

The Milk-Fed & The Mature

Hebrews 5:11-14, Heb. 6:9

- If you have your bibles you can go ahead and turn with me to Hebrews chapter 5 as we continue our journey throughout the Book of Hebrews
 - If you were with us last week, we spoke from verses 7-9 of chapter 5 and how from the example of Jesus we as believers are to learn how to endure the suffering of this life with faith.
 - It's a heavy topic to discuss, and sometimes whenever we talk about enduring suffering as believers some will push back and say that "Well it sounds like a call to Christianity is just a call to suffer"
 - However the reality is, just to be a human being is a call to suffer in this broken world that we live in

- The only difference between the believer and the non-believer is that the believer has hope in the midst of the suffering
- But still let's talk about something a little more uplifting now, huh?
 - Well not really...because the writer goes on to give the rebuke portion of his letter, not to cut down or discourage his readers, but rather to give them a strict warning of what could happen to them if they refuse to take their faith seriously, and to encourage them to keep living out their faith...
- ***"We have much to say about this, but it is hard to make it clear to you because you no longer try to understand. In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the***

Sunday, February 25, 2024

mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.”

-Hebrews 5:11-14 (NIV)

- PRAY
- I took Kindergarten twice. It's not something I am bragging about by any stretch, but it's the truth. I am one of the few people I have ever known that had to repeat kindergarten.
- But I did it to myself. I started school in Northern Ireland where they start you at 4 years old rather than 5, and I did not like to read at all. It was just too taxing, I didn't like looking at words, sounding them out, all of that it was annoying.
- Now, my 4 siblings and I had a teacher come in, Ms Monica, and we had turned the garage into a little school house. So we were kinda homeschooled without my mom having to do it.
 - But I knew how to work Ms Monica now...
- Whenever it came time to do my reading, we would get Curious George or whatever book it was, but almost like clock work, right when we would start the reading, my tummy would start hurting.
 - I would put my head on her shoulder, and I would pout a little bit, and it worked...
 - She would send me back into the house, so mom could deal with me
- However, we ended up moving to Philadelphia during the school year, and my parents just decided to move us along to the next grade level.
- All of my siblings moved on with ease, however, whenever I was sitting in first grade and the teacher tried to get me to read something simple...I couldn't
- So they ended up having to send me back down to kindergarten so I could learn what I needed to learn before I moved on.

Sunday, February 25, 2024

- *Thus, I had to repeat the most elementary schooling that there is all because I wouldn't put the work in*
- The writer of Hebrews states that there are Christians that are in danger of being stuck in spiritual infancy because they refuse to put the work in
- And the work, as we'll see, isn't even all that difficult or burdensome, even that work is very elementary as we should aspire to have the faith of a child
 - However we should still be striving to grow in our faith, to mature in our faith, and I think most Christians in America today are very confused about what Spiritual growth looks like, so we just keep making excuses to not learn and grow in the areas that we need to learn and grow in
- It's very interesting the illustration the writer of Hebrews uses whenever he tells them that they are stuck on milk instead of solid food.
 - Because whenever a child is either nursing or on the bottle, before they graduate to solid food, they literally cannot fend for themselves.
 - They are completely dependent upon mom or that bottle to get their nutrients
- However, the milk can only be the baby's main source of nutrients for so long...and if you keep them on the bottle and off of solid foods for too long it can hinder their growth.
 - One article said, Don't wait too long to start solid food
 - *"Your baby's body needs the extra energy and nutrients to help them to keep growing. Waiting too long may cause your baby to stop gaining weight at a healthy rate, and puts them at risk of becoming thin and weak."*
 - You see a lot of believers put off the solid food of our faith for way too long. And we get confused because what used to be the sole

Sunday, February 25, 2024

sustaining nutrients of our faith doesn't seem to be filling us spiritually anymore.

