

## STUDIES IN THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

### STUDY NUMBER NINE - Hebrews 5:11-14

#### TEXT:

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.

INTRODUCTION:

(I've Got Tears in My Ears from Lyin' on My Back in My Bed  
While I Cry Over You . . . : Country Music's Best (and Funniest) Lines by Paula Schwed)

"I ONLY MISS YOU ON DAYS THAT END IN 'Y'"  
p. 47

"COULDN'T LOVE HAVE PICKED A BETTER PLACE TO DIE?"  
p. 50

"I'VE GOT TEARS IN MY EARS FROM LYIN' ON MY BACK IN MY BED WHILE I CRY OVER  
YOU"  
p. 53

"I'VE ENJOYED AS MUCH OF THIS AS I CAN STAND"  
p. 55

"EVER SINCE WE SAID 'I DO,' THERE'S SO MANY THINGS YOU DON'T"  
p. 57

"MY TEARS HAVE WASHED 'I LOVE YOU' FROM THE BLACKBOARD OF MY HEART"  
p. 61

(The Pancake Man & Friends by Richard Speight)

Sunday afternoon finally arrived. The whole family piled into the station wagon for the drive to the old ballpark. Everyone knew what was at stake; each of us was filled with hope and apprehension. It would take so little to make us happy. We didn't need success, only the absence of failure. Was that so much to ask?

Richard's team was in the outfield first.

I don't know what happened during that first half of the inning. I wasn't paying attention. It isn't that I didn't care. I was simply preoccupied. You see, an even newer wrinkle had been added. Just before the game started, the coach of the Pirates had asked me to pitch! While young Richard was getting his bat and his helmet and preparing to head for the batter's box, I was shaking like a leaf and heading for the mound.

Three pitches. That's all the chance he had. Three pitches and back to the tee. It was all the chance I had, too, unfortunately.

I tossed the first ball. It hit the ground three feet in front of the plate. Richard swung wildly. Both of us had forgotten everything we ever knew.

"Strike one," the umpire bellowed loudly. Just what we needed. A public reminder of our inadequacy.

I pulled myself together, held the ball behind me and leaned forward, as if I were waiting for a signal from the catcher. Richard just stood upright with his bat resting on his shoulder. All of his confidence was gone.

I let another one go. The ball followed a lazy arc, ending up right across the plate. Richard swung wildly a second time.

"Strike two!"

The ball had floated across waist high. I can't pitch it any better than that, I thought. I could have sworn that Richard's eyes were closed when he brought the bat around. He had swung way too late.

The father in me was going crazy! I felt an overwhelming urge to fix things, to make it okay, to come to his rescue. He seemed so small, so vulnerable. I glanced over at the stands. Barbara's face mirrored my anxiety. I turned back to Richard, served up the best pitch I could muster, and closed my eyes.

With a resounding crack the bat met the ball, sending it sailing through the air, over the infielders' heads. I raised my arms heavenward in sheer ecstasy.

Richard raced toward first. Just as he got there, the ball scooted between the left fielder's legs and on out into higher grass. Three excited outfielders converged on it, thrilled to death to finally have a ball come their way. They bumped into one another like Keystone Cops while Richard rounded the bag and headed toward second.

One of the outfielders finally fought off the other two and gained possession of the ball. By that time, Richard had stepped on second and was headed for third. The third baseman guarded the base as Richard and the ball came toward him at full speed, neck and neck.

"Slide, Richard, slide!" the coach screamed.

Good advice except for one thing. Richard hadn't learned to slide yet. Left with no alternative, he did the only thing he knew to do. He ran straight ahead at full speed. The ball went one way, the third baseman went another, and Richard headed for home under a full head of steam, pumping for all he was worth.

I was beside myself, jumping up and down with unbridled glee, shouting out incoherent words of encouragement.

The catcher retrieved the errant ball and started chasing Richard as hard as he could, but it was too late. Ten feet from home plate Richard left the ground in one final joyous leap, landing on the sacred spot with both feet. It was a home run!

I burst into tears! Everyone went wild! Everyone but Richard, that is. He took off his batting helmet, put back on his cap, dusted himself off, and strolled toward the bench, accepting his teammates' congratulations with the confident look of one who did this kind of thing regularly.

I heaved a sigh of relief and prepared to face the next batter. Richard's masculinity was saved! Come to think of it, so was mine.

We fathers don't really need all that much to make us happy, do we? Just a vicarious thrill here and there, a little triumph we can remember from time to time, magnify beyond belief as the years roll by, and embarrass our children by recounting at inopportune times. And our children? What do they need? Just a chance to give life a try, for one thing, and a dad who is present while they are trying, one who is willing to help when he's needed. And, most important of all, they need a dad whose support and love are there for the taking in equal measure, win or lose.

Of course, an occasional home run doesn't hurt, either.

pp. 83-85

(The Book of Virtues by William J. Bennett)

Five Little Chickens

Said the first little chicken,  
With a queer little squirm,  
"Oh, I wish I could find  
A fat little worm!"

Said the next little chicken,  
With an odd little shrug,  
"Oh, I wish I could find  
A fat little bug!"

Said the third little chicken,  
With a sharp little squeal,  
"Oh, I wish I could find  
Some nice yellow meal!"

Said the fourth little chicken,  
With a small sigh of grief,  
"Oh, I wish I could find  
A green little leaf!"

Said the fifth little chicken,  
With a faint little moan,  
"Oh, I wish I could find  
A wee gravel-stone!"

"Now, see here," said the mother,  
From the green garden-patch,  
"If you want any breakfast,  
You must come and scratch."

pp. 353-4

(Even Eagles Need a Push by David McNally)

But there are many others who agree with Woody Allen's statement: "Most of the time I don't have much fun, and the rest of the time I don't have any fun at all."

p. xi

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

p. xiv

(Over the Top by Zig Ziglar)

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?

p. 206

As we focus our attention on the CONCLUSION OF CHAPTER 5, we need to recognize the fact that we have come to a DIVISION in the text.

Lane says:

The beginning of a new division is indicated by the simple transition from exposition (4:15-5:10) to exhortation (5:11-6:20).

p. 311

Macaulay says:

"My tongue is the pen of a ready writer," he says in effect, "but I am held in leash by your sluggishness--seeing ye are become dull in hearing." Their first going after Christ had been marked by a keenness which, had it been sustained, would have made teaching them a constant exhilaration and delight. But that sharpness of appetite, and ready grasp of the things of the Lord, had gone, and such inertia had taken them that even the elementary things taxed them. Once they were on the way to becoming teachers, but they stopped short, became satisfied with their attainment, lost the progress they had made, and returned to babyhood.

p. 74

Bruce introduces this section by saying:

With the repeated reference to Ps. 110:4 in v. 10, the logical sequence of our author's argument would have led him on to expound the significance of Christ's being a priest "after the order of Melchizedek." This he does in Heb. 7:1ff., but first he turns aside (as he has done before) to address some words of practical admonition to his readers' spiritual condition.  
p. 133

Hughes begins by saying:

But there is a massive tragedy few are aware of and with which fewer still concern themselves--namely, arrested spiritual growth, perpetual infancy, never becoming a "big person" spiritually. Set against eternity, this is a tragedy of incalculable proportions.  
p. 146

Montefiore in Black's commentary says:

The last section ended with a reference to Melchisedek, to whom a return is made in vi. 20, after the end of a long exhortation which begins at this point. In view of the previous verse it is probably **about him** (i.e. Melchisedek) rather than about the whole subject under discussion, that our author writes: . . .  
p. 101

Westcott has these things to say:

The highest truth is not to be mastered at once, nor without serious and continuous effort. It can only be grasped in virtue of a corresponding growth in those to whom it is addressed. There is always, in the case of those who have learnt somewhat, the danger of resting in their attainment, which is a fatal relapse. Yet we are encouraged by past experience to hold our hope firmly; and the promise of God remains sure beyond the possibility of failure.  
p. 130

The life of faith is like the natural life. It has appropriate support in its different stages. Healthy growth enables us to appropriate that which we could not have received at an earlier stage. But this general law carries with it grave consequences. (a) The period of first discipleship may be misused, as by the Hebrews, so that we remain still mere 'babes' when it is past (11, 12). And so (b) when the time comes for maturer instructions we may be unprepared to apprehend it (13, 14).  
p. 131

Delitzsch introduces this section by saying:

Before pursuing further the comparison of Christ with Melchizedek, the author rebukes his readers for their backwardness, in lingering on the threshold of Christian knowledge, over which he would now, with God's help, lead them onwards to perfection.  
p. 256

Wiersbe titles this section:

"Pilgrims Should Make Progress (Hebrews 5:11-6:20)"  
p. 58

"We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised" (6:12, NIV).

