

Readings

Scripture

^{5:11} About this we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. ¹² For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, ¹³ for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. ¹⁴ But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.

^{6:1} Therefore let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, ² and of instruction about washings, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. ³ And this we will do if God permits. ⁴ For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, ⁵ and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, ⁶ and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt. ⁷ For land that has drunk the rain that often falls on it, and produces a crop useful to those for whose sake it is cultivated, receives a blessing from God. ⁸ But if it bears thorns and thistles, it is worthless and near to being cursed, and its end is to be burned.

⁹ Though we speak in this way, yet in your case, beloved, we feel sure of better things—things that belong to salvation. ¹⁰ For God is not unjust so as to overlook your work and the love that you have shown for his name in serving the saints, as you still do. ¹¹ And we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness to have the full assurance of hope until the end, ¹² so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

- Hebrews 5:11-6:12 (*English Standard Version*)

Reflection

In Hebrews 5:14 the preacher redefines the issue in moral terms: “solid food is for adults who by constant practice have trained themselves to distinguish good and evil.” The “adult” is the mature Christian who will recognize the moral claim of God upon his life, even if it exposes him to martyrdom. Those who remain infantile and who refuse to exercise their faculties daily by making decisions in a Christian manner will be unable to exercise the proper moral discrimination between good and evil when they stand before the interrogation of a Roman magistrate. In that case they will be unprepared for the ultimate moral choice between confessing and denying Christ, when the cost of confession and identification with Christ is the loss of one’s life. That is the connection between verse 13, with its reference to being “unskilled in the word of righteousness,” and verse 14, which describes the mature person as trained by constant practice to discriminate between moral choices.

This house-church that received Hebrews was not spiritually immature in the sense that these men and women lacked theological insight. Their problem was simpler but more serious. They had regressed and had become infantile in the area of making sound Christian decisions. By listening to the voice of their fears, they had stopped listening to the voice of God. The preacher says, “You have become hard of hearing.” His concern in addressing this sensitive matter in Hebrews 5:11-14 was intensely practical.

- William L. Lane, *Hebrews: A Call to Commitment* (p. 89-90)

Sermon Outline

Are You Listening?
Hebrews 5:11-6:12

Consider Jesus
Brad Anderson

There is much more to be said. Are you awake? Are you paying attention? Are you listening? (Hebrews 5:11, 6:11-12)

Are you willing to live as mature Christians in a hostile society? (Hebrews 5:11-14)

Are you willing to remain open to being carried forward by God to a deeper level of maturity? (Hebrews 6:1-8)

Are you willing to become “imitators of those who through faith and patience inherited the promises”? (Hebrews 6:9-12)

Reflection Questions (taken in part from the Serendipity Study Bible for Groups)

- If you could eat it hot out of the oven with a glass of milk, what would you choose: Chocolate chip cookies? Pound cake? Home-made bread with butter? Why not tonight?
- The language of Hebrews 5:11 indicates that the congregation had become dull of hearing. Look back over the first five chapters and find the places where the author talks about hearing/listening. How are hearing/listening related to obedience?
- Why does the author hesitate to give his readers further details? How does solid food help one mature in Christ (Hebrews 5:14)?
- What bothers the author about their prolonged immaturity (Hebrews 6:4-6)? What does each of these descriptive phrases mean?
- Is their fate (Hebrews 6:6) reversible? Why? (See also Matthew 10:32-33) What does the agricultural analogy suggest (Hebrews 6:7-8)?
- Are these people true believers gone bad? Those who “hung around” true believers, but ultimately turned away (See Hebrews 3:16)? Borderline believers who need to examine themselves? How does this warning disrupt you in redemptive ways?
- How and why does the author then encourage his readers to do better (Hebrews 6:9-12)? What “parental logic” do you see here? Positive incentives? Negative ones? Praising? Prodding?
- How would you describe your spiritual appetite now: “I’ll just nibble”? “A good meal now and then is nice”? “I’m famished for all I can get”? Why?
- When have you been spiritually lazy? What got you going again?