

Pentwater Bible Church

Hebrews Message 12

February 25, 2018



"Pastoral Scene"
By Jan Siberechts (1627-1703)

Pentwater Bible Church

The Book of Hebrews

Message Twelve

THE MILK AND THE MEAT

February 25, 2018

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Hebrews 5:11–6:8

¹¹ Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing. ¹² For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. ¹³ For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. ¹⁴ But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil (KJV).

LACK OF ATTENTION TO SANCTIFICATION

Hebrews 5:11–12

¹¹ Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing. ¹² For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat (KJV).

The apostle has been making comparisons to Jesus being *like* the order of the Hebrew high priest but saying He is more closely aligned in similarity to Melchizedek. Again, Melchizedek was a very righteous man. He was a priest and a king and knew God. Abraham realized this and Paul in Hebrews says that Jesus is not a high priest *after* or *like* the earthly high priest but *after the order of* Melchizedek. The priesthood of Christ and Melchizedek are not the same. No mere man could possibly compare to Christ's priesthood. The only point here is that Jesus is like the person of Melchizedek. It is important to affirm the distinction between Jesus and Melchizedek. Jesus was like him and was not him.

The text moves on to say that there are many more concepts or doctrines regarding Christianity and the Lord Jesus which the apostle wants to speak to this audience but they are not ready for them. They have chosen a path of slow or no growth in their faith which is called sanctification. By the end of the first century this laziness regarding growth in Christ had become so apparent that Jesus told the apostle John to write about this to the Church at Ephesus as part of the book of Revelation. The letters to the churches of Asia in Revelation chapters two and three while focusing on each individual church's problems were all distributed to all the churches. That is, each of the seven letters went to all the churches. This indicates that the issues were important enough for Jesus to want all of His churches to be aware of the problems that have arisen and to concern themselves with them lest they fall victim of them as well. This is a major problem today too.

Revelation 2:1–7

¹ Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks; ² I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: ³ and hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted. ⁴ Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. ⁵ Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent. ⁶ But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. ⁷ He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God (KJV).

This letter was written to the church of the apostolic age which is generally defined as the first century. Ephesus means, “Desired.” It represents the apostolic period of church history. By the time this book was written they had become overrun regarding problems with false teachers. Paul wrote extensively about this issue. (I Timothy 1:3-4; 18-20; 6:3-10; 20-21; II Timothy 2:14–18; 4:1–4) Timothy was somewhat discouraged and Paul gave him some advice on how to handle it. This is still very appropriate for us to pay attention to because the false teachers are proliferating at an accelerated level today. They lead us astray. We must be Bereans and strive to learn the whole counsel of God’s Word and then put it into practice. The false teachers will lead us away from personal growth in Christ and declare the necessity of obedience to them so as to enrich their false teaching.

The Ephesians are commended for hating the work of the Nicolaitans. There is no mention of this group in church history but we can get a clue from the meaning of the Greek word. It means “rulers of the people.” This meaning implies that there was an attempt to divide the clergy from the laity, which makes an unnatural distinction between them in which the clergy exercise rulership over the laity. Certainly, elders have the Biblical authority to determine policy and church discipline over the local church. But, it appears that the authority described here went much further than issues in the local church and may have extended into their personal lives. This is clearly a lack of sanctification in Christ on the part of the leaders. If they had continued their growth in Jesus they would not have desired to rule over others in their positions of authority in the Church. Some denominations teach that they only have the truth of the Scriptures. They must be listened to and not the Bible alone. The Church as Ephesus is also condemned for losing their first love. It refers to the Word and the Messiah. They had become cold and lax. They did not have the fervor of the first generation. Had they kept it their growth in Christ would not be questioned.

Paul is saying to the Jewish believers that they should have grown in their sanctification to the level of spiritual maturity so that they could teach others. Had they matured sufficiently they would be capable of imparting the deep spiritual truths and doctrines of the Bible to others.

They would have the confidence to accurately convey these principals to others. Clearly those who teach must be intimately aware of their responsibility because those who teach will be judged more strictly (James 3:1). A teacher's condemnation is greater because, having affirmed to others that he is qualified, he is all the more bound to demonstrate a high level of spiritual maturity. He can't carry out these responsibilities with wisdom unless he has moved beyond the basic level of Christianity. Some realizing this will just avoid growth in the Scriptures instead of advancing in them. Paul uses the terms milk and meat as a comparative illustration of different types of food which a human can consume from infancy to physical maturity.

When humans are infants they can only consume milk. As we grow we are able to tolerate and properly digest solid food. The lack of Spiritual growth is a very common problem which, was concerning Jesus and the apostle Paul in the first century. Paul addressed the church at Corinth with the same issue.

Paul wanted to speak to them of the deep nature of Spiritual matters but could not. Their sanctification was truncated. So, because of their sin they had not grown in Christ likeness at all. He had to continue to speak to them as "babes in Christ" and not the mature believers they should have been at this time in their walk with Christ. They continued to follow the ways of the flesh and not the Spirit. Sin in our lives causes our Spiritual growth to stem until we remove the sin. During our Spiritual lives as we grow from the day of our salvation (justification) we become *mature* in our belief. Look how Paul describes the milk and meat of Spiritual truths.

