

Hebrew 5:11-14

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[0 : 00] Good morning, church. If you will, please turn your copy of God's Word to Hebrews chapter 5. He reads, Chapter 6, verse 1.

Therefore, let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity. So this morning, we pick up in our study of Hebrews with a new section in the text, or a new subdivision in what the author of Hebrews is trying to communicate.

In this section, most commentators agree, starts with the beginning of our text, in chapter 5, verse 11, to chapter 6, verse 12, and is bookended by the same Greek word, and it's only used in these two places in the New Testament, and this is the word for dull or sluggish.

So if you look in verse 11, it says, Since you have become dull of hearing, and then flipping over to chapter 6, verse 12, it says, Now, a cursory reading of chapters 5 through 7 of Hebrews demonstrate this section as an obvious pause in the writer's argument.

But the purpose of this pause is not totally clear, and there's no real consensus among commentators on its purpose. However, I believe that this section plays an important role in our understanding of the larger goals, of what the author of Hebrews, and therefore our Lord, is seeking to accomplish in writing to the Hebrew believers and writing to us today.

[2 : 39] So for the sake of context, I'd like to remind us of the condition of the Hebrew church, and take a quick look at where we've been in Hebrews so far, and where the author is in persuading his listeners of the argument that he's trying to make.

So we've learned already that the Hebrews are heavily persecuted people. We're told in other places in the text that their property has been plundered, that they've been imprisoned, and that they should soon expect to shed blood for their faith.

Based off of the author's writing, they're a pretty beat-up congregation. We've also noted how they were being tempted to conform to the acceptable version of religion to the people around them, and for the Hebrews, this was Judaism.

These Jews would have been cast out of their families and communities, and would have been at an extreme economic disadvantage for claiming Christ as their Lord. So they were tempted to practice their religion in private, or simply believe that they were worshipping the same God, so what was the hurt in going back to the old religion?

So let's turn back to Hebrews 1 and remind ourselves of the way that this author addresses their persecution and temptation by looking at the author's thesis in chapter 1, verses 1 through 4.

[3 : 57] And again, I just briefly want to go through where we've been in Hebrews so far, so that we can understand what this segment of Scripture is doing in the author's argument.

So again, Hebrews chapter 1, this is kind of the thesis for the rest of the book. Chapter 1, verses 1 through 4, he writes, I want to pause.

I think a lot of times, as we're taking notes in sermons, we kind of skip through the introduction with our notes, and wait for the body of the sermon where I give you the three points, which I'm going to do.

But I would encourage you not to skip this particular introduction, not because others aren't good or important, but there's a lot of things to point out in the introduction that will have relevance to the points that we're making later.

So if you haven't picked up taking notes, and you're ready to, I would encourage you to do so.

Okay, so from the beginning, the author of Hebrews asserts that Christ is supreme.

[5 : 28] He's the supreme inheritor and heir, the creator and sustainer of all things, the radiator and representer of God, the purifier of his people, and ruler over all.

He says this at the beginning, and then spends the next 10 chapters and 18 verses proving it by demonstrating how Christ is higher than angels, greater than Moses, a sympathetic and eternal high priest, greater than Aaron, and begins discussing how he's like the mysterious Melchizedek, and then pause.

He inserts the section. After this section, he returns to spend a whole chapter talking about Christ's high priestly office, and how it's after the order of Melchizedek.

And then he proves the covenant ushered in by Christ is better, that the earthly dwelling place in the Old Testament temple was a shadow of the heavenly one that Christ dwells in. And then gloriously and climactically, the author demonstrates Jesus as the perfect and eternal sacrifice for his people. So let's turn to the end of this author proving his thesis, chapter 10, verse 11. And it reads, Every high priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices which can never take away sins.

[6 : 58] But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet.

For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified. And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us, For after saying, this is the covenant that I will make with them, and after those days declares the Lord, I will put my laws on their hearts and write them on their minds. Then he adds, I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more. Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin. And then drop the mic.

The thesis has been proven. Right? Everything else, if you look forward in Hebrews from this point, is building on the implications from the thesis that he has proven in chapter 10, verse 18.

Or through chapter 10, verse 18. But that begs the question, why pause for a whole chapter in the middle of this beautiful exposition? Especially when you're so near to the end.

[8 : 03] You're ramping up, and then you pause, and you insert this section. So to understand this question, we need to see one more point about this particular section of Scripture in our text this morning that stands out.

