

HEBREWS - PRESSING ON/TAKING FLIGHT

Review/Background

Hebrews 5:9-14 – Spiritual Immaturity

Summary overview:

Central to the book of Hebrews – THE theme of the book of Hebrews – is the superiority of the Messiah (anointed) Jesus – the pre-eminence of Christ. *Christ* – Anointed – in the Greek.

We see Jesus as “better than” the angels; “better than” Moses; “better than the Aaronic priesthood” (Aaron – brother of Moses – from the tribe of Levi)– the priesthood in Moses day through 70 AD when the temple was destroyed.

“Better” – more advantageous/more beneficial. Jesus is the FULFILLMENT of all God’s promises

The writer of Hebrews was addressing Jewish believers who were being persecuted.

Date: 65 to 68 AD. Nero was on the throne of the Roman Empire. Tradition says Peter and Paul perished in this persecution (Heb. 10:32-39; 12:4).

Under such pressure, there was the strong temptation on the part of these readers to lapse back and put themselves under the Mosaic Covenant – under the Law – observing the commandments connected with the Temple (which was still standing [Heb. 10:11]). They were beginning to doubt and to drift – veering toward going back to the Law – back to the Promise of the Messiah. They already had the FULFILLMENT – they had come to faith in Jesus. Because of their faith in Jesus, the readers were being persecuted. They were beginning to compare their previous life in following the Mosaic Covenant (not much persecution) with their life in Jesus (things were heating up).

Because the readers were on the verge of turning from the fulfillment and going back under the promise (of the fulfillment), the author of Hebrews emblazons on every page Who Jesus is and His finished work on our behalf.

If we don’t have a Biblical understanding of Jesus, we can never be willing to live for Him or die for Him. If we don’t know Who Jesus is according to Scripture, we could easily be deceived, and be following a false Jesus – NOT the Biblical Jesus – a manmade Jesus. And, thus, we could drift away! The knowledge of God is crucial.

The author is attempting to focus their attention on the future world (Heb. 2:5). Be faithful and obedient now because it’s going to impact the future – how we rule and reign with Christ!

The author is telling his readers – the Jewish believers – as he is telling US . . . PRESS ON TO MATURITY! Be obedient; be faithful!!!

There are warnings in the book of Hebrews. These warnings are for the readers who are BELIEVERS! These warning passages are intended to MOVE these believers on to maturity in Jesus. These warning passages speak of the serious consequences for failure to progress.

The author. . .

- Educates – the book is intensely theological – it is a book of “high Christology” – study re: the Christ, the Anointed – Who He is and His work on our behalf.
 - The author also educates re: the future world – after they die. He speaks of rewards for faithful service.
- Encourages – the author loved the recipients of his letter. Their circumstances were the same. He is coming alongside them. He encourages the readers to **MATURE!**
 - NOTE: the readers are believers. The author doesn’t talk to them about coming to faith in Jesus. They are saved – they are born again – they are justified. They’ve been saved from the **PENALTY** of sin.
 - The author is talking to about obeying Jesus and walking in faith – and working out their own salvation (Phi. 2:12-13). When the author mentions salvation in this book he’s talking about it in terms of being sanctified – being set apart from sin now that they know Jesus – about being conformed to God’s image – about walking in the Spirit and not in the flesh – about being saved from the **POWER** of sin – looking forward to the time when, as believers, they will see Jesus face to face and be saved from the very **PRESENCE** of sin!
- Exhorts – the author’s love for the readers is a tough love. He exhorts them – he warns them. He is lovingly in their faith. He exhorts them to **GET THEIR ACT TOGETHER – TO PRESS ON TO MATURITY – TO NOT REMAIN STUNTED IN THEIR GROWTH IN THE LORD!**

While much doctrine/theology is presented – this book has **EXTREME APPLICATION** for us!

We have an exhortation to move forward to maturity because we have a great High Priest – Jesus Who intercedes for us. Therefore, Heb. 4:16 proclaims to us that we, who are believers in Jesus, can come boldly to the throne of grace (NOT a throne of judgment) to obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

The most important message the writer brings in this book is the truth that, in Jesus, God has given believers their one and only “great High Priest (Heb. 4:14).