This verse summarizes the main message of this difficult (and often misunderstood) section of the epistle. Israel wanted to go back to Egypt; and, as a result, a whole generation failed to inherit what God had promised. They were safely delivered out of Egypt, but they never enjoyed the promised rest in Canaan. We believers today can make the same mistake.  
p. 58



Draper confesses:

This passage reminds us that the Word of God is a Book of deep, eternal truths. The writer of Hebrews says there are many more things about Melchizedek and Christ that he would like to discuss. The Word of God is an enlarging revelation that comes to our hearts. It matters not how many times we have studied it, it is always replete with new meaning, new direction, and new discoveries for our hearts. We can study it over and over again and every time we do, we come to a new understanding of God's Word and will for us. That's why we call it a "living Word."  
p. 131

F. B. Meyer says:

There are comparatively few to whom Jesus does not say, at some time in their lives, "Come and watch with Me." He takes us with Him into the darksome shadows of the winepress, though there are recesses of shade, at a stone's cast, where He must go alone. Let us not misuse the precious hours in the heavy slumbers of insensibility. There are lessons to be learned there which can be acquired nowhere else; but if we heed not his summons to watch with Him, it may be that He will close the precious opportunity by bidding us sleep on and take our rest; because the allotted term has passed, and the hour of a new epoch has struck. If we fail to use for prayer and preparation the sacred hour, that comes laden with opportunities for either; if we sleep instead of watching with our Lord: what hope have we of being able to play a noble part, when the flashing lights, and the trampling feet announce the traitor's advent? Squander the moments of preparation, and you may have to rue their loss through all the coming years!  
p. 27

As we approach these 4 REMAINING VERSES IN CHAPTER 5, let us title this section:

THE THIRD WARNING: THE PERIL OF SPIRITUAL IMMATURITY (5:11-6:12)

Chapter 5:11-14 are absolutely crucial in understanding chapter 6.

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" refers us back to the whole high-priestly ministry of Christ in the order of Melchizedek that he has just made reference to in verse 10:

"being designated by God as a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek."

One PRINCIPLE that we can learn from this is:

SPIRITUAL TRUTH IS NOT MASTERED IN ONE BIG SWALLOW.

"CONCERNING HIM" then refers to Jesus Christ, our great High Priest, who is a priest "according to the order of Melchizedek."

When he speaks of this subject of priesthood, he says  
2 THINGS:

1. "THERE IS MUCH TO BE SAID"
2. "IT IS HARD TO EXPLAIN"

The author here finds that he would like to say a lot more about this priesthood. Yet, when it actually comes to the saying of it, he is finding it difficult; and he is frustrated to explain it. The reason is that the readers have become hard of hearing.

## IT ALL DEPENDS . . .

Pilot: Control tower, what time is it?  
 Control tower: What airline is this?  
 Pilot: What difference does that make?  
 Control tower: If it is United Airlines, it is 6:00 P.M.; if it is TWA, it is 1800 hours; if it is Ozark, the big hand is on the . . .

(From InfoSearch 3.51)

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

**We have much to say about this**, referring to the subject of Jesus' Melchizedek priesthood. As it turned out, his subsequent discussion was indeed lengthy (7:1-10:18) as well as deep. . . . [It was] **hard to explain because [they] were slow to learn.**

"CONCERNING HIM THERE IS MUCH TO BE SAID, AND IT IS HARD TO EXPLAIN"

And now the author proceeds with the REASON:

"SINCE YOU HAVE BECOME SLUGGISH IN HEARING (HARD OF HEARING)."

Wiersbe says:

It refers to a condition of spiritual apathy and laziness that prevents spiritual development.  
 pp. 58-59

Delitzsch says:

They are deficient in quickness of spiritual apprehension, and that, as intimated by the verb, in consequence of a falling back from their previous position to an alarming and unnatural degree.  
 p. 259

Westcott describes it as follows:

The difficulty of which the apostle has spoken came from the fault of the Hebrews. They had become with years less quick in understanding and not more quick according to a natural and healthy development.

p. 132

Montefiore in Black's commentary says:

Furthermore, the Greek word nothroi, here translated **dull**, can denote, in the papyri, those who are sick and ill; so that there may well be here the further implication that his readers' spiritual deafness is due to spiritual malaise.

So far from progressing, they have actually gone backwards.

p. 102

Hughes points out:

Literally, the phrase reads, "you have become sluggish in the ears." Therefore we understand that their problem was an acquired condition characterized by an inability to listen to spiritual truth. They were not naturally "slow," they were not intellectually deficient, but they had become spiritually lazy. They listened with the attentiveness of a slug. They had become unreceptive and closed.

p. 146

It is epitomized in that old statement:

"DON'T CONFUSE ME WITH THE FACTS! MY MIND IS ALREADY MADE UP!"

Lane says of this 11th verse:

"We have much to say about this subject, and it is hard to explain intelligibly."  
p. 135

The adjective, "hard to explain," occurs only here in the Greek Bible. Among hellenistic writers it is used uniformly to describe a difficulty intrinsic to the material to be expounded and not extrinsic to it, i.e., a difficulty that derives from the complexity of the matter rather than the lack of skill in the writer or his audience.  
p. 136

The choice of terms is significant in the context of v 9, where Jesus was designated "the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him." Deafness or dullness in receptivity is a dangerous condition for those who have been called to radical obedience. The importance of responsible listening has been stressed repeatedly in the sermon (2:1, "we must pay the closest attention to what we have heard."  
p. 136

If this apathetic attitude was not checked, it would lead to spiritual inertia and the erosion of faith and hope.  
p. 136

A. T. Robertson said:

It is the likeness of Jesus as high priest to Melchizedek that the author has in mind.  
p. 370

Robertson, speaking of this word "DULL OF HEARING," says it is an:

Old adjective (papyri also), from negative ne and otheo, to push, no push in the hearing, slow and sluggish in mind as well as in the ears. In N.T. only here and 6:12 (slack, sluggish).  
p. 371

Barclay says:

In Greek it means slow-moving in mind; it means torpid in understanding; it means dull of hearing; it means witlessly and senselessly forgetful. It can be used of the numbed limbs of an animal which is ill. It can be used of a person who has the imperceptive and lethargic nature of a stone.

p. 48

English says:

. . . their spiritual ears are not receptive to what he has to say. Like men and women of our own day, these early Jewish believers were taken with a sort of spiritual inertia. Anaesthetized by the attractions of the world, perhaps, or bound by the traditions of ritualistic legalism, their hearts were not susceptible to holy, heavenly, and eternal issues.

p. 146

Lenski says:

Something has come over his readers that makes him hesitate. They are no longer the people they once were. Their ears have become sluggish. The writer tells them plainly what is the matter with them. Their sorry condition makes it hard for him to expound what God says in reference to Christ and Melchizedek.

pp. 168-9

Lenski says further:

The sending station is in order, but the receiving radio set is out of order.

p. 170

It is like owning an AM/FM RADIO. When you have both receivers, you are able to get AM and FM. If you just have an AM radio, you are not going to enjoy the FM programming that is available to you.

