
- Rom. 8:4 Led by the Spirit

Carnal Brethren in the Church

- Eat on milk for the immature
- Rom. 8:5 Minds the things of the flesh
- Rom. 8:4 Walk after the flesh

1. When one says he is a believer but will not respond to the clear teachings and authority of the Word of God, it is fair to classify him or her as an *infant*.
 - His lack of response denotes the believer's inability to digest the Word of God.
2. Babes in Christ tend to avoid strong doses of the Word because they know the Word will convict them of their wrongdoing, and their consciences will prod them to change. *Infants* may even attempt to discredit the Word in their desires to rationalize and justify self-serving actions.
3. *Infants Rebel: Indeed, even now you are not yet able, for you are still fleshly [carnal]* They were passive and/or rebellious regarding their new life and position in Him. They were rebelling against God's commands for ALL believers.

Gal. 5:16 Walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.

I Thess. 5:19 Quench not the Holy Spirit!

- It is the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer that secures the victory over sexual lust, covetousness, and self-centeredness; carnal, fleshly desires
- The power of the ministry of the Holy Spirit parallels the degree to which believers allow the Word of God to *richly dwell within* them.

Eph. 5:18-19 And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit.

Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;

Col. 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

It is Biblically infantile for one to name the name of Christ and yet continue to display spiritual immaturity and latent insurgency toward God by refusing to adhere to the precepts of His Word. "Throwing protein-rich food from the high-chair is unacceptable. It is rank rebellion."

4. Proof They Were Carnal: Immature Display Jealousy & Cause Strife

I Cor. 3:3 For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?

Notice the progression: Immature believers don't listen to good counsel.

- They rebel and affect others in the body of Christ:

Eph. 4:31 Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:

The babe in Christ has difficulty putting away the old self, his self-centered ambitions and quest for significance. *Infants in Christ walk like mere men. act like non-believers.*

Gal. 2:20 Paul said of himself, "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live"....every mature believer must live with an attitude of being dead to self.

Marks Of A Growing & Maturing Believer

Ability to Appreciate The Wisdom Of God I Cor. 2:6

Immature Christians Are Impressed by sensationalism

- I Cor. 1:22 Impressed by visible signs
- I Cor. 1:22 Impressed by sophistry of human wisdom
- I Cor. 2:4 Impressed by oratorical power

Mature Christians Are Impressed by The Power Of The Gospel

- I Cor. 1:18 The Simple Gospel is God's Power
- I Cor. 1:2 The simple preaching of Jesus Christ is enough.
- I Cor. 2:4-5 They don't require the persuasive words characteristic of human wisdom
- I Cor. 2:7-13 Impressed with the wisdom of God revealed by the Spirit of God

Truth: The ability to discern good and evil is a vital part of Christian maturity.

- The Israelites under Moses lacked this discernment and failed to claim their inheritance.
- The readers of Hebrews were in danger of making the same mistake.

Truth: It is impossible to stand still in our Christian life. Either we go forward and claim God's blessing or we go backward and wander about aimlessly.

"Most Christians are "betweeners;" between Egypt and Canaan - out of the place of bondage and slavery, but not yet into the place of rest and rich inheritance. Die in the wilderness.

Consider: Mature believers had senses trained to discern good and evil.

Question: How did they come to maturity? Practice & Training

Heb. 5:14 But strong meat belongs to them that are of full age [mature], even those who by reason of use [practice] have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

- Use = #1838 = hexis = habit; constant practice; power acquired by practice
- Senses = #145 aisthétérion= to perceive with the aid of the *physical senses*; moral feeling to know what is right or wrong in God's eyes
- Exercised = #1128 = gymnazo = to *train with one's full effort*, i.e. with complete physical, emotional force like when working out intensely *in a gymnasium*; presumes full discipline, necessary to be in "top working condition" (full agility, skill, endurance). This is gained only from *constant, rigorous training (exercise)*. Conveys acquiring *proficiency through practice*
- Discern = #1253 = diakrisis = properly, a *thorough judgment*, i.e. a *discernment (conclusion)* which distinguishes "look-alikes," i.e. things that *appear to be the same*.
- Good = #2570 = kalos = beautiful by reason of purity of heart and life, and hence praiseworthy; morally good, noble
- Bad = #2556 = kakos = evil; what is contrary to law, either divine or human, wrong, crime:

Heb. 5:14 But solid food is for full-grown men, for those whose *senses and mental faculties* are trained by practice to discriminate *and distinguish between what is morally good and noble and what is evil and contrary either to divine or human law.* [amplified]

Spurgeon: Discernment is not knowing the difference between right and wrong. It is knowing the difference between right and almost right.

