

"The Need for Spiritual Growth"

Part 1

Hebrews 5:11-14

Introduction:

The writer of Hebrews is writing to a group of Hebrew believers who were under great persecution because of their faith in Jesus Christ. They had come out of Judaism and had come to Jesus Christ for salvation. But the transition from Judaism to Christianity was very difficult for some of these Hebrews. They were walking away from that which their families had followed for hundreds of years. At the time this letter was written the Temple was still standing and the sacrificial system was still in operation. But because of their faith in Christ they had been banned from the Temple. Many were considered to be the "outcasts" of society. Life had now become very difficult for them because of their faith in Christ.

So many of these Hebrews were considering going back into Judaism and therefore the writer is on a mission to help them to see that Jesus is better than anything of the Old Covenant. To go back to the Old Covenant was to go back to the ceremonies and the rituals which were all shadows of Jesus Christ. So the writer, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, is writing to pull these people along in their faith.

Now in order to make his point the writer gives several warnings throughout the letter. I want to quickly recap the warnings which we have seen so far because they will help us to see something in the warning at the end of Hebrews 5.

I. The Warning to the Believers

Hebrews 5:10-14

Part 1

Now before we step into these verses I need to remind you that in Hebrews 5:1-10 the writer had set out to show that the Priesthood of Jesus was superior to the Priesthood of Aaron. The writer had presented some deep spiritual Truth in Hebrews 4:14-16 about Jesus being the Great High Priest and then in Hebrews 5:1-10 he shows that Jesus does qualify to be a High Priest. The writer does this by presenting the qualifications for a high priest in Hebrews 5:1-4. Then in Hebrews 5:5-10 he explains how Jesus meets the qualifications.

Now it was in Hebrews 5:6 that the writer spoke of Melchisedec and it was his desire to continue with the thought of Melchisedec because he was a type of Jesus Christ.

Notice Hebrews 5:10

Here he comes back to Melchisedec again and this brings us to the warning he will give to the Hebrews.

Notice Hebrews 5:11a

Here we see that the writer had many things to say concerning Melchisedec but there was a problem.

1. **They were unable to understand the deep Truths of the Bible.**

Notice Hebrews 5:11

They Hebrew believers were dull of hearing. But there is much more that we need to see.

The words "ye are" could be translated "have become". This is a very alarming Truth. The word "dull" means to be "sluggish" or "slow of hearing". The writer had much to say about Melchisedec but there was a problem and the problem was NOT that it was hard to put into words but the problem was in the hearts of the Hebrews. They had BECOME sluggish in their ability to hear the deep things of God's Word. This tells us that there was a time when they were NOT sluggish in hearing so something happened which caused them to become dull of hearing.

Let me tell you what had caused this in the lives of these people. The cause was divided allegiance. They were divided between Judaism and Christianity. They were divided between Jesus and the Old Covenant. When they were first saved they would have been eager to drink in the milk and eat the meat of the Word but when this letter was written they had BECOME dull of hearing. That means they were not able to understand the deep Truths of God's Word and neither did they have a desire to feed on the Word because there was something else that was consuming their thoughts. Their minds were now filled with the thoughts of Judaism and for that reason their spiritual growth was hindered. There were other consequences also which we will get to but I want to make an application here before we move on.

Application:

Divided allegiance does the same to you and I if we allow it to happen we can be sure our spiritual growth will be hindered and we will not be able to grasp the deep Truths of the Word.

We must guard against anything that steals us away from a steady diet of God's Word. Let me show you some verses and then I will pull some thoughts together. I want to first show you God's blueprint for growth in His children.

Ephesians 4:11-14

¹¹ And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

¹² For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

¹³ Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

¹⁴ That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

Here we can see that God placed spiritually gifted men within the body of Christ to teach the Word to the flock. So God's blueprint here is this, I am to study the Word and then we are to meet together throughout the week and it is my responsibility to teach you what God has given to me in my studies. To be consumed with something else and to not come and get a steady diet of the Word will cause you to become dull of hearing.

Now I know that there are times when people cannot make it. But I also know there are times when people can but they chose something else over sitting under the Word of God. We do have the CD ministry here and that is a great ministry but it is not the same as being here. There is a special blessing when we are gathered together with other believers.

Matthew 18:20

²⁰ For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

This is why the writer of Hebrews speaks to the Hebrews about gathering together in chapter 10.

Hebrews 10:23-25

²³ *Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;)*

²⁴ *And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:*

²⁵ **Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together**, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

The gathering together in the blueprint which God gave for the church is designed for us to grow in our spiritual walk.

So with all of that said we must guard against anything that would become a distraction which would take us away from a regular diet of God's Word.

Let me show you what Jesus said about being one of His disciples.

Luke 14:26-35

²⁶ *If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.*

²⁷ *And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.*

(With these verses Jesus is saying that to be a disciple or a learner of Him we cannot allow anything or anyone to steal away our allegiance and we must be willing to make great sacrifices. Then Jesus goes on to speak of the cost of discipleship.)

²⁸ *For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it?*

²⁹ *Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him,*

³⁰ *Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish.*

(The idea here is to be a disciple is very costly. It will cost us times of leisure and times of self indulgence. So if we are going to be a disciple we had better sit down and count the cost.)

³¹ *Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand?*

³² *Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace.*

(The idea here is that if we are going to be a disciple it will not only affect our lives but it will affect the lives of everyone around us. The king who goes to war does not go alone. His decision will impact many people. The king would have to make a decision. Either he is committed or he is not. He could enter the battle or he could be controlled by the people around him. The same is true of being a disciple of Jesus Christ.)

³³ *So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.*

³⁴ *Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned?*

³⁵ *It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill; but men cast it out. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.*

(Here in these verses Jesus is stating the need for full commitment. Someone who decides to follow Jesus and then gets distracted and tries to serve half hearted is like salt that has lost it savour.)

Now let us get back to Hebrews. The Hebrew believers were distracted and it had made them dull of hearing. Let me show you another verse that applies to those who are of a divided allegiance.

James 1:8

⁸ *A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.*

Let me show you another consequence connected to their divided allegiance.

2. Stunted Spiritual Growth

Notice Hebrews 5:12

This verse helps us to know that they had been saved for some time and in the time that passed the writer makes it very clear that they should have been teachers by now but instead they were in need of someone to teach them the basics of God's Word again.

We need to understand what the writer is implying in this verse. He is telling them that they had the responsibility of growing in their faith and then being able to teach others. This was something that God required of them. The very basics which they needed to be taught again were the very Truths they should have been able to teach to others. Their divided allegiance had not only dulled their hearing but it had also hindered their spiritual growth. We do not know how long they were saved but by this time they should have developed their gifts and been involved exercising those gifts.

Application:

Did you know that God requires the same of us? We should all be growing in our faith so that we are then able to teach to others what we have learned in our lives. I can safely say that God has not saved one person so that they can just sit on a pew. We are not just to be "spiritual sponges". In other words we do not just soak up the Word but we are to also squeeze out to others what it is that we have learned from God.

Conclusion:

Now let me tell you why this is so important especially today. I want to show you a passage that describes our Nation.

Romans 1:18-28

¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;

¹⁹ Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them.

²⁰ For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:

²¹ Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

²² Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,

²³ And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.

²⁴ Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves:

²⁵ Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.

²⁶ For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature:

²⁷ And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet.

²⁸ And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient;