

Hebrews 5:9-14

“Don’t Be Dull”

You may be thinking, “I hope you got a lot out of this particular time of study preacher because that’s what I think each time I come in here, ‘Don’t be dull.’” But unfortunately the warning, the notification, this particular exhortation found in this particular context isn’t directed toward the preacher, but rather the *preachee*! The warning regarding that which is written isn’t predicated upon how I *say* it but rather upon how you *hear* it. How critical it is to our walk and relationship with the Lord that we have ears to hear what the Spirit is saying to us, both personally as individuals and also collectively as a body that we might stand fast in one spirit, with one heart, one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel.

Well if you remember right as our time came to its conclusion last week we were met face to face with the challenge, with the reality that since suffering was a fit tool to teach the very Son of God that, that means it’s a fit tool to teach you and teach me to. So often we as believers “waste our suffering.” Something enters in to the equation of our lives that causes us to somehow or in some way suffer and we can so easily begin to become embittered toward God, we can begin to doubt His love *toward* us, or if in fact He’s really *for* us. We’re short with our brothers and sisters who are seeking to reach out *to* us. Yet there are certain sights that we see, or strengths that we glean, or lessons we can learn that come only through the school of suffering. Be they lessons on God’s grace, His compassion, the upholding power of His righteous right hand, sympathy and compassion toward others who are hurting that apart from a similar experience we wouldn’t have thought twice about. Suffering has this way of causing us to loosen our grip on the things of this world, we become disillusioned with this world, a bigger house, a better car, the latest blockbuster at the box office just don’t seem as appetizing in the face of suffering. Suffering has this way of helping us to *let go* of this life and *look forward* to the next. Truly it’s a fit tool through which God teaches you and me, through which He taught His own Son, Jesus Christ and It’s not that God is personally inflicting some sort of suffering upon us, but that He’s able to use that which enters into our lives to teach us, to take us and shape us, make us more like Christ, suffering has this innate ability to work deep humility into who we are.

Now, having said all of that we need to realize that those lessons weren’t necessary for Jesus. He didn’t struggle with not having compassion, He moved and ministered in humility, He wasn’t drawn in by or enticed by the things of this world, but He learned the cost that obedience demands when suffering is involved. He knows what it means to stay true to God’s plan, God’s purpose for your life no matter what the cost.

Vs9-11

Look back at Vs 9 (read). Now immediately in this Vs we're confronted once again with what appears to be some sort of quandary. It's like when we read last week that Christ "learned obedience" in Vs 8. Does that mean that He was ever *disobedient*? No! There was never a time when He wasn't obedient, that's our testimony, not His. What He learned was the cost of obedience when it involves suffering as we just mentioned. That obedience doesn't always come easy, (though for Him it always came).

So then what does *this* mean when it says in reference to the sinless Son of God, "... having been *perfected*." ? Was there a time when He *wasn't* perfect, but then throughout the course of time graduated *into* perfection? No, no, no, listen.

This word "perfected" is the same word that Jesus uttered from the cross when He said, "It is *finished*." This process, the path that I've been journeying down has come to completion and the desired end has been accomplished. This has nothing to do with who He is *morally*, nothing to do with who He is *spiritually*, it deals with the plan God had for Him *experientially*, the things He would bear up under *humanly*. There were certain things that were what we might call "preparatory" that God had planned for Him that He might be both sympathetic and sufficient as the Great High Priest of humanity. and What this is saying is that He was taken *fully* down that path, there was no aspect of God's plan for His life that wasn't inaugurated into His life. As we've said over and over again throughout our study in the book of Hebrews Jesus was both fully God, and fully Man.

