

Pastor Scott Wood 9-29-2024  
HEBREWS STUDY: PERSEVERE- HOLD ON-BELIEVE TILL THE END  
PART 5: PROVOKED TO SPIRITUAL MATURITY

Good Morning (Afternoon) CV Church family. Sacred Sunday to all of you on site and Sacred Sunday to all of you gathering with us online. It is so wonderful to be back with you. There is nothing like gathering together every Sunday and during the week with you, our CV family.

This morning (afternoon) we continue our stimulating study in the book of Hebrews. Pastor Scott Alvarez and I have entitled this study **PERSEVERE—HOLD ON—BELIEVE TILL THE END**. Today were looking at Pt 5: **PROVOKED TO SPIRITUAL MATURITY**. If you don't have the notes that we provide please raise your hand and one of our leaders will get them to you immediately.

We're looking at Chapter 5:11-6:1-12. We provide the Scripture text on your notes, but I would also encourage you to bring your Bibles so that you can follow along, underline, or make some notes in your Bible as well as on your notes. There are 5 warnings that the Pastor who wrote Hebrews has written in this stellar book. This is the third warning in Hebrews. **Its purpose is to create a responsiveness to God's word and to imitate the behavior of the faithful as in Abraham and the heroes of faith that we'll study when we get to chapter 11.**

**Pt I. REALIZE that shame is used to GOAD us to spiritual growth.** Please follow along as I read Hebrews 5:11-6:1-3. It is in your notes. To save time I will put the appropriate section of the text under each point that I will explain. "Hebrews 5:11-6:1-3. **"<sup>11</sup>THERE IS MUCH MORE WE WOULD LIKE TO SAY ABOUT THIS, BUT IT IS DIFFICULT TO EXPLAIN, ESPECIALLY SINCE YOU ARE SPIRITUALLY DULL AND DON'T SEEM TO LISTEN. <sup>12</sup>YOU HAVE BEEN BELIEVERS SO LONG NOW THAT YOU OUGHT TO BE TEACHING OTHERS. INSTEAD, YOU NEED SOMEONE TO TEACH YOU AGAIN THE BASIC THINGS ABOUT GOD'S WORD. YOU ARE LIKE BABIES WHO NEED MILK AND CANNOT EAT SOLID FOOD. <sup>13</sup>FOR SOMEONE WHO LIVES ON MILK IS STILL AN INFANT AND DOESN'T KNOW HOW TO DO WHAT IS RIGHT. <sup>14</sup>SOLID FOOD IS FOR THOSE WHO ARE MATURE, WHO THROUGH TRAINING HAVE THE SKILL TO RECOGNIZE THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN RIGHT AND WRONG. <sup>1</sup>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. <sup>2</sup>YOU DON'T NEED FURTHER INSTRUCTION ABOUT BAPTISMS, THE LAYING ON OF HANDS, THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD, AND ETERNAL JUDGMENT. <sup>3</sup>AND SO, GOD WILLING, WE WILL MOVE FORWARD TO FURTHER UNDERSTANDING."**

Thomas G. Long is brilliant in how he sets up the context of this passage using a contemporary example from education. Suppose a teacher is about to introduce her students to a new and difficult idea; an idea that will require alertness and diligence to master. She is not sure, however, that the students are really up to the task. It's the middle of the term, and they're already growing weary. Also, they have struggled in the first part of the course with the more basic material. Will they have the energy, she

wonders, for these advanced lessons? Plus, any new concept is always somewhat threatening since it pushes aside familiar ways of thinking. Will the students simply dig in their heels and resist being disturbed by anything new?

This teacher faces many obstacles, but she is determined to break through the walls they have built. She knows that what she wants to teach to her students is demanding. But she also knows it's very valuable; it's something they must learn if they are to continue growing. So, what should the teacher do? How can she coax these reluctant students to grapple with the challenging new material?

One very effective approach would be to use a bit of reverse psychology. She could start by telling the students that she has a rich and wonderful idea to teach them, but that, sadly, they just aren't ready for it. She could close the textbook ruefully, shaking her head because they aren't wise enough, alert enough, or prepared enough, to handle material this difficult; that is this important. Maybe someday, she says, but not today. After all, they are just babes in the woods, not really up to the stronger, more adult stuff. Her goal, of course, is to create enough pain and discomfort to motivate her students to stretch their limits. When they cry out in protest, their intellectual pride wounded, then she can, with a dash of feigned hesitation, agree to teach them this material since they are insistent. If this tactic works, of course, the teacher will find herself presenting this new idea to a class full of eager, bristlingly alert, students, bound and determined to prove to their teacher that she's wrong about them.

