

## **Bibles???**

### **The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority**

Turn your bibles with me to Hebrews 5

We are continuing our verse by verse study through the Book of Hebrews

I want to remind us that this letter was written to a group of Jewish believers who were seriously contemplating returning to Judaism

So the writer send this letter to them exhorting and reminding them that Jesus is greater than anything they wanted to return to.

That all the traditions, feasts and sacrifices and worship ceremonies in Judaism – they all pointed back to Jesus.

And so this evening, we are going to look at the problem of spiritual maturity.

Let's pray...

#### **Read Text –**

One of the things that the company requires of me is that every year, I need to go get my hearing checked.

And I really don't look forward to it because it is a process that takes an hour or two of simply sitting in a waiting room and when they finally call me - they put me in this tiny

little closet with a head set and a pushbutton – and I am supposed to just sit there until I hear beeps.

One time – they left me in there for 30 minutes after the beeping was done – they forgot about me

And I usually go before lunch – so there are times when my stomach is growling and sometimes I hear my stomach instead of the beeps.

And for those of us that have never taken the test, they start off with some really low frequency beeps and the beeps get higher in frequency until one can no longer hear them.

And so - what the clinic does is they get your baseline of your hearing and then every year they compare the new results with the baseline and they can tell whether or not your hearing loss is getting worse from working in a noisy environment.

This assessment is then sent to my boss.

And by the grace of God, my hearing hasn't changed much in the last 26 years.

The reason I bring this up is because in our text this evening - the writer of the Book of Hebrews is going to give this group of Jewish believers the results of their hearing test.

And he is going to notify them that their baseline was pretty bad –

As we will see – the writer is going to tell them that they had become dull of hearing

And he is also going to let them know that being dull of hearing – it carried some bad implications

It was not a good thing

However, he is also going to let them know that even though they are dull of hearing – they are not hopeless

He is going to give them some insight and advice to correct their hearing

To raise their baseline / or increase their spiritual maturity

So the writer is going to give them and us the signs of dull hearing and then he is going to provide the remedy for dull hearing.

Now – in our study last week,

The writer of this letter, began to provide the reader on how Jesus was a greater High Priest than any of the high priests that the Jews had

Not only did Jesus meet the requirements for being a High Priest

He exceeded them –

He is our Great High Priest

He is the Son of God

He has continual access to God – unlike the Aaronic high priests that only had access to God one day out of the year

He is sinless

He offered Himself as a living sacrifice

And was appointed by God

And pick it up in verse 9 -

**[Heb 5:9-10 NKJV] 9 And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him, 10 called by God as High Priest "according to the order of Melchizedek,"**

Now – I mentioned last week that we are going to get deeper in our study of Melchizedek later in our studies through Hebrews.

**[Heb 5:11-14 NKJV] 11 of whom we have much to say, and hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing.**

So here is what the writer is saying -

He is telling them, I want to continue telling you about how Jesus is a greater high priest – I want to continue to tell you how Jesus is of the order of Melchizedek

I have told you the basics of why Jesus is a greater high priest

And there is so much more I want to tell you –

But here is the thing –

The writer is pausing as he writes this -

I can't tell you more because what I am about to tell you about Jesus as our High Priest is much deeper and much harder to explain than what I already told you already about Jesus –

The writer is concerned for the reader

So when he writes that what he has to say is hard to explain -

It was hard to explain – not because the writer was incapable of explaining it or because he didn't understand it.

It was hard to explain because of the difficulty of the hearers

He was concerned about their spiritual condition –

He was concerned about whether or not they were going to be able to receive what he was about to give them.

In other words – he is saying, “Are you guys even mature enough to be able to understand what I about to say – are you guys capable of comprehending or is it simply going to go right over your heads?”

Why was the writer concerned that this would happen?

**They had become dull of hearing**

Which means that they were not always dull of hearing – but that they had become dull of hearing over time.

The word that is used here for dull – can be translated as lazy, as someone who is apathetic (they really don't care) or sluggish

In other words, there was no excitement left in these Jewish believers to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ

They lacked the zeal that they once had

When they responded to the gospel – they were initially excited to leave Judaism, to live in the freedoms we have in Christ, where they no longer had to abide with rules and laws but could simply abide in Jesus and draw closer to Him and live according to His grace.