- We're still spiritually hungry because we're not moving on from the milk
- Now I remember whenever Fletcher was getting to the point where he was about ready to start solid foods
 - He would suck down that bottle at a faster and faster rate as time went on
 - Rach would be gone, he was hungry, around the 5 or 6 month mark, and I would go get him a bottle, sit him on my lap, put something on the tv, look down, and he had drained that whole bottle SO FAST!
- But that's exactly what Milk-Fed Christians do...
- **MILK-FED CHRISTIANS DRAIN THE PEOPLE AROUND THEM**
- They have no idea how to feed themselves, but they get hungrier and hungrier for some sort of answers and wisdom, but they're not really

willing to seek out that wisdom for themselves so they just latch on to the people around them and drain them

- All they do is complain, all they do is pick apart other people's lives and short comings, they are the most critical and fearful people around because they are not feeding themselves on the word of God
- Because like a nursing infant, they demand so much of other people but give very little of themselves
 - *A Milk-Fed Christian will drain their marriage because they are not consistently feeding themselves on God's word that tells them how they can be the best they can be for their spouse*
 - *A Milk-Fed Christian will drain their friends because they will rely on their friends to fill them and give them some sort of affirmation rather than being secure in their relationship with Christ*

Sunday, February 25, 2024

- *A Milk-Fed Christian will drain their children because they will demand Christians values in their homes, but never really be able to explain why*
- The writer says, **“Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness.”**
-Hebrews 5:13 (NIV)
 - Literally meaning, is inexperienced in speaking about the Word of Righteousness.
- We should be having such a regular intake of the Word of God, that we are able to describe the ways of God and the Heart of God to those around us
- But you see, the Milk-Fed Christian has such difficulty explaining the things of God because their intake of God’s word is few and far in-between
 - They will be the ones hopping from church to church, because “I just wasn’t being fed there”
- I feel like the Writer of Hebrews would respond, FEED YOURSELF!
 - Now I get that there are some places where theology is off and there are no real opportunities to serve or build relationships, I get that....
- However, Sunday Mornings aren’t supposed to be your main source of feeding!
 - If your feeding on God’s word only involves an hour service on a Sunday morning, you are going to be incredibly spiritually malnourished and in turn you are going to just drain the people around you
- Because, like an infant, Milk-Fed Christians don’t really concern themselves with what they can give, but rather are only concerned about what they can get
 - There are so many people that are missing out on the beauty of what Church and Christian Community is supposed to be because they’re just focusing on what people

aren't doing for them, rather than focusing on what they can be doing for others.

- What you want other people to be for you, you first have to be for other people
- Because the Christian Community, The Church, is supposed to be a group of believers that all pour into each other, that encourage each other, that build one another up, that bear one another's burdens, and seeks to outdo each other in doing good for each other
 - Which is why he says in verse 12, ***"In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again" -Hebrews 5:12 (NIV)***
- So if the milk fed believer drains the people around them
- **THE MATURE BELIEVER FEEDS THE PEOPLE AROUND THEM**
 - Now the use of the word "teachers" in the context of verse 12 doesn't necessarily mean

that they should be scholars, pastors, or professors, or anything of the like

- It's rather more so of just being one who shares what they have learned
- Because whenever God teaches you something new, and you share that with a fellow believer, it can feed their soul as well by either teaching them something new, reminding them of a truth they hadn't thought about in a while, or encourage their heart by them seeing you grow spiritually.
- However we have too many believers, especially young believers that are so hesitant to share what they are learning because they don't feel smart enough or seasoned enough yet
 - We have done such a poor job of confusing spiritual vocabulary for spiritual maturity
- We think if we can learn some fancy theological terms then we must be maturing in our faith

