

July 11, 2021
Hebrews 5 – Warning Signs
JD Farag

Good morning and welcome to our Second Service on Sunday morning where we're going through God's Word book-by-book and chapter-by-chapter, verse-by-verse. And today, we find ourselves in Hebrews Chapter 5. And Lord willing, we will finish the entirety of this chapter, verses 1-14.

I'll ask those of you here, if you're not there already, to turn there. You can join us online. And if you're able, please stand. You can follow along as I read. If not, where you're seated is fine.

The writer of Hebrews by the Holy Spirit verse 1 writes, "Every high priest is selected from among the people and is appointed to represent the people in matters related to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins.

He is able [verse 2] to deal gently with those who are ignorant and are going astray, since he himself is subject to weakness. This is why he has to offer sacrifices for his own sins, as well as for the sins of the people. And no one takes this honor on himself, but he receives it when called by God, just as Aaron was.

In the same way, [verse 5] Christ did not take on himself the glory of becoming a high priest. But God said to him, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father." And He says in another place, "You are a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek."

During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered, and once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek.

Now verse 11 is interesting. "We have much to say about this, but it is hard to make it clear to you because you no longer try to understand.

[Some of your translations render it you have become dull of hearing]

Wow! In fact [verse 12] though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's Word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness.

But [verse 14] solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil." Wow!

Let's pray if you would please join with me. Loving Heavenly Father, we readily admit that the passage before us is such that we desperately need for the Holy Spirit to give us understanding. There's a reason this is here in our Bibles and it's also the reason why we're here today because we need for You to show us what it is that You would have us to see, and Lord, when You do, we want to have eyes to see.

And when You speak, we want to have ears to hear. And Lord, we want to have hearts to receive. Lord, as only You can and always do because Your word never returns void, You speak into our lives and sometimes it's very specific, very personal, and that's what we're looking for and even asking You for today. Would you do that for us, Lord, today? Will You speak? Your servants are listening, we ask You in Jesus' name, amen and amen.

You can be seated. Thank you.

July 11, 2021
Hebrews 5 – Warning Signs
JD Farag

, I want to talk to you today about those warning signs or warning lights if you prefer in our Christian lives that indicate we're not growing spiritually. You know how it is in your car when those dash lights come on warning you? What do you do? You get the electricians tape, the black, and you cover it up. It's so annoying.

Well, that light is there for reason. It's a warning light and it's warning you something needs your attention. Something is wrong and you need to pay attention and give it attention now. Warning, warning, warning!

Well, that's what Chapter 5 is in Hebrews that's before us today. As we just read and as we're about to see, the writer of Hebrews knows that these believers are not spiritually mature enough to understand. You can almost sense the frustration which we'll talk about here shortly. I mean, he wants to explain these truths to them and these truths are life-changing truths, but he can't. He wants to, but he can't. And the reason he can't is because he knows they just won't get it.

Now it's important to know the context in which this letter is written. It's going to be germane to our understanding. Not only the context in which it was written, but to whom it's written, namely these Hebrew Christians who were under tremendous pressure.

These were arguably new believers; however, it would stand to reason given what the writer of Hebrews says here that they should be much further along by now but weren't. But they were under tremendous pressure to go back to Judaism.

And it seems that the focus was on the high priest. And it's for this reason that he emphasizes the fact that Jesus is our High Priest. And he cites Old Testament Scripture related to Melchizedek, which he expounds on in Chapter 7. When we get there, we'll talk more about that.

Now, I realize that at first read one might be tempted to quickly conclude that what does this have to do with me? Melchizedek? What? High priest? Huh?

Well, the fact of the matter is this has profound application to our lives today and here's why. Like with them then, so too is this true for us now when it comes to the pressure to turn away and give up on the Lord. And it's very subtle. It a process, happens over time.

Enter today's text where I was able to find three warning signs, three warning lights that serve as indicators that we are just as prone as they were to do this. And the first one is in verses 1-6. And this is where it starts, we start to stray.