## "YOU HAVE BECOME SLUGGISH"

We need to recognize that this is a process that has gone on over time. It is the display of an **APATHETIC ATTITUDE TOWARD SPIRITUAL THINGS** that has created this. They have **"BECOME SLUGGISH IN HEARING (HARD OF HEARING)."**

One is reminded of Matthew 13:12, 14-15:

"For whoever has, to him shall more be given, and he shall have an abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him.

"And in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is being fulfilled, which says, 'You will keep on hearing, but will not understand; And you will keep on seeing, but will not perceive; For the heart of this people has become dull, And with their ears they scarcely hear, And they have closed their eyes lest they should see with their eyes, And hear with their ears, and understand with their heart and return, and I should heal them.'

### 1 Thessalonians 2:13

And for this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received from us the word of God's message, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe.

John MacArthur says:

**Dull** comes from the Greek nothros, which is made up of the words for "no" and "push." Literally, therefore, it means "no push"--slow, sluggish. When used of a person it generally meant intellectually numb or thick. In the context of this passage, however, it primarily indicates spiritual dullness.

p. 130

Roy Hession in his little book From Shadow to Substance says:

And remember, a state of ignorance comes about through a continual ignoring of what God is saying to us and is therefore something culpable in the Christian life. That is why Paul uses the phrase "and are become dull of hearing." But if our hearts are hungry and open to God's voice, either in conviction or in encouragement, there is nothing very complicated here. It is the same simple message of the grace of God with which we began our Christian lives and which we must "hold steadfast to the end."

p. 53

Lange says:

The dulness or spiritual hardness of hearing of the readers is not designated as a natural trait, but as the result of a retrogradation which has no apology in their history and outward condition.

p. 109

Griffith Thomas does a good job of summarizing the verse:

There were many things to be said concerning the priesthood after the order of Melchizedek, but was difficult to explain the matter to them, since the trouble was with them and not with the subject.

They lacked "push and go," they had become sluggish (6:12) in their capacity for listening to the truth. There had been degeneration ("become") and through neglect they had gone back. There was "a languid indolence of mind and body" (Holmes). The words "dull of hearing" represent the same original term as is translated "slothful" in 6:12. Spiritual degeneration is therefore possible because God's will for the believer is constant progress.

pp. 67-68



Hewitt says:

They had become dull of hearing, which was a common Greek ethical term for a sluggish intelligence.

p. 101

Pink in his commentary says:

"To be 'dull of hearing' is descriptive of that state of mind in which statements may be made without producing any corresponding impression, without being attended to, without being understood, without being felt. In a word, it is descriptive of mental listlessness. To a person in this state, it is very difficult to explain anything; for, nothing, however simple in itself, can be understood if it be not attended to" (Dr. J. Brown).

p. 263

"CONCERNING HIM THERE IS MUCH TO BE SAID, AND IT IS HARD TO EXPLAIN."

The REASON being:

"SINCE YOU HAVE BECOME SLUGGISH IN HEARING."

Someone has said:

God is ever calling to the deeps within us, but we are too shallow to respond.

It is natural for us at this point to raise the QUESTIONS:

WHEN DID THIS HAPPEN?

HOW DID IT HAPPEN?

We can avoid this problem when we are doing what we are hearing and be guilty of sluggishness when we are resisting what we are hearing.

For ADAM AND EVE it was AVOIDING GOD. We too avoid people who are going to say what we do not want to hear.

There is no such thing as FELLOWSHIP BY LONG DISTANCE.

Satan will do everything he can to destroy the Father's credibility by bringing doubt about His dealings with us.

Hannah Hurnard in her book The Hearing Heart says:

In Hebrew an "obedient heart" is the same word as a "hearing heart." If one hears the Voice of God, it should mean obedience, and if one obeys one will hear.  
p. 13

After all, if you are living a hum-drum life, and you do nothing to change it, ten years from now you will be a product of ten more years of hum-drumidness.

David Campbell

(From InfoSearch 3.51)

#### KEEP MOVING!

Most of us have seen one of those "fender benders" on a busy expressway. One car in the line of traffic suddenly comes to a stop, and soon a whole string of drivers are caught in a chain of accidents. Well, that's the way it is with the believer who is not growing in Christ. His example is a source of discouragement, and his lack of spiritual vitality causes weakness within the body of Christ, the church. This is not just a matter of moving forward, in the sense of a lot of outward activity with no inner development of character. What is needed, rather, is a consistent, determined going on with the Lord, which results in real growth in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

(From InfoSearch 3.51)

## POOR PREACHING

"I have listened to many sermons from preachers called poor, and I have never heard one that did not teach me something if I was in the spirit to profit from it."

--Charles Haddon Spurgeon  
(quoted in Journal of Biblical Counseling,  
Wint, 1993)

(From InfoSearch 3.51)

(Our God Is Awesome by Tony Evans)

I like the story of the very wealthy grandfather who was getting up in age. He was going deaf, but he went to the doctor and was fitted with a unique hearing aid. It not only overcame the old man's deafness, but it allowed him to hear perfectly. When he went back to the doctor for a checkup, the doctor commented, "Well, your family must be extremely happy to know that you can now hear."

The grandfather said, "No, I haven't told them about my hearing aid. I just sit around and listen to the conversations. I've already changed my will twice."  
p. 126

(God Isn't in a Hurry by Warren Wiersbe)

We are emerging from an era of superstars and celebrities, people who have used Christians to build up their ministries instead of using their ministries to build up Christians.  
p. 105

(Acts of Love: The Power of Encouragement by David Jeremiah)

"You learn to speak by  
speaking, to study by  
studying,  
to run by running,  
to work by working;  
and just so,  
you learn to love God  
and man by loving."  
--Saint Francis of Sales

p. 28

(Abba's Child: The Cry of the Heart for Intimate Belonging  
by Brennan Manning)

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 an illusion."  
pp. 141-2

(The Living Body: The Church Christ Is Building by Dr.  
Richard Halverson)

Dr. James Houston, who founded Regent College in order to equip the laity, describes our time in church history as "the period of the entrepreneur." Someone has observed that the Christian faith began in Palestine as an experience, moved to Greece and became a philosophy, moved to Rome and became an institution, moved to Europe and became a culture, and then moved to America and became an enterprise.  
p. 15

(When Heaven Is Silent by Ronald Dunn)

I remember what Dr. Paul Tournier wrote about a patient consulting a doctor:

What he is looking for is a medicine that will make it unnecessary for him to change his life, so that he can go on living in accordance with his whims and passions, counting on some wonder-working pill to rescue him from their awkward circumstances.

We look for the easy path, always ripe for a quick-fix scheme. Instant gratification is the order of the day.  
pp. 16-17

(Holiness by J. C. Ryle)

It has long been my sorrowful conviction that the standard of daily life among professing Christians in this country has been gradually falling. I am afraid that Christ-like charity, kindness, good temper, unselfishness, meekness, gentleness, good nature, self-denial, zeal to do good and separation from the world are far less appreciated than they ought to be and than they used to be in the days of our fathers.  
p. 12

(Exit Interviews by William D. Hendricks)

One of his mentors, a seasoned veteran of the faith, offered a grim analysis. "I see people go through three stages, particularly in ministry," the man told him. "Number one is tired. Number two is numb. Number three is burnout. You're at numb, heading for burnout."  
p. 141

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.