But something happened that made that excitement stop, they no longer were growing in Christ but were regressing -

So what happened?

The same thing that happens to believers today -

Life happened

Spiritual warfare happened to them

Temptation happened to them

These believers had become weary and well doing by their circumstances and persecution

Turn with me to 1 Cor 3

I am going to show you another group of believers who had the same problem as this group of Jewish believers.

**[1Co 3:1-3 NKJV] 1 And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual [people] but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. 2 I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able [to receive it], and even now you are still not able; 3 for you are still carnal. For where [there are] envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like [mere] men?**

So the church in Corinth – same issue.

Their spiritual maturity had stalled – however, in their case, it was because they were carnal.

The group of Hebrews – it was because of the persecution that they were going through –

They had become discouraged

The discouragement began to rob their joy and take away the zeal that they had for the Lord.

And so because of that, they wanted to find relief –

And they thought that the key to the relief was pulling back from being in His word and to turn back and go back to Judaism.

And so – instead of bringing them relief – it simply led them to becoming dull of hearing and having no spiritual growth.

The same things happens today –

We may go through a phase in our lives where we feel that we are constantly being attacked by spiritual warfare.

And our tendency is to – pull back

Our thinking is,

“Maybe if I pull back – the enemy will leave me alone”

“I just need time for myself – I just need a little peace”

And we think it is good – but in reality what happens is that we become distant from the Lord and that distance begins to create a dullness of hearing as we approach the Word.

The dullness of hearing occurs -

- When we stop seeking to know God and no longer apply His Word in our lives.
- When we start thinking of “going to church” as a chore instead of where we are going to be equipped by His word.

**12 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; and you have come to need milk and not solid food.**

So again, I want to make sure that we grasp that the writer is making it clear that the people he is writing to are believers.

Not only are they believers – they have been believers for some time.

They should've had no problem grasping what he had been teaching them

In fact, they should have been the ones that were teaching it to others.

Now, not every believer is gifted to be pastor teacher – there is the spiritual gift of teaching.

However, every believer is called to teach -

**[Mat 28:19-20 NKJV] 19 "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20**

**"teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, [even] to the end of the age." Amen.**

So part of our commission as disciples is to make disciples and to encourage them and to teach them or to point them to what the scriptures say.

For example – if Art were to come to one of you guys and say, “I’m seriously thinking about going to Fry’s and stealing a turkey”

Any one of us – is allowed to minister to him and say – “No Art – the scriptures clearly point out that this is a sin”

Exodus 20:15 – You shall not steal

That is what the writer is saying here –

You guys have been believers for a while now – you should have been the ones that were telling the newer believers on how Jesus is greater than the angels, Moses and high priests and so on.

They should have been able to minister one to another

But rather than progressing in their understanding of God’s Word – they actually needed someone to teach them again the first principles of the oracles of God.

They needed someone to teach them again the elementary truths of the Word of God

They needed someone to teach them the A,B,C’s of the Word

By this time, they should have known the A,B,C.s – they should have been teaching the A,B,C's to themselves and others but it wasn't happening.

Why did this happen?

It wasn't because of the lack of instruction

It happened because of a lack of application.

They heard the word when they gathered with the brethren – but they failed to apply what they heard.

That is why James tells us in his epistle -

**[Jas 1:22-25 NKJV] 22 But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. 23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; 24 for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. 25 But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues [in it], and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.**

That is what was happening to these Jewish believers and it is exactly what happened in my own spiritual walk as a young Christian

I would go to church services and it would go one ear and out the other

No application

No spiritual maturity

No growth

**13 For everyone who partakes [only] of milk [is] unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. 14 But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, [that is], those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.**

The writer wanted to give these folks some solid food –

He wanted to give them some steak!

