

Jesus: Our Great High Priest Forever
Hebrews 5:11-6:12
“From Milk, to Meat, to Maturity”

Introduction

Last week, on Easter Sunday, we examined the miraculous encounter that Cleophas and his wife Mary (at least that is who I believe it was) had with Jesus on the road to Emmaus. We saw how Jesus sought them out, even though they had all but given up hope. After He came to them, He explained the scriptures to them, and finally, once they had believed the message of the scriptures, He revealed Himself to them. You see, even in their state of unbelief, Jesus came to them and “enlightened” them as to Who He really was, and after He did, everything changed for them! It is very much the same way that all of us come to faith in Christ. We hear the message being taught in His Word, The Bible. The Holy Spirit enjoins with us, revealing the Word as truth, as He convinces us to believe. Once we believe, we encounter Jesus for ourselves and come to know Him personally as we follow Him. That, my friends, is Christianity 101, where seeing isn’t believing, but rather, **believing is seeing**. Without the “enlightening” of The Holy Spirit, no one would ever come to faith in Christ. This is why so many in this world cannot accept the truths of Scripture, for they are “spiritually discerned” :

“The person without The Spirit does not accept the things that come from The Spirit of God, but considers them foolishness and cannot understand them, because they are only discerned through The Spirit.”
1 Corinthians 2:14

So you see, the only way that we can ever hope to understand and believe the promises of God is for His Holy Spirit to enlighten us. Without this spiritual enlightenment, no one could ever be saved. But what happens to someone who has received this enlightenment from God, and yet, still refuses to accept Christ? We will find the answer to this question today as we study **Hebrews Chapter 5:11 - 6:12**. This is the third of five warnings found in *Hebrews*, and it has to do with those who have been “Spiritually Enlightened” with sufficient truth to believe in Jesus, and yet, still choose to reject Him. It is a sobering advisory that each of us should carefully contemplate.

Consider, if you will, Cleophas and his wife from last weeks sermon. After Jesus Enjoined them, Explained Himself in the Scriptures to them, and then Enlightened them by revealing Himself in their presence, what do you think He would have done, if they had still refused to accept Him? Would He have made a second trip, or even a third, to further convince them of the truth. Probably not. Why? Because He had already shown them the truth. After the truth of God has been completely revealed to someone, what more can be done to convince them to believe? Answer: **Nothing!** After a person has had the facts spiritually and supernaturally revealed to them, there can be no further “enlightening” as it were. They have all that is necessary to believe in Jesus. So to reject Him at this point would require a sheer act of rebellion. Once we have been shown the truth, the decision lies within us as to whether we will surrender or continue to fight against God. These are the only two options available at this point. To continue in our rebellion once enlightened by The Spirit would be a most catastrophic decision. Wisdom demands that we believe the truth, and then, live accordingly.

The writer of *Hebrews* admonishes those who have been shown the truth of The Gospel of Jesus Christ to respond properly to what they have been given. The appropriate response is faith, and then, in this same faith to continue to follow Jesus until we reach maturity. We, like newborn babies, begin with the very basics. We crave milk (spiritually speaking) in the beginning, but as we grow in Christ, we become more and more like Him. We go from spiritual **Milk**, to **Meat**, and finally to **Maturity**. This should be the natural progression of every true believer in Jesus. No one should want to remain an infant forever, and in like manner, no one should desire to remain “baby Christian”. It just isn’t natural. Christ has called us to start as “learners” and end up as “teachers”. To remain as “infants” on the gospel is to miss out on our calling to fulfill “The Great Commission” (**Matthew 28:16-20**). The writer of *Hebrews* is challenging us to not only believe the truth of the gospel, but to “grow up” in our faith and be transformed into the image of Christ!

From Milk

The writer of *Hebrews* had previously compared the High Priesthood of Jesus to the “perpetual” priesthood of Melchizedek (**vs. 5:6-10**). But, before he expanded upon this principal any further, he paused to admonish his readers that they were too “spiritually dull” to fully grasp the comparison (**vs. 11**). He then tells them that by this time they should be able to teach the truths of Christ, but unfortunately, they were still infantile in their understanding, and therefore, only able to handle the simplest of spiritual truths. They were babes (spiritually speaking), and the deeper things of God’s Word had been lost upon them (**vs. 12-13**). They desperately needed the enlightenment of The Holy Spirit to enable them to understand the “Meat of the Word”, as it were, in order to become spiritually mature, and thus, able to teach others and move beyond the elementary truths of God’s Word.

