

Hebrews 5:11-14

“Hold the pickles”

Introduction

Vs. 11 Prolonged immaturity

Vs. 12-14 The cause of the problem

Introduction

We come to a pivotal section in our letter to the Hebrews, and the third warning of the letter where the writer warns the reader not to reject spiritual maturity. In this section from 5:11 to 6:12 the writer gives four examples he witnessed in these professing Hebrew believers: Three of them are stated and one is implied. Each of them are given a description that explains their condition:

Vs. 11-14 **The prolonged immature**, those who have “*come to need milk and not solid food.*”

Vs. 1-3 **The maturing believer**, those that have left “*the elementary principals of Christ*”.

Vs. 4-8 **The stillborn**, those “*who were once enlightened but now were endanger of falling away*”.

Vs. 9-12 **The reproducers**, those that have, “*ministered to the saints, and do minister*”.

The prolonged immature

Vs. 11 This section starts out with the words, “**of whom** we have much to say” and is a direct reference to the topic of Jesus being “*a high priest after the order of Melchizedek*”. The Greek word indicates that what he is referring to is **the teaching** about the Melchizedekian priest of Jesus, not Melchizedek specifically. The importance of this truth lay at the heart of these unsaved Hebrews who were returning to the Levitical sacrifices instituted through Aaron instead of the truth of the King of Peace High Priest Jesus, as the lamb of God. The writer wanted to explain this more to them but had to adjust his writing do to their **prolonged immaturity**. The phrase “**hard to explain**” is to be interpreted by the words “*since you have become dull of hearing*”. In other words, the difficulty of interpretation of this truth about Jesus was **NOT** difficult do to the TRUTH or the challenge of communicating it. The writer explains the cause of this difficulty by the condition of its most visible symptom, “**dull of hearing**”. Further more these professing Hebrew believers had not always suffered from this condition as we are told that they had **BECOME** “*dull of hearing*” which indicates that they were not always in this condition. This is further brought out in 6:4 where we are told that they “*were once enlightened*”. **Their problem wasn’t in that they COULDN’T receive the truth about Jesus it was in that they WOULDN’T!**

First let’s be plain: There is nothing wrong or unnatural about a **recently born again believers** in need of “**MILK**” which is further described in the comparison with the **maturing believer** in verse 1 as the “**elementary principals of Christ**”. But the problem described is one in which there were some who had **been professing Christians for a**

good many years. Enough time had passed that **the expectation of the natural development of maturity** should have been achieved. By this time through a natural spiritual progression and a NORMAL spiritual DIET, maturity should have enabled them to have been able to rightly divide the Word of God as teachers. But instead they were still dependent upon someone teaching them the basics of the gospel. It was a clear case of “**arrested spiritual development**”.

The rabbi is describing a spiritual condition like one would observe in the physical growth of humans. You can have the cutest little child, that says and does the cutest things when they are of a young age. But if these cute things they say and do persist as their bodies continue to mature and develop the same cute things we observe at a young age are no longer viewed the same. Any parent would experience sorrow over the arrested physical development of their child.

Vs. 12-14 The cause of the problem

To make matters far worse such an arrested spiritual development was something completely preventable as the person closed themselves off to hearing the truth. To clarify the condition of **prolonged immaturity**, the writer makes three observations about this problem.

