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## *Into Thy Word Bible Study in Hebrews*

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### **Hebrews 5:11-14: *Our Call to Christian Maturity!***

**General idea:** A call to go deep in our faith! A question is presented in this passage; have you been a Christian for a long time? If so, what have you done with your faith? What should you have done? What can you do now? Here we are being directly called to do something with our faith and that is to grow it! The recipients of this letter seem to be struggling with the practice of their faith. They may have the idea down, but not the practice of what it means to be a Christian. They were not listening to God or His leaders. Thus, the practice of their faith was missed and the consequence is that people who are new to the Church are not being taught or disciplined because the senior members are not being taught or disciplined themselves. A call is given if we know Christ; we are to grow in Christ and in so doing, show that growth to others by our example and our instruction. If not, how can others learn and grow in the faith? As with any discipline, such as a sport or a musical instrument, a learning curve is given and the practice of it disciplines us to know and grow—from novices to intermediates to more advanced and then perhaps experts or professionals. In the Christian walk, it is the same. We have to put in the time and effort so we can become the person Christ has called us to be. We are called to learn the Bible and put it into our life and walk so we are impacted and grow. The result is we can be used in others' walk with Christ too.

### **Contexts and Background:**

This passage shows us the importance of spiritual maturity to knowing and growing in the power of God and His Word. The human author is identifying with his readers as a priest identifies with the weak, yet in great sincerity and passion points out the error of their ways so they will not fail or waste away further. At the same time, he is disappointed in his church of seasoned believers who should know more and do more. He wonders if they have the intellectual and effectual faith to understand what he is saying. Perhaps even God Himself is frustrated by our lack of conviction by or refusal of His Son and the slowness of our faith. We have a contest between milk and meat. Milk refers to the basics of saving faith—our knowledge of our Lord and what He has done on this earth as our High Priest. The meat is our depth of faith from our growth and maturity. It is the impact that Christ has had because His teaching has been listened to and adhered to. He is our help and our Lord; we can go to Him and we do. In so doing, we have the skills to know His Truth and practice it, living wholehearted and content lives in Him.

### **Commentary; Word and Phrase Meanings:**

- *Much to say.* The context of Jesus' eternal Priesthood and role to us; the author wonders if his readers would get it. This was a Greek expression to show how important this topic is and to pay close attention to it.
- *Hard to explain/utter/dull of hearing...slow.* Another Greek expression to show frustration with ones students "being sluggish" to learn or not getting it, as Jesus must have been with His Disciples as He walked this earth. This may refer to them not conceiving the point of Jesus' Priesthood and or the practice of authentic faith.
- *Learn.* The call to progress in the Christian faith and life by applying God's truths. The ability to distinguish between good and bad, the only way to do this is to know what is good and what is bad, because we are predisposed to do what is bad and shun what is good. Thus, we have to study. Christian maturity is not grafted in us automatically, it must be pressed in our diligence to be taught and trained and obey and apply it.
- *By this time.* Indicating these people have been Christians for a considerable amount of time and should have done more with their faith and life. Complacency and laziness are evils in the sight of our Lord that cause us problems and miss opportunities. Jesus calls us to deep faith.
- *You ought to be teachers.* Every believer is called to teach not professionally or as a pastor but by example and to pass on the message of the Gospel. This means to have words to back up our faith and mentor others too. This is also a warning of backsliding or mental laziness and slipping back to where you once were instead of advancing in discipleship. A Greek philosophical phrase meant to stir up the students to pick up the pace or to apply what one has been told. Also a way to say, you should know this as most teachers say today. This is also a warning against spiritual laziness (Deut. 6:7; Rom. 2:17-23; Col. 3:16; 2 Tim. 3:15-16; 1 Pet 4:11).
- *Elementary truths / basic principles/ oracles.* Greek expression by Aristotle that shows what are the clear and needed elements "rudiments" to make this "idea" work. Greek philosophers taught it is necessary to first listen and begin with simple principals before going on to more complicated or deeper thinking and application. The author of Hebrews picks up on this truism of the simple must precede the difficult. This also referred to the Greek Alphabet. As in review your ABC's. This is the beginning of what we are to learn, like learning the alphabet before learning how to spell. In the Christian spiritual growth journey, we need to know Who and what we believe before we grow more in the One we trust and act upon. To grow in Christ, we have to know Christ; and to teach others about Christ, we have to know Christ, and this is done through the Word and then the practice of its principles. This is explained further in the next chapter (Rom. 3:1-2; Gal. 3:23-24; Heb. 6:1-2).