So our text, verses 11 through 14, offer the only rebuke in the book of Hebrews. Now as I was discussing this with Nathan yesterday, I was like, I think this is the only rebuke.

And he was like, I'm not sure. Let's double check it. So I double checked it. And this is the only rebuke. There are plenty of other warnings. There are heavy warnings, which we'll look at in a second. Serious ones that we need to take seriously.

But this is the only charge that he brings against the church. And like I said, there are plenty of serious and heavy warnings issued along the way. And I want to look at some of these warnings, because he gives some heavy warnings, and yet only one rebuke.

So that says something about the rebuke. So you don't have to follow along. You're welcome to if you want to. But like in chapter 2, verse 1, he says, we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it.

[9 : 10] Chapter 4, verse 1, let us fear lest any should fail to reach God's rest because of disobedience or unbelief. Or 10, 26, if we go on sinning deliberately, after receiving the knowledge of truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins.

Followed by, it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Or lastly, in chapter 12, verse 25, see that you do not refuse Him, God, who is speaking, ending with, for our God is a consuming fire.

Now, these are serious warnings. This is heavy. He goes on, I mean, he's warning them not to drift away, not to fall away from the faith, not to fall into the hands of a living God.

And I point these things out to say that an author who feels the need over and over to warn these Hebrews to fear and to take heed, to be careful and diligent, issues but one rebuke in the text.

So this tells us two things. Firstly, we really need to understand this text. And secondly, he probably placed this passage where he did, in the middle of a greater exposition, to grab his reader's attention.

[10 : 22] So before we move into the next body of text, I need to zoom in a bit and point out one last clue in our text, which indicates the role of this section from 5.11 to 6.12.

So, if you'll flip back to chapter 5, we'll sit there for a minute. So, verse 11 in our text, the beginning of it reads, Now, many commentators read this verse and believe the this and about this brings the focus back to what he has previously been discussing, Christ as the eternal salvation and throws in

there after the order or the priesthood order of Melchizedek.

And so it seems when you read the English translation, the NASB actually translates this about him, there is much to say. And I want to point out something that Nathan's pointed out a couple of times, that in Hebrews, the author is writing in the highest form of the Greek language, far higher than the rest of the New Testament.

And so it gives some translation issues because normally in translation, you're able to see, oh yeah, this word is used in this way, in these different contexts. But there's a lot of words and idioms and phrases in the Greek that are only used once or maybe twice in the whole New Testament.

And so sometimes it becomes difficult to point out or to pin down exactly what the author is trying to say. So this is a good example of how we can miss an important point if we're not careful.

[12:01] And I'm by no means a Greek scholar, but I've read a couple. And so I want to be careful with this particular phrase. So this phrase in the beginning of verse 11 is a Greek idiom commonly used by orators to serve a particular purpose.

And it's probably better translated about these things we have much to say. Because that's how other Greek writers would use this phrase. They would say, about these things we have much to say.

So William Lane in his commentary, which I'll be referencing a couple of times, demonstrates that speakers would use this particular phrase to get their listeners to perk up because they were about to make their main driving point.

It's a phrase they would be speaking about something and right before they're about to get to the driving point in their argument, they would use this phrase. About these things we have much to say. So then our author was not on a roll and then randomly decides to drop in a rebuke that points backwards, lamenting the fact that further teaching cannot be given.

Rather, as he picks up steam and is about to make his most important point, he pauses. He perks up his audience's ears to buckle up and issues then the only rebuke in this treatise that they're being lazy in their hearing.

[13:20] He then goes on to reveal, or to, sorry, revel in the glory of Christ as the perfect high priest and perfect, all-sufficient sacrifice for his people. Okay, so we understand the purpose of this greater section, to look forward to what's about to happen.

Now we need to understand this rebuke. So, my three points. In our text this morning, we'll see point number A, the call to hear, the call to hear well.

Point B, the call to teach in verse 12, the first part of verse 12. And thirdly, point C, the call to grow 12B, through the end of our text in verse 14.

And I'll repeat those as we go. So, first of all, point A, the call to hear or the call to hear well. So, if you think about this text for like three seconds, then you know that the writer is not claiming that the Hebrews get their ears checked.

But something is wrong with the way that they are hearing or the way that they are perceiving. So, to understand what the author is trying to rebuke the Hebrews for and therefore warn us against, we must dive a bit deeper into the concept of hearing as it's used throughout the scriptures.