Sunday, February 25, 2024

- The writer of Hebrews doesn't want them to be teachers of simply information that they've heard...he wants them to be sharers of the transformation of their heart
 - It doesn't have to be a perfect or eloquent exposition
 - It can be sloppy and messy and still so pleasing to God
 - You've seen whenever an infant begins to learn to feed themselves the solid food, one of the first things they want to do is feed you too, feed the dog
 - And as much as those instances make us smile, just imagine how our Heavenly Father smiles when He sees us trying to feed those around us.
- Yes we are to move on from milk-fed spiritual infancy, however, don't forget that Jesus said, ***"Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it."*** -Luke 18:17 (ESV)
- What does it look like to receive something like a child? You receive it with excitement, joy, and enthusiasm...and then you want to tell everyone about it
- I'll tell ya, when I go over to Matt and Miriam's house, if anything new has happened in that household, my nieces and nephew are going to tell me about it in the first 10 seconds of walking in that door
 - They have recently fallen in love with the movie Wonka, I haven't seen it yet but Ella took it upon herself to explain to me the entire plot and story line
 - Now, she didn't ruin the movie for me because I could barely understand her and keep up with the conversation, I'm pretty sure she was going in and out of Italian some without knowing it
 - But she was not concerned with how well she was speaking or explaining things, she was just sharing out of sheer enthusiasm

- And the hope is that we will be able to share our faith and what God is teaching us with that same type of child-like enthusiasm
 - And don't worry about how well you speak or explain things because I promise you will do a better job than a 4-year old with 2 languages in her head
 - You're doing better than you think you are, I promise, because the Spirit moving through you will use it
 - Furthermore, from my experience I will tell you, people are drawn more to authenticity than they are eloquence
 - And we know that spiritual maturity doesn't really come down to knowledge and theological training as some would lead you to believe
- Because in acts chapter 4, when Peter and John were being tried before the council in Jerusalem, I love the way the NLT puts it, it says, ***"The members of the council were amazed when they saw the boldness of***

Peter and John, for they could see that they were ordinary men with no special training in the Scriptures. They also recognized them as men who had been with Jesus."

-Acts 4:13 (NLT)

- You see, The goal of sharing your faith is not to get people to see how smart you are, the main hope is that we will be recognized as those who have been with Jesus
 - God loves to use ordinary people that just authentically live out and boldly speak about their faith
- And you can feel the frustration from the writer, because he has seen these believers live this out before!
 - He's seen them growing in their faith, feeding each other, but somewhere along the way he says in verse 11 they stopped trying.
 - He says that it's hard to get them to understand some of the teachings because they no longer try to understand

- But he desperately wants them to get back to the Solid Food..in the ESV verse 14 says
- ***“But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.” -Hebrews 5:14 (ESV)***
- So really, the biggest difference between the Milk-Fed Believer and the Mature Believer, really comes down to effort.
 - One has stopped trying, the other practices
- **THE MATURE BELIEVER PRACTICES THEIR FAITH**
 - Another way you could put it is, Practices of living out the Word
 - The Word of God will always highlight ways to us that we need to grow and mature in our faith, and it is up to us to put it into practice
- For example we could read something like Ephesians 4:32 that says, ***“Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one***

another, as God in Christ forgave you.”

-Ephesians 4:32 (ESV)

- Now the Milk-Fed believer will look at that and say, that’s a nice verse and then think about all the ways that other people should be kinder and more forgiving to them
- But the Mature Believer will read that and become convicted and say, “Lord I know I haven’t been as Kind to those around me as I should be. Please soften my heart, help me to reflect the same forgiveness that you have shown me to those around me,”
- And then move on intentionally praying for and seeking ways to show kindness. We intentionally do not allow ourselves to give into the hardness of our hearts and we work on practicing true Christ-like forgiveness when we really don’t feel like it.
- *If we skip the application, the word will never really take root in us and we’ll never spiritually grow*

