



“High Priests and Baby Christians...”

Hebrews 5:11 – 6:8

by Pastor Tim Dodson
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11 of whom we have much to say, and hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. 12 For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need [someone] to teach you again the first

principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. 13 For everyone who partakes [only] of milk [is] unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. 14 But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, [that is], those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. 1 Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary [principles] of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, 2 of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. 3 And this we will do if God permits. 4 For [it is] impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, 5 and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, 6 if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put [Him] to an open shame. 7 For the earth which drinks in the rain that often comes upon it, and bears herbs useful for those by whom it is cultivated, receives blessing from God; 8 but if it bears thorns and briars, [it is] rejected and near to being cursed, whose end [is] to be burned.

Beginning in chapter 5 verse 11, the writer suddenly seems to realize that this stuff is not the easiest stuff to understand and to digest, let alone accept. Despite this epiphany, he is not cutting the reader any slack. He says that he would love to lay more of this grand truth on them, but while they should actually be TEACHING this stuff at this point in their lives, they are in actuality still struggling to grasp it even on a basic level. Struggling even to find application for it in their own personal lives, let alone instructing others! This is so relevant to our own lives because we tend to deal with this matter in one of two ways:

One, we feel we are, *or at least should be recognized as*, a teacher of men: if only people would see and acknowledge our awesome abilities and righteous life! It seems that few things are as blinding as the curse of pride. Certainly I have had to deal with this as a local issue with a lot of folks over the years. Those who believed they were spiritual giants while they were in fact still babies and didn't realize it or refused to believe it.

So often people want to be the teacher, ...the mentor, the leader. And that may on some level be admirable. Yet, the truth is they are unable or unwilling to actually say in word and deed, "Be like me." And that, in fact, is critical, *mandatory even*, to be able to say if we step into such a position. Many of us feel we are "there." We have "arrived." And we want to now, in our "man of steel" state, to be the instructor, the teacher. However, these same folks often have a history, even often a RECENT history, of a lifestyle of creating not peace, but problems. Emotional tantrums, marital and family battles, self caused health problems, and self-centered actions. Division, not unity. All of this and yet they still do not get it. They still don't see that they are not only NOT teachers, but are in fact yet babies! And inevitably, this state of heart and mind is accompanied by an unteachable spirit.

Proverbs 13:10 says, "By insolence comes nothing but strife, but with those who take advice is wisdom."

Romans 12:3 gives warning concerning this: " For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith."

James 1:19 says, "Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger..."

The second group will consistently attempt to take the "low road" and claim it's all not for them and they thus attempt to bow out of such ministry, failing to understand that moving into such a space is not an option, but it is to be an inevitable, *you could even say a "mandatory,"* eventual position and responsibility for all of us that claim Christ as Savior and Lord. Titus 5 speaks of this issue and calls all of us into such a life-teaching example, a role model first and a verbal teacher and instructor second. As Francis of Assisi was once quoted as saying, "*Preach the gospel always, and if necessary, use words.*"

Colossians 3:16 "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom..."

Matthew 5:16 "In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."

Matthew 5:13 "You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet."

A real reason for this failure, especially with those who are older, is the "one foot out the door" church mentality or the "customer" idea within that same church, or even the idea that since you are older, you don't have to step up and be a living example of Christ and endurance in Him. Truth be told, many of us partake in community and fellowship from afar, never getting into the game, never significantly contributing and never really committing.

Psalms 92:13-14 "Those who are planted in the house of the LORD Shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bear fruit in old age; They shall be fresh and flourishing..."

2 Timothy 2:15 "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth."

The writer of Hebrews is saying here, "*I've got so much more about Jesus that I want to share with you, and there is so much more to know and experience. There is forever a closer walk, a deeper life in Christ. More beauty, more power, more to be in awe of. I would love to teach it all to you, so you could see and experience how infinitely large and beautiful and big and mighty God is. How He will fill your soul. But the reality is, I can't even begin to explain all that to you. I can't begin to bring that to you because you've become dull in hearing.*" Notice the language of the text: "you have *become* dull in hearing." This means that, at some point, they were not so. But as time went on, somewhere along the way, they stopped hearing, stopped growing and become stagnant. Everyone knows that if something is not growing it's dying. That is the law of the universe. If something has ceased to grow, it has started to die. And scripture is telling us that there is a progression in the Christian faith wherein all of us who are believers in Christ eventually become teachers.

That doesn't mean that everybody who follows Jesus will eventually pastor a flock or teach a Bible study. But it does mean that all of us who follow Jesus, as we mature, should be able to sit down across the table from someone and explain who Jesus is, explain the gospel of Jesus Christ, explain who He is, what He's like, what it means to follow Him.

It means ...as we mature, we more and more prioritize Christian community, the house of God, and our service and place within it. Especially over our activities in the world...our hobbies and interests that take a far back seat in the life of such a maturing believer. Not out of sheer duty...although that does play a part, but moreover out of a growing passion. It means we are easily recognizable as standing out of the cultural gray masses of the world around us. We should be easily recognizable and quickly identified as a believer.

