

STUDIES IN THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

Part II

STUDY NUMBER NINE - Hebrews 5:11-14

In today's study the author is asking the question, "Are you green and growing or are you ripe and rotting? Are you a person who is beginning to mature and to understand what life is all about?"

Real joy comes in life when you mature to the point, that you are giving instead of receiving.

When you've learned what it is to, sacrifice your own interests, for the interests of others.

The inspired person, according to author David McNally, comes to life with a purpose and passion, with the daily desire to grow and contribute.

Zig Ziglar in his book called, *Over the Top* really brings this home when he says:

"Commitment is essential for victory in an individual's life. Committed lives have meaning, accomplishment, purpose, and excitement."

On the other hand, tentative living is never satisfying.

Tentative generally becomes negative, and negative becomes critical or even cynical.

Tentative lives are never victorious.

Have you ever read a biography or a history story related to someone who lived tentatively and became a hero?

You have to say, “No, I haven’t.”

The whole problem in the book of Hebrews is that we have some people who are very tentative in their commitment to Christ.

They are Christians, they are Jewish Christians. They have the Jewish background. But they are real believers.

However, they have gone dead in the water because of the persecution and the suffering that they are facing.

They want to go back under Judaism.

The writer wants to convince them of the superiority of the Person of Christ.

Christ is superior to the angels.

Christ is superior to Moses.

And then we learned last week,

Christ is also qualified as a priest after the order of Melchizedek.

**The ten verses from last week told us three things.
To be a priest, a representative between God and man:**

- 1. You have to be a human being.**
- 2. You have to be sympathetic, in that you deal gently with those who come to you.**
- 3. You cannot be a priest because you desire to, God is the One who makes the appointment.**

Now from 5:11 to 6:20 the author is going to deal with the whole business of exhortation.

The only way you're going to understand Hebrews Chapter 6, which comes up next week, which is a most difficult passage, is that you have to understand Hebrews 5.

From 5:11 to 14, we only have 4 verses today.

If I titled these 4 verses today, I would call them "Pilgrims Should Make Progress."

You ought to be growing up and maturing, so you bring delight, to the heart of your heavenly Father.

One of the things that the writer has done, is that he has stopped and given warnings before.

**In Hebrews 2 he says,
“You need to pay attention to what you have heard.”**

**In Hebrews 3 he says,
“If you sense or hear the voice of the Spirit,
do not harden your hearts.”**

**Today he’s going to say,
“You’ve become sluggish in your hearing.”**

**It’s the hearing and responding to it, in obedience,
that produces the environment for spiritual growth.**

Are you ready?

**v.11 Concerning Him there is much to be said, and it is
hard to explain, since you have become sluggish in
hearing (hard of hearing).**

**“Concerning Him,” concerning who?
Last week our last verse, verse 10 said,
Jesus Christ, “being designated by God as a high priest
according to the order of Melchizedek.”**

**Now, “Concerning Him” that is Jesus Christ.
There are some things, “there is much to be said.”
I could teach you so much. But I can’t!
Your capacity has been nullified.
You can’t catch what I’m trying to teach you.**

The very first principle you get out of this is that that, spiritual truth is not mastered in one big gulp.

You can't just come on one day and become a spiritual giant by some decision you make. Spiritual maturity comes the same way physical maturity comes.

You're exposed to the experiences of life, and to the disciplines of life, and you begin to grow up and mature and bring your life more into alignment, with those things, that lead to a successful, fruitful and fulfilling life. That's just growth!

The same thing is true spiritually but we don't teach that.

We get people to come to Christ by faith and come into God's family but we leave them with the burp, the bottle and the dirty britches.

They never grow up and mature in the Savior. This is part of the frustration that the writer is feeling as he jumps into this.

“Concerning Him” that is Jesus Christ and his priesthood in the order of Melchizedek, two things:

1. **“there so much to be said” and**
2. **“it is hard to explain.”**

**The author is saying, “I’m frustrated!
There is much that I’d like to say to you, and it’s hard
to explain.”**

**Then the reason is given in the next phrase.
“since you have become sluggish in hearing (hard of
hearing).”
Let’s break that down a little bit.**

**How could I be here today and be “hard of hearing”?
Or “sluggish of hearing”?**

**Well, spiritual apathy, laziness, you haven’t followed
the disciplines of being in the Word on a daily basis
so you and God, are at a distance.**

**You could be out of fellowship with Him.
When you’re out of fellowship, everything shuts down
in a relationship.
You don’t talk,
you don’t commune,
you don’t deepen that relationship.
You become sluggish in the ears.**

You need to pay attention.