- This is what James was getting at whenever he said, ***“Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do.”***
-James 1:22-25 (NIV)
- The Christian life is one of faith and obedience
 - And as Romans says, Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God
 - However, hearing has to be followed up by doing, or obeying
- We cannot have one or the other
 - If we do not apply to our everyday lives what we have read or heard from the word of God,

we will never truly understand what this Christian life is supposed to look like

- That’s why the writer of Hebrews says that spiritual maturity is found by practicing our faith
- And in the original context, he is saying that, by practicing out our faith all of our senses become renewed
- That’s why the New King James translates verse 14 as, ***“But solid food belongs to those who are [mature], that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.”***
-Hebrews 5:14 (NKJV)
- Whenever you come to Christ, and begin to practice out your faith, you have probably had those instances where things that you used to never think twice about started to bother you
 - I remember before I really started following Jesus, I used to not think twice about the

strong language I would use around my friends

- However, after I had really been going after this new life of faith for about 6 months or so, I remember the first time hearing the F-Word since, and it was like a shock to my system
- And it wasn't something that I needed to be taught again or have a full on debriefing about after I came to faith, it was just an aspect of my senses being renewed in my early stages of trying to grow in my faith
- Now keep in mind, that this letter is being written to believers specifically, the writer is using strong language and strong rebukes because he holds these professing believers to a higher standard because they are saved
 - And they have been saved long enough to come out of the milk-feeding process
 - He expects them to go after spiritual maturity
- However, these new senses of right and wrong that the believer gets through the Holy Spirit

are not going to make much sense to our unbelieving friends

- As you begin to practice out the word and mature in your faith, some of us might get accused of not being true to yourself. Of becoming overly religious, of selling out, not being any fun
 - And the enemy will use that to try and stunt your spiritual growth
- Really that was what was happening to these Hebrews that he was writing to
 - A lot of them didn't want to go further into spiritual growth because it would just distance them even further from their previous Traditional Jewish ties and would heighten the opposition that they were facing
- And though none of us are facing the type of persecution that they were facing, it can be very discouraging to us whenever we come to faith, start to grow in our faith, get excited about our faith, and then just seem to get shot down time and time again by those close to us.

- But a movement of God never happens without a fight, and that includes God moving in your personal life
 - And when you start to grow in your spiritual life, don't be surprised if you get hit by opposition, don't be surprised if people try to bring you "back to reality" or just dismiss you for being on a "spiritual high"
 - When the enemy has lost the battle for your soul, they will use any resource at their disposal to discourage you and keep you from moving on to maturity
 - The enemy would love to keep us "Milk-Fed Christians"
- But whenever you faithfully feed on the Word of God you can actually be at a place where you can bless those who curse you and pray for those who persecute you, as Jesus taught
- Because you will recognize that we wrestle not against flesh and blood, and those people who you may feel are trying to bring you down are not your enemy
 - And you can actually gain confidence in knowing that the only reason you have anything coming against you at all is because you got your real enemy rattled and you're a threat to their agenda
 - So you keep pressing on, you keep on going deeper, you keep on practicing your faith, because Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world!
- The writer of Hebrews goes on to say in chapter 6, ***"Therefore let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, and of instruction about washings, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. And this we will do if God permits."*** -Hebrews 6: 1-3 (NIV)
- Now when he says, "leave" that doesn't mean to do away with, he just means we're going to discuss something else right now.

Sunday, February 25, 2024

- And it's kind of mind boggling of the things that he refers to as elementary here, because they sound like pretty mature topics!
- However, these were all things that had Jewish roots and Christian ties
 - These were things that these believers would have been well versed in since birth
 - And like most of us, we like to just stick with what we're good at
- However that is a way to stay in spiritual infancy, because you cannot grow that way
 - He is saying that all of these things you love to keep discussing with your great theological jargon is going to keep you in spiritual infancy because you're not allowing yourself to be challenged, grow, or change
 - Like we said a few weeks ago, the goal of reading the word of God is not information it's transformation
- And if you're not being transformed and your senses are not being renewed you're still being Milk-Fed
- If you ever get to the point where you think you've come to understand all there is to know about God and His ways, you're still being milk-fed
- If you think you have all of the spiritual maturity and wisdom that you need, you're still being milk-fed
- Because if you want to summarize a good portion of the book of Proverbs, you could do it in this way:
 - *The Wise Seek Wisdom, Fools Think They Have Already Found It*
- And the writer of Hebrews goes on to give a very strict warning of what could possibly happen to the believer if they refuse to do anything with their faith or press on the spiritual growth