Here in verse 12 we get the DIAGNOSIS FOR THE CONDITION that we have confronted in verse 11.

The CHARGE OF IMMATURITY is seen in their:

1. DEAFNESS in verse 11

and now it is seen in their:

2. DEPENDENCE in verse 12.

They should be giving instead of receiving, but their need is for receiving instead of giving.

Ezra 7:10

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

This is the PATTERN that the Father expects from us as His children who are growing in the faith. We come to a point where we are able to give instead of constantly receiving divine truth.

In The Bible Knowledge Commentary we read:

They had been Christians a long time, he reminded them.

. . . Others who had been in the faith less time than they should be profiting from their instruction. Instead they needed someone to instruct them again in the basics.

**The elementary truths** [equals] the letters of the alphabet, "You seem to need your ABCs reviewed" . . . but at the same time he had no intention of going over them (6:1). What he apparently had mainly in view was their wavering state of mind in regard to the error that sought to lure them away from the faith. . . . What he would offer them shortly would be solid food indeed, by which he evidently hoped to pull them dramatically forward in their Christian experience.

pp. 792-3

They ought to be teachers, indeed. God counts the time since a man has heard the truth and believed it. He rightly expects progress in divine things. Years, months, days, hours, yea, moments are precious to professing Christians since the Holy Ghost came down from heaven to enlighten us, to lead us into all truth, to empower us in things divine, and to bring forth through us and in us that precious fruit for which the husbandman, the Father, looks with yearning from those in Christ the true vine. Reader, we are always becoming. Not one of us is where he was yesterday. If an unbeliever, you are further in unbelief today than yesterday. For to sow an act is to reap a tendency. To sow a tendency is to reap a habit. To sow a habit is to reap a character. To sow a character is to reap a destiny.

J. Dwight Pentecost procures 3 QUESTIONS from the passage in Hebrews 5:

Thus the apostle in a very practical and simple way has put three tests before us by which you and I may determine which of two stages of spiritual development we fit into, maturity or immaturity.

1. Is your life characterized by knowledge or lack of knowledge?
2. Is your life characterized by independence or by dependence?
3. Is your life characterized by ability to use the word of God or by complete inability to apply the principles and precepts of Scripture to daily conduct?

In addition to the pointed questions on maturity the Christian is given a pattern for development. Advancement will be the result of study of the word. Also, this kind of study will produce qualified teachers of the Scripture.

The reason many Christians become dull of hearing is simply because they do not put into practice that which they hear. Every day is a brand-new opportunity, and we must face each day with the DISCIPLINES OF LIFE. To be:

1. IN THE WORD
2. IN PRAYER
3. IN FELLOWSHIP WITH THE LORD

Every day we must express the:

4. OBEDIENT HEART by fulfilling the principles of Scripture



This is true in every area of our lives:

PHYSICALLY--We wish that the exercise that we participated in yesterday could apply for today but it is taking up the cross daily and following Him.

EMOTIONALLY--The love we had yesterday does not count for today.

SPIRITUALLY--The time in the Word we had yesterday does not count for today.

Each day is a new:

STEWARDSHIP

and RESPONSIBILITY.

As a result, too, it is an:

OPPORTUNITY for growth and spiritual development.

Pink observes:

Their condition was to be deplored from three considerations. First, they had been converted long enough to be of help to others. Second, instead of being useful, they were useless, needing to be grounded afresh in the A.B.C. of the Truth of God. Third, so far from having the capacity to masticate strong food, their condition called for that which was suited only to a stunted babyhood.  
p. 265

Two aims should be prayerfully sought by every Christian auditor: his own edification, his usefulness to others.  
p. 266

Lange observes:

Failure in fidelity begets failure in our experience in spiritual life; and failure in experience produces failure in the understanding of the word of God.--The important matter is, not how long one has been a Christian, but how earnest he has been in his Christian profession.--Without exercise, there is not the needful progress either in Christian knowledge or in Christian life.  
p. 110

Delitzsch has this to say about the word "TIME" ("FOR THOUGH BY THIS TIME YOU ARE UNDER MORAL OBLIGATION TO BE TEACHERS"):

. . . is the whole time which has elapsed since these Hebrews first became believers in Christ,--a period of such length that they ought on this account to be not only far advanced in knowledge of the truth for themselves, but also to be the teachers of it to others.  
p. 259

The Hebrew Christians are again in need of instructions as to the fundamental principles of Christianity, because, instead of building on them further, they have lost that very apprehension of those doctrines themselves which is necessary for any further development.  
p. 260

Lenski says:

This rebuke hurts. These readers were former Jews and were, therefore, thoroughly versed in the Old Testament. Now it, however, develops that they have been thinking of dropping back into the old Judaism and giving up Christ. Are they really such babes as not to know what God himself says about the supreme and eternal High Priesthood of Jesus in connection with Melchizedek to whom even Abraham bowed?  
p. 169

The problem is, the writer says, as to how we are going to discuss Melchizedek and what God has said about him, which is beyond the ABC, when you readers have to have the ABC taught you again. Your condition certainly makes such a discussion hard for me.  
p. 171

Wiersbe says:

The "milk" of the Word refers to what Jesus Christ did on earth--His birth, life, teaching, death, burial, and resurrection. The "meat" of the Word refers to what Jesus Christ is now doing in heaven. We begin the Christian life on the basis of His finished work on earth. We grow in the Christian life on the basis of His unfinished work in heaven.  
p. 60

Bruce observes:

Their sluggishness showed itself in a disposition to settle down at the point which they had reached, since to go farther would have meant too complete a severing of old ties. To such people the exposition of the high-priestly service of Christ, with the corollary that the old order of priesthood and sacrifice had been abolished once for all, might well have been unacceptable; the intellect is not over-ready to entertain any idea that the heart finds unpalatable.  
p. 136

In view of the time that has elapsed since your conversion to Christianity, you ought to be taking solid food, like grown-up men and women; in fact, however, you are still unable to digest anything stronger than milk, the food of infants.  
p. 135

Draper admits:

They had a moral debt because of what they had received. The Word of God in us demands that we share it. A teacher shares the Word of God because he is obliged to do so. Having received the Word of God, we ought to be teachers.

p. 133

Macaulay points out:

There is a difference between the laughing comedy of normal babyhood and the doleful tragedy of retarded growth.

So it is in the spiritual realm. A newborn babe in Christ is a joy, but protracted babyhood, or a return to spiritual babyhood as in the case of the Hebrew Christians here addressed, is an unmitigated sorrow.

p. 75

Phillips puts it this way:

In addition to their mental problem is a moral problem (5:12-14). The Hebrew believers are behind in their duty. They should be ready and able to teach others the principles of Christianity, but instead they need someone to teach them the first principles of the oracles of God. They were in need of milk, not solid food. "Ye ought to be teachers" (5:12), he says. That word "ought" implies moral obligation. We cannot escape personal responsibility and accountability for the truth we have.

p. 88

Barclay says:

Here the writer to the Hebrews is face to face with a problem which haunts the Church in every generation. He is face to face with the problem of the Christian who refuses to grow up.

p. 49

A. T. Robertson describes these Hebrews as:

. . . without intellectual and spiritual teeth.  
p. 371

Lane says:

With biting irony, the writer calls the community to acknowledge its maturity, which has both ethical and theological ramifications for responsible life in the world.  
p. 137

Hughes points out:

Here the author is most graphic because the Greek translated "the elementary truths" actually means something like, "the ABC's of the beginning of the words of God."<sup>3</sup> This refers to the basic truths of God's Word--what Alistair Begg has called the main things: "The plain things are the main things, and the main things are the plain things."