Now the writer of Hebrews draws this comparison concerning the high priest who deals gently with those who are ignorant. I want you to hang onto that word "ignorant" for just a moment. Not only those who are ignorant, but those who go astray. As we'll see shortly, this ignorance is chiefly due to one deliberately ignoring, ignorance, ignoring. Please tell me you connected those dots.

[Laughter]

It's deliberate, deliberately ig-ner-ing, well, that too, but ignoring. And the reason that it's deliberate, ignoring is because one doesn't really value the importance. Isn't it true, wouldn't you agree that if we don't place a high value on something or someone, we're not going to give it any attention. I mean we're going to ignore it. Pull out that black electrician tape. You know, so go away, just stop bugging me. I'm going to ignore it.

July 11, 2021
Hebrews 5 – Warning Signs
JD Farag

And when this happens it is just a matter of time before the inevitable straying will ensue by virtue of one no longer prioritizing the things of God.

And this brings us to the second one in verses 7-11. I want to spend a little bit of time on this because it's very important. It's that we become bored.

[Yawning]

Uninterested, just doesn't seem interesting to me anymore. That's what the writer of Hebrews is saying here. It's very interesting for a number of reasons, chief of which is found in verse 11. This is where it kind of seems like you get the sense that the writer is just frustrated.

It is kind of like I want to tell you these things. There are so many things and I want to tell you this, I want to explain this to you. I want to show this to you. But you can't handle it. I think of the child who you would never give the keys to the car to, and I'm not talking about your 16-year-old either. They're too immature. They wouldn't be able to handle it.

And in the same sense, this is what the writer of Hebrews is saying here. Oh, it's just that I want to tell you this. I mean I want to talk to you about the High Priest and Melchizedek and how he points to and is a picture of the person of Jesus Christ. But I can't. You won't get it.

And there is a reason you won't get it. The reason is you've become [keyword] dull of hearing. You no longer even try. You're just not interested. Come on, let's be honest. It is boring to you now. You've become [keyword] bored. You've become dull of hearing.

I know this is a dorky illustration but it's the best I got. If you got a better one, see me after. But have you ever wondered why it is we don't have earlids? Told you it is dorky; we have eyelids and we can shut our eyes but we can't shut our ears. Hmm, hmm.

You know where I am going with this, right? You know how it is that you can hear, but you are not really hearing? I mean you are hearing them, but you are not really hearing them.

When I was a little boy, my mom in her very thick accent would always hit this note, this octave when she was mad at me, which was quite often by the way, and I gave her a good reason to be. But she would [raising high voice] I don't know what note that is but whatever note that is, that was it. That's all I heard. And all I heard after that was [talking in a high voice]

[Laughter]

I had shut my ears and I didn't hear her. That's what we do with the Word of God and the God of the Word.

Here's the thing: I hope you understand that what I'm speaking of comes from experience okay? I mean, how many times have I been dull of hearing the Word of God? Especially under the banner of not wanting to hear the Word of God. I don't want to hear that.

So we shut our ears and become dull of hearing and we just blow it off. We ignore it. Here again, we see the personal application to our own lives when we no longer even try. I mean we're just not interested. And when we no longer try, then we no longer desire the things of God, which is why we ignore the things of God.

July 11, 2021
Hebrews 5 – Warning Signs
JD Farag

And you can just start the watch. It's just a matter of time before you become bored with the things of God. Then when that happens, warning lights, right? They start flashing to get our attention that the things of God need our attention.

And before we go on to this third one, I want to say this because it's very important that you understand this. Never imagine that God is in Heaven demanding you listen to Me, boy! You listen to Me now!

No, it is more like this and you see it and sense it with the heart of the writer of Hebrews. It is more like I wish I could tell you this. I wish you would listen, not for Me, for you. I have your best interest at heart. The warning light; I'm trying to protect you. I am trying to redirect you. I am trying to provide and guide because I love you. Please listen to Me. Please hear Me. Don't ignore Me. Don't shut Me out, turn Me off.

Verses 12-14, the result is we remain immature, remain. Are you noticing the wording here? Very specific. We become dull of hearing; the implication being that we didn't start out that way. We became that way over a process and a period of time, We have become uninterested. We have become bored. We have become dull of hearing, and what happens next? Well, we remain immature.

