



Daily Bible Habit

The Letter To The Hebrews

Thomas F. Fischer, M.Div., M.S.A.

Focus Points...*For Hebrews 5*

Stop And Consider...

- * How important it is that every believer constantly be in God's Word.

Look...

- * At how the Church of Hebrews had suffered because of evil within the Church.

Listen...

- * To the writer of Hebrews as he directs the Christians of his day to "take the high road" so that they could forgive, as Jesus forgave, and thus "complete" God's calling for their faith.

Prayer:

Great High Priest, I come to You today. Open my heart to understand the magnanimity of Your love. As You forgave those who were hell-bent to destroy You, give me a heart to be an instrument of Your peace to You have placed around me. In Your name I pray. Amen.

+ + +

Commentary:

The opening verses of Hebrews 5 give a sense of some of the struggles with which the early church wrestled. Hebrews 5:2 indicates that numerous believers had lapsed, fallen away or reverted to their former ways in Judaism for numerous reasons.

Anti-Christians, whether Jewish or Roman, may have caused damage and disruption in the church. Other hypocrites or misguided believers within the church may have sabotaged and betrayed their leaders and undermined the church. Though we don't know the specific circumstances of the churches, the situation may have reached critical levels. The Churches were in peril.

The first steps for the church leaders, was to try to bring peace, harmony and reconciliation so that the church could continue. Obvious questions in scenarios such as this might include: How should the church deal with those whose faith had failed? Should those church members who damaged the church be censured or punished? Should they be welcomed back into the church, forgiven and restored?

The answer in Hebrews 5 is clear: they should be forgiven. Why? Because Jesus is the Great High Priest. The reason He came was to offer “gifts and sacrifices for sins” (5:1). No sinner is exempted. In a way greater than that of any Old Testament priest—including Aaron—Jesus, the Great High Priest, offered His sacrifice for *all* sinners.

As for how to deal with the erring and those whose faith had lapsed, the writer of Hebrews pointed the churches to what Jesus would do. Jesus dealt “gently with those who are ignorant and are going astray” (5:2). The churches should do the same.

Would granting this forgiveness be easy? Certainly not, but they, like their Great High Priest, had a higher calling: to forgive. As priest “in the order of Melchizedek” (5:6), Jesus’ ministry of reconciliation and forgiveness far exceeded that of Aaron’s priesthood.

Aaron’s priesthood began with Moses. Melchizedek’s priesthood began before Abraham, hundreds of years before Aaron was even born (cf. Genesis 14). Aaron offered sacrifices for sins using animals. Jesus, the Melchizedekian priest, offered Himself as the sacrifice for sin.

The writer of Hebrews also needed to encourage the churches to forgive those who caused such massive damage to the Body of Christ. Calling their attention to Jesus’ abuse and death, Hebrews notes that Jesus didn’t condemn those who crucified Him. Instead,

“Although He was a Son, He learned obedience [that is, “godly reverence”] from what He suffered and, once made perfect, became the Source of eternal salvation.” (5:8-9).

Jesus, as the Son of God, had every right—and the authority—to destroy those who condemned Him to death. But He didn’t. Instead, He patiently bore the suffering. By patiently enduring suffering and persecution to which God called Him, Jesus learned “obedience.” Jesus endured suffering and freely forgave those who abused Him. The writer of Hebrews urged the churches to follow the example of their Great High Priest and thus “perfect” or “make complete” their obedient response to God.

In 5:11, the writer of Hebrews recognized that the encouragement in 4:14-5:10 would not be enough. After all, they were “slow to learn.” A more accurate rendering of the original might be, “you have become lazy listeners.”

The hearer’s problem was not that they didn’t have the intellectual ability to learn. They were lazy, sluggish and disinterested—even apathetic. When combined, all these create a very difficult mix which can result in the highest forms of stubborn, spiritual resistance.

At the very least, those in the churches were plagued with arrested spiritual development. They should have been teachers by now—but they still needed to be spoon-fed! (5:12-13).

In 5:14, the final verse of this chapter, the writer of Hebrews gives an insightful analysis. The reason the problems began in the church in the first place is because they had not matured in the Word. They had not become “mature.” Their faith was not, as the Greek connotes, “complete.” Instead, because they had become lazy, they lost their capacity to distinguish “good from evil.”

Perhaps these words are appropriate for the contemporary church as well!

Prayer:

Holy Spirit, You have given me the Word so that I might have faith by hearing. Move me to a greater diligence to read Your Word. Enlighten me so that I can better distinguish between those things that build Your Church and those things which destroy it. Above all, give me the heart of the Great High Priest, Jesus, so that I may forgive even those who have abused me and Your Church. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

Thomas F. Fischer

Copyright 2009 Thomas F. Fischer
www.DailyBibleHabit.com All Rights Reserved.

+ + +

Unauthorized Duplication Or Distribution Of This Material
(by printed, electronic and/or internet/email)
Is A Criminal Violation And Strictly Prohibited
For Questions, Please Contact www.DailyBibleHabit.com
Picture: “Moses Receives The Ten Commandments”

Scripture taken from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®.
© 1973, 1978, 1984 International Bible Society.
Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved.

TFF 5/09