[14:35] And as we do so, we'll see that this accusation of being dull or sluggish, lazy in hearing is not merely an encouragement to pay attention or to take notes during a sermon. Not a bad idea. Nor is it a call to listen for special revelation in your prayer closet, but is a sharp rebuke against idolatry and a call to turn away from disobedience.

So, hearing or the inability to hear is associated with a few key concepts both in the Old and New Testaments. So, first of all, a failure to hear is associated with idolatry.

So, failure to hear is associated with idolatry. If you will, please turn with me to Psalm 115. Psalm 115. Now read verses 1-9.

He says, Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to your name give glory. For the sake of your steadfast love and your faithfulness. Why should the nation say, where is their God?

Our God is in the heavens. He does all that He pleases. Their idols are silver and gold, the work of human hands. They have mouths, but do not speak. Eyes, but do not see.

[16:02] They have ears, but do not hear. Noses, but do not smell. Hands, but do not feel. Feet, but do not walk. And they do not make a sound in their throat. Those who make them become like them.

And so do all who trust in them. O Israel, trust in the Lord. He is their help and their shield. So, based off this passage, we see that every object created has a purpose. And its worth to its creator is derived from its ability to fulfill the purpose for which it was created. So the mouth is created to speak, yet it's silence on the grave and idle, and it is therefore worthless. And so are we. If the measure of our worth as a creature is in fulfilling the purpose for which we are created, so are we, as we trust in things to satisfy, as we trust in idols to do what only God can do. When we're created for the specific purpose, to worship God and to be satisfied in Him, and then to bring Him glory by teaching others to do the same. Calvin famously once proclaimed that the human heart is a perpetual factory of idols.

[17:17] And if this is the case, we must seriously guard against idols taking the affection, the treasuring, the time, the energy, and the mental capacity that we devote to things, to people, to relationship, to status, that only belong to our Lord as the one who can satisfy.

So what idols are you trusting in today that you need to cast aside so that you may hear as you ought to hear? Secondly, hearing is associated with understanding the things of God.

So in the New Testament, our Lord often ended His parables and other sections of teaching with the phrase, those who have ears to hear, let them hear. He explains this concept to His disciples more clearly in Matthew chapter 13 when they're asking why He speaks cryptically to the people in parables.

So if you will, please turn again with me one of the last places to Matthew chapter 13. starting in verse 10.

And again, oh yeah, it says in the text. Never mind. So in verse 10, it reads, Then the disciples came and said to Him, Why do you speak to them in parables? And He answered them, To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven.

[18:49] But to them it has not been given. For to the one who has more will be given and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away.

This is why I speak to them in parables. Because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. Indeed, in their case, the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says, and this is from Isaiah 6, You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive.

For this people's heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes have been closed, lest they should see with their eyes, hear with their hearts, hear with their ears, understand with their heart, and turn, and I would heal them.

But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear. So Christ makes an important point that two people can hear the same teaching or the same information about the kingdom of God.

One understands, and the other doesn't understand, because one has or has been given the ears to hear, and the other doesn't. So this can lead us to question God's authority, or it can well up in us in expressible gratitude.

[20:06] What a joy that we have, that we've been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God. This is a privilege not to be squandered. If you can perceive the secrets of the kingdom, by all means, pursue them.

Those who have ears to hear, let them hear, and let them hear abundantly. And lastly, hearing is equated, not merely associated, but equated with obedience.

It's the third sub-point, hearing equated with obedience. So this concept is especially clear in the Old Testament because of the word used for hear in ancient Hebrew.

And there's actually an awesome Bible project video on this word, the Shema. There's a whole series on this text in Deuteronomy, chapter 6, verses 4 through 5, called the Shema, which we'll talk about a little bit.

But it's this word, Shema, which is translated here. So in the Greek, and obviously in the English, there are two different words for hear, something that you do involuntarily with your ears, and obey, something that you do with your will, affection, and action.

[21:16] However, fascinatingly, in Hebrew, they're the same word, Shema. So listen to a few examples. Deuteronomy 5.1, this is the Ten Commandments, says, And Moses summoned all Israel and said to them, Hear, Shema, O Israel, the statutes and the rules that I speak in your hearing today, and you shall learn them and be careful to do, Shema, them.

Deuteronomy 6.4-5, which is again, the Shema. Hear, Shema, O Israel, the Lord your God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might.

And then in Exodus 19.5, Now therefore, if you will indeed obey, Shema, my voice, and keep, Shema, my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for the earth is mine.

So then to be dull in hearing is to be sluggish or lazy in obeying the knowledge that we have received. So the degree to which you hear is then the degree to which you respect the authority of the one speaking.