If you were to ask me what I thought was one of the saddest passages in all of Scripture, Hebrews 5:12-14 would have to be at the top of the list and I will explain why. It speaks to how many a Christian never matures, never grows. And the result is they remain stunted in their growth, dare I say retarded in their spiritual growth? And this is sad and this is tragic.

Sadly and tragically there is just so much that they miss out on in their Christian lives that only the mature Christians get to enjoy. Let me expound on this just briefly. I think of the Christian who has grown in grace and matured in Christ, knows the Word of God and the God of the Word.

So when, not if, the storm hits, and the storm hits, they're mature enough and they can handle it. This is an interesting analogy, wouldn't you agree? This notion of still being a spiritual infant? You haven't even teethed yet. You can't even eat prime rib. Wow, what a tragedy! I know that's a stretch but you get the point, right? You are still on milk. You are still on the bottle.

Man, you are missing out! Mature Christians, 42 ounce, spiritually speaking of course, prime rib, medium rare [kissing sound] that's meat! That's meat.

But the immature Christian knows no such thing. Completely foreign to them. They've never tasted of that because they can't. All they can taste is just the milk because they have never matured.

It is really an indictment, and I want to be careful because I don't want anybody to leave here today feeling condemnation. It's not condemnation. It's conviction. And there is a huge difference between the two.

One of the litmus tests that has served me well in my walk with the Lord is that condemnation will drive me away from the Lord. That's what Satan wants, by the way, whereas conviction will draw me near to the Lord. That's the Holy Spirit, by the way.

It's not condemnation because if it's condemnation, it's like oh, I better keep my distance. I better not pray. I'm going to get it. And the other shoe is going to drop. God's had it with me.

July 11, 2021
Hebrews 5 – Warning Signs
JD Farag

No, that is condemnation. And Romans 8:1, the whole chapter of Romans 8, especially if you struggle with doubt about God's love for you, I really encourage you to spend some time in Romans Chapter 8.

There is no thing that can separate you from the love that God has for you, neither height nor depth, nor principality, nor power of darkness, nor any created thing, pretty much covers everything, that can ever separate you from the love that God has for you. What if I told you that there's nothing you can do to make God love you less?

How about that?

Really?

Yeah.

No, you don't know, Pastor, with all due respect, I didn't have a very good week.

Really? Who told you that?

Well, I mean just all week, I mean I blew it bad.

Oh, well, what did you do about it?

Oh, I just kind of laid low, stayed under the radar.

Oh, that's too bad. All you would have had to do is go to the One who paid in full for that sin and instantly receive forgiveness, for that sin.

All you have to do, 1 John 1:9, is confess that sin. And he is faithful and just to forgive you and cleanse you, purify you of all unrighteousness. Why would you not go to the One who could do that?

That's where the Holy Spirit comes in, in that gentle, kind, patient, still, small voice. And you know this voice. It's the Holy Spirit. And you've grieved the Holy Spirit who indwells you because your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit.

Think about that. This is kind of intense, but it's true. Everywhere you go, everything you watch, the Holy Spirit is there and sees it. Think about that next time you are in a conversation that's not edifying. The Holy Spirit is just writhing, no! What does the Holy Spirit do?

Thankfully, there is that putting God's finger on that thing ever so gently, ever so lovingly and convicting you, not condemning you, convicting you. We need to deal with that. Let's go to the Cross. Let's go to the Lord.

You know what's interesting? I was thinking about Elijah this last week. He is one of my favorite men of God, mightily used of God. This man had issues by the way. I personally believe though I know it's not necessarily something you can find in Scripture, but I think he was a pyromaniac. There was something about fire with this guy. I mean he loved fire, you know?

Well, anyway this was a man who was mightily used of God, very dramatic. I mean there's the account of 1 Kings 18, that contest with the prophets of Baal, and he is like game on, you guys go head first, that's fine. You call upon your god and we'll see if fire comes down from Heaven and consumes this sacrifice on the altar. It's really pretty dramatic.