As Long writes, **“The Pastor of Hebrews employs a similar teaching and homiletical strategy in this section of his sermon. In his upcoming chapters of this sermon, the preacher plans to dive into deep Christological water, and He wants to prepare his congregation for this plunge. The ideas ahead will be complex, challenging, even threatening, and he wants to focus their attention, to bring them to a new level of theological alertness and receptivity.”** So, like our example schoolteacher, the Pastor wakes up his sluggish students with rebuke, challenge, and admonition, mockingly insulting the pride of the congregation so that they will take the dare and be willing to jump after him as he leaps into the theological depth.

Long continues, **“The diving board from which the Pastor will spring was set up in chapter 5. There the pastor developed the theme of Jesus’ role as High Priest, building gradually toward a Christological clarification of the dramatic conclusion that the Pastor is driving home to his congregation.”** It is found in Hebrews 2:14-18 and chapter 5:7-9. It is imperative that we get this. We will dive head long into what it means that Jesus is our high priest in chapter 7-10. Hebrews 2:14-18 says, **“<sup>14</sup>BECAUSE GOD’S CHILDREN ARE HUMAN BEINGS—MADE OF FLESH AND BLOOD—THE SON ALSO BECAME FLESH AND BLOOD. FOR ONLY AS A HUMAN BEING COULD HE DIE, AND ONLY BY DYING COULD HE BREAK THE POWER OF THE DEVIL, WHO HAD<sup>[a]</sup> THE POWER OF DEATH. <sup>15</sup>ONLY IN THIS WAY COULD HE SET FREE ALL WHO HAVE LIVED THEIR LIVES AS SLAVES TO THE FEAR OF DYING. <sup>16</sup>WE ALSO KNOW THAT THE SON DID NOT COME TO HELP ANGELS; HE CAME TO HELP THE DESCENDANTS OF ABRAHAM. <sup>17</sup>THEREFORE, IT WAS NECESSARY FOR HIM TO BE MADE IN EVERY RESPECT LIKE US, HIS BROTHERS AND SISTERS, SO THAT HE COULD BE OUR MERCIFUL AND FAITHFUL HIGH PRIEST BEFORE GOD. THEN HE COULD OFFER A SACRIFICE**

**THAT WOULD TAKE AWAY THE SINS OF THE PEOPLE. <sup>18</sup>SINCE HE HIMSELF HAS GONE THROUGH SUFFERING AND TESTING, HE IS ABLE TO HELP US WHEN WE ARE BEING TESTED.” Hebrews 5:7-9: “<sup>7</sup>WHILE JESUS WAS HERE ON EARTH, HE OFFERED PRAYERS AND PLEADINGS, WITH A LOUD CRY AND TEARS, TO THE ONE WHO COULD RESCUE HIM FROM DEATH. AND GOD HEARD HIS PRAYERS BECAUSE OF HIS DEEP REVERENCE FOR GOD. <sup>8</sup>EVEN THOUGH JESUS WAS GOD’S SON, HE LEARNED OBEDIENCE FROM THE THINGS HE SUFFERED. <sup>9</sup>IN THIS WAY, GOD QUALIFIED HIM AS A PERFECT HIGH PRIEST, AND HE BECAME THE SOURCE OF ETERNAL SALVATION FOR ALL THOSE WHO OBEY HIM.”**

Church, you will be hard pressed to find a single sentence in this passage, and the other that I quoted, that more comprehensively sums up the message of Hebrews! Long writes, **“Indeed, this complex, many layered claim stands at the theological heart of the sermon. If the Pastor’s congregation knows, believes, and trusts the profound implications of this truth, they will be able to ‘... LET US STRIP OFF EVERY WEIGHT THAT SLOWS US DOWN, ESPECIALLY THE SIN THAT SO EASILY TRIPS US UP. AND LET US RUN WITH ENDURANCE THE RACE GOD HAS SET BEFORE US.”** Hebrews 12:1b, and c. If, however, they remain spiritual children wearing water wings, and paddling around in the shallows, they will soon grow weary and drift away with the tide. This is a contemporary way of saying they will drift away and become apostates, rejecting Jesus and missing God’s eternal plan and Kingdom for them. This is no laughing matter Church!

**A. RECKON that dullness of heart can lead to HARDNESS of heart. Hebrews 5:11.** In this verse the Pastor says he has more to say about what he just covered in 5:8-10. **“<sup>11</sup>THERE IS MUCH MORE WE WOULD LIKE TO SAY ABOUT THIS, BUT IT IS DIFFICULT TO EXPLAIN, ESPECIALLY SINCE YOU ARE SPIRITUALLY DULL AND DON’T SEEM TO LISTEN.”** Jesus’ Sonship is a major theme in Hebrews. What these 3 verses say is that even though Jesus was specially related to Father God, He learned obedience in His suffering. The word **“learned”** in the Greek suggests a process. Church there is no hint that Jesus ever disobeyed, See Hebrews 4:15. As Craig Kester writes, **“To say that Jesus ‘learned obedience’ does not mean that He was formerly disobedient any more than saying that He ‘became a merciful and faithful High Priest’ means that He was formerly callous or faithless.”** This verse emphasizes Jesus’ humanity. Thomas Schreiner writes **“Jesus learned how to obey in the anvil of humane experiences, as He we experienced life day by day. In particular He learned obedience in His sufferings.”** William Lanes argues that, **“Jesus’ perfection was an abstraction until He obeyed God in the concrete realities and travails of everyday human experience. His sufferings and death equipped and qualified Him as the source of our salvation and to serve as our High Priest.”** Again Schreiner writes profoundly that **“Jesus learned what it was to please God as a child, a teenager, and an adult. Jesus’ perfection and obedience had to be worked out in everyday life and at every stage of His life. He wasn’t qualified to serve as priest as a young boy or teenager. He fulfilled what God intended when He created human beings. Jesus’ suffering was not merely moral. It is also vocation, fitting Him for His role as High Priest.”**