As a Man God would prepare Him to identify *completely* with every aspect of humanity even more so than you can or I'm able. *Tempted* to a greater degree (as we've developed in previous studies), *understanding* what it means to be despised and rejected by man. Having the crowd sing your praises one minute, only to turn tail on you in a single moment in time crying out "crucify Him, crucify Him, we have no king but Caesar." A Man of sorrows, intimately acquainted with grief, He understands what it means to suffer excruciatingly, knows what's entailed in following through obediently regardless of what the cost may mean to you personally or how people may perceive the situation specifically. If there was ever a graduate from God's "School of suffering" it was Christ and He graduated with a Master's degree. Therefore He's qualified *completely, perfectly* to be our Great High Priest, filled with sympathy, equipped with compassion and sufficiency to meet our every need as humanity.

Now again, keep the context, the writer here is writing to a group of people who are considering corralling once again around the law, around the Levitical order, forsaking Christ as their Mediator, their "go between" between God and man, because of pressure, persecution, tribulation and tough times. and What he's doing here is showing them how to do that is to make a huge mistake, it's to exchange the greater for the lesser, that which provides (as we see here) eternal salvation, for that which could never save you.

On and on we could go the bottom line is that Aaron's order of priesthood could never offer eternal life, could never cleanse a man of sin, Aaron was insufficient to present a person holy and without blemish to God by any sacrifice he may've made on their behalf.

Only Christ can do those things, He alone has become the "author of eternal salvation." What does that mean, the "*author*" of eternal salvation? Well, it means exactly what you might think it means, it means that Jesus is the *source*, He's the originator, the well spring of eternal salvation. Last week we spoke for a moment on the fact that many try to stand before God as their own priest. They think they're a pretty good person and don't need *anyone* or *anything* else to represent them before God, they'll do just fine on their own. The problem is that all of humanity has sinned and falls short of the glory, that is the perfection of God. How then can one who has sinned stand worthy to be accepted into the presence of the One who is sinless? It's impossible for one to stand being seen sinless if he/she is a sinner, now that presents a problem for all of humanity. Because there's none who are righteous, no not one. How then can I have my sin removed from me so that I might be seen as worthy to abide in the very presence of God throughout eternity? Well that's where Christ comes in, human as you are and I am, fully God, fully Man, all ways tempted as we are yet without sin, making Himself the sacrifice for sin upon the altar of the cross.

Shedding His blood on our account making atonement for our sin so that as you and I identify with Him through faith, believing upon Him for that finished work of the cross on our behalf God accredits His righteousness to your account, my account, we're more than *covered* in God's eyes, we're *cleansed*. Jesus and Jesus alone is the wellspring of salvation, that's why He said, "*I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.*" John 14:6 He is the *author* of eternal life. Now just as others try to be their own priest, they try to author their own book as well. Seek to determine on their own what it is that God will or won't accept, and in their book He'll always accept them because there's a reason for them doing what they've done that somehow justifies them in the sight of God. The problem with their book is that God won't read it. The only one He reads is the one that Jesus authored, there is *no other way*. and As the apostle Peter said, "*Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.*" Acts 4:12

Notice again what kind of salvation it is. Its "eternal" salvation, God's grace is more than sufficient to save you for a season. Life in Christ is eternal, it's everlasting. Jesus said, "*My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.*" John 10:27-28 What is eternal life? What does it consist of? Is it bound up in living forever? That's part of it, but it's not the substance. Is it bound up in avoiding hell and getting to go to Heaven? That's part of it, but it's not the substance. Is it bound up in streets of gold, many mansions, a crystal sea, pleasures at His right hand forever more? That's part of it as well, but not the substance. Listen, eternal life isn't bound up in things, or even in a place, but in a person.

Perhaps you recall as Jesus was praying there in John Ch 17 with the reality of the cross sorta overshadowing Him and He said, “*Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him. And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.*” John 17:1-3 What’s the substance, the satisfaction, and the contentment of eternal life? Knowing the only true God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent; there’s no OT priest who could offer anyone eternal life, yet that’s exactly what we have in Christ.