July 11, 2021
Hebrews 5 – Warning Signs
JD Farag

Boy, I tell you somebody needs to make a movie about this account. It's just unbelievable. So all day long they're screaming and cutting themselves, by the way, which was what they did. It was a pagan custom to cut oneself, interesting.

And I love this about Elijah. He's having some fun with it. And you can't blame him. He's like maybe he can't hear you. Why don't you yell louder? So they are like Baal, screaming, nothing, nothing. This goes on all day. He's like well, maybe he's on vacation. There's one and in the original language, you can check me on this, but he actually mocks them and says maybe he's in the bathroom.

[Laughter]

No, that is a very loose paraphrase, but that is basically what he says to them. So this goes on, and finally, he says get out of my way, my turn. It is more like God's turn. And I mean, he says, more water, more water, so there is no mistake here, so it's unmistakably clear that this is God.

He calls out to God. Fire comes down, [boom sound] I mean it consumed everything. I love, I think it is the New King James that says it licks up all the water. That is pretty picturesque. And then he has 450 prophets of Baal slain.

And you would think on the heels of such a grand and glorious victory for the Lord that this man would be rejoicing but he's not. He's running. Why? Because Jezebel put a contract out on his life. And he's running for his life, fleeing Jezebel who says basically gets a message to him - I don't know if it was text or e-mail or whatever - basically saying I am going to do to you what you did to the prophets this time tomorrow.

So here is this great man of faith calling fire down from Heaven. I mean, it doesn't get any grander than that and he's running for his life, goes and hides out in a cave. What happened to you, man? And it gets even worse than that. He gets in the cave and he wants God to kill him.

So God shows up - you know the account, right? He says Elijah, what are you doing here, man? I know it's a loose paraphrase; it doesn't say "man" but you get the point. It is not so much what He said, but how He said what He said.

So first there is this mighty wind, but God's not in the wind. Then there is this earthquake; I mean we're talking massive earthquake. God's not in the earthquake. Because Elijah is a pyromaniac there is even fire, all of that, but God was not in that. And you would think that God would be in the big because this is an Elijah we're talking about, but He's not. What is He in?

He's in that still, small voice. In the original it carries with it the idea of still, refining. I mean it just gets to the heart of the matter.

It's this conviction: You're still on milk and you're missing out. You've become dull of hearing. You no longer have interest. You're no longer even trying. In that still, small, refining voice.

And I love you so much that I can't stand to see you remain this way because I've got so much for you, so much I want to show you, so much I want to give you. But you can't handle it because you're still on milk. You're still immature.

I want to just share this before we close, and I want to leave myself enough time for this because it's something that the Lord has impressed upon my heart very heavily especially as of late. And it has to do with pastors not feeding the flock of God and teaching them and feeding them the meat. It is all fluff and cotton candy.

July 11, 2021
Hebrews 5 – Warning Signs
JD Farag

The blame should not be laid only on the immature Christian, but certainly the pastor, the teacher who is called to preach the Word. The blame is certainly theirs as well if not more so. I know James says that desiring to be a teacher is noble, and it's a good thing. But be careful because teachers will be judged by a much higher standard.

Why do you think that is? Because we're dealing with the Word of God. And as the Apostle Paul would say, I have no one's blood on my hands because I did not cease to proclaim the whole counsel of God, the whole Word of God. You know, I have to confess that there have been times - I hope you don't look at me differently when I share this - but there have been times where the passage going through the Bible, the whole counsel of God from Genesis to Revelation, I've come across a portion of Scripture and I am like no!

Please Lord, can we just skip that one?

Nope!

Lord, this is tough stuff. I know. Lord, I don't want to teach it and they don't want to hear it.

And surely the temptation is to if I do teach it, to kind of just soften the edges a little bit, and to do so is to rob you. Sometimes it's a hard word, but that's a good thing.

Since we're talking about milk and meat and food, really it's the vegetables that none of us like, but they're very nourishing and very healthy. We need it.

I don't want it.

No, but you need it. You need it to grow.

You want to grow?

Yeah. Well, then this is how you are going to grow.

So there's been times where I have been tempted to revisit, maybe I will do a series, you know just kind of a - for a few weeks on the love of God. Why are you looking at me like that? I mean yay! God loves you! You know let's just take just a break maybe just for a few weeks from talking about that!