Hebrews 3:7-8, “Do not harden not your hearts if the spirit of God is speaking to you.”

William Barclay says it so graphically. He says: “They are imperceptive and lethargic and have a nature of a stone.” There is no ability to respond.

One other writer says: “It’s the perception of a slug.” The inability to comprehend spiritual truth.

Another writer put it this way, he says, “The sending station is in order, it’s the receiving set that’s not getting the message.”

You and I must recognize the fact, that it’s a daily walk with God, that gives you the reception, of what God’s trying to say to you through His Word, and through the time of communion that you have with Him.

You can’t be sporadic on that sort of thing or you’re going to develop a hardness of hearing.

Notice another phrase: “you have become sluggish.”

What’s that tell you?

That tells you it’s a process.

That tells you that you’re apathetic attitude didn’t just all of a sudden, happen one day and BOOM!

You're hard of hearing and you're not hearing any more.

It's like, with botched up priorities, stressed out living, and everything that goes with it, you have slowly developed a hardness of hearing toward spiritual things.

“You've become sluggish in hearing.”

How many times did Jesus talk about the ears? Do you remember the letters to the 7 churches in Revelation 2 & 3.

Each one of those letters has a post-script? Almost like a P.S. from the Lord Jesus when He gets through giving the message.

“He who has ears to hear, let him hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches.”

In other words, we can become so distracted in life and so stressed out, there is no corresponding response in the relationship on our part because we aren't hearing.

The message is being sent, the word is available, but there's nothing happening to us because we are not responding to it.

“Concerning Him there is much to be said, and it’s hard to explain, since you’ve become sluggish in hearing.”

Let’s ask 2 questions about this verse:

- 1. When did this happen?**
- 2. How did it happen?**

When did it happen? It happened when they started contemplating going back under Judaism and running away, from the relationship with Christ.

**And then how did it happen?
Over a process of time.**

**Now the next big question is,
Am I hard of hearing?**

- 1. If you’re responding to what I am saying and you’re really concerned about your ability to hear, you’re OK.**
- 2. But if you’ve been resisting what I’ve been saying, and you’ve been thinking of all the people that should be here today to have heard this, you may have a problem.**

You see, any time anybody speaks the word of God and you're thinking about everybody else who should be here, you may have a problem with hearing.

Because every time the word of God is taught, if you're sensitive, you're going to hear something.

It's going to minister to you and it's going to be good.

It's going to be the right thing for you to hear and the Lord has brought you to hear that and you respond to it with a teachable spirit.

You're all ears!

You want to hear what the Lord is saying, not to be defensive.

Not to resist it, but to respond to it and develop a dependency upon what you hear and trust God to make it real in your life.

There is no such thing as fellowship with the Lord by long distance. And Satan will do everything he can, to destroy the Father's credibility, bring doubt in your life, and cause you to get at a distance, so you're not hearing what the Lord's, trying to say to you.

Tony Evans, *Our God is Awesome*, it's a great book on the attributes of God and it will make you laugh.

There is an old grandfather who is very, very hard of hearing. And he goes to the doctor. And the doctor fixes him up with one of these fancy new transistor hearing aids and he can hear everything perfectly. About a month later he came back in for the check up and the doctor says “How’s it going?” He says, “Oh, I’m hearing everything.” “Wonderful, I bet your family really rejoices over the fact that you can hear.” He says, “I didn’t tell ‘em and I’ve changed my will three times.”

v.12 For though by this time you are under moral obligation to be teachers, you are having need again for someone to be teaching you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have become such as are having need of milk and not solid food.

Whereas in verse 11 the charge of immaturity, is that, they are deaf.

The charge in verse 12 is they are dependent. By now they ought to be mature enough in their relationship, to be giving help instead of receiving it.

Now, the processes of maturity are different.

Maturity is a time word.

I don't know exactly how long, you need to be a Christian, before the Father, sees you as grown up.

But I can tell you one thing, the Father is very disturbed about these Hebrew Christians as a Parent.