So many of us who should be eating steak at this point are factually still on the baby's bottle. If I owned a mythical set of spiritual glasses that would allow me to see the real state of everyone in this room this morning, what would I see?

So what is it? He gives us a little bit of insight in that last verse of chapter 5. Look at it: "But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained...exercised, to discern good and evil." So, here is who he's talking to: there is this group of believers, there are these men and women who have professed Christ, but who have become dull of hearing, and what he means by that is they have stopped applying the truth that they know. They have stopped practicing maturing in their faith. They still give verbal affirmation to the things of God and scripture. They're still saying, "Amen! That's right, that's good, that's the way it should be," but they've ceased to actually apply it to their lives.

Chapter 6 carries on with this thought. "*So let us stop going over the basic teachings about Christ again and again. Let us go on instead and become mature in our understanding. Surely we don't need to start again with the fundamental importance of repenting from evil deeds and placing our faith in God. You don't need further instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.*" It's not that these things are not important, for they certainly are! They are foundational elements of Christianity! But what he is saying is, "Will there ever come a time where you move beyond these things? For they are not the end of faith, but in fact just the beginning! They are designed and meant to lead us onward and into greater faith and example."

He begins this list with, "Let us stop laying the foundation of repentance for worthless deeds." What does that mean? It means, can we quit coming to church every weekend and going, "Ok. Ok. I hear it, and I'm not going to do that bad stuff anymore"? Does that hit home for any of us today? How many of us, week after week, and now maybe year after year, have been coming here saying, "No more, *starting today...*" only to end up right back in our thing on Monday morning? The thought is this: can we do whatever is necessary to walk away from this? Can we get this repentance from lifeless works? Can we get this down?

He then adds "*and of faith toward God.*" In other words, will we ever get to point where we give Him actual full control of our lives? That isn't some nebulous "c'est la vie" attitude, nor is it a hyper-spiritual attitude that places you somehow outside scriptural obedience and community life. Quite the opposite. I say that because I have had those in this crisis life state suddenly adopt a "Me and Jesus have never been so tight" position which, in effect, means they are now outside the realm of correction, corporate body life, spiritual submission, and good works. Now it's just sort of adopting a spiritual yoga lotus position where you embrace your feelings instead of taking out the mirror and really looking at the actual practice of your life. Because the failure to do this is essentially becoming "dull of hearing" and giving up the pursuit of holiness and maturity in exchange for a spiritual bottle because it is easy and comforting.

Going on, he says “let us move on from ...*the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.*” This is in reference to those who are all caught up in the minors while forgetting about the majors. Rituals and incidentals, instead of practical and real. These folks are often obsessed with end times revelation: all the titillating details of the rapture and the tribulation instead of just getting on with it, living in the light of the fact He could return today and how will I live these last few hours? These folks live for end times conferences and government conspiracy theories while failing to acknowledge that none of that really matters if I am not living faithfully in light of my salvation. These are folks who are consumed with wanting to debate nebulous concepts of eschatology and theoretical doctrines at the expense of simple loving and service toward others in the body of Christ, being a living example and sharing the gospel of Christ to a lost and dying world.

It's a life that's muddy. A practicum that is unclear or even non-existent. It's the guys who call the church and won't give their names but want to get a pastor on the phone to argue our position on a triune God, men having long hair, or why the old King James Bible is the only anointed version and the rest are heresy. The writer of Hebrews isn't saying that any of this isn't worth discussion, but he's simply saying, “Let's move on. Let's start actually **applying** the Word of God. Let's just start actually living out the simple gospel everyday so we can move forward.”

And then he gets to the end of this and literally throws down. He goes on to say something that is, in fact, or at least it should be for all of us, one of the most terrifying things in all of scripture in my opinion:

"For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame. For the earth which drinks in the rain that often comes upon it, and bears herbs useful for those by whom it is cultivated, receives blessing from God; but if it bears thorns and briars, it is rejected and near to being cursed, whose end is to be burned."

Whoa...

That's a heavy thing to say. Here it is: “*Listen, people: you have got to pay attention. You've got to stop being so passive about your faith. You have to stop getting off on all this weird stuff and all these things that don't matter. You have become dull in hearing. You have become lazy in putting your faith into practice. I'm pleading with you to leave the elementary teachings of Christ and press on to maturity. I am pleading with you to apply what you know, what you have been taught, because you are in very dangerous spot.*”

Now, just what exactly is he saying? Is he inferring here that we can lose our salvation? No. He IS saying—more than inferring but actually stating as a fact—that we can experience spiritual things without really being spiritual, without ever really being born again. The passage says "if they fall away" which is a poor translation. The literal rendering of the passage speaks of when, not if, meaning that such a person is going to go down. He is going to eventually fall.

There is, in my opinion, not a more dangerous position for anyone to be in than this one: where a person is involved in church, religious actions, and spiritual community but having never truly been saved. Because we inevitably get to a point where we can think we are there because of the world we live in or the things we participate in. This is a "dead man walking." An inevitable train wreck. We would be better off in truth to be

totally outside of the faith and living like a pagan. At least then we would clearly know where we stand., and thus within reach of redemption.