Nope.

I think of Jesus to Peter when He restored him.

He said, Peter, do you love Me?

Yes, I do, Lord, I love You.

Then feed My sheep.

A second time, Peter, do you love Me?

Oh, Lord, yes, I love You!

And by the third time and this, to me, explains why Peter wept because he figured it out, he got it. That third time was to restore him because three times Peter denied Him. That third time, do you love Me?

July 11, 2021
Hebrews 5 – Warning Signs
JD Farag

And he wept, yes, I love You.

And He says to him three times, then feed My sheep. If you love Me, you'll feed them. I want you to be the most well fed - I mean when you leave here, you're like man, I am stuffed, spiritually speaking of course.

And here's why: Because if you're full in the Spirit, you won't have an appetite for the flesh. You know the best example, and again, I hope you don't tire of this and if you have a better one, I'm all ears, I'm very open, and we'll close with this one.

But if you invite me to your place for dinner, and on the way there I drive by Taco Bell and they have a special, you know the 12 pack, the variety pack of tacos with the mild sauce? And I give in and I pull in and I buy me one of those 12 packs of tacos and I just whack it and eat it and stuff myself with it.

And then I show up at your place and there you are. You must have spent all day on that. What a wonderful meal. Oh, my goodness! We have a problem. I'm full. I don't have any more of an appetite. I can't take another bite.

Let's flip that around. You invite me over for dinner, and I show up and I eat a magnificent meal that you prepared. I mean wonderful! I leave there and I am so full. Oh, that was so good! I'm so full! I'm so satisfied.

Now, I drive by Taco Bell and it is speaking to me in tongues.

[Laughter]

Saying my name. JD.

[Laughter]

Hey. [Cackling] I am not interested. Why? I'm full. I'm full of the Spirit. I won't fulfill the lust, the appetite of the flesh. That is what that means by the way. When you walk in the Spirit, you're so full of the Spirit, busy in the Spirit, you don't have time for the flesh. You're so full of the Spirit, you don't have an appetite for the flesh. That's why.

Okay, one last thing: Back to this confession, this temptation. Before COVID hit, it hit me that when I stand before the Lord, I have to give an account for what I did behind this pulpit in this His church as is my privilege to be as the pastor of this church.

And I want to hear, like you, those words from the Savior, "Well done good and faithful servant, enter in." I was faithful to that which God called me to. And I got to tell you that when COVID hit, it hit me that had that not been the case - I mean, we had been going through the Bible some 16 years prior to last year.

And we were growing; I'm not just talking numerically. That's not really the gauge anyway. We were growing spiritually. And I speak of myself too. We were growing; we were maturing. And then when this thing hit, we were immovable. We were immovable. We could handle it.

I don't want to leave you with the impression that those who are young in the Lord, nothing wrong with that; you need to grow though. Don't stay there. Don't stay immature. I mean new believers, you are immature; yeah, it is milk.

July 11, 2021
Hebrews 5 – Warning Signs
JD Farag

But if you've been walking with the Lord for any length or period of time and you're still on milk? To use the writer of Hebrews analogy, how heartbreaking would that be? I mean it is adorable when you see an infant. So cute. But what if you came back 16 years later and they're still in the crib with a bottle? That would be tragic. That would be heartbreaking. And that's what the writer of Hebrews is saying here. In the days ahead, I do not know how anyone is going to survive, let alone thrive with what's coming without maturing and growing in Christ, getting off the milk so that you can handle the meat, the meat of God's Word.

Why don't you stand; we'll have the worship team come up. They'll close us in song and I'll close us in prayer. This chapter, and by the way, it doesn't get any easier. Chapter 6, whoa, talk about some meat. It is very meaty, but very good, very good.

Loving Heavenly Father thank You. Thank You for those warning lights in our Christian lives.

Lord, I pray that we would never be numbered amongst those of whom it can be said that they ignored it, were not interested in it, but that rather we would be numbered amongst those of whom it can be said they took heed, took heed to Thy Word.

Lord, thank You in Jesus' name, amen.