- ***“It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age and who have fallen away, to be brought back to repentance. To their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace. Land that drinks in the rain often falling on it and that produces a crop useful to those for whom it is farmed receives the blessing of God. But land that produces thorns and thistles is worthless and is in danger of being cursed. In the end it will be burned.” -Hebrews 6:4-8 (NIV)***

- Now, this passage can be a little troubling and difficult to understand. Some say that this is the most difficult passage to translate in the entire New Testament.

- One one hand, some say that he isn't talking about Christians, but those who have

entertained the idea of becoming a Christian, tried out church for a while, but they never actually really were saved

- However, that cannot be the case because we know that they are specifically believers that he is writing to, and he even expresses so down in verse 9

- On the other hand, could he really be saying that Christians who have at one time come to faith, believed in the Name of Jesus, had the Holy Spirit, can still end up in hell?

- Well that would be contradictory to so many other passages of scripture

- Jesus said that those who hear His voice and follow Him are His sheep, and no one can snatch us out of His hand, He says no one will snatch us from the Father's hand.

- Paul says, ***“In Him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in Him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, Who is the***

guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of His glory.” -Ephesians 1:13-14 (ESV)

- Paul further explains in 1 Corinthians that our bodies become temples of the Holy Spirit we are sealed with, therefore our lives are no longer our own, we were bought with a price.
- Furthermore, we read James close out his letter by saying, ***“My brothers and sisters, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring that person back, remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of their way will save them from death and cover over a multitude of sins.” -James 5:19-20 (NIV)***
 - That term wander can also be translated to fall away, but James encourages that they can be brought back so don't give up on them!
 - But it seems like the writer of Hebrews is saying, “Don't even bother! It's impossible for

someone to experience all of the Goodness of God, and still fall away, it's impossible for them to be brought back!”

- But the question we should ask is, impossible for who?
 - Because that same word is also used whenever Jesus said ***“Jesus replied, “What is impossible with man is possible with God.” -Luke 18:27 (NIV)***
- So, let's keep in context of what the writer of Hebrews is specifically talking about in this portion of this letter. He's talking about spiritual infancy and maturity.
 - And I think the illustration that he gives about the lands and crops puts this difficult language that he uses into perspective. Let's look at it again:
- ***“Land that drinks in the rain often falling on it and that produces a crop useful to those for whom it is farmed receives the blessing of God. But land that produces thorns and***

thistles is worthless and is in danger of being cursed. In the end it will be burned.”

-Hebrews 6:7-8 (NIV)

- I don't think the warning here is that you better shape up and start maturing or your going to burn in hell with all those un-believers!
- Rather this warning is more so that we believers can be enlightened to the Gospel, be sealed with the Holy Spirit, experience the Goodness of God and His Word, get a glimpse of the Power of Christ's return!...
 - ...and still produce useless crops
 - And eventually those crops are going to have to be burned...but again this is not speaking in the context of eternal judgment
 - This is speaking about whenever God has to become that All-Consuming Fire that Revelation describes Him as.
 - John said that Jesus came to baptize with the Holy Spirit and with Fire.