**They aren't growing up to maturity.
They should be giving instead of receiving.**

Ezra 7:10

Ezra prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, to do it, and to teach it in Israel.

**We see the Lord's desire in 2 Peter 3:18,
"That we grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."**

That we begin to mature.

In the Christian realm, you can reverse the growth process by not responding in obedience and you go back to babyhood again.

**You either use it or you lose it.
That's the principle.**

It's almost like any doctor can tell you. When you put one of your limbs in a cast, it will atrophy.

And it's going to take therapy and time to restore the function of that.

The same law is true spiritually.

If you just keep it on hold, you don't stay at the same level. You atrophy.

You become hard of hearing.

You lose the things you had, not your salvation or your relationship, but you lose that potential for fruitfulness that could be yours if you were a person who was growing.

**Now you might be thinking,
"How do I know I'm growing?"**

Well, you know if you're growing, if you've been in the Word today.

When you learn one word about spiritual things, it'll get you a long way down the road.

And it's the word "Daily."

Being in the Word, in prayer, in fellowship with the Lord every day, that's how you express an obedient heart.

What I did yesterday doesn't count for today.

And what I did today isn't going to count for tomorrow morning.

When you get that down, you're going to start growing spiritually.

Now, these are immature Christians. They have become dull of hearing but they've also become something else. Look at the little phrase in verse 12. Let me go back and let you catch it.

“For though by this time you are under moral obligation to be teachers, you are having need again for someone to be teaching you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and” what? “you have become such as are having need of milk and not solid food.”

What's the phrase? “you have become.”

See it's in verse 11. “you have become” what? “sluggish in hearing.”

Now verse 12: “you have become such as are having need of milk and not solid food.”

Because you've become “sluggish in hearing,” you have become a baby. And you can't eat the solid food.

**Not only are you deaf in verse 11,
you have become dependent in verse 12.
You aren't following the normal rules of growth.**

**In *Abba's Child* by Brennan Manning, a Catholic priest
he tells a sad the story:**

**An old woman lay seriously ill in a hospital. Her
closest friend read Isaiah 25:6-9 aloud to her. Wanting
the comfort and support of faith, the sick woman asked
her friend to hold her hand.**

**On the other side of the bed, her husband, who
considered himself a deeply religious man and who
prided himself for his boldness in having a "Honk, if
you love Jesus" bumper-sticker on his car, reached out
to take her other hand. His wife withdrew it, saying
with deep sadness, "Herbert, you are not a believer.
Your cruelty and callousness throughout the forty
years of our marriage tells me that your faith is only
an illusion."**

Another little story that Tony Evans says:

**Once upon a time [there was] a scorpion [who]
needed to cross a pond. Wondering how he would get
to the other side, he noticed a frog nearby. "Mr. Frog,
will you please hop me across this pond?"**

**The kind, gentle frog said, "Certainly, Mr. Scorpion.
I will be glad to do so."**

So Mr. Scorpion jumped onto Mr. Frog's back as Mr. Frog hopped from pod to pod, [pad to pad] bringing Mr. Scorpion to the other side of the pond. But just as the frog said, "Well, Mr. Scorpion, here we are," he felt an excruciating pain in his back. Mr. Scorpion had stung him.

As Mr. Frog lay dying, he looked up at Mr. Scorpion and said, "How could you do this? I brought you from one side of the pond to the other and now you sting me so that I die."

Mr. Scorpion looked at Mr. Frog and said, "I can't help it. It's my nature."

That's the crummy trash we've got pumped into us from our culture.

It's like Jesus Christ can't make a difference in a life.

And it's because of the nature that we experience such defeat. Jesus Christ is totally adequate to defeat a nature.

And you don't have to respond to that sinful, selfish nature.

You can have victory in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And you will grow and mature more like the Savior as you learn to say no.

C. S. Lewis says:

A car is made to run on gas, and it won't run properly on anything else. Likewise, God made us to run on Himself. He is the fuel our spirits were designed to burn and the food our spirits were designed to feed on. So it's no use trying to find inner release and power and fulfillment apart from God. There is no such thing.

- 1. You have become dull of hearing, he says. That's my frustration.**
- 2. You've also continued to atrophy to the point that you are needing to receive help rather than be in the position of giving help.**

Be a person who begins to give to others what you have received.

v.13 For everyone who is partaking only of milk is unacquainted with the teaching about righteousness, for he is a babe.

