

Warning — You Should Be Teachers!

We have entered the third warning section of Hebrews. It has only been thirteen verses since we left the last warning section (Heb. 3:6-4:13). God started by giving us and the first readers of Hebrews some sound doctrine about Jesus' being greater than the angels, and then He warned them to listen to Jesus. Next, He told them that Jesus was their merciful and faithful high priest and proved that Jesus was more faithful than Moses. Immediately He warns them to believe. Now He has started to show them that Jesus does not need to be a Levite to be a priest because God has recognized other priests who were not Levites. Again we are starting another warning section. The pattern is sound doctrine and then application - solid truth and then what it means to us. This third warning section is honest, blunt talk.

A PROBLEM EXISTS. The Holy Spirit will spend one and a half chapters talking about Melchizedek and Jesus. That is more than He gave to Jesus and the angels or to Jesus and Moses. All of chapter seven is going to be about Melchizedek, but it will be difficult. The problem is not that Melchizedek is controversial, unusual or that someone thinks he is unimportant. The issue is the heart condition of the readers. The Spirit includes six unique Greek words to describe their problem - six words that occur only in the book of Hebrews and nowhere else in the New Testament. Now there is only one reason one would use six unique words. There is no other way to explain the problem. The first two words occur in Heb. 5:11.

Concerning him we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. (NASB)

Heb. 5:11

TWO GREEK WORDS. The Greek words are *dysermeneutos* and *nothros*. One describes the result of the readers' problem and the other reveals their problem. The Greek word *dysermeneutos* means that they will have a hard time understanding and agreeing with the explanation He will give to the passage. That was the result of their problem. Some years ago I visited a church in Philadelphia. During a conversation with one of the men in leadership he asked me, "How can

you know what any passage of scripture means? Each verse can mean so many different things." His question was honest. It is a question I have been asked numerous times. The readers of Hebrews had a hard time understanding the meaning of



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scripture. It is a problem Christians struggle with today.

NOTHROS reveals the problem. The Greek word occurs only here and in Hebrews 6:12. We will look at Heb. 6:12 first.

... that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises. (NASB) Heb. 6:12

The word *nothros* is our word “sluggish.” The word also means “slow, faltering, listless, and lazy.” The literal meaning of the word is “no-pushers.” What was their problem? They had become and were continuing to be lazy in seeking to understand the Word of God.

They were “no-pushers.” They had no real desire to spend time struggling to understand scripture on their own. They were lazy. Many Christians today when asked what they believe, will quote their pastor or one of their teachers. They do not really know their Bible. These Hebrews did not know scripture either. They wanted the easy, soft stuff of scripture. Did they prefer stories, jokes, illustrations and warm, soft application? While we do not know the specifics, we do know they were not interested in digging into scripture as we will see in the next verse. They were lazy when it came to studying the Word of God. Maybe God’s Word was boring to them. Maybe Sunday morning was all the Bible they thought they needed. As Jews they would have heard the stories of Abraham, Moses, and King David from childhood. Did they think there was nothing more to learn?

SHOULD BE TEACHERS. What was the result? They did

not know the meaning of scripture.

For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. (NASB) Heb. 5:12-13

The Holy Spirit uses strong language. He says they should be teachers by this time. Does He mean they should have the spiritual gift of teaching? Does He mean they should be able to teach others biblical truth, or know more than they currently do? He means the last two. Every Christian should make it their goal to know enough to accurately explain scripture to another person. The Spirit does not imply they should be gifted teachers.

They had been Christians for a long time. The Holy Spirit says “by this time” and “need again.” Time had passed since they first heard the truth about Jesus. They were not new Christians or spiritual infants. Some Christians today believe that “growing older in the Lord” makes them a spiritual Christian. That is not true. These folks had been Christians for a long time. They started spiritually growing when they were new Christians and some time later they started going backward spiritually. They now needed someone to teach them the elementary truths of the Christian faith - once again - one more time. What a sad condition.

ELEMENTARY TRUTHS. The Spirit says they needed to be taught the elementary truths again. What elementary truths

Only 9.3% of Christians Want To Know Their Faith

What is the most significant expected gain from Bible study? Only 9.3 percent answered that it “helps me to be knowledgeable about my faith,” while instruction for [how to live my] life won 58 percent, and 32.1 percent answered that it “helps discern God’s speaking to me . . .”