- There is this refining fire aspect of God's discipline and testing that is talked about throughout scripture

- Paul speaks about this in the context of building a house rather than planting a crop in 1 Corinthians 3
 - He says we all believers have the foundation of Jesus, however it is up to you how you are going to build on that foundation.
 - And eventually we are going to have to answer for what we have built on the Foundation of our Salvation
- Paul says, ***“Each one's work will become obvious. For the day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire; the fire will test the quality of each one's work. If anyone's work that he has built survives, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned up, he will experience loss, but he himself will be saved—but only as through fire.”*** -1 Corinthians 3:13-15 (CSB)

Sunday, February 25, 2024

- So taking all of this scripture into context, the writer of Hebrews is trying to communicate this warning to his readers:
 - To not be those people who have had all of the goodness and blessings of God available to them and at the end of it all have nothing to show for it
 - He's warning them that it is possible to stay so lazy and immature in your faith for too long, that it will cause your heart to become so hardened that it will take nothing short of the refining fire of Divine Intervention to wake you up.
 - And when that day comes, it is not going to be pretty, it is not going to be comfortable, and it is going to burn
 - But it's going to be exactly what you need.
- I know this, I am confident in this doctrine, because I lived it.
 - I know the day I came to saving belief in Jesus and was sealed with the Holy Spirit. I know the day that I was saved.
 - However, for the next 13-14 years I produced nothing but useless crops...I was producing nothing but thorns and thistles
 - But my life was no longer my own, the Holy Spirit I was sealed with was only going to lie dormant for so long, I was God's child-He was only going to let me go so far...
- And eventually the day came whenever He had to divinely intervene and burn down the useless crops I had produced and I had to start over.
 - And I had to start with the milk, but this time I didn't stay at the milk, I very sloppily moved on to solid food, I very sloppily tried to feed the people around me, and I just kept up the effort
 - And I look back on times in my early 20's, and I know that some of the times I tried to

share my faith, I sounded just like Ella trying to explain the plot line of Wonka

- But I just kept practicing, and I'm still trying to figure out how and why the crap God made me a pastor
- I don't know, maybe God just wanted some people to hear from a guy that knows what it's like to fumble through this faith
 - To encourage you that God doesn't need us to be excellent, eloquent, pristine, perfection
 - He has all of that in Himself
 - He smiles at the sloppy, He just wants to watch us grow up! He enjoys all of the stages
 - He doesn't expect us to go from the milk bottle to cutting the steak ourselves
- However if we've been a believer for 20 years and are still on the bottle that's a problem
 - But we do not have to be those that become to draining and hardhearted that God has to burn it to the ground a start over

- Even the writer of Hebrews says he doesn't view his readers that way! No he says in verse 9 he says, ***“Even though we speak like this, dear friends, we are convinced of better things in your case—the things that have to do with salvation. God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them. We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, so that what you hope for may be fully realized. We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.”*** -Hebrews 6:9-11 (NIV)

- Here we get one more aspect of the the mature believer
 - The mature believers feeds others around them, the mature believer practices their faith, and probably most importantly:

- THE MATURE BELIEVER LOVES PEOPLE WELL

- He doesn't say that God takes notices and remembers how well you behaved
- He doesn't say "Oh, God's not going to forget how smart and scholarly you've become"
- He says, "God will not forget the love that you have shown Him, by the way you have loved His people."
- That is the work we're called to mature in, that is the effort we're called to keep up! Loving, helping, caring for God's people!
- Every parents desperately hopes that their kid grows up to love what they love, so they can bond over it.
- God wants the same for us! For us to love what He loves! And He loves people!
 - "For God So Loved The World...He sent His Son" -John 3:16
 - "By this we know love, that He laid down His life for us," -1 John 3:16
- "By this all people will know that we are disciples of Jesus, if we have love for one another." -John 13:35
- If any theology or doctrine that you are so called "maturing" in, doesn't lead you to be more loving, kind, patient, caring, generous, considerate, peaceful, and compassionate to the people around you...it's milk
 - You may have poured it out of the bottle into a big boy cup but it's still milk!
- Because solid food leads us to grow to be transformed into the image of Christ
 - That is to have your heart line up with his heart...And it is His heart's desire that we love people well.
 - ***"The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith." -1 Timothy 1:5 (ESV)***