<sup>3</sup>Leon Morris, The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Vol. 12 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1981), p. 52.  
p. 147

DeHaan explains it this way:

In other words, they hadn't even learned their ABC's.

But there is no excuse for such neglect, and it will be judged of the Lord. With all this light and instruction, with the power of the Word to help us, with such an High Priest to forgive and strengthen, with the Holy Spirit to guide, there is absolutely no excuse for remaining in a state of perpetual spiritual infancy.  
p. 93

Immature Christians not only hurt themselves by robbing themselves of the spiritual benefits which accompany maturity, but they rob others also. Christians should be teachers, sharing their spiritual blessings with others, both within and without the church. It is the entire church that has been called to a teaching ministry, although some individuals have special gifts. The Great Commission includes the command to teach all nations.

Owen says:

The Apostle complains of their slow progress, considering the time and opportunities they had enjoyed.  
p. 88

"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 . . ."

This phrase we have already seen back in verse 11. It is a PROCESS OF TIME.

"YOU HAVE BECOME SLUGGISH IN HEARING" in verse 11.

"YOU HAVE BECOME SUCH AS ARE HAVING NEED OF MILK AND NOT SOLID FOOD" here in verse 12.

They have reversed the normal growth pattern.

Whereas the focus is on their:

DEAFNESS in verse 11,

it is focused on their

DEPENDENCE and DEFORMITY in verse 12.

The choice has been theirs according to the graphic illustration that Jesus uses at the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount of the WISE MAN WHO BUILDS HIS HOUSE UPON THE ROCK AND THE FOOLISH MAN WHO BUILDS HIS HOUSE UPON THE SAND. They have been playing in the sand instead of building on the rock.

Wuest says:

Thus because of the length of time in which these Hebrews had been under the instruction of teachers presenting New Testament truth, they ought to be teaching the same. The "ought" is one of moral obligation. The Greek word is used of a necessity imposed either by law or duty, or by the matter under consideration. "Again" is in an emphatic position in the Greek and is to be construed with "need," not "teach."

p. 105

English points out:

The very Gospel by which they had been saved was not wholly clear to these early Jewish Christians. For example, the essence of the Gospel message is that Salvation is wholly God's free gift: "by grace are ye saved through faith" (Eph. 2:8). Yet these believers in the Christ of God continued to look back to and covet the sacrifices and ceremonial observances of the old covenant, failing to appreciate the liberty of the new.

p. 147

Westcott points out:

The respective topics of the two stages of teaching are not spoken of as more or less essential or important.

That which corresponds with the 'milk' is in fact 'the foundation.' The 'milk' and 'solid food' are appropriate to different periods of growth. The older Christian ought to be able to assimilate fresh and harder truths.

p. 134

J. Vernon McGee has it right when he says:

They ought to be teachers and mature saints, but instead they are still little babies needing someone to burp them.

p. 542

Stedman observes:

"There is so much of the riches of the Melchizedek priesthood of Christ which I want to tell you," he says, "which would make your starved humanity burst into bloom like buds in the spring if you could but grasp it, but you would not get it because you are so dull of hearing." The immature lose so much, and they risk even more.

p. 79

First, there is the clear suggestion that **age alone does not produce maturity**. It is amazing how many of us think it does. We love this thought of inevitable growth. How often we say, "Just give us time. We have only been Christians for fifteen or twenty years. Perhaps we will yet grow out of these hot tempers, catty tongues and jealous spirits. Just give us time." But time never brings maturity.

pp. 76-77

That is exactly the situation with these Hebrew Christians. They had been going through the same experience again and again, all the years of their Christian life, but had never grown. Instead of marching forward they were simply marking time. It is the problem with so many of us, is it not? Someone told me the other day that he had analyzed his difficulty and had decided he was suffering from prolonged adolescence, merging into premature senility! It is this process that produces the frequent phenomenon of Christians who come to sit, and soak, and sour. But the writer here makes very clear that age will never cure immaturity.

p. 77



## PRECIOUS LITTLE

"A great teacher is teachable. If he is not, he will have precious little to teach. Flee from the teacher who knows it all, unless the teacher is God. I know teachers who, in their first year of teaching, made lesson plans for their courses and have used those same plans, unaltered, for years. They are not great teachers."

--R.C. Sproul  
(quoted in World, Jul 17, 1993)

(From InfoSearch 3.51)

## "THIS IS A FOOTBALL!"

Vince Lombardi, who was the head football coach of the Green Bay Packers for many years, produced one NFL champion after another. He motivated his men to play every moment of every game to the best of their ability. No matter what the circumstances, the Packers were as strong and tough in the last 2 minutes of the game as they were at the opening kickoff. They never quit. What was their secret? We're told that Lombardi began each practice session by holding up a football and saying, "This is a football!" Then he drilled his men in the basics of conditioning, blocking, tackling, and playmaking. This thorough training in the basics stood them in good stead when the pressure was really on. It kept them from giving up.

(From InfoSearch 3.51)

(Can We Save the Evangelical Church? by Bill Hull)

Charles Spurgeon once said, "Though I can understand the possibility of an earnest sower never reaping, I cannot understand the position of an earnest sower being content not to reap."  
p. 163

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

Now we have THE REASON that they "are having need of milk and not solid food." And the PRINCIPLE is given in the 1st part of the verse:

"FOR EVERYONE WHO IS PARTAKING ONLY OF MILK IS UNACQUAINTED WITH THE TEACHING ABOUT RIGHTEOUSNESS"

1 Corinthians 13:11

When I was a child, I used to speak as a child, think as a child, reason as a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things.

Righteousness does not come by the works of the Law.

Romans 3:19, 20

Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, that every mouth may be closed, and all the world may become accountable to God; because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.

The truth is, RIGHTEOUSNESS COMES BY RELATIONSHIP.

Romans 1:17

For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "But the righteous man shall live by faith."

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

It is unsatisfactory to remain a baby in spiritual matters. . . . "Not acquainted" might be better rendered "inexperienced." It is not so much that a spiritual "infant" lacks information--though at first he obviously does--but rather that he has not yet learned to put "the teaching about righteousness" to effective use. He lacks the skill which goes with maturity and which results in the ability to make appropriate moral choices.

p. 793

#### FROM END TO END

Baby: An alimentary canal with a loud voice at one end and no responsibility at the other.

No wonder kids are confused today. Half of the adults tell them to find themselves; the other half tell them to get lost.

<Unknown>

You can lead a boy to college but you cannot make him think.

Elbert Hubbard.

(From InfoSearch 3.51)

(Our God Is Awesome by Tony Evans)

As I begin I feel a little bit like the late Art Linkletter, who saw a little boy drawing a picture and asked, "What are you doing?"

The boy replied, "I'm drawing a picture of God."

Mr. Linkletter said, "Well, I thought that no one knew what God looked like."