So let's unpack that a little bit. Because when you respect the speaker's authority, you don't merely take in the information, but you do so in such a way that it produces the action intended in the hearer from the one who's communicating it.

[22 : 41] So I'll say that again. When you respect the speaker's authority, you don't merely take in information, but do so in such a way that it produces the action intended in the hearer from the one communicating it.

So there's a responsibility that comes with the way that we are to hear. There's a responsibility with how we hear the word of God, and the degree to which we are truly hearing is the degree to which we respect God's authority, which is also the degree to which we obey the word that has been spoken.

So I have maybe a silly example that I think will help illustrate this point. And if my mom were here today, she would attest to the truth of this story.

So I had good parents, which means that I had chores growing up. And when I was seven, eight, nine-ish years old, one of my chores, least favorite chores, was cleaning the bathroom.

And as an eight-year-old boy, like most eight-year-old boys, I wasn't too concerned with the details of what it meant to clean the bathroom. So when mom says, clean the bathroom, what I take that to mean is, make the bathroom look clean, which are two different things.

[23 : 55] And if you've ever cleaned a bathroom, you know the difference. Make the bathroom look clean means when you walk into it, do you think, oh yeah, this is a pretty clean bathroom. But clean the bathroom is like getting the mildew out from under the ring in the sink, or scrubbing the shower floor so that it's as white as the walls.

And so there's a difference in the way that I'm hearing as an eight-year-old boy. And so you get that picture in your mind, but then imagine that as an eight-year-old boy, I'm playing Donkey Kong Country on my Super Nintendo, and mom walks in, and she says, okay, it's time to clean the bathroom.

And I say, yeah, yeah, okay, I'll clean the bathroom. And then she's explaining what exactly she wants me to do. And instead of asking the question, okay, is this the deep cleaning, or is this like make the bathroom look clean because guests are coming over, which is instead of asking that, I just keep playing my video games.

And she says, okay, clean the bathroom. And I'm like, yeah, yeah, okay, I'll get to it. Just give me a second. And then she's like, no, I want you to listen to what I'm saying. And I'm still playing the game. Haven't paused it or anything. I don't know if you can pause Donkey Kong Country, but I haven't paused it.

And she's still saying, no, I want you to like really deep clean it, get under, you know, the ring in the sink and get behind the toilet to whatever mess is back there and all these other things.

[25 : 18] And if I'm still paying attention to the video game that's in front of me, then while I may be receiving the information in one way, I'm not heeding it. And I'm certainly not going to transfer that into the action intended of the one who's speaking because my attention is elsewhere.

What she really wants me to do when she says, clean the bathroom, is pause, put it down, look her in the eyes and ask, what do you mean? And to say, do you want me to do a deep cleaning?

Do you want me to get the mildew or is this just a shallow cleaning? Right? And so she wants my attention as she's telling me something. And even though I may feel like as an eight-year-old boy that I know what she means, that assumption can be dangerous and it can lead to disobedience.

Right? And so it is often as we approach the Word of God, our attention is elsewhere. We're not really engaged. We think we know what we ought to be doing, but we're making a dangerous assumption when we do so because we may not be hearing as He has intended us to hear.

So we interpret what God is saying to our advantage or in accordance to what we already want to hear, seeking to do the minimum required effort to count for obedience.

[26 : 42] So often in the Christian life, the problem is not that we don't have the right information, but it's that we've forgotten the God who has spoken the information to us. We hear, but we don't heed and obey.

So to not be dull of hearing then is to consume the Word in such a way that it produces obedience. So again, the responsibility in your hearing of the Word of God, whether that's you listening here today or in your personal time, is to see how it's supposed to be working out of you, how it's supposed to be applied to your life, how you are to obey.

And this isn't something that can be done quickly or with half of a brain, but you have to be engaged. So according to our three observations about hearing in the Bible, to not be dull of hearing, we must be free from idols, able to understand or perceive the things of God, and must take it in in such a way that it produces the action that it commands, that He commands.

Therefore, the author's rebuke back in Hebrews of being lazy or sluggish or dull of hearing on the part of the Jewish believers carries a great deal of weight, directly related to the way that they are respecting the authority and the supremacy of God, which is why it makes sense that the author's thesis, if this is a dull of hearing people, is Christ the supreme over all.

As they see Christ the supreme, they begin to pay attention, they begin to hear as they ought to hear. So we should fear this spiritual condition.