Vs. 12a “*For though **by this time** you ought to be teachers*”: The Greek word for **time** here is time contemplated not a definite period of time. ***These professing Hebrews had sat under solid teaching for a long enough period of time that not only should they have full understanding of the truth that should have been able to communicated it to others by this time!*** The writer clears up a common reason **why this spiritual condition goes undiagnosed** in many people who suffer from it: **Age alone does not produce maturity!** Our biological age in Christ **doesn’t automatically determine** our “*spiritual maturity*”. It is amazing how many Christians associate their biological years in Christ with the thought of their **inevitable spiritual growth and maturity**. They refer to this all the time, “*Why I’ve been a Christian 35 years*”, but such a statement doesn’t necessitate that they have spiritually matured to a level of 35 years of walking and depending upon Christ. I suppose we do this because physically, as far as our intellect is concerned, with have done nothing to mature. **Time has passed and it has been matched by physical transformation**. But our spiritual and psychological development is not the same as our physical development. Have you noticed that the same fleshly attitudes and actions have **NOT** dissipated from our life by mere passing of days? **Passing of time never brings maturity!** There is a big difference in having grown and matured through twenty-five years of experiences. Then having the same experience over twenty-five years and have not grown from it. These Hebrew professing believers had been going through the same experience again and again, but had yet to grow spiritually from it and instead were simply marking time. That is **the definition of immaturity**: *Repeating the same action over and over and expecting different results*. There are far too many Christians in our society that have decided to engage in a **prolonged adolescence**, that is now merging into **premature senility!** You can recognize them by the **pickling process**: Those that have come to SIT, SOAK, and SOUR. The truth is **age will never cure immaturity!**

Vs. 12b-14 “*You need someone to teach you again...*” The **second observation** the writer makes is that **arrested spiritual development** is **self-identifying**. There are **two clear marks that provide a simple test** that we can determine whether we have this condition:

The **first mark** is an **inability to instruct others**: Though these believers had been Christians for years they still couldn’t help anyone else. They had nothing to say when other believers were struggling with problems. They couldn’t even point them to Jesus. They were stuck even after many years in only being able to understand the simplest biblical truth. The writer describes them as: Needing milk for spiritual sustenance, instead of solid food. He further defines this as “*unskilled in the word of righteousness*”; which is **the practice of the Word of God that results in in right conduct and living**. The simple reason for this was because they only want milk. That is **the first self-identifying mark of immaturity**, is an inability to instruct others.

The **second mark** is an **inability to discern good from evil**: This test is seen in the positive trait in verse 14 of those who partake of solid food who can discern both good and evil. The contrast by implication is that those of **arrested spiritual development** can’t do that. This trait shows up in **many varieties**:

It can describe **a person who knows what is right and even thinks they are doing what is right but are in reality continually doing the wrong things**. These spiritually immature are always creating problems and difficulties with others.

Then there are those that are **doctrinally undiscerning**: Christian’s who are characterized by Paul’s critique of them in Ephesians 4:14 as being “*tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men...*” They are in continual search for the latest theological fads, books, speakers and video series that proclaim to offer something that they claim can’t be found or is essential to add to **the simple application of the word of God**. These **doctrinally undiscerning**; are in a never ending quest for something to add too the Bible or that can replace it.

Next is the **emotionally gullible**: Christian’s who are moved by emotional appeals. They are easily affected by emotional stories and respond to them purely on emotional stimulation and give of their time talent and treasure because of these emotional appeals. They lack the ability because of their dependence upon emotional stimulation to evaluate any work. If it has emotional content, that is all they are looking for.

Finally, you have the spiritually immature who are **personality followers**: Those who fasten themselves to a particular personality or movement and read only their books and listen exclusively to them to the exclusion of others. Those who do this are immature and unable to distinguish the activity of ego, from the manifestation of the Spirit. They applaud what God condemns; and resent what God approves. The **third observation** the author makes is that “arrested development” causes the immature to lose out on so much truth that transforms and puts them in risk of losing even more. **The use of the word “babe” in verse 13 carries NO implication of these professing Hebrews salvation**. They are not called “*babes in Christ*” as Paul calls the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 3:1. Instead the word in the Greek simply means **the immature in contrast to the mature**. The qualifying

phrase in the context is that this phrase is referring to unsaved Hebrews who were intellectually convinced but not spiritually committed. The writer wanted to give them more on the riches of the Melchizedekian priesthood of Christ which would have blessed them, but because of their dullness of hearing he couldn't. There is a very grave danger that threatened these professing believers in chapter 6:4-8 that we will get to later if they continue in this condition of prolonged immaturity.