The boy looked up confidently and said, "They will when I get through."

p. 18

Westcott, speaking about the teaching of righteousness, says:

. . . teaching which deals at once with the one source of righteousness in Christ, and the means by which man is enabled to be made partaker of it. The doctrine of Christ's priestly work is based upon these conceptions, which belong to the 'solid food' of the mature believer.

p. 134

Lane says:

It may be preferable, therefore, to take account of a technical use of the formulation in the early second century that clearly links the phrase with martyrdom. In calling for unceasing perseverance in Christian hope, Polycarp appeals to Christ Jesus and says, "he endured everything. Therefore, let us become imitators of his patient endurance and glorify him whenever we suffer for the sake of his name. I, therefore, exhort you to obey the word of righteousness and practice patient endurance to the limit--an endurance of which you have had an object lesson not only in those blessed persons Ignatius, Zosimus, and Rufus, but also in members of your own community as well as in Paul himself and the other apostles."

p. 138

Hughes observes:

He assaults his friends with a grotesque image--adult infants who are still nursing. Think of the tragic absurdity of full-grown men and women in diapers who are neither capable of, nor desire solid food and who sit around sucking their thumbs. Such full-grown infants amount to a huge disgrace and drain on the Church. Obviously the writer's grotesque images are meant to shock and to motivate some of his hearers to pull out their thumbs and say, I'm no baby.

pp. 148-9

English observes:

Yet it strikes us that it is the very truths about which the writer of the epistle is about to expostulate that he alludes to here by the term, namely: the high priesthood of Christ and its bearing upon our justification and righteous standing before God's holiness. Every one that uses milk and nothing else is but a babe. He has not grown spiritually. He benefits by all that his salvation in Christ embraces, that is, in his standing before God. He is redeemed, regenerated, justified, and sanctified as to his position. But he is unskillful in the Word of righteousness in that he is uninformed as to its full import and deeper meaning, and ignorant as well, perhaps, of the practical reality of the abundant life and spiritual maturity.

p. 150

J. Vernon McGee says:

I don't want to step on your toes, my friend, but I'd love to be helpful to you. You cannot grow apart from the Word of God. I don't care how active you are in the church. You may be an officer. You may be on every committee in the church. You may be a leading deacon or elder. I don't care who you are, or what you are; if you are not studying the Word of God, and if you don't know how to handle it, you are a little baby.

p. 542

Paul, in speaking to the Ephesian saints, sets his sights on the following goal:

Ephesians 4:13

until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.

The problem with these Jewish Christians is that they see growth and spiritual development as a performance rather than a relationship.

One is reminded of the words in Galatians 3:3, 21:

Galatians 3:3

Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?

Galatians 3:21

Is the Law then contrary to the promises of God? May it never be! For if a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law.

(Heaven Came Down: Jesus Shows Us How to Treat One Another  
by Lynn Anderson)

Some people seem to think Christians are supposed to wear a sign that says, "No fun, no sun, and no laughs." They're the dreary crowd with solemn faces and sourpuss expressions, who spend long nights at home. The "really spiritual" Christian knows how to turn down invitations, turn up his nose at jokes, and turn his back on anything that seems to suggest a good time.  
p. 30

Paul Adolph in his book Release from Tension spells out  
8 HINDRANCES TO CHRISTIAN GROWTH:

1. Perfectionism attempted through the energy of the flesh
  2. Fear, anxiety and worry
  3. Bitterness, resentfulness 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
- pp. 63-64

Paul Adolph in the book Release from Tension also says:

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. It appears to us that spiritual starvation is in many instances the reason for lack of spiritual growth in many Christians today. This in turn accounts, we believe, for the prevalence of diseases which stem from emotional tensions in Christian people, for we are convinced that when adequate attention is given to factors which produce spiritual growth, there is usually little or no difficulty encountered in connection with diseased states caused by emotional tensions.

pp. 59-60

Curtis C. Mitchell in his book Let's Live! says:

Check our your desire. Do you really want to love God? Do you really have confidence in God? Are you really totally committed to Him? Have you been honest with Him? Any or all of these may be reasons why your communication has broken down and your Christian life is just a dull routine--a drag.

p. 26

(The Tribute by Dennis Rainey with David Boehi)

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

--Soren Kierkegaard

p. 108

(The Victorious Christian Life by Dr. Tony Evans)

Suppose you went to Sears and purchased a brand new refrigerator, the top of the line. This model has all the bells and whistles and cost you a hefty \$6,000. On your way home you stop at your local grocery store to purchase the food for your new appliance. Later that afternoon your refrigerator is delivered and installed, and you fill it with all the goodies you purchased--your favorite chocolate chip ice cream, chocolate milk, and fresh corn on the cob.

You retire for the night, but when you come into the kitchen the next morning, you experience the shock of your life. Ice cream is all over the floor! The milk is sour, and the vegetables [sic] are changing color! It is quickly evident that your brand new, top-of-the-line refrigerator isn't working!

Angry and disgusted you call Sears to give them a peace [sic] of your "Christian mind" for selling you a dud. The salesperson who sold you the refrigerator is aghast at the news. He asks you to pull open the freezer door to see if the light comes on.

You do so. No light.

He then asks you to put your ear to the bottom of the refrigerator to see if you hear the low hum of the motor.

You do so. No hum.

Finally he asks you to look behind the refrigerator and see if the electrical cord has been plugged in.

You do so. Lo and behold the cord is lying on the floor, unplugged!

You return to the phone and inform the salesman that the refrigerator is unplugged but that shouldn't matter. You argue that for \$6,000 it should work--plugged in or not!

The salesman then explains a very important principle to you--namely, refrigerators are dependent appliances. They were never made to work on their own. They are built with certain specifications that can only be realized when they have been energized by the power of electricity. While all the necessary parts are there, they will not work until they get the necessary electrical juice to enable them to be and do what they were created to do.



In this regard, Christians are like appliances. We are dependent creatures. When you receive Christ as Savior, He gives you the requisite parts necessary for you to live a victorious Christian life. But you will not be able to do so until you are plugged into God's power source: the Holy Spirit. Even though your new nature provides all the parts necessary to live a vibrant Christian life, you will find one part of your life after another perishing because the power to keep you operating as an alive and victorious child of God is absent.  
pp. 33-34

(31 Days of Praise: Enjoying God Anew by Ruth Myers)

I praise You that "Jesus Christ is able to untangle all the snarls in my soul, to banish all my complexes, and to transform even my fixed habit patterns, no matter how deeply they are etched in my subconscious" (Corrie ten Boom).  
p. 74

C. S. Lewis wrote that 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. And God has given us His life and power through our inner union with Christ Jesus our Lord.  
p. 138

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.

In verse 11 we talked about the immaturity of these Hebrew Christians, made manifest in their DEAFNESS. They were "sluggish in hearing."

It was manifested by their DEPENDENCE. When they ought "to be teachers" they were having need of "someone to be teaching" them again.

They were DEFORMED. They were "having need of milk and not solid food."

In verse 13 we learned that they are DECEIVED. They are "unacquainted with the teaching about righteousness," for they are still babies.

The word "BUT" forms the CONTRAST for us in verse 14. We switch from IMMATURITY to MATURITY.

There are 2 QUALITIES OF A MATURE PERSON that are described here in this 14th verse:

1. THEIR DISCIPLINE - "WHO BECAUSE OF PRACTICE ARE HAVING THEIR POWERS OF PERCEPTION TRAINED"
2. THEIR DISCERNMENT - "THEIR POWERS OF PERCEPTION TRAINED TO DISCERN GOOD AND EVIL"

I am reminded of a ZIGGY CARTOON where an old man is talking to Ziggy sitting on the park bench, and he is saying:

"Wisdom is supposed to come with old age but sometimes old age shows up all by itself."

These Hebrew Christians were manifesting a prolonged babyhood by the fact that they were not mature enough to continue in the direction they should be going in growing up in Jesus Christ.

