Time to Grow Up!

Lesson for Sunday, December 5, 2021

TEXT: Hebrews 5:11-14

INTRODUCTION:

* Each week we try to review the theme of Hebrews: Jesus is better. We have seen the author point out that Jesus is better than the angels, prophets and priests.
* What about the overall context of the book? *Allow for some input; see what they know.*
* We saw the comparison in an earlier chapter when Israel wanted to go back to Egypt, and the result was that an entire generation failed to inherit what God had promised. They had been delivered out of Egypt, but they had never enjoyed the promised rest of Canaan.
* Now, in the times when Hebrews was written, these converted Jews were being tempted to go back to their Jewish roots and abandon the blessings to be experienced from walking in Christ.
* Some scholars argue that today’s text is the central passage of Hebrews. These three verses summarize the main point the Holy Spirit is trying to convey to every reader.
* Here’s the point: It’s time to grow up! God intends for Christians to mature in their faith.
* Question: Are you growing? Are you more mature today than this time a year ago?
* To find the solution to spiritual immaturity you must be able to correctly diagnose the problem. In these verses there are four key words that describe the various hindrances we face in the area of our spiritual growth.

BIBLE STUDY:

1. DULLNESS (vs. 11)
   1. The word “dull” means lazy, and describes a condition of spiritual apathy.
   2. As a result, people with dull hearing are unable to listen to the Word of God, to receive it, or to act upon it. We would say that these people have a “don’t care” attitude toward Scripture.
   3. Previously in Hebrews, two specific causes are mentioned that lead to dullness:
      1. 2:1-4 describes people who drift spiritually. These verses refer to Christians who allow things to “slip” (vs. 1) and as a result “neglect” the things of God (vs. 3).
      2. 3:7-4:13 describes people who doubt (3:12).
   4. Discussion:
      1. What causes Christians to slip spiritually?
      2. How do we begin to neglect the things of God?
      3. What happens in a life that causes them to doubt the goodness of God?
   5. Warning: Laziness toward the Word of God leads to uselessness in the work of God.
   6. TO DO: Start every day with the Bible on your lap.
      1. There is not a more important spiritual discipline than this! You will never mature spiritually until this becomes a regular part of your life
      2. Offer your time to help anyone in class learn to develop a meaningful daily time with God.
2. DEVELOPMENT (vs. 12a)
   1. There is a strong implication in these sentences. There is an implied moral obligation to grow spiritually.
   2. We have a moral responsibility to know and understand Scripture. This is a key point! The problem is moral (disobedience) – not intellectual (an inability to understand).
   3. The author is making a strong accusation: My spiritual immaturity is my fault! I cannot blame anyone else.
   4. We are told over and over in Scripture to grow: Ephesians 4:13-14; 2 Timothy 2:15; Hebrews 6:12; 1 Peter 1:2; 2 Peter 3:18.
   5. When we refuse to grow spiritually, we are being disobedient to what God has commanded us to do. It is a sin that needs to be confessed and repented of.
   6. This is a tough message, but there is hope! If my lack of maturity is my fault then there is something I can do about it!
   7. TO DO: Determine (right now) to grow spiritually. No more excuses.
3. DIET (vs. 12b-13)
   1. The author uses terminology that we can all understand.
      1. He refers to the simpler truths of God’s Word as “milk.” Cf. 1 Corinthians 3:1-2.
      2. He refers to the stronger truths and doctrines as “meat.”
   2. There is a breakdown in the illustration if we take it too far. As a child grows naturally they are able to handle stronger food. The child doesn’t think about it or change something intentionally – it is simply the way healthy children grow.
   3. For the Christian, spiritual growth doesn’t just happen because one is saved, or even because an individual truly wants to grow.
   4. As the author points out, immature believers are “unskilled.” They are inexperienced, but inexperienced by choice. To reiterate point 2, we must determine that we will grow and then go to work developing the skills that will lead us to spiritual maturity.
   5. TO DO: Identify one spiritual skill you need to work on and find a tool that will help you! Discuss: What skills and tools do we need to properly study and apply God’s Word in our lives?
4. DISCERNMENT (vs. 14)
   1. This verse describes a mature believer, someone who is of “full age.” This is referring to people who can apply the principles of the Bible to their daily lives. Remember 4:12, the Word of God is a living, powerful Word that will go to work in your daily life when you determine to turn it loose!
   2. Notice that mature believers are sensitive to right and wrong.
   3. The author provides a wonderful picture that we can all relate to: exercise. Think of your physical exercise and diet. If we want to get in shape physically, we have to discipline ourselves to exercise and control what we consume.
   4. As we learn to apply God’s Word, we exercise our spiritual senses and are able to develop spiritual discernment. The key: We have to exercise! It doesn’t just happen.
   5. TO DO: Determine when and where you will exercise yourself spiritually. Start small – just a few minutes in God’s Word. But commit to a specific place and a specific time and then go to work!

APPLICATION:

In this text, we have listened to the author both rebuke and exhort. He has admonished them for their willful ignorance and immaturity in the faith.

* Do you need to grow up spiritually? It’s not a question of how long you have been saved. One can be saved for decades and still be as immature as a brand-new baby convert.
* In a very real sense, we all have areas in which we need to mature spiritually. Where has the Holy Spirit convicted you?
* What is one thing you can do this week to take a step toward a more mature faith? Be specific.

The author doesn’t just admonish, he also exhorts and offers the cure to spiritual maturity.

* The reader is encouraged to develop an appetite for the solid food of God’s Word.
* What’s the current level for your Bible appetite?
* What is one thing you can do this week to cultivate a hunger for God’s Word in your life?

CONCLUSION:

Most Christians resemble the Children of Israel in the wilderness. We are “betweeners.” The Israelites were stuck living between Egypt and Canaan. We are often stuck living between the Cross (salvation) and empty tomb (the hope that leads to abundant life). Take heed to the author of Hebrews: It is time to grow up!