The length and the breadth of just how far a person can go in this blind position is incredible. One can even march right on through to the pulpit even without being saved. Make no mistake! This is the field that receives the God-given rain, but instead of producing fruit, it produces thorns and briars. Please, ask yourself this and for once in your life answer with the truth: are you truly producing the fruit of the Spirit? Or is the field this morning, no matter how long you have danced among all things Jesus, really producing thorns and briars? The fruit of the Spirit is "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness," (Galatians 5:22) "goodness, righteousness, and truth" (Ephesians 5:9).

Fruit is the stuff which pleases God, furthers the kingdom of God on earth, blesses others, builds up the community of Christ, and places Jesus as the undeniable first place in one's life. This is a serious self-evaluation. For I have seen many folks come through a church and play the part for months or even years, only to eventually implode and reject Christ or at least a faithful life in Him. And they are lost in spiritual obscurity today, even if they are sitting in another pew somewhere. They were never born again and are still not today because the blindness that accompanies this facade is so deep and so debilitating that, according to the Word itself, is impossible to come back from.

Maybe I sound like a broken record on this matter, but I have seen that eternal damage from such a personal ruse. I never want to give you false security in a false salvation. Listen closely: a reborn life WILL have a profound effect upon your life, your passions, your priorities, your time use, your view of yourself, and your view of the world. A moreover it will continuously *grow*. To deny such a profound reformation is to say God and the gospel is emasculated and without power. It is to call God a liar. And there appears to be no coming back from such a position.

This is why Jesus says in Matthew, "You can identify them by their fruit, *that is*, by the way they act. Can you pick grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles? A good tree produces good fruit, and a bad tree produces bad fruit. A good tree can't produce bad fruit, and a bad tree can't produce good fruit. So every tree that does not produce good fruit is chopped down and thrown into the fire.

Yes, just as you can identify a tree by its fruit, so you can identify people by their actions. "Not everyone who calls out to me, 'Lord! Lord!' will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Only those who actually do the will of my Father in heaven will enter. On judgment day many will say to me, 'Lord! Lord! We prophesied in your name and cast out demons in your name and performed many miracles in your name.' But I will reply, 'I never knew you. Get away from me, you who break God's laws.'"

Hebrews 3:14 says, "For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end."

It doesn't say, "We will become partakers in Christ, if we hold fast." That's not what it says. It does not say that you and I will become partakers in Christ if we just hold on, if we "do things spiritual." It is speaking solely to those who have been a part of church and Christianity. It says, "We have become partakers in Christ." And because we have, we will make it firm until the end. The actions do not determine the position. The position determines the actions. It is the litmus test of our actual state.

It doesn't matter if green shoots are coming up or have come up in your field this morning. This is not the equivalent to fruit. What those green shoots eventually become and what they themselves produce in kind is the

"proof in the pudding." You see, many of us have seen those green shoots starting to come up and have rested in that, believing we are a-ok. But later in life what those shoots really were became evident. They are actually thorns and bristles and there is no real fruit. What came up was in fact rebellion, pride, unteachable spirits, hardened hearts, rejection of authority, accountability and counsel. I urge you to be honest and factual here, for a failure to see the facts can mean, *will mean*, disaster.

So this text today is not about people who are saved who then lose their salvation; it is about those who experience spiritual things and are not saved. And that, to me, is a more terrifying idea than being able to lose one's salvation. Even Judas did some amazing things through the Holy Spirit and he was never truly a child of God. So be very careful how you evaluate yourselves in this matter.

If you're in here today afraid, you should be afraid, ***bottom line***. If you're in here today going, "Oh man, I don't know," that is the good kind of fear. This text is for you, and I pray it leads you away from death and into life. There will be those who are afraid today about all of this, and they should be. Others have no cause and will likely need someone to help them see things more clearly. I strongly encourage you to seek a godly brother or sister and have a conversation. And there will be some who are not afraid, and they should be, but because they have never in truth been indwelt with the Spirit of God, they are blind to their condition. I am asking, pleading for us all today, to step back and really look. No excuses. Just look at the field that is our lives: is there genuine and maturing fruit?

I cannot overstate the importance of this message today. This is heaven and hell. This is eternity. This is what we are all here for. Where are you on this? Sluggish? Dull of hearing? Knowing truth that you refuse to apply? I mean, this text is saying that you are in a dangerous, dangerous, dangerous spot. Nobody's exempt from who this could be. It could be me. Like, years from now, if you hear I've renounced the faith and that I think this whole thing was a mistake and I was just deceived and foolish, I didn't lose my salvation; I never had it. I know this message is wildly unpopular, but it might just save your life. It just might save your soul. Where are you? Are you practicing? Are you moving? Are you maturing? And if not, why not? What's going on? Are you practicing and growing in faith or just going to church?

Your answer to all of this is here in this book if you are willing to receive it as truth and seek obedience and faithfulness to what it is saying. Because remember, 1John 5:13 tells us, "These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may ***know*** that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God."

You can know today for sure. God is not messing with you. He wants you to know, and in that living truth, ***thrive***.