Westcott says:

The spiritual maturity of which the apostle speaks is the result of careful exercise. It belongs to those who have their senses--their different organs of spiritual perception--trained, in virtue of their moral state gained by long experience.

p. 135

The discernment of 'good and evil' is here regarded in relation to the proper food of the soul, the discrimination of that which contributes to its due strengthening. The mature Christian has already gained the power which he can at once apply, as the occasion arises. This power comes through the discipline of use which shapes a stable character.

p. 136

Draper says:

One of the greatest tragedies in human history in general, and in Christendom in particular, is the lack of spiritual growth and development among Christians. Those who have received the Word of God but have not understood its depths, its demands, or its demonstration in their lives are tragic caricatures of Christians. They are spiritually immature. Their lives are torn with frustration and fear. Their spiritual lives are shipwrecks, and they stand in need of being taught the basic principles of the Christian faith. God help us to grow up in his Word and be skilled in its use.

p. 137

Wiersbe says:

I once heard a preacher say, "Most Christians are 'betweeners.'"

"What do you mean by that?" I asked.

"They are between Egypt and Canaan--out of the place of danger, but not yet into the place of rest and rich inheritance," he replied. "They are between Good Friday and Easter Sunday--saved by the blood but not yet enjoying newness of resurrection life."

Are you a "betweenner"?

p. 61

Hahn in Lange's commentary says:

Great truths demand also a certain spiritual age and disciplined senses.--If one does not correctly understand a thing, let him first seek the fault in himself, and administer proper self-rebuke.  
p. 110

Larry Richards says:

Maturity comes when we act on the truth of God and thus develop the capacity (which each person potentially has in Christ) to make daily, practical choices of God's will rather than of that which is wrong and evil.  
p. 53

Hewitt says:

They who are of full age have reached an advanced stage of spiritual understanding. They are mature or full grown in the deep mysteries of the Word of God. This condition is not gained by apathy or by slothfulness, for there is no room in the Christian life for mental laziness. It is gained by the regular exercise of the spiritual faculties in the Word of God and in the doctrines of the Christian faith, for there is no easy way to spiritual maturity.  
p. 102

Pink says:

"Senses trained to discern both good and evil" has reference to what is set before a believer as food for his soul. The "good" is that which is nutritious and suited to his nourishment, "evil" is that which tends not to his edification, but to his destruction.  
p. 271

"If people really loved and cherished what they so fondly called 'the simple gospel,' their knowledge and Christian character would deepen, and all the truths which are centered in Christ crucified would become the object of their investigation and delight, and enrich and elevate their experience. . . . There are no doctrines more profound than those which are proclaimed when Christ's salvation is declared.

p. 271

"BUT SOLID FOOD IS FOR THE MATURE" who because of practice are having their powers of perception trained to discern good and evil. What is the right thing to do? Stay or go!

Ephesians 4:14

As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming;

James 1:6

But let him ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.

Galatians 4:19, 20

My children, with whom I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you--but I could wish to be present with you now and to change my tone, for I am perplexed about you.

1 Timothy 4:7, 8

But have nothing to do with worldly fables fit only for old women. On the other hand, discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness; for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.

1 Corinthians 15:58

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord.

## THE ENEMY COMES IN LIKE A FLOOD

"If you can induce a community to doubt the genuineness and authenticity of the Scriptures; to question the reality and obligations of religion; to hesitate, undecided, whether there be any such thing as virtue or vice; whether there be an eternal state of retribution beyond the grave; or whether there exists any such being as God, you have broken down the barriers of moral virtue and hoisted the flood gates of immorality and crime . . . Every bond that holds society together would be ruptured."

--From McGuffey's Eclectic Reader  
originally published in 1836  
(quoted in Good News, Mar/Apr 1993)

(From InfoSearch 3.51)

## ON THE OFFENSIVE

"Today, over 50% of Americans say fundamentalism makes them nervous. By more than two to one, they do not believe the Bible is authoritative--a precise reversal from 30 years ago. Most cultural strongholds in politics, academics, and the media are occupied by people who renounce religious belief. As paganism spreads across our culture, our impulse could be to panic, to circle the wagons and keep strictly to our own kind. But is this the right response? Should Christians retreat into a new isolationism? Or should we go on the offensive, infiltrating increasingly hostile territory?"

--Charles Colson  
(in Christianity Today,  
Oct 25, 1993)

(From InfoSearch 3.51)

## ROAR!

"The Word of God is like a lion. You don't have to defend a lion. All you have to do is let the lion loose, and the lion will defend itself."

--Charles Spurgeon  
(quoted in World Vision,  
Dec 1993/Jan 1994)

(From InfoSearch 3.51)

## THE REAL THING

When a man is accepted for a job with the FBI, he is given intensive training. As part of the program, he is taught to watch for counterfeit money. He makes a thorough study of the genuine bills--not the phonies--so that he can spot the fake currency immediately because of its contrast to the real thing.

(From InfoSearch 3.51)

## TRAINING IN GODLINESS

Steve Farrar writes: "Recently I was watching the late edition of SportCenter on ESPN to catch highlights of that day's NFL games. After football, they showed about a 20-second clip of the New York marathon. It was incredible to watch nearly 20,000 people in one race. I don't know how many finished, but I'd bet you a used piece of gum that every person who did had something in common with every other finisher. What could ten or twelve thousand runners of different races, professions, and income levels all have in common?"

"They trained.

"In the Christian life, it's not how you start, it's how you finish. Your level of endurance is important.

1 Timothy 4:7b gives the secret of obtaining endurance. It's called training."

[Point Man by Steve Farrar. Multnomah, 1990. Pages 135-136.]

(From InfoSearch 3.51)

(No Place for Truth: Or Whatever Happened to Evangelical Theology? by David F. Wells)

. . . a poem written by Francis Whiting Hatch during the time when ice was being shipped from Wenham Lake. Entitled "Love's Labor Found (and Bound)," it concerned the inner thoughts of a young woman called Hester Price who lived "by the famous lake in Wenham":

Pies she baked were straight from Heaven,  
Every cookie, every tart,  
Was an arrow shot by Cupid  
Piercing stomach, piercing heart.

"When it comes my time to marry,"  
Hester said, "I'll have you know,  
That my Bible and my Cook Book  
Are the books to make things go."

(Hatch, "Love's Labor Found (and Bound)," in "Wenham Poems" file, Wenham Museum, Wenham, Mass.)  
p. 29

(Our God Is Awesome by Tony Evans)

Once upon a time a scorpion 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, 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."

p. 37



(Becoming a Contagious Christian by Bill Hybels & Mark Mittelberg)

A few years ago my wife and I spent a day with Billy and Ruth Graham at their mountaintop home in North Carolina. In the evening I could tell Billy was starting to get tired, so I told him we were going to head back to our hotel. But to my surprise he handed me his Bible and said, "Bill, before you go, feed me from God's word."

I thought to myself, this seventy-three-year-old man is obviously not a baby Christian. And there's no savor problem here, either! In addition, he has communicated the gospel message to more people than anyone else in history. Yet here he was saying to me, in effect, "I still need and love to be fed from God's Word."

This experience helped me understand why Billy Graham has maintained such a high-potency factor for so long. He continually takes steps to heighten his saltiness. Nothing that happened during our time together lingered with me more than that did. I left, hoping that my savor factor will be sky high when I'm that age. I would like to be dangerous when I'm seventy-three--wouldn't you?

pp. 43-44

(Guard Your Heart by Dr. Gary Rosberg)

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. I don't want my life to end up like some painful puzzle full of empty promises and faded dreams. I want a life that makes sense, a life that points toward a destiny beyond time. A life that will allow a close inspection; full of mistakes, yes, but also full of repentance and obedience. A heart that has lived life and given it all it has before it goes into an eternal relationship with our heavenly Father.

I'll bet that's what you want, too. Let's stick together then, and find out how to get it done.  
p. 41

(They Walked with God by James S. Bell, Jr.)