[28 : 14] With all the warnings that were given, this is the rebuke. We should fear having this spiritual condition for ourselves and yet many in our country, our county, and maybe in our midst have likely grown accustomed to it.

We read and we hear the commands of Scripture and we feel conviction in the moment, yet we lose focus a few hours later when the next wave of distraction hits. We know we're commanded to read and to pray regularly, to grow deep in relationship with believers, to get accountability, that we tell ourselves we don't know where to start, that we don't have the time to commit, that we're too busy and we don't know where to start.

We're often prideful about our appearance, too prideful to break down and ask for help. Or maybe you felt conviction for years to talk to a co-worker or a neighbor about the Lord that haven't made the sacrifice of an evening with your family to be hospitable to your neighbors as the Lord is hospitable to you.

Instead of trusting that God has commanded that which is best for our flourishing, spiritually or otherwise, we buy into the lie that whatever feels best to us should guide the decisions that we make.

We judge the worthiness of the command of God in our lives based off of the temporary satisfaction and joy that it brings rather than trusting that He has spoken, that we are His creatures and that He designed us specifically for His purpose.

[29 : 41] When we don't get emotional satisfaction from obeying these commands, we must see that the problem is with our emotions. Sometimes we need to obey because He has said so and allow our emotions to catch up as we trust our great Lord.

As we've seen, this rebuke of sluggish hearing is not merely a call to perk up and listen, but is meant to be a serious wake-up call, both for them and for us. So the Hebrews, too, had the necessary information, but they weren't applying what they had learned, and therefore they could not mature or bring others into maturity in their walk with the Lord.

And this brings us to our second point, answering how the Hebrews failed to hear as they ought the call to teach. So, point B, the call to teach. This is in verse 12.

So if you're not back in Hebrews, please flip there again. So verse 12.

For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, excuse me, not solid food.

[30 : 54] So, very simply, note the word for at the beginning of verse 12. It would seem to this author the first indicator that he points out in the Hebrew sluggish hearing is not an understanding but rather an action.

They were dull of hearing because they weren't yet teaching others. Get that logic flow. It's not that they didn't understand that they were supposed to be teachers given the sharpness of this rebuke, but it is that they weren't applying what they knew they ought to be doing.

So, hear this clearly this morning. Believers are meant to be teachers. All of us. There's not something reserved for ordained clergy, for missionaries, or for people on stage. And while teaching may seem like a daunting task, it can take many forms, most of which have nothing to do with standing behind a lectern and speaking publicly, and all of which are essential to the life of the church.

Many find themselves wondering what their place in the church is. Some of you here likely feel that way. While each of us have different gifts and will certainly exercise them in different ways, we are all meant to teach in some way.

[31 : 59] So, I want to look at a couple of ways in Scripture that we're called to teach one another and those outside of the congregation really quickly. I don't think I want you guys to turn anywhere maybe to Matthew 28 if you want to move in that direction.

So, first way that each believer is called to teach is through rebuking, admonishing, and or counseling. So, Paul writes in Colossians 3 to the church at Colossae, let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.

How? Teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom. So, teaching and admonishing, which is like a soft rebuke or correction in instruction.

Secondly, in encouraging each other. First Thessalonians 5, 14, we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the faint-hearted, help the weak, and be patient with them all.

Again, written to the church. Thirdly, in discipling, and that takes so many different forms, but one example, a good one, in 2 Timothy 2, chapter 2, Paul shows four generations of discipleship.

[33 : 10] As he writes to Timothy, he says, what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. So, Paul is teaching Timothy.

Timothy is entrusting this information to faithful men who will then be able to teach others. It's meant to be this family tree of believers teaching, discipling one another.

And then, if you'll turn with me to Matthew 28, verse 18. This is the Great Commission. And I understand we've probably heard all these things before.

If you've been around here, you have. And you've probably heard these things before in your own churches, but I fear that oftentimes they're taught as suggestions, things that are like beneficial if you want to be a deep Christian.

But note that the rebuke that's here is not given to the deep Christians, but it's given to the believers. They're being sharply rebuked for not hearing as they ought to hear.

[34 : 27] So, I encourage you now, hear this as you ought to hear it. We're all meant to be teachers. So, the Great Commission, Matthew 28, starting in verse 18. Jesus came to them and said to them, His disciples, All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me.

Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I've commanded you. And behold, I am with you always to the ends of the age.

So, first thing to point out, that it says make disciples of all nations. It's not making converts of all nations. Converts are important. That's the first step in discipleship, but it doesn't stop there if we're going to mature to the end.