“For” is the reason.

**Here is a person who only needs milk and can only take milk.
He can't take meat.**

He is unacquainted with regard to the teachings about righteousness.

A baby who finally comes into relationship with Christ, has to learn something and it's a basic principle. And that is: righteousness does not come by performance but by relationship.

That's a hard lesson to learn. These Jews had not learned that.

They were going to go back under the law and perform the law, to try to gain acceptance in God's presence.

And that righteousness is impressing God with how good we are and the things we do.

That's a baby style.

God's plan for righteousness is that he is going to change your life to an ever deepening relationship with the Lord Jesus who gives grace and who's totally adequate to produce growth and will get glory from the righteousness that flows from your life because He changed you.

Not because you're trying to keep a certain bunch of legalistic standards that make you appear to be righteous.

The only way righteousness will come is by faith.

And as you deepen that relationship, the righteousness will begin to flow out of your life.

Not as a performance but out of the relationship.

Righteousness does not come by the works of the law. Righteousness comes out of relationship.

Now how do you grow?

How do you grow up if you find that you are a child today?

“As newborn babies desire the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby”—1 Peter 2:2, 3.

Growth is meant by taking the food of the Word of God and acknowledge the fact that you need milk right now. But get on to the meat.

Get on to the place where you grow.

Paul Adolph in his book *Release from Tension*, says there are 8 things that will stop your growth:

- 1. Perfectionism attempted through the energy of the flesh to produce this.**

- 2. Fear, anxiety and worry**
- 3. Bitterness, resentment and lack of a forgiving spirit**
- 4. Doubt, or failure to believe and lay claim to God's promises**
- 5. Indecision and failure to discern God's will**
- 6. Lack of rest, relaxation, and recreation by failure to regiment one's time**
- 7. Jealousy and boredom through failure to rejoice in the Lord always**
- 8. Selfishness**

And then he says this:

“It is to be observed that the Bible gives as great an emphasis to Christian growth as it does to the actual message of salvation.”

Soren Kierkegaard who was that Danish philosopher said it well:

Christians are like schoolchildren who like to look at the back of the book for the answers rather than go through the process.

And so many of us are just like that.

Now we come to our last verse, we're going turn over from immaturity to maturity in this last verse.

v.14 But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice are having their powers of perception trained to discern good and evil.

**We see two qualities here.
They are discipline and discernment.**

Their discipline—“who because of practice are having their powers of perception trained.”

What’s practice?

Remember when you went out for the ball teams when you were growing up. What did you do? You always said, we went to practice, we went to work out. You just went every day and you worked and you worked and you worked and then came the time for the big game. And then you went to play.

It’s exactly the same spiritually.

It’s a requirement.

There’s a discipline involved, “who because of practice are having their powers of perception trained.”

There is one thing you can learn when you see somebody who runs 26 miles in a marathon, and that is, that person, has trained.

**You have to train to be able to do that.
And that's exactly the principle that's here spiritually.**

**You have go to train if you are going to
mature in Christ. That's all.**

Solid food is for the mature.

**The mature person is the one who has struggled
with his old nature and with his other problems and
he has gotten them purified.**

**Joseph Stowell has written a book called *Perilous
Pursuits* and he says:**

**Our passions, pride, and desire for pleasure are
powerful motivators, bubbling to the surface in our
attitudes and actions. Like the search for significance,
these forces are God-given and good in themselves. But
unless they are submitted to God's control, they will
flow into destructive channels that not only rob us of
their God-intended enjoyment, but cause us to damage
ourselves and others. Just as there is no significance
outside of Christ, there is no true fulfillment of these
inner drives apart from Him.**

**Bill Hybles in *Becoming a Contagious Christian* told
about spending a day with Billy and Ruth Graham.**

He said he could tell later in the afternoon that Billy was getting tired and they excused themselves to go to the hotel. Billy picked up his Bible and threw it into his lap and said, “Bill feed me from the Word.” Bill was overwhelmed that a 73 year old man who’d spoken to more people than anybody else on the face of the earth, could in humility and in brokenness, want to be as a last act of the day fed once again from the Word.

And Hybes said, “I would like to be as dangerous when I’m that old.”