Some of us can never forget the hymn composed by the last Pastor Theodore Monod of Paris in his first radiant vision of a life hidden in Christ with God:

All of Self and none of Thee!  
Some of Self and some of Thee!  
Less of Self and more of Thee!  
None of Self and all of Thee!

F. B. Meyer

01/03

(The Message: Psalms by Eugene H. Peterson)

Psalm 138

Finish what you started in me, Yahweh.

Your love is eternal--don't quit on me now.

p. 186

(Perilous Pursuits by Joseph M. Stowell)

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.

p. 39

(The Complete Book of Zingers by Croft M. Pentz)

If we are beginning to encounter some hard bumps, be glad. At least we are out of the rut.

p. 96

(Downscaling: Simplify and Enrich Your Lifestyle by Dave and Kathy Babbitt)

When Jeannette was twenty she said, "I'm not ready to meet the person I'm going to marry because I'm not the person I hope to be when I get married." That's a profound concept. We are all changing and becoming.

p. 200

(Institutes of the Christian Religion by John Calvin.  
Translated and Annotated by Ford Lewis Battles)

We are therefore thrice miserable Christians if we grow old without advancement, for our faith ought to progress through all stages of our life until it grows to full manhood [Eph. 4:13].

p. 89

CONCLUSION:

What are some of the lessons that we can learn from this particular study?

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.

As we stand back from the passage for a moment, there are  
4 REFLECTIONS I would like to share with you at this time:

1. These Hebrew Christians are babes. They are babes in Christ. They have eternal life.  
They have been born again.
2. They need no knowledge. Their need is to use the knowledge they have.
3. They have lapsed into dullness because of disuse.
4. They are expected to teach.

The "MILK" in the passage speaks of IMMATURITY and BEING TAUGHT.

The "MEAT" speaks of MATURITY and TEACHING.

Lane summarizes the passage by saying:

In vv 11-14 the writer uses irony effectively to summon the house church to resume their status as adults with its attendant responsibilities.

p. 139

Wiersbe summarizes it this way:

#### **Mature in Christ**

Mature believers understand the heavenly priesthood of Jesus Christ and know how to come to the throne of grace for help. They are skillful in using God's truth in their personal lives, and they can also teach others. Do you qualify?

p. 817

Barclay says:

A case of arrested development is always a pathetic thing; and the world is full of people whose religious development has been arrested. They refuse to grow up. They stopped learning years ago; their thought is still the thought of a child; their conduct is still the conduct of a child. It is true that Jesus said that the greatest thing in the world is the childlike spirit; but there is a world of difference between the childlike and the childish spirit. Peter Pan, the boy who would not grow up, makes a charming play on the stage; but Peter Pan, the man and the woman who will not grow up, make a tragedy in real life. Let us have a care lest we are still in the religion of childhood when we should have reached the faith of maturity. Let us have a care that we are not still behaving like children when we should be behaving like men and women full grown.

p. 50

It would be good for us to reflect for a moment on that great hymn:

"Higher Ground"

I'm pressing on the upward way,  
New heights I'm gaining ev'ry day;  
Still praying as I'm onward bound,  
"Lord, plant my feet on higher ground.

My heart has no desire to stay  
Where doubts arise and fears dismay;  
Tho' some may dwell where these abound,  
My prayer, my aim is higher ground."

I want to live above the world,  
Tho' Satan's darts at me are hurled;  
For faith has caught the joyful sound,  
The song of saints on higher ground.

I want to scale the utmost height  
And catch a gleam of glory bright;  
But still I'll pray till Heav'n I've found,  
"Lord, lead me on to higher ground."

*Refrain:*

Lord, lift me up and let me stand,  
By faith, on Heaven's tableland,  
A higher plane that I have found;  
Lord, plant my feet on higher ground.

("Higher Ground" by Johnson Oatman, Jr. The New Church Hymnal, Lexicon Music, Inc., 1976. #171)

(Beyond Culture Wars by Michael S. Horton)

Yale's H. Richard Niebuhr had liberals in his sights with the following pristine crystallization of modernism, but his summary could equally apply to the message of many evangelicals today: "A God without wrath brought men without sin into a kingdom without judgment through the ministrations of Christ without a cross."

p. 212

(Squeeze Play: Practical Insights for Men Caught Between Work & Home by Bob Briner)

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. We keep unbelievers from coming in contact with the Gospel. Don't let the same thing happen to you. Constantly seek an integrated life. Be vigilant to see that your faith relates positively to all you do. Be certain that your business and professional friends know who you really are and whose you really are.

Every day you may find yourself caught between the blessings of your faith and the demands of your career. You have enough stress at work and don't need the additional stress of this "squeeze play." The only way out of it is to put your faith in Christ first. Even before you cross the plate, the only Umpire who really counts has already signaled an irrevocable hands-down "safe" call. You don't have to be hung up between third and home. That base path ought to be a cake walk because we know the Holy Spirit will take us safely home.

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 postgame press conference where we can all join the Savior in a marvelous, never-ending celebration!

pp. 140-41

(The Message: Psalms by Eugene H. Peterson)

Psalm 19

Clean the slate, God, so we can start the day fresh!

Keep me from stupid sins,  
from thinking I can take over your work;

Then I can start this day sun-washed,  
scrubbed clean of the grime of sin.

These are the words in my mouth;  
these are what I chew on and pray.

Accept them when I place them  
on the morning altar,

O God, my Altar-Rock,  
God, Priest-of-My-Altar.

p. 28



(Amazing Grace: 366 Inspiring Hymn Stories for Daily Devotions by Kenneth W. Osbeck)

PRECIOUS LORD, TAKE MY HAND

Thomas A. Dorsey, 1899-1993

*For I am the Lord, your God, who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, "Do not fear; I will help you." (Isaiah 41:13)*

Out of a broken heart after his wife and newly born son had both died, Thomas Dorsey cried to his Lord to lead him "through the storm, through the night[.]" In doing so, he created lines that have since ministered to others in an unusual way. This tender song, written by a black gospel musician in 1932, has since been a favorite with Christians everywhere.

Thomas A. Dorsey grew up in Georgia as a "preacher's kid." As he began to be successful as a composer of jazz and blues songs, however, he drifted away from God. After it seemed to him that he was miraculously spared in brushes with death, Dorsey came back to the Lord. As his life dramatically changed he began to write gospel songs and to sing in church services. It was during a revival meeting in St. Louis, Missouri, that he received a telegram telling the tragic news of his wife and infant son. Stunned and grief-stricken, Dorsey cried, "God, you aren't worth a dime to me right now!"

A few weeks later, however, as Dorsey fingered the keyboard of a piano, he created the lines of "Precious Lord" to fit a tune that was familiar to him. The following Sunday the choir of the Ebenezer Baptist Church in South Chicago, Ill[i]nois, sang the new song with Dorsey playing the accompaniment. "It tore up the church!"

God continued to lead Thomas Dorsey by the hand until he had written more than 250 gospel songs. He once stated:

"My business is to try to bring people to Christ instead of leaving them where they are. I write for all of God's people. All people are my people. What I share with people is love. I try to lift their spirits and let them know that God still loves them. He's still saving, and He can still give that power."

\* \* \* \*

Precious Lord, take my hand, lead me on, help me stand--I am tired, I am weak, I am worn; thro' the storm, thro' the night, lead me on to the light--Take my hand, precious Lord, lead me home.

When my way grows drear, Precious Lord, linger near  
--when my life is almost gone. Hear my cry, hear my call, hold my hand lest I fall--Take my hand, precious Lord, lead me home.

p. 260