He’s the author of *eternal life* to all who (notice) *obey* Him. That’s kind of interesting isn’t it? We would’ve thought perhaps it should say, “...to all who *believe* in Him.” But can I just say that loving Christ, that believing in Christ is simply synonymous with *obeying* Christ. Jesus said very plainly, “*If you love Me, keep My commandments.*” John 14:15 Perhaps you’ve heard something to the effect that the faith that doesn’t change your life certainly won’t save your soul. James said, “...*Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe — and tremble! But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?*” James 2:18-20 and The idea there is that if the life of Christ isn’t being worked *out* through you, not spilling over *from* you, than perhaps the life of Christ has never been worked *into* you. Because it’s impossible to receive Christ and your life not change, the Spirit of God will begin to shape you, and mold you and make you more like Christ and less like yourself. Now, having said all of that you should also realize obeying Him is synonymous to believing in Him. Remember when the multitude was following Christ because it worked out for a meal ticket? and He encouraged them not to labor for the bread that perishes, but rather for the food which endures to everlasting life. and They said, “Speaking of labor, speaking of work, what must we do to work the works of God?” and Jesus said, “*This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent.*” John 6:29 So if you want to obey God, believe on Jesus Christ

Vs 10

Here’s the mention of that “Melchizedek” fella again what’s the deal with him? You’ve got to stay tuned in till we reach Ch 7 to find out.

Vs11

Why are we going to wait till Ch 7 to discuss Melchizedek? Because that’s when the author of Hebrews desires to discuss him, there are other things on his heart/mind now that need to be settled 1st, that take the priority, or the precedence (if you will). You see he says here that he has a lot that he wants to talk to them about concerning the subject but he can’t just yet because they’re not going to be able to receive it. It’s too hard to explain, *not* because he has difficulty articulating it, but because they have difficulty understanding it, they’ve become *dull* of hearing.

Which kinda brings us back full circle to our time of introduction. The problem isn't always with the preacher sometimes it's with the preachee. Oh, I'll grant you that there are some guys who've made an art form out of making the bible an incredible bore. But it takes some time to develop that skill because just left to itself the word of God is fascinating. But most generally when it comes to having a dull time in the word of God the problem doesn't really lie in the one teaching, but rather the one being taught, he says it's hard to explain, again not because he doesn't know how to say it, but because they won't be able to hear and understand it, they've *become* hard of hearing regarding the word of God. Watch out when the Word of God begins to become dull to you. It's not really making an impact on your heart, or on your life. Perhaps you sit here, but in your mind you're just about any place else, be careful, you are in a very dangerous position spiritually speaking. and I'm not talking about an occasional distracting thought such as is common to man, but that you're here, you're going through the motions, you've perhaps drawn near to God with your lips, you've honored Him with your mouth, but your heart is far from Him.

I want you to notice here that the writer acknowledges that such was not *always the case* with those to whom he is writing. There was a time that they were vibrant, fresh, eager to hear, soak *in*, and be changed *by* the Word of God. But through the course of time, rather than *burning brighter* for the Lord, they simply *burned out* and began to withdraw *from* the Lord. Instead of keeping things *fresh*, they became *familiar*. and Like the church of Laodicea there in the book of Rev Ch 3 you say, "I am rich, and have become wealthy and have need of nothing-- and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked." Things *look* real good, but in reality they're *real* bad, you've become *dull* of hearing. Over and over again throughout the gospels Jesus issues the exhortation, "He who has ears to hear, let Him hear." "He who has ears to hear, let Him hear." Why? Because when we stop hearing, when things become *dull*, there's a natural progression and if not placed in check and repented of we start down that slippery slope of *departing*.

How does one become "dull" of hearing? They weren't always that way, there was a time that they were sharp, keen, sensitive to the Word of God, tuned in to the things of the Spirit. As we mentioned already sometimes simple familiarity has a way of instigating mechanics, we slip into the motions but our heart sorta drifts to sleep. We talked about pride, we think we have our act together, spiritually rich, wealthy, in need of nothing, in reality that attitude in itself bears witness against us, that we're miserable, poor, blind and naked.