Solid food is for the mature, “who because of practice are having the powers of perception trained to discern good and evil.”

Gary Rosberg has written a book called *Guard Your Heart*. And he says:

It boils down to this. I need to have a plan for putting strong boundaries around my heart, if I’m going to protect it from invasion and contamination and destruction. I need to be on the alert, ready to live a life without regrets.

And—God help me—I can’t do it alone.

Frankly, neither can you. Alone doesn’t cut it. You and I weren’t wired to keep this thing called Christian manhood in one piece by brute strength and solo effort. You want to be connected not only to your wife and

kids, but also in friendship with other clear-eyed, vigilant men who are committed to finishing the race well.

I don't want to waste my short time on earth with a bunch of dead ends and wrong turns and aimless detours.

When you learn that and you become accountable, belief and conduct that is inspected, will always improve.

In Psalm 138, Eugene Peterson says:

**Finish what you started in me, [Lord].
Your love is eternal—don't quit on me now.**

Bob Briner in his book called *Squeeze Play* says this:

When we fail to live a fully integrated life—one in which our faith impacts all we do—we rob ourselves and others of the joy of a Christ-centered life. . . .

So live joyfully with eternity in mind. Honor God by believing His promises. Inspire others by exuding God's peace and serenity. And someday soon, I look forward to a great post game press conference where we can all join the Savior in a marvelous, never-ending celebration!

LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE:

LESSON #1: God is ever calling to the deeps within us but we oftentimes are too shallow to respond.

LESSON #2: Spiritual truth is not mastered in one big gulp.

LESSON #3: It is possible as a believer through the process of time to develop an apathetic attitude, whereby it is possible for us to be “sluggish in hearing.”

LESSON #4: There should come a time in the normal process of spiritual growth when we are in the business of giving rather than receiving.

LESSON #5: If we are not using our spiritual gifts and insights, we are losing them.

LESSON #6: These Hebrew Christians had reversed the normal growth pattern.

LESSON #7: Righteous standing before God does not come by the works of the Law.

LESSON #8: An acceptable righteous standing before God comes by a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

LESSON #9: Those who are mature in Christ manifest discipline and discernment.

LESSON #10: Maturity reflects itself in senses that are trained to discern good and evil.

STUDIES IN THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

PART I

STUDY NUMBER NINE — Hebrews 5:11-14

v.11 Concerning Him there is much to be said, and it is hard to explain, since you have become sluggish in hearing (hard of hearing).

v.12 For though by this time you are under moral obligation to be teachers, you are having need again for someone to be teaching you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have become such as are having need of milk and not solid food.

v.13 For everyone who is partaking only of milk is unacquainted with the teaching about righteousness, for he is a babe.

v.14 But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice are having their powers of perception trained to discern good and evil.

QUESTIONS:

- 1. Read Hebrews 5:11-14 and summarize in your own words what Paul is saying in this section.**
- 2. What frustration is verbalized by Paul in verse 11?**
- 3. Can you make a list of things that would cause “sluggishness in hearing?”**
- 4. State the problem, according to verse 12.**
- 5. What is their need, according to verse 12?**
- 6. What are the milk drinkers unacquainted with, according to verse 13?**
- 7. Who is the “solid food” for, according to verse 14?**
- 8. Why are the mature able to “discern good and evil,” according to verse 14?**
- 9. What verse in the study has meant the most to you?**
- 10. What lesson have you learned from this study?**

LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE:

LESSON #1: God is ever calling to the deeps within us but we oftentimes are too shallow to respond.

LESSON #2: Spiritual truth is not mastered in one swallow.

LESSON #3: It is possible as a believer through the process of time to develop an apathetic attitude, whereby it is possible for us to be “sluggish in hearing.”

LESSON #4: There should come a time in the normal process of spiritual growth when we are in the business of giving rather than receiving.

LESSON #5: If we are not using our spiritual gifts and insights, we are losing them.

LESSON #6: These Hebrew Christians had reversed the normal growth pattern.

LESSON #7: Righteous standing before God does not come by the works of the Law.

LESSON #8: An acceptable righteous standing before God comes by a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

LESSON #9: Those who are mature in Christ manifest discipline and discernment.

LESSON #10: Maturity reflects itself in senses that are trained to discern good and evil.