This world is in desperate need of “mature believers”. Church pews (or chairs if your church is more contemporary) are packed with “worshippers” who seem to come for the “entertainment value” of the Sunday Morning Service. This is why so many of them grow tired of the preaching and singing in their church and must seek their entertainment elsewhere. What would happen in our churches, if the deep truths of God’s Word were proclaimed and taught in order for the congregants to mature in their understanding of God and as a result become **teachers** instead of just listeners? I’ll tell you what would happen. **Lives** would be forever changed, that’s what! Not only would the “older members” become filled with a sense of real purpose as opposed to empty consumerism, but they would have a tremendous impact on the next generation as well. Now I don’t know about you this morning, but when I die I want my obituary to say a whole lot more than “He faithfully attended such and such church”. I want it to say that because of my obedience to Christ... **LIVES WERE FOREVER CHANGED!** That is a funeral service my friends, that will preach itself!

In **Chapter 6** the preacher goes on to say:

“Therefore let us move beyond the elementary teachings about Christ and be taken forward to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, instruction about cleansing rites, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgement. And God permitting, we will do so.” **Hebrews 6:1-3**

Now bear with me here, for we are about to enter into arguably the MOST controversial passage in all of the New Testament! That being said... No Fear. The biggest misconception regarding this passage begins by assuming that the list of things we have just been given are fundamental teachings of “Christianity”. They are not. What the writer is describing are the fundamental teachings about Christ, found in Judaism. Therefore, the passage that follows is **not** about Christians, who somehow “lose their salvation”, but rather, it is directed at Jews, who were so hung up on *The Old Testament* pictures of Christ that they refused to accept the real thing, even after it had been clearly explained to them.

Let us examine the list item by item shall we? He begins by saying:

“....let us move beyond the ELEMENTARY teachings about Christ and be taken forward to maturity.”

A better translation would actually say “**The primary teachings about THE Christ**”. And where would we find these? In *The Old Testament*. Remember last week, when we saw Jesus teaching the two on the Road to Emmaus all *The Old Testament* teachings regarding Himself? These are the primary teachings of Christ. *The Old Testament* is kind of like “Christian Kindergarten”. *The New Testament* gives us the “grown up stuff”. When we go beyond *The Old Testament* teachings about The Christ (Messiah) and get into the “meat” of *The New Testament*, it’s like going from learning our ABC’s to reading a great novel! *The Old Testament* is merely a starting point, but the *New* gets us to the finish line. The first century Jews, which the writer of *Hebrews* is addressing in this book, are still too hung up on “all things Jewish” to be able to fully grasp the reality of Christ.

For instance, **“the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God.”** are *Old Testament* concepts. Repentance has always been required of God’s people. The nation of Israel had been admonished to “turn away” from their sins many times in *The Old Testament*, but in *The New Testament*, we have been called to turn away from sin, by turning **TO** Jesus! In *The Old Testament*, people were called to “have faith in God”, but in *The New Testament*, we are shown to believe in Jesus and be purified so that we will **SEE** God (**Matthew 5:8**).

The preacher goes on to talk of the ceremonial washings (**vs. 2**) of *The Old Testament*. The High Priest would bathe and change clothes FIVE times on the day of Atonement to symbolize “ceremonial cleansing”. The Jews were required by law to keep a bowl of water in their homes to ceremonially wash their hands several times each day. Even today, during The Passover Seder, Jews observe two separate “washing of the hands” in order to be ceremonially clean. These symbolic acts have forever been replaced by the washing away of our sins by the precious blood of Jesus. He died not to make us “ceremonially clean”, but to present us as spotless before the Throne of God! (**Colossians 1:22; Jude 1:24**).

The “laying on of hands” that the writer describes (**vs. 2**) is *The Old Testament* practice of laying hands upon the head of a sacrificial animal, in order to symbolically place the sins of the people upon it so it could die in their stead. This is merely a picture of Jesus, Who took our sins upon Himself (**1 Peter 2:24**) and became “sin for us” (**2 Corinthians 5:21**), and thereby, offered up Himself as the ultimate sacrifice for all sin. You see, the “primary teachings” about The Christ are just the “milk of The Word”. But in *The New Testament*, we find the MEAT. Even *The Old Testament* spoke about a coming resurrection of the dead (**Daniel 12:2-3**), but Christ IS the resurrection and the life (**John 11:25**). To become so caught up in the primary school teachings of *The Old Testament* that you cannot accept the deeper *New Testament* fulfillment of those teachings would be a great tragedy indeed. It is incumbent upon every hearer of The Word to graduate from Milk to Meat!