I Corinthians 3: 2-3

I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions are ye not carnal, and walk as men (KJV)?

It is an interesting example Paul uses of milk and meat. Meat is the old KJV term for solid food that he uses to describe their situation. A baby can only consume milk until it is more mature then solid food can be introduced into their diet. Paul longed to teach them the deeper Spiritual truths but they could not understand it or handle it because their growth had been stemmed. When he left them on his second missionary journey they were babes in Christ and upon his return he saw them the same way. They had not grown. We can gauge our own growth by the measure of *fleshly* emotions we embrace. Do we envy, have deep continual hatred, desire adultery or seek to divide the body of Christ by engaging in sowing discord among other believers? From Galatians chapter five we see examples of living in a manner that will prevent Spiritual growth.

Galatians chapter five gives us examples of living in the flesh. This is a Biblical technical term for a host of emotional outpourings that strive against the Spirit. It is *not* a discussion of the natural uses of our bodies such as eating, sex, keeping warm or general care for our flesh. It is something deeply sinister that the apostle is warning us of here which constantly presents itself to us in the world while we live in these fleshly bodies. Paul's explanation from Galatians Chapter five lists these concepts and lets us know our responsibility to recognize and avoid them

Galatians 5: 18-21

Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance (strife), emulations (jealousy), wrath, strife (factions which are small organized dissenting groups within the Church of Christ), seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God (KJV).

The believers at Corinth were living lives that matched those of the culture around them. They were not letting the Spirit lead them in appropriate thought and behavior. New believers behave this way. They still cling to the ways of this world thinking they can compartmentalize their Christianity and not open it up for the world at large to witness. They need to be discipled in Christ. They must be *fed* to grow. After regular feeding on God's Word a new believer becomes less concerned with "what the world thinks" and only concerned with what Jesus thinks and wants. We become unashamed of the gospel (Romans 1:16). If you are still reluctant to speak of Christ as fact to others and have been a believer for a long time then you might still be in the early stages of Spiritual development. You might want to ask yourself why are you stuck at this elementary level? For the Corinthians it was carnality. What is it for you? Typical situations are:

1. Sin
2. Desire to follow the world's ways and not place your full trust in Christ.
3. Placing God's Gospel as equal in the smorgasbord of beliefs in this world.
4. Unsure of whether God's Word is completely true.
5. Following denominational teachings and not God's Word.

As The Lord Jesus said:

Matthew 5: 15-16

Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father, which is in heaven (KJV).

The Jews in the first century Church were also in need of learning the deep nature of Spiritual matters. Like the Corinthians their sanctification was truncated because they were unable to discern between good and evil. Because of this they had not grown in Christ likeness at all. Like the Corinthians Paul had to continue to speak to them as "babes in Christ" and not the mature believers they should have been at this time in their walk with Christ. They continued to follow the ways of the flesh and not the Spirit. Sin in our lives causes our Spiritual growth to stem until we remove the sin. During our Spiritual lives as we grow from the day of our salvation we become *mature* in our belief.

Christ also gives us examples of what He hates in Proverbs six.

Proverbs 6: 16-19

These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren (KJV).

Paul simply tells the Corinthians and the Jewish folks in the church that it is clear to him that they have not grown at all Spiritually because they are engaging in activities which do not produce growth in the sanctification. The worst in this list from Proverbs is *soweth discord among brethren*. Paul told the Corinthians that they needed to be unified instead of divided. However, we must be unified but not at the cost of truth. If there is heresy or outward visible sin among us it must be dealt with. Failure to deal with it will lead to disunity. Unification of believers is not the goal. Living for Christ is the goal which keeps us progressing in our sanctification. Disunity is simple the outward manifestation of a poor Spiritual condition. Paul knew the cost to the Church if he failed to confront these issues. He told them that they lived in this world as unsaved people or new babes in Christ and not the children of the most-high God who bought them with a very high price.

Hebrews 5:13–14

¹³ For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. ¹⁴ But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil (KJV).

Far too many believers in the universal Church remain unskillful *in the word of righteousness*. These folks stay as babes in Christianity for a number of reasons.

1. Untrained pastors or Bible teachers
2. Sin in their lives
3. Desire to live for the flesh and this world
4. Falsely declaring themselves as believers
5. Relying on denomination teaching instead of the Word of God.
6. Trusting in the Mosaic Law and its rabbi's instead of the New Testament
7. Inability to read
8. Presuppositional study concepts
9. Subordinating doctrine for application
10. Spiritualization of the text
11. Failure to study the context
12. Reading into the text instead of letting the Bible teach us
13. Believing that Bible study is not important
14. Failing to pray and trust God
15. Having theological or emotional bias
16. Failure to listen to Bible teaching expectantly

We Must Keep in Mind....

The more literally we take the Bible the more fundamental our theology becomes. The less literally we take the Bible the more liberal our theology becomes.

There is only One Interpretation of the Bible.

It is up to us to find it & listen.

GOD HAS SPOKEN

Remember....

If We Go the Liberal Route
God's Message to us is Lost

It Can No Longer Then be Called God's
Word

It is Then Man's Word and not Special Revelation

Next message: The Maturity in Christian Doctrine

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