And this steak was going to be a weighty doctrinal truth – he was going to tell them how Jesus relates to the order of Melchizedek and how Jesus continues to be our High Priest even to this day

He wanted to go on

But he was concerned that they were not going to be able to handle this large dose of solid food – because their diet was one of only milk

They were not going to be able to chew on the steak that he was going to give them

They were not going to be able to swallow the steak that he was going to give them

Because they are still on milk

The fact that they only wanted milk was an indication that they were babes in Christ

Once again, I want to make sure that we grasp –

New believers – they are supposed to drink milk

They are learning new things, they are excited, they make mistakes – they are learning, they are processing

But after a Christian has been a Christian for a long time – there comes a time when they are supposed to grow out of that baby stage

A 1-year-old, talking baby talk, sucking on a bottle and wearing diapers is cute

But a 25-year-old doing the same thing – is not cute anymore

These Jewish believers should have been eating meat by now

And because of their lack of maturity – because of their dullness of hearing – they are not going to grasp what he is going to tell them

And here is the two main reasons why -

1. They were unskilled in the word of righteousness – I had you make a note of that earlier. (vs 13)

They were inexperienced in using the word of God

They were not using the word to apply in their lives – it was going in one ear and out the other

They were not making moral decisions based upon His word

2. (14) those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

I like the way the NLT states it – who through training have the skill to recognize the difference between right and wrong.

Those who are mature believers, those who are applying His word in their lives, will have a skill to recognize the difference between right and wrong.

They will have discernment (by the power of the Holy Spirit)

The more we apply the word of God in our lives and the more we draw closer to Jesus as we abide in Him – we will have the ability to discern between right and wrong, between good teaching and bad teaching

So here at the end of ch 5, we have the evaluation of their hearing test – they did bad

But then the writer reveals to them how to raise that benchmark up / how to correct the issue.

**[Heb 6:1-3 NKJV] 1 Therefore** (the writer is pointing back to what he just got done saying), **leaving the discussion of the elementary [principles] of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, 2 of the doctrine of baptisms,** of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.

So despite their dullness of hearing – they were to leave the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ and go on to perfection

The elementary principles of Christ – were the things in Judaism that pointed to Jesus

It was the things that they already knew

Paul had the same conversation with the churches in Galatia –

The Judaizers were telling the believers that they had to go back to observing the law

And Paul writes to the churches and says

**[Gal 3:23-25 NKJV] 23 But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. 24 Therefore the law was our tutor [to bring us] to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. 25 But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.**

A tutor in that culture was specifically for a child –

Think of a nanny

They trained a child

They watched over the child

And when the child became of age – they were an adult and no longer needed a tutor

And in the same way, these people didn't need to go back to the elementary principles that they learned from Judaism that pointed to Jesus – that Jesus already fulfilled

They should have already known these things and moved onto much weightier things like how Jesus fulfilled the order of Melchizedek

Everything about the law pointed to Jesus

Once Jesus came and fulfilled the law there was no need to go back to these things – they were supposed to press forward to maturity in Christ

And that is what the writer is saying here in these opening verses of ch 6

I had you make a note of the doctrines of baptisms – notice it is plural

In fact the Greek word is different than the baptism (singular) of the NT

This is in reference to the washings that Jews had to do

The writer is saying that they no longer have to back to these washings because Jesus has already washed us – once and for all

The laying on of hands is what people used to do when they would bring a sacrifice – they would lay hands on the bull as their sins were passed on to the bull –

Again, they don't have to go back to the laying of hands because our sins were imputed to Him on the cross.

### 3 And this we will do if God permits.

Here is something we must learn to grasp – our spiritual maturity is also based on His grace.

If God permits – doesn't mean that God might not want any of us to mature

It means that maturity only comes as God works in us and through us

He is going to be the one who creates this growth in us

If we walk with God and we apply His word in our lives – God will take us on to maturity

It is all by grace

James tells us in James 4:8 – draw near to God and He will draw near to you

Salvation began with God's grace

Sanctification (spiritual maturity) is a result of God's grace

He is the author and finisher of our faith

Let's pray...

To Receive Christ do the following:

Admit, "I am a sinner."

Confess and be willing to turn from your sin.

Believe, by faith that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross.

Receive, through prayer, Jesus Christ into your heart and receive eternal life.

Dear Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins. Please forgive me for my sins and cleanse me by Your blood. I accept You by faith as my personal Lord and Savior. Give me a thirst for Your Word and Help me to follow You all of my days. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

[Num 6:24-26 NLT] 24 '

May the LORD bless you and protect you.

May the LORD smile on you and be gracious to you.

May the LORD show you his favor and give you his peace.'