- *Milk*. Here means the basic elementary truths that are essential to know and adhere to before one moves on to more. Referring to the opportunity and basic steps toward becoming a mature believer. Another Greek expression to show a contrast of the basics to the in-depth (Plato and Pythagoras). Although milk is important and nourishing to a baby, remaining in it does no good to one's growth physically or as illustrated for our spiritual formation. (1 Cor. 3:1-2; 1 Pet. 2:2; Heb 6:1).
- *Solid food / strong meat*. Not referring to animal flesh; rather what is deeper for spiritual nourishment. Meaning advanced students seeking more truth and application of reason and faith. Here is a call to conscientiousness of one's faith development and the necessary diligence of study for Christian maturity. This does not happen overnight, it is a lifelong process.
- *Infant / babes*. A philosophical illustration to not just see sensory knowledge, what is in front of us such as one's situation but go deeper and trust God and grow in Him and not be spiritual infants. Perhaps referring to the wavering state of mind and faith of the believer and or the church. It is essential we are properly instructed in the Word and faith as believers and then pass it on to others. Only babies do not do this, they only receive care and instruction and can't give it to others, but they are growing. Unless one wants to stay a baby in Christ and not grow which is a point of this passage, do not do that!
- *Not acquainted/ unskilled*. Inexperienced because one has not applied or practiced what they learn or be effective with their life as a believer and in this context it is *righteousness* that is not put into use.
- *Righteousness*. Christ has paid our debt by declaring us righteous (Rom. 1:16-17; 3:21-26; 5:10-19; 10:3). This declaration means we as the elect are free from our debt of sin, but we as debtors are to respond back to him in faith and be witnesses to the lost! This also means conformity to God's Law, both from our heart and deeds, inside and outside. We cannot attain it apart from perfect adherence to the law; Christ our High Priest was the only one in all of human history to do it. This in context may also refer to the Gospel message too, that our righteousness is because of and from Christ (Rom. 1: 10; 17; 3:21-22; 9:30; 1 Cor. 1:30; 2 Cor. 5:21; Phil. 2:2-20; 3:9; Titus 3:5).
- *Mature / perfect / of full age*. Meaning having reached the goal or reaching for the goal, as a child grows into an adult or a student becomes a master or teacher. This is not just knowledge or intellectual superiority, rather to grasp and apply the precepts of our Lord so one's life is changed. Then one can have sound judgment and discernment. Then such a person can handle life, setbacks and triumphant and give Christ glory. Knowledge without the love of God in and through us just makes one a more clever fiend or a cold condescending pseudo-Christian. And this is predicated by an in-depth trust that goes deep in us, a person who is not shallow; rather convicted and

transformed (2 Sam. 14:17; 1 Kings 3:9; Ezek. 44:23; Matt. 19:21; John 3:30; Gal. 2:20-21; Phil 1:6-11; 3:1-14; Col. 1:28; 4:12).

- *Distinguish / exercise good from evil.* With love and true Truth, then one has the ability to be obedient and thus differentiate decisively and critically between truth and deception as the basics. When we take hold of and apply the teachings of our Lord then one can have sound judgment and discernment. This is also one's consistence and obedience to the will of God revealed by His precepts in His Word and Spirit. Our morals are rooted in the truths we believe, these make the sensibilities we live out and teach (1 Tim. 4:7-8).

### **Devotional Thoughts and Applications:**

It seems the same problem we have today was also in the early church, people want a feel good message and a shallow undisciplined and rarely practiced faith. When we are called to stretch, grow and reach for Christ in every daily encounter in our life. The key is to listen to God, His Word and precepts, and His Spirit, so we can put into practice His principles. But it does not begin or stop there. There must be a deep seated trust in Him, a conviction that runs deep. If not, we have little to show to others who Christ is and what He has done. If you are not practicing your faith, then there is little to show of a life of faith because Christ has worked a lot but not fully received by us and put into place.

This comes from a big problem we have in most churches today, that is the tendency of leaders not effectually growing in the Lord and thus do not practice their faith. And the outcome is a church that has missed its point and reason for being; as its people, who Christ has brought in, go without being taught or disciplined because the pastors and leaders are not being taught or disciplined. Being mature means you know not just Who Christ is, but His impact has gone deep and has occupied all aspects of our life and faith. Life is all about Him and not about selfish ideas or perceptions. We have gone to His throne and His priestly duty has been received, our Milk, and then the meat is feasted upon, His wondrous precepts and Truth. So our faith is real, personal, fully transformed and becoming fully engaged followers of Christ seen by a life well lived. If we want to be an impacting Christian in a church that impacts its community and world, we have to be eating the meat and sharing it with others.

**The Essential Inductive Questions** (for more Inductive questions see Inductive Bible Study):

1. What does this passage say?
2. What does this passage mean?
3. What is God telling me?
4. How am I encouraged and strengthened?
5. Is there sin in my life for which confession and repentance is needed?

6. How can I be changed, so I can learn and grow?
7. What is in the way of these precepts affecting me? What is in the way of my listening to God?
8. How does this apply to me? What will I do about it?
9. What can I model and teach?
10. What does God want me to share with someone?

***Additional Questions:***

1. Have you been a Christian for a long time? If so, what have you done with your faith? What should you have done? It is not too late, what can you do now?
2. Why does Jesus directly call us as believers and as a church to do something with our faith? How have you responded to this call? How has your church? Why would someone not do this?
3. What are the consequences when people who are new to the Church are not being taught or disciplined? If your church does not teach or disciple what is its purpose? How can others learn and grow in the faith in your church?
4. How long can you go in your Christian faith by not learning and growing? Why do we have to put in the time and efforts to become the person Christ has called us to be?
5. Have you ever felt that Christ was disappointed in your church of seasoned believers who should know more and do more?
6. What does it take to put into practice the intellectual and wonders of effectual faith to understand what God is saying in His Word?
7. Have you ever been frustrated by the little conviction of faith in others? How can your church turn around its people's slowness of their faith?
8. How and why is chief role and duty of your church, to train and disciples its people so they can know and grow in Christ and thus be an impact in the world? How is this done now? How should it be done better?
9. Why is it important in your spiritual growth journey, you need to know Who and what you believe before you can grow more?
10. Why is complacency and laziness evil in the sight of our Lord? How does this cause problems and miss opportunities?
11. What does it mean to respond back to Christ by faith? What can you and your church do to show more diligence and passion, yet in love and confidence, in

pointing out people's errs so they do not fail or waist away? How can this be done in love and tact so people are not offended and can take it with maturity?

12. What can you do better to show your growth to others by your example and your instruction?

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