

YOU WON'T MAKE IT ON MILK

Hebrews 5:11 – 6:12

The book of Hebrews was written to Jewish Christians in 65 A.D. suffering persecution for their faith in Jesus as Messiah. In this warning section the Preacher confronts their spiritual regression. As a result of drifting away from God's Word (2:1), they have regressed to a state of spiritual infancy increasingly vulnerable to their Jewish antagonists and the temptation to defect from Christ. The Preacher seeks to shake them out of their spiritual lethargy and to help them press on to spiritual maturity. He warns them that if they continue their drift and defect back into Judaism they will cross a line of no return.

In 5:11-14, the Preacher addresses the fact they have become dull of hearing.

You Won't Make It On Milk (5:11-14)

About what does the Preacher have much to say? He has much to say about the high priesthood of Christ; in fact he dedicates the better part of his letter to the high priesthood of Christ (chapters 5-10)! Drifting has made them dull. In the Christian life there are no spiritual plateaus; we're either progressing or regressing. The more time away from the Word the more muddled our thinking. Our minds are never a vacuum; if the Word of Christ is not dwelling in us richly then the wisdom of the world and flesh is. Our ability to discern right from wrong, good from bad is greatly diminished. In such a weakened state of spiritual infancy, how will these persecuted Hebrew Christians stand firm against their Jewish antagonists and the temptation to defect?

The Preacher's commitment is to take them beyond milk to meat.

Leave the Milk and Go On To Maturity (6:1-3)

It seems there might have been some type of catechism for new believers. Whatever the case, the Preacher urges them to move beyond the "elementary" doctrines of Christ to maturity. And he's confident they will, "if God permits". What does "if God permits" mean? Why is there any question that God would "permit" them to go on to spiritual maturity?

Because there is one circumstance in which God will not permit it. That one circumstance is explained in verses 4-8.

One Circumstance Wherein God Will Not Permit A Believer To Go On To Spiritual Maturity (6:4-8)

Throughout the book the Preacher has related to his readers as truly born again believers and the description he gives here is consistent with a born again Christian. He is warning his beloved brothers and sisters that if they succumb to temptation, let go their confession (3:1; 4:14), recant their faith in Christ and return to Judaism, they will forfeit any chance *in this life* to go on to spiritual maturity.

To *fall away* in this context means to succumb to the temptation to return to Judaism by recanting their confession that Jesus is the Messiah. To *fall away* means to once again reject Jesus' claim to be the Son of God. To *fall away* is described as "crucifying once again the Son of God". It clearly means rejecting Jesus; the crucifixion being the ultimate rejection of Jesus by the religious leaders of Judaism. To *fall away* **does not** refer to "sin" in general nor does it refer to "backsliding". *Falling away* refers to recanting one's confession of faith in Jesus as Messiah and (in this context) returning to Judaism.

It is critical you understand that *repentance* means *change of mind* **not** *justification* *salvation*. Before they heard the preaching of the Apostles' about Jesus and saw the accompanying signs and wonders of God (2:3-4), the recipients of the book of Hebrews **did not** believe that Jesus is the Messiah/Son of God/Savior. Then they *repented*, they *changed their minds* and believed that Jesus is the Messiah/Son of God/Savior and were justified by faith. Now, under persecution, they are tempted to recant and reject Jesus once again as a necessary step of returning to Judaism.

If they return to Judaism there is no returning again to Christianity *in this life*. That is vastly different than saying they will lose their justification salvation and not be able to be saved again. They are saved. They have been justified by faith in the blood of Christ. The warning is that if they return to Judaism, they will not go on to spiritual maturity *in this life* because God will not permit them to change their mind about Jesus again *in this life*. Those who fall away are still saved, they are redeemed people, but they face divine discipline in this life (2:1-4; 3:16-19 the Exodus generation died in the Wilderness and failed to enter God's rest). They will receive rebuke at the Judgment Seat of Christ (Matt. 25:14-30; 1 Cor. 3:10-15; 2 Cor. 5:10) and reduced inheritance/authority in the Millennial Kingdom.

The illustration of the fields in 6:7-8 speaks of reward versus rebuke not heaven versus hell. The mistake is to interpret “burned” as referring to hell. It illustrates the farmer’s response to his field based on the field’s productivity or lack thereof.

This interpretation is further reinforced by the Preacher in 6:9-12. In these verses he softens his tone and seeks to encourage his hearers. Notice he focuses on their former works and assures them God will not overlook what they have done in the past.

Persevere in Faith and Patience So That You Inherit the Promises! (6:9-12)

Reflection

We must take to heart the truths of Hebrews and realize that persecuted or no, we are called to be faithful and obedient to the Word of God and we, too, are either growing spiritually or we’re regressing. We’re either yielding fruit for God or we’re yielding thorns and thistles.

Second, this should move us to pray for our persecuted brothers and sisters around the world for whom this very issue of defecting is an every day temptation.

Thirdly, this passage reveals the radical nature of God’s grace and the absolute sufficiency of the blood of Christ by which **all** our trespasses have been forgiven (Col. 2:13-15; Heb. 10:11-14).

Finally, we need to repent of a minimalist mindset that rationalizes spiritual apathy. There are consequences now and for eternity for the way we live our lives. What joys and incredible experiences are we forfeiting by living for the baubles and trinkets of this world? Let us move on to maturity. Let us be faithful and obedient to do the works of God here and now that we might inherit the promises in the kingdom!