The bible teaches us that the cares of this world, the desire for material riches and other things can enter in and choke the word and we become unfruitful.

Could be that we don't really have a reason *to* stay sharp, and sensitive, poised, primed and in position, ears to hear and all of that. "What do you mean?"

I was reading about a U.S. Army officer who told of the contrast in his students during 2 different eras of teaching at the artillery training school at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. In 1958; the attitude was so lax that the instructors had a problem getting the men to stay awake to listen. However, During the 1965; classes, the men, hearing the same basic lectures, were alert and took detailed notes. The reason for the difference in 1965: *those men knew that in less than six weeks they would be facing the enemy in Vietnam.* What's my point? The point is that if things seem dull perhaps you're not preparing for the battle zone, you don't sense a need to pay attention because you don't sense impending danger. But the fact is that you're in a war, you don't fight with guns, or bombs, the weapons of your warfare aren't carnal, but they're mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing even every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. Don't be dull, stay sharp.

Vs12-14

He says here that though by this time they themselves ought to be teachers they've come to need to be taught themselves the very basic fundamentals of the faith once again. and The essence here is that much has been given to them, much is required from them but they're not delivering, they're not making good with that which has been given to them. They're not investing that which has been given them in the form of practical application toward their own lives much less seeking to share it with others.

With that there's a couple things we do well to note here. Notice that there is a given span of time whereby the Word of God recognizes that you're going to be sort of soaking *up* and sifting *through* the Word. You'll be like a reservoir simply taking in information that you might learn and grow thereby. But there comes a definite point whereby the "banks" of the reservoir of our heart should begin to spill out in the form of sharing what we know regarding the principles and the precepts of the Word of God, the gospel message with others. He says, "...by this time." There's a time when the baby eaglets hang out in the nest just being fed, and they're growing and developing, getting stronger, but eventually it's time to fly on our own. You shouldn't always depend upon someone else to spoon feed you the word of God. Now, it's not that we ever stop being taught, or we become un-teachable, and even with regard to the basics it's good to have a consistent refresher course. We don't outgrow the milk; milk, hey, "...it does the body good." Peter said, "*For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth.*" 2 Peter 1:12-13 You may know it, but it's good to be reminded *of* it and refreshed *in* it. Paul told the Philippians, "*For me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe.*" Phil 3:1 We don't outgrow the milk, the basic fundamentals, the ABC's of the faith, but we add solid food to our diet.

When we read of the fact that you ought to be teachers it's not saying that everyone has the spiritual gift of teaching, or being a pastor, or anything like that. But rather there comes a time when any/every believer in Christ should be able to explain the gospel message and show through the scriptures the basic fundamental aspects of the faith. and There should be enough interest to impel us to do so. But how many people rest on words like, "Well, I've only known the Lord for about 4 yrs so I'm still pretty new to all this." Listen, if you've known the Lord for 4 yrs, you're not new to all this, you should be able to mentor/disciple effectively a babe in Christ, someone who's new to the faith. It is sad the # of people who've known the Lord 10-15-20 yrs and still don't really know their way around the word of God.

They can't navigate through their bibles. They're still babes, and have come to need milk and not solid food. Yet they hear the word of God week, after month after year. One has said that small progress under great privilege is a grievous fault. and So the question that confronts me, and confronts you would be, "Is my level of maturity accurately reflecting the amount of time I've been in the Lord?"