Michael S. Horton. "Recovering the Plumblines." The Coming Evangelical Crisis. p. 259

is He talking about? Six of them are given to us in Heb. 6:1-2: repentance from dead works, faith toward God, teachings about baptism, laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. They needed to be taught these once again. How would we do? How would you do? Could you teach these to someone else? The Hebrews could not do that. They needed to be taught again.

Many believers think they know basic Christian truth. Yet many cannot explain why 1 Timothy 2:5 calls Jesus a man. This is just one example. This is one verse the Jehovah's Witnesses use. Basic foundational truth is what is missing. Many Christians want to hear words that meet their needs, that comfort, or encourage them. But if someone offers to teach theology, few Christians will come. R. C. Sproul says it well with,

Part of our problem is the disdain for theology that abounds in Christian circles. Although theology is taken from two words that, together, mean "the study of God," many brothers and sisters prefer shortcuts to "relevance." To say that theology is boring is really to say that God is boring.




BABES AGAIN. The Hebrews had become spiritual babies. The Greek word the Holy Spirit uses for babies is NEPIOS. The word does not refer to an infant, but to a preschooler. He says they are spiritual preschoolers in their understanding of scripture. When babies enter the world they start by drinking milk because their digestive system cannot handle solid food. Later, mothers wean them from milk onto solid food. At first, babes do not like the solid food so they spit it out. It takes time and patience for mothers to encourage little ones onto a diet of mature food. But these folks did not have a poor digestive system since they had the Holy Spirit to give them understanding (1 Cor. 2:12-14). They just did not like solid biblical teaching. Listen to Paul.

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires; (NASB) 2 Tim. 4:3

They wanted a diet of "Bible milk" - something to make them feel good. They wanted to drink their Bible knowledge - something soft and easy. Today Christians ask for a book that explains the Bible - no study required. Others want to study but do not know how. Many pastors and teachers either do not know how to help them learn to study or they do not want to explain. Many teachers simply read prepared materials, and many pastors wait until Saturday night to prepare for Sunday morning. It is amazing how many who teach the Word do not take the time to study the Word. Is it any wonder Christians cannot explain simple Christian truths?

A spiritual baby cannot digest the deeper truths of scripture. They are not of interest to him/her. The baby is unskilled, inexperienced, and unprepared to understand. That was the Holy Spirit's situation.

MATURITY - SPIRITUAL. What are the some of the marks of spiritual maturity? 1 John 2 describes spiritual growth as moving from little children to young men and then on to fathers in the faith.

		
Little Children	Young Man	Father
"Sins forgiven" 1 John 2:12	"Strong, Word of God abides, overcomes evil one" 1 John 2:14	"Known Him Who is from the beginning" 1 John 2:13

I am writing to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven . . . I have written to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one. (NASB) 1 John 2:12, 14

Little children are where we all start. Our sins are forgiven. A young man is the next level. He is one who knows the Word of God. It is part of his life, and he is having increas-

ing victory over sin. The spiritual father is one who was a young man and now he desires to know “Him who has been from the beginning.”

Spiritual maturity involves many things, but Christians cannot get there by receiving only milk. The last verse says that mature Christians feed on solid food.

But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil. (NASB) Heb. 5:14

The word “practice” comes from the Greek word *hexis*. It means “habit or repeated activity.” A mature Christian constantly studies God’s Word. The passage says this person has an ability to discern evil from good, righteousness from unrighteousness, and truth from error. This is not true of a spiritual baby. Did you notice the young man is said to be “overcoming the evil one”? Did you notice he is the one who has a firm grasp of scripture? They go together! One is required for the other. But knowledge does not guarantee a Christian will not sin as King Solomon did later in his life. He calls us to be holy as He is holy (1 Pet. 1:16). The Word of God is essential!

CONCLUSION. This was a strong message to those Christians. It is a strong message to us. The path to spiritual maturity is more than feeling spiritual or “living the Christian life.” It includes habitual study of His Word. It means chewing on the tough stuff of scripture. Milk and ice cream are great, but they do not make one mature. The Holy Spirit has called us to grow!