

Text: Heb 5.13-14

Last week we talked about what we ought to be. From our text, I suggested that all Christians ought to become teachers, serving others in the gospel as they go on and grow in the Lord.

I didn't mean that we must all have a formal position as a teacher, but that we ought to be able to teach and we ought to be teaching.

One thing I mentioned last week was how our text describes the Hebrew Christians. It tells them

1. What they ought to be: teachers
2. What they are: infants

There is no middle ground.

In the normal process of spiritual growth, just as in physical growth, there are many stages between infancy and maturity.

1. First we learn to walk and talk
2. We learn (eventually) to feed and cloth ourselves
3. Then we become teenagers...
4. Somewhere along the way we become functioning adults (that's the theory anyway)

Our author presents only the extremes in Heb 5. His point seems to be that if you aren't pressing on in following the Lord, growing into Christ, you are regressing back to the beginning.

Read Heb 5.11-14

Today we will look at the spiritual vulnerability of a believer in regression. I've called the message:

Discerning the Undiscerning

How would you know you are among the undiscerning?

The author of Hebrews speaks to the Hebrew Christians sternly:

- You have become dull of hearing
- You ought to be teachers
- You have need for someone to teach you the ABCs
- You have come to need milk

I want you to notice in our text that he uses “you” through vv. 11-12.

He changes in vv. 13-14, “everyone” and “the mature” – he moves from direct confrontation to general principles.

You, you, you, are in a state of regression (implication, spiritual infancy) ...

Everyone who is in spiritual infancy shares a common problem ...

Proposition: We need to take a hard look at our own spiritual development: are we progressing in Christ or slipping away from Christ?

I. The spiritual diet is insufficient (13)

A. The steady diet of spiritual milk

1. The author is not saying, “this is where you are”
2. He is saying, this is true of everyone who “partakes only of milk”

It would seem incredible that Christians of longstanding would “partake only of milk”

If you had a teenager who would only consume milk, what would you think?

I recall vaguely a slogan in bygone commercials about milk, calling it “the almost perfect food” – I did a search to see if I could find it

- I found that beans, eggs, and cabbage are also called the “almost perfect food”
- Milk has many nutrients and is almost all digestible, which has gained it the label “almost perfect”
- What does milk lack? “Milk lacks fiber and does not contain enough Vitamin C for the body’s needs.”¹

3. To “spiritualize this”...

- a. A steady diet of spiritual milk gives you spiritual nutrients

¹ Deanna Piercy, “The Almost Perfect Food - Milk ~ Home Ec Unit 1 Ch. 4,” Life with Dee, April 8, 2021, <https://lifewithdee.com/the-almost-perfect-food-milk-home-ec-unit-1-ch-4/>.

- b. But an exclusive diet of spiritual milk will not give you all you need

B. The unreadiness for the word of righteousness

1. The NAU says the “milk-only” Christian is “not accustomed” to the word of righteousness

- a. KJV: “unskillful”
- b. NET: “inexperienced”

2. The word and its word-group

- a. *apeiros*: “**pert. to lack of knowledge or capacity to do someth., unacquainted with, unaccustomed to** (‘lacking the ability to make trial ... of’)”²

- b. The idea of “lacking the ability to make a trial of” led me to search out its opposite

- 1) In it’s opposite there are several words that point to “putting something to the test, to a trial”
- 2) The opposite is the word for “temptation” — as in, putting God to the test (“tempting God”), or putting a man to the test, or temptation
- 3) But there is a generic sense that has the idea of “trying something out, experimenting”

English word: “peirastic” – “Involving, or performing, an experiment; speculative, experimental, tentative”³

3. So here we have someone who is not able to do something, not accustomed to doing something, **not trying to do anything**

4. The something the milk-only Christian can’t do — use the word of righteousness

- a. The word of righteousness

² Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, ed. Frederick W. Danker, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

³ Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. “peirastic, adj.,” July 2023.

<<https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/5742167374>>

1) Various interpretations, but context...

a) Contrast of milk and solid food in v. 12

b) Mention of solid food in v. 14

c) And mention of “concerning him we have much to say” v. 11

2) The word of righteousness is the solid food a mature Christian needs

b. Note: the text doesn’t say, “the word of righteousness is unavailable, or hidden”

1) Why doesn’t he say this?

2) Because the word of righteousness is always available for Christians

Think of all the Bibles you have in your possession

Think of the constant teaching of the Bible in our church

Think of the freedom to buy a Bible in this country if you want one

3) The problem isn’t lack of availability

C. The undeniable category: infancy

“for he is an infant”

What shall we say about ourselves? Are we infants?

The author is implying that the Hebrew Christians were infants.

In Coleridge’s poem, *The Ryme of the Ancient Mariner*, there is this stanza:

Water, water, every where,
And all the boards did shrink;
Water, water, every where,
Nor any drop to drink.

To paraphrase:

Bible, Bible, every where

And not a bit do I drink

II. The spiritual practice is inadequate

A. The mature Christian digs into the solid food of the Word of righteousness

1. The words used

a. The mature: the complete, the finished one

b. Practice: the state of full training

c. Senses trained: have completed the spiritual workout (root of “trained” gives us the English “gymnasium”)

The mature Christian is “spiritually built” – he’s done his workouts.

“six-pack spiritual abs,” “spiritually sculpted”

2. The exercise produces discernment

B. Discernment is between “good and evil”

1. Our world presents many options before us

2. Some are extremely challenging to discern

“Scripture provides enough information for us to define the world as a concept. It is impossible, though, to define the world in terms of precise descriptions of its manifestations in human behavior. I believe a friend of mine who serves in youth ministry hit on an important point when he realized that, as he said it, ‘You can’t define the world; the world defines the world.’ Our adversary keeps an ever-changing kaleidoscope of attractions before our eyes, and as soon as we think we have a pretty good handle on a matter, it morphs into something different that is once again challenging to assess.”⁴

⁴ Randy Leedy, *Love Not the World: Winning the War against Worldliness* (Greenville, S.C: Bob Jones University Press, 2012), 105–6.

3. Nonetheless, exercising your senses in the “solid food” produces discernment

Christians who don't take in solid food easily slide into all kinds of worldly practices.

III. The spiritual risk is incomprehensible

- A. The Hebrew Christians were under pressure, and tempted to fall back into Judaism

1. After all, they reasoned, we would still worship the true God
2. We would be accepted in our community
3. We might gain an audience for talking about Christ

- B. The next chapter will give fearsome warnings

Read 6.4-8

1. The warning carries with it a fear of apostasy (turning away from Christ)
2. The warning clearly is meant for these Hebrew Christians who are tempted to go back to Judaism
3. I will not define apostasy today, but the problem is that these Christians cannot seem to see the danger of their lack of discernment
4. They appear poised to make a huge mistake
5. However, there is one word of hope

Read Heb 6.9

6. The author thinks better of them
 - a. He gives them the warning
 - b. But he assures them that he thinks they are better than that

Conclusion:

In our day, how many Christians seem to have no compass when it comes to the practice of the world – they drink, pursue the movies, music, parties, lifestyle of the world... yet say they are Christians.

Maturity in Christ doesn't display itself this way: we live "sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age" (Tit 2.12)

The mature discern between good and evil: they exercise themselves in solid food.

My title:

Discerning the Undiscerning

Are you discerning or undiscerning? You have Bible all around you, are you digging into it, applying it to your heart and life?