Secondly, Jesus Himself took three years of living with His disciples to teach them. Living with them. He's teaching them. He's discipling them. How much more does it take relationship with others as imperfect teachers, us, to do the same?

Also, note that the task at hand here is not simply to teach all that Jesus commanded, while that is a daunting task in and of itself, but He says teach them to observe or to obey all that I've commanded.

[35 : 47] And this takes a lot. It takes devotion, relationship, love, counsel, and yes, it takes teaching. Now, of course, the power to do this is not in ourselves, right?

We know that the Spirit has to work in the lives of others to do it, but God works through His people to accomplish His purposes. He doesn't need us to do this, but He has chosen to invite us into the work that He's doing in this world, so He calls us to teach.

Fourthly, we teach through personal evangelism. You can listen to this one. 2 Corinthians 2, 15-17 says, We're the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing.

To one, a fragrance from death to death, to the other, a fragrance from life to life. Who is sufficient for these things? For we are not like so many peddlers of God's Word, but as men of sincerity as commissioned by God in the sight of God, we speak in Christ.

So it flows out of us. We speak in Christ, commissioned by God in the sight of God to believers and to unbelievers. And lastly, a way, these aren't necessarily all the ways, but a way that we teach is through parenting.

[37 : 06] So I quoted earlier from the Shema in Deuteronomy 6, 4-5, and I'd like to read that again and go on through verse 9 to demonstrate this point. You're welcome to turn there.

You don't have to. Pretty straightforward. It says, Deuteronomy 6, starting in verse 4, Hear, O Israel, the Lord, our God, the Lord is one.

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might. And these words that I command to you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children and talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise.

You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. Each of the above, rebuking, admonishing, encouraging, counseling, preaching, evangelizing, and discipling are first and foremost to be done with our kids, those in our immediate context.

And as God teaches here through Moses, teaching isn't merely an event. It's not that you're moving from one teaching event to the next teaching event, but it's something that happens on the way as you're going.

[38 : 17] And to get to this point, you've got to believe it first. We read earlier in 2 Corinthians 2 that we are not peddlers, but we are those who are men of sincerity, which means we've got to believe it for ourselves.

We've got to hear it right first, and then we're able to teach it to others. So God's people were always meant to be teaching people in this way. Israel, a light to the nations around them, and now the church, a light to one another and to the world around us.

The salvation that you have been given was not merely for you to know and to enjoy God, but for you to become the means by which God works in the lives of others. As we often say, God doesn't need us to accomplish this work, but has chosen to use this as the way for others to learn about who He is and what He has done in creating the world and saving the people for His own possession that He might dwell with them forever.

So how are you teaching the people around you? Do you meet with someone in the church on a regular basis, both to teach and to be taught by sharing your struggles and sharing how God is working with your life?

Are you seeking to build relationships with unbelievers so you can share the good news of the gospel? Are you intentional in your parenting and in family worship and with conversations with family?

[39 : 34] Do you seek close enough friendships with other believers so you can speak truth into their lives that brings encouragement or counsel or correction when needed? While some of these things are certainly easier in some stages of life than others, I fear that we often excuse ourselves entirely from our role as teachers and neglect the work God has given us in the church and in the world around us.

We may fall short in this area because we haven't prioritized it in our lives. We may fear losing social equity in the eyes of others. We may be doubting the sufficiency of God to work in and through you in the lives of others or we may simply be too selfish with our time.

Like the Hebrew church, we may not be teaching because we need to grow up in the cheersome in our relationship with the Lord. So join me as we look at our last main point together in the text.

Point C, the call to grow. Second part of verse 12, really looking at 6.1. So turn back to Hebrews if you're not there.

I'll go ahead and read verse 11 to get the full picture. It says, About this we have much to say and it is hard to explain since you have become dull of hearing. For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God.

[41 : 00] You need milk, not solid food. For everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness since he is a child. But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.

Therefore, let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity. So, looking at the call to grow, I have three more sub-points for you if you're taking notes.

First, and I'll go through these again as we're going. The Hebrew is growth, secondly, the assumption of growth, generally, and thirdly, the means of growth. So, there are a few reasonable ways to interpret this section of our text.

And generally, commentators disagree on what the nature of the Hebrews problem is and their lack of maturity. Some believe that the author is addressing unbelievers who have made their way into the church, here from verse 11 through chapter 6-8, and then changes audiences, transitioning back to speaking to true believers.