Vs13

Of course the phrase, "The Word of righteousness" is really synonymous with "The Word of God." He's saying that babes in Christ, or perhaps we could say "Babies" in Christ don't know how to wield the word of God effectively or accurately. They're disoriented regarding God's Word. Of course as we consider the nature of a baby an inability to articulate is only 1 of several potential problems a baby has. I happen to have a baby girl that's about 8 months old. Now there's nothing more precious in life than a baby, they're just beautiful, innocent, undefiled and pure. But there are certain issues that should they be growing older and still have, they're not innocent, undefiled, or pure any more, they're a legitimate problem. I have found that my baby girl has a tendency to be very temperamental, her mood can spin on the drop of a dime, easily upset. I have found she can be very demanding, she needs fairly consistent attention to stay happy, I have found that if it's not done for her, it doesn't get done. I've found she wants to be served and can't function if she's not being served, I've found that she doesn't get along in arenas that don't go exactly her way. I guess what I'm saying is that babies quite simply are oriented to the things of the flesh, they don't really delve into the things of the Spirit.

In like manner babies in Christ are precious, they need milk, need tended to, taken care of, and it's a wonderful thing. But there comes a time when they need to start toddling, taking steps on their own, be able to function in the event that something doesn't happen exactly like they think it should or perhaps it could. When they need to start serving rather than all the time being served, because if not those becomes signs of stunted growth, it's a significant problem. Babies can't digest solid food, and that's ok; but when an adult can't digest solid food it's tragic. How is the transition made, how do we grow and develop as children of God?

Vs14

Or to understand that another way, we grow when we place the precepts and principles of God's word that we've learned into practical application in our lives. We receive it, and respond to it. We allow it to permeate and integrate into who we are, you see solid food belongs to those who are of full age (or mature). That is, those who by *reason of use* have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. They place God's word into practice, and when we read of discerning both good and evil that's not a reference to moral good or evil, most people recognize right from wrong morally. It's a reference to that which is doctrinal, they're able to discern the difference between solid doctrine and that which is corrupt. Babies will put anything into their mouths, a babe in Christ will believe anything someone tells them if they're behind a pulpit or on TV, or the radio (internet). If they've written a book than they must be the expert, not necessarily. If you know the truth you'll recognize the lie, Jesus said, "My sheep hear My voice." You'll recognize the voice of the Good shepherd. But this is more or less a "use it or lose it" type exhortation.

I've been enjoying watching Emily's fine motor skills develop, she slowly has learned to get a grip on a little bit of this dissolving kinda baby food and she used to feed her eye, or her cheek, she could never quite hit her mouth. But by reason of use, now she's pretty good at it, she hits her mouth almost with out exception. If she quits honing those skills her muscles will atrophy.

Same thing spiritually, we've got to exercise our spiritual senses. Have you *tasted* and *seen* that the Lord is good lately, you have a spiritual sense of taste, of sight, "Open my eyes that I may see wondrous things from Your law" Ps 119:18 "The eyes of your understanding being enlightened" Eph 1:18 Of hearing (which we've discussed), of smell, Paul spoke of a gift that was sent to him as a sweet *smelling aroma* an acceptable sacrifice well pleasing to the Lord. and Of course you have a spiritual sense of touch or feeling, we can be soft before the Lord, pliable in His hands, or we can harden ourselves against Him. Become dull toward Him, don't be dull. Exercise yourself unto godliness, have ears to hear what the Spirit is saying.

Prayer Points:

God give us ears to hear, help us that we not become dull of hearing but by reason of use have our senses exercised that we might discern both that which is good for us and that which is evil toward us. That we might drink in the pure milk of Your Word, and be nurtured in growth by taking Your Word and allowing You to have Your way in us through it. and If there be areas of immaturity or stunted growth in us, Lord help us, bring us through it, may we mature out of it. May we burn ever brighter for Your glory.

If you've not given your heart to Christ, your hearts not on fire for Jesus, it's not even dull toward Jesus, it's dead before Him. You've never received life in Christ, but you can sense the Spirit dealing with You, the Lord is reaching out *to* You and today you're willing to surrender your heart to Christ, that He might set you on fire for Him, pulsating with life, refreshed through forgiveness, then let me encourage you to pray, that you might open your heart and receive Him today.