To Meat

“And God permitting, we will do so.”

Hebrews 6:3

I LOVE that verse! For you see, we cannot “grow ourselves up” in the Christian faith. No, we must be enlightened and enabled by God through His Holy Spirit. He causes us to grow in our faith.

“... He, who began a good work in you, will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.”

Philippians 1:6

If you are remaining Christ, you don’t have to worry about growing in Christ, for He will see to it that you do (**John 15**). But you had best make sure that you are, in fact, In HIM. Which brings us to the terrifying portion of today’s warning:

“It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in The Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the Word of God and the powers of the coming age, and who have fallen away, to be brought back to repentance. To their loss, they are crucifying The Son of God all over again and subjecting Him to public disgrace.”

Hebrews 6:4-6

In case you were wondering, THAT’S the controversial part! First. Let us talk about what it is NOT saying. This passage has often been quoted as “proof” that a person who has been saved can “lose” their salvation. This is absolutely NOT what this passage is talking about. Just as the “elementary truths” that we discussed earlier are not about salvation, this passage is not about “saved people”. It is, rather, about those who have been shown the truth of God’s Word and have been enlightened by The Holy Spirit in regards to Christ (**vs. 4**), and yet, for whatever reason, they have chosen to reject those truths. They have come so very close to the saving grace of God, but are determined to resist His offer of salvation. Perhaps there is some sin that they refuse to forsake, or perhaps they truly desire to escape the fires of hell, but have no desire to be under the Lordship of Christ. In any case, there is no more that can be done for them. They have known the truth, and what’s more, The Holy Spirit has Himself revealed it to them. They are without excuse for their unbelief, and yet, they still refuse to accept Christ. For them, it is the same as saying, “Put Him back upon the cross, for I have no desire to serve Him” (**vs. 6**). What a horrifying position to take in regards to The Holy One of God!

In **Mark 3:28-29**, Jesus describes this spiritual condition as “the unpardonable sin”, which is to summarily reject the enlightenment of The Holy Spirit, and thereby, committing blasphemy against Him. When a person has been shown the truth of the gospel by The Holy Spirit Himself, and subsequently rejects that truth, then they place themselves in grave peril.

"If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God." **Hebrews 10:26-27**

The preacher of *Hebrews* continues his warning with an illustration of a rain shower falling upon two types of ground, with two different crops that are produced as a result (**vs.7-8**). The good crop is an illustration of those who receive the enlightenment of The Holy Spirit and respond appropriately. While the other patch of ground receives the exact same rainfall (spiritual enlightenment), and yet, produced only thorns and thistles. This ground represents those who receive that same enlightenment from The Spirit as believers do, but reject the truth. These blasphemers will be consumed in the fires of hell (**vs. 8**). Please heed this warning today. If you have been enlightened by The Holy Spirit and have been shown that Jesus is in fact the Sinless Son of God, who came to die for your sins; if you have been convinced that God has raised Him from the dead; then confess Him as your Lord this morning, for this may very well be your final opportunity. Do not commit the unpardonable sin. Believe in Him and commit yourself to follow Christ. Go from the Milk of God's Word, to the Meat of it, and begin your journey toward spiritual maturity. Jesus is calling. He wants you to grow... in HIM.

To Maturity

"Even though we speak like this, dear friends, we are convinced of better things in your case — the things that have to do with salvation. God is not unjust; He will not forget your work and the love you have shown Him as you have helped His people and continue to help them. We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, so that what you hope for may be fully realized. We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those, who through patience, inherit what has been promised." **Hebrews 6:9-12**

Don't you just love what he tells them in these verses? **"We expect better things from you."** I believe that every word of scripture is inspired by The Holy Spirit, so as far as I am concerned the "we" in this case is The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Our God expects us to remain in Him and bear fruit. If we will just believe in Christ, and abide in His Word and in His will, we can rest assured that we will "bear the fruits" that accompany salvation. He will see to that. He will finish the good work that He has begun in us, and He will see to it that we are as a field yielding a good crop. The results are up to Him. We shall indeed go from **Milk**, to **Meat**, to **Maturity**. Those, who have truly been "enlightened" by His Spirit and abide in Christ, shall never be ashamed! Our maturity in Christ is a foregone conclusion. Or as the writer of *Hebrews* so eloquently said it:

"God permitting... We will do so!"

And ALL of God's People said... TRUTH!!!