Secondly, and more commonly, some read this text like the author as saying that the Hebrews had believed the gospel but had basically stagnated at that point. According to this reading, the appropriate response would then be to go over the basic truths of the gospel and to feed them spiritual milk.

[42 : 20] But this isn't really what the author does. While these readings are possible, based off of the surrounding verses and the general context of the Hebrew church, some of which we've touched on, I believe the most reasonable approach to understanding the text goes something like this.

Though you should be teachers and are ready for solid food, you have begun to live as infants in need of milk. So instead of seeing Hebrews as the Hebrews as having never matured, I believe the text and surrounding context supports the position that they have deviated from the initial course that they were on and have four basic reasons for why that's the case really quickly.

So firstly, as we said, the author responds with solid food and not milk. Commentator William Lane mentioned earlier points, puts it this way. He says, it is commonly assumed on the basis of this passage that the community addressed had failed to mature in faith and understanding and consequently required rudimentary instruction rather than the advanced exposition of Christ's priesthood and sacrifice presented in the rest of the sermon.

The problem with this reconstruction of the situation is that it is not supported by the detail of the text. The author presupposes advanced Christian instruction and shows no inclination to review with his hearers the foundational elements of the Christian faith.

So, in other words, if they really needed milk, if he's literally saying, this is kind of where you guys are at, then why doesn't he give it to them? He responds with solid food.

[43 : 53] He's been giving them solid food so far, and then continues to give them solid food. These are not basics. Again, the highest form of Greek, he's not giving them milk. He doesn't take the time to walk them through the basics of the gospel.

So, that's reason one. If this is true, the problem was not with their diet, per se, but with the digestion of the diet. They had the information they needed, but they weren't putting it into practice. They had become dull of hearing, but they weren't always. Secondly, they had already demonstrated maturity through the endurance of suffering. So, he speaks in the past tense in Hebrews 10, 32-33, he says, recall the former days when after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, and sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated.

So, they're pretty mature if they're able not only to suffer for their faith, but like tie themselves to other people who are suffering. Thirdly, they had demonstrated maturity through hope in a better abiding possession, being the hope that they had in Christ.

So, continuing on Hebrews 10, verse 34, he says, for you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one.

[45 : 17] Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has great reward, for you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what is promised. So, again, joyfully accepting the plundering of their property because they were looking to a better possession.

Okay, reason number four, they had already demonstrated maturity through love and through service. So, the next bookend on this section, again, is Hebrews chapter 12.

So, I'll read, and you can turn there if you're not already there. It's just a page for you. Hebrews 6, 10 through 12. It says, God is not unjust so as to overlook your work and the love that you have shown for his name in serving the saints as you still do.

And we desire each of you to show the same earnestness to have the full assurance of hope until the end so that you may not be sluggish but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

So as we've established in our study in the Hebrews, these believers are under constant temptation to practice the culturally acceptable version of religion instead of an uncompromising, obedient life devoted to God and His work.

[46 : 33] The author is constantly reminding them of the hope that they were once holding on to, but now seems to be slipping away. He's saying to them in the midst of this constant temptation, Stay strong. You have already endured so much. Keep enduring.

Don't give in now. Don't forgive the hope to which you once clung so closely. Finish the race. Keep the faith. Stay the course. The Hebrews needed this encouragement, and some of us need to hear it this morning.

They needed to be reminded of the way that they had once held on to hope so closely and the fruit of righteousness that had produced in their lives to the point where they were joyfully accepting the plundering of their property.

As we often do, they needed to remember the hope that they had in Christ to stand before God as sons looking forward to the abiding city He has made for His people. Okay, next.

In the call to grow, sub-point two, the assumption of growth. So this is growth generally. The assumption of growth. Note the author's tone in the way that he speaks of maturing in the faith.

[47 : 40] It's the same that he is saying about teaching. He's expecting them to grow. It's not an option. It's an expectation. And as we're teaching, sanctification, becoming more and more like Christ as we are in longer relationship with Him, is not reserved for a select few serious Christians, those who want to get plugged in, but it is a normative part of the Christian life and an indicator of the genuine nature of one's faith.

2 Corinthians 3, verse 18 says, And we, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image, from one degree of glory to another.

For this comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. So believers, every believer is being transformed to be more like Christ. The negative of this statement. If you aren't being transformed, then it's possible you may not be a believer.