Heb. 5:14b reason of use [practice] have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

- Our inner "spiritual man" has "spiritual senses."

Eph. 3:16 That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; [Paul's prayer from prison]

Ps. 34:8 O taste and see that the Lord is good.

Matt. 13:16 But blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear

- As we feed on God's Word and apply it in daily life, our inner spiritual senses get their exercise and become strong and keen.
- God's Word will build you up, feed your soul, give you strength, direction, hope & faith. Wow!

I Tim. 4:7-8 Paul called this exercising ourselves unto godliness.

But refuse profane and old wives' fables and exercise thyself rather unto godliness.

⁸ For bodily exercise profits little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, Having Promise Of The Life That Now Is, And Of That Which Is To Come.

Quote: God's Word is the living seed that brings new birth. It is the milk that nurtures the life of a young Christian and the meat that builds the muscle of a mature believer.

Romans 12:1-2 How the believer grows from infancy to maturity:

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

² And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

➤ Spiritual growth occurs when the believer is *transformed by the renewing of his mind*.

Boyce: Our minds become renewed by the study of the life-giving and renewing Word of God. Scripture has the power, since it is *living and active*, to transform an individual from childhood to adulthood to the degree he allows it to renew his mind. Therefore, renewal and transformation are tantamount to knowing and obeying the Word of God.

Mature Believers Use Their Time Wisely

Ps. 119:97, 148 O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day.

Mine eyes prevent the night watches, that I might meditate in thy word.

Eph. 5:15-17 See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise,

¹⁶ Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

Wherefore be ye not unwise but understanding what the will of the Lord is.

Col. 4:5 Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time.

Note: Redeeming the time is related to wisdom in how we "walk," in how we live.

The word for "redeeming" in Ephesians 5:16 is used elsewhere in scripture to refer to Christ redeeming us with the cross - so very costly indeed.

- Redeeming the time carries with it the idea of a cost.
- Redeeming the time requires new birth in Jesus Christ.
- We do not work from our own strength or according to our own priorities.
- Redeeming the time requires being led by the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit

Opportunities To Redeem The Time & Walk Wisely

Those openings for ministry that often come at inconvenient times - a friend who wants to talk, a child with a problem, the chance to lend a hand to someone in need.

Paul is encouraging us to keep our lives uncluttered so that we can respond when the need arises. Opportunities for the Lord's work can get squeezed out of an overly tight schedule.

Think back on your last 24 hours. Were there some "kingdom opportunities" you saw or you see now in retrospect? But which you rushed past because you were "too busy" or not sensitive to the Holy Spirit's leading?

The 16th-century reformer Philip Melanchthon kept a record of every wasted moment and took his list to God in confession at the end of each day. Little wonder that God used him in such great ways.

Henry Blackaby: Timing our obedience is crucial. Invitations from God come with a limited opportunity to respond. Some opportunities to serve Him, if not accepted immediately, will be lost. Occasions to minister to others may pass us by. When God invites us to intercede for someone, it may be critical that we stop what we are doing and immediately adjust our lives to what God is doing. Missing opportunities to serve the Lord can be tragic. When an invitation comes from God, the time to respond is now.



An ancient Greek statue depicted a man with wings on his feet, a large lock of hair on the front of his head, and no hair at all on the back. Beneath was the inscription:

"Who made thee?	Lysippus made me.
What is thy name?	My name is OPPORTUNITY.
Why hast thou wings on thy feet?	That I may fly away swiftly.
Why hast thou a great forelock?	That men may seize me when I come.
Why art thou bald in back?	That when I am gone by, none can lay hold of me."

Spurgeon: If you have not the time, God gave it to you, then you have misspent it.

Only one life 'twill soon be past,
Only what's done for Christ will last.