Heb. 8:1 – “This is the ‘main point,’ we have a great High Priest seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens. . . .”

To a Jewish believer in Jesus in the first Century church – they definitely knew what a high priest meant. All their lives they were accustomed to going to the temple, participating in the temple worship, very moving, very dramatic, deeply instilled.

This “priest thing” has everything to do with whether or not you’re going to have any kind of relationship with your Creator. And whether or not you’ll have the privilege of entering into His presence. No priest – no presence with God.

The idea of a priesthood connects itself with the consciousness of sin. Priest – bridge builder.

The High Priest – ever since Moses’ day – was the only one who could appear before God in the Holy of Holies once a year at Yom Kippur/Day of Atonement – offering a sacrifice to cover/atone the sins of the nation of Israel – for a year. The High Priest – CRUCIAL to their covenant relationship with God!

Turning to Jesus as their Messiah left these Jewish believers without access to the human High Priest and his sacrificial ministry.

The author’s message: Jesus is our one and only High Priest and bridge to God. You no longer need Annas I, Caiphas, Jonathon, Ananias, and Annas II – or any of that family – appointed by Rome – NOT according to the Mosaic Law. Let them go!! Jesus is all the High Priest you will ever need!

Just as the writer begins to explain Jesus as THE one and only High Priest (Heb. 4:14-Heb. 5:11), he launches into an extended exhortation: “It’s high time you grew up!”

Heb. 5:12-14 - “We have much to say about Jesus as our High Priest – but it’s hard to explain because you have become dull of hearing! You don’t listen. You’re way behind. You need to go back to kindergarten.”

The writer doesn’t hesitate to confront. His readers are in danger of drifting from their anchor – Jesus – the fulfillment of everything God had promised them! And, their drifting now – in this life – has consequences in the afterlife. If they are not living faithfully now – there will be lack of rewards (I Cor. 3; II Cor. 5:9ff)

Re: our walk with the Lord – our sanctification – our maturing in Him - as believers, if we persist in spiritual lukewarmness (not reading God’s word [Heb. 4:12ff]; not being sensitive to God’s direction), the more “dull of hearing” we can become.

REMEMBER – the author is speaking to believers. He is NOT raising a question as to their justification – their being declared righteous by God – their being saved/born again. They are redeemed. They are HOLY BRETHREN.

If we cease to progress spiritually – we begin to move backward. When that occurs, our sensitivity to God begins to lessen, and our understanding of the Bible becomes more difficult.

Since they have not retained the truth – they have not taught it to others – they need someone to teach them again “the first principles of the oracles of God. They have reverted from adulthood back to infancy in spiritual things; they have lapsed from maturity back to immaturity.

The author illustrates this through the analogy of food. Milk is suited to infancy; solid food is suited to maturity. The author is not comparing easy passages (milk) to hard-to-understand passages (meat). He is telling the readers that they are NOT skilled in the word of righteousness – therefore, it’s not producing righteousness in that believer’s

life. You cannot apply in your life what you do not know! Spiritual adults are those “who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.”

The baby is unable to use the Word to determine what is right and wrong – to use the Word to guide in his/her decisions or to use the Word as their standard of life.

The spiritual adult is able to use the Word to determine what is right and wrong. The baby has the Word but he/she doesn't USE the Word.

Hebrews 6:1 – THEREFORE. . . – still talking about MATURITY – it's THE issue – “Let us go on to PERFECTION” – to “full age” (Heb. 5:14).

NOT saying – “Get saved!” They ARE saved. They need to GROW in the Lord.

They already have LIFE in Jesus – they're being considered “babies” in their position in Christ. They HAVE life – but they're stunted.

Since Hebrews focuses on the maturity of the believer, we can assume that this is one of God's greatest concerns for all believers – to “go on” to spiritual maturity. We need to take spiritual inventory and set spiritual goals.

Write down some specific things we would like to be true in our lives spiritually a month from now, three months from now, six months from now, a year from now.

Pray, study God's word diligently, and walk in submission to Him, trusting Him to move us in the direction of true spiritual maturity.

Throughout Scripture, drawing near to God always entails leaving behind those things that would hinder us in our progress.

Is there anything in your life – my life – that would hold us back spiritually? If so – we need to make a decision here and now to leave it behind and move on with Christ!