Now, this doesn't mean that if you've had a bad week or a bad month, that you are all of a sudden no longer a believer. The Christian life is a life of endurance through these ups and downs, trusting that even though you don't feel, you may not feel like you're growing in the moment, that you continue to seek and obey that God, or seek and obey, trust that God is growing you, and that He will finish the work that He started in you.

Remember, the Hebrews themselves had stopped growing. They had stopped applying the truth that they had once held on to. And while the warnings and the rebukes were certainly warranted, the author held out continued hope for this church.

[49 : 13] If you read through Hebrews, the warnings and even this rebuke are kind in so many ways. There's a warning, and then He assures them, but I've seen these things in you already.

So there's like the warning, and the point backward to the way that the Spirit was once working in them. And so there's this kindness in the way that He gives these rebukes.

There's hope that's there, but the point still stands, that the trajectory of our life will have its downs, but should generally be trending towards Christlikeness.

So, in your life, when you look back on the past six months, or the past year, or two, or five, or a couple decades, do you see yourself being transformed into the image of Christ, or do you basically see yourself stagnant, the same?

And again, sometimes it feels this way. Sometimes it feels like we haven't grown in a while, but as we seek and trust in the Lord, He transforms us to the image of His Son.

[50 : 19] So thirdly, the means of growth, answering the question, how then do we grow? Very simply, the consumption, digestion, and use of the right food.

So we saw from our study today, how the content of what we take in matters, but so does the way that we treat this content. As believers, we grow when we receive the truth of God's Word, and apply it to our lives, through believing He who said it, and therefore obeying that which we have received.

So first, we remind ourselves often of the milk. We remind ourselves, regularly consume the basic reality of the gospel, this milk.

We daily speak to ourselves and to one another, the fact that God created this world by speaking it into existence, that He's holy, totally separate from sin, that He designed humanity with a purpose to obey Him, and to submit to Him as their Creator, and each one of us rebelled, and decided that we knew better than Him, that our version of right and wrong, was more suitable for our lives, than His version.

This sin separated us from God eternally, making us enemies of God, worthy of eternal spiritual death, and physical death. And this was our deserved status, what we bought with our sin.

[51 : 44] Then out of nothing that we could ever do, out of no good thing that He saw on us, or merit of our own, God sent His Son Christ to be the substitute in our place, to live a perfectly sinless life, to then bear the wrath of God, the punishment that we deserved.

Christ died, rose three days later in accordance with the Scriptures, and is now exalted on high with the Father, until the day when He returns for His bride. Us, His people, those who have placed their faith in these truths, and have turned away from their sin, seeking instead to obey God's commands, and now await His return.

So this is our spiritual milk. This is the basics. And if there are any of you in this room, who haven't turned from their sin, and begun to pursue right relationship with God, through a life of obedience, don't harden your hearts this morning, place your faith in Christ today.

Secondly, we grow by seeking after solid food. The solid food is the deep truths of God. God gave us brains, so that we could understand and process a great deal.

And the more we're able to understand the nature and the character of God, the more we're able to know, appreciate, and worship Him, which is why He created us. In addressing the question, which is the greatest commandment, Jesus answered in Matthew 22, something that's very familiar to us now.

[53 : 10] He said, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. John Piper comments on this text in his book called Think.

He says, I take this command to mean that we direct our thinking in a certain way. Namely, our thinking should be wholly engaged to do all that it can to awaken and express the heartfelt fullness of treasuring God above all things.

I'll read that again. Our thinking should be wholly engaged to do all that it can to awaken and express the heartfelt fullness of treasuring God above all things.

So then, to fail to study His Word and seek after a deeper and deeper knowledge of Him is to fall short of the design that He has for your life, and it's to neglect the growth and maturity that is ours in Christ.

Again, thinking back to Psalm 115, we don't want to become like our idols, not fulfilling the purpose for which we were created. We were designed to know Him deeply and intimately and to grow in this knowledge which satisfies our souls.

[54 : 18] And when we fail to do so, we inevitably fill the void with the first available idol and settle for that which our hearts were not meant to love and to treasure. So speak zealously after the knowledge of God as a treasure to be found.

Hear and heed His voice as you ought and do the work He has designed you to do. So we've seen our text this morning. A sharp, three-pronged rebuke of the Hebrew believers warning us not to be dull in our hearing, to be diligent in teaching, and to seek maturity in our relationship with the Lord. May we be a church zealous for deeper knowledge of the Lord. May we have ears to hear and eyes to see the truth of God. May we continually pick up the glorious task of teaching as the means by which God saves and perfects a people for His possession.

Let's pray. Let's pray.