In verse 11 the Pastor is using the rhetorical skill of shaming them because it is the fact that they are dull and refuse to listen. So this hinders him from speaking to them about deeper and stouter truths about Jesus as our high priest. Like the schoolteacher, he is trying to get their attention through shame. We must not confuse the concept of shame that comes out of the recovery movement with how God uses shame. Shame is an emotion that involves negative self-evaluation, believing that something is wrong with you as a person. You may believe that you haven't lived up to certain standards and feel unworthy or inadequate as a result. To be spiritually dull means that they are sluggish, lazy, and lethargic in their ability to hear spiritual truths and put them into practice. In verse 12, the Pastor challenges them to change and no longer be spiritually dull and indifferent. That shame they were meant to feel is not false shame. They ARE at fault. He is concerned that it is their spiritual dullness, laziness, and indifference that has caused them to drift and could, potentially, cause them to apostatize or quit following Jesus. Grant Osborne writes this about the shame language. **“The pastor may have intentionally exaggerated their retrogression into spiritual childishness in order to shame them into awakening from lethargy. Notice, particularly, such humiliating phrases as those ‘... who have need of baby’s milk rather than solid food.’”**

It is important to note what the Pastor specifically says about this “dullness,” “sluggishness” or “immaturity.” Osborne writes, **“The Pastor fears that this unnatural ‘immaturity’ will prevent the hearers from grasping what he has to say about the Son’s effective High Priesthood in 5:11. Instead, their ‘immaturity’ seems to be focused on ‘the elementary doctrines of Christ’ in 6:1. Secondly, this ‘sluggishness’ would prevent them from being imitators ‘of those who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises’ in 6:12, such as Abraham, ...”** which we will see in 6:13-16, **“... and the other faithful in Hebrews 11:1-40. It appears that grasping and appropriating the ‘great salvation’ of Christ’s priesthood, as described in Hebrews 7:1-10:18, is the means of imitating those who ‘through faith and endurance’ inherit what God has promised and is thus the very opposite of this sluggish immaturity, which is retarding the reader’s advance . It is the ‘solid food’ that they should begin to chew. It is the word of righteousness (5:13) that will enable the readers to follow the examples of the Righteous in Hebrews 10:38-11:40, It appears then that failure to appropriate the benefits of Christ’s High Priestly work is failure to follow the example of the faithful, which results in loss of entrance into the heavenly homeland.”** The Pastor is saying, through this tough language, that their dullness, sluggishness, laziness, and slothfulness to put the energy into their own spiritual maturation, that they need to know that this naturally leads to a hardness of heart. We already saw this in 3:12: **“<sup>12</sup>BE CAREFUL THEN, DEAR BROTHERS AND SISTERS. MAKE SURE THAT YOUR OWN HEARTS ARE NOT EVIL AND UNBELIEVING, TURNING YOU AWAY FROM THE LIVING GOD.”** **B. RECOGNIZE milk drinkers are UNSKILLED in following the right course of action. Hebrews 5:12.** This congregation had adequate time to become teachers of the fundamentals and elementary truths, but they still had the need to be taught all over again. Loved ones, God wants you to grow so that you can teach others the fundamentals of God’s word. Next week we will look at exactly what the pastor was talking about in chapter 6:1-3. He lays it out. Peter O’Brien writes concerning God’s

Word, in the Greek it is God's oracles, "... **probably means the Scriptures interpreted in the light of the death and exaltation of Jesus.**" Church, as believers we need to review the basics of our faith, but in this case the readers are indicted for needing to be taught what they were to be teaching others. This is how CVChurch will grow strong spiritually: Each one of us making sure that we're reading our Bibles daily. That we're following our Bible bookmark; we're applying the SOAP acrostic exercise on our Bible Bookmark, and asking the kinds of questions that allow us to apply the Scriptures we read to each day. Also, if you have the NLT Application Study Bible, I recommend that you begin to read the footnotes. You can also look at the bibliography that Pastor Scottie and I include in the Notes. The problem with milk drinkers is that they refuse to grow in their ability to discern between what is right and what is wrong. I will close with a wrap up of my teaching and pray. I am done.