

The Church's Biggest Problem: Stunted Christians

(Hebrews 5:11 – 6:1)

Sunday, February 4, 2018

The writer of Hebrews pauses in the midst of a discussion of the priesthood of Christ to direct a warning to those who claim Christ as Savior and yet resemble one that does not care. He addresses those whose actions fail to indicate a dedication necessary for victory in the name of Christ. The church's greatest enemy has never been the forces of evil but rather the weakness and immaturity of its own membership.

Every church problem can be traced to immaturity. God calls us out of our immaturity and the crisis comes at the point of our obedience. We serve a Christ who became "obedient unto death." A Christian halting along the journey of faith is as pathetic as a house standing alone, half built.

I. Stunted Christians shun Christlikeness (Hebrews 5:11)

One might assume that any Christian would enjoy a discussion of the priesthood of Christ, but such is not the case. Rather, the writer of Hebrews finds it difficult to continue the discussion because a great number of Christians had no ear for it. In other words, they didn't want to hear about it.

He indicates that although he has many things to say, they are "hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing" (vs 11). How tragic that Christians could be described as being "dull of hearing." The word translated "dull" literally means, "no push." Christians who shun Christlikeness have a sluggish mind when Christian doctrine is being discussed.

Jesus often reminded his disciples that ears were to be used to hear: "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." The language of Hebrews 5:11 indicates that the people involved are personally responsible for this sluggish condition. It has been brought on by neglect. They are like people who take a book to church with them to read while everyone else sings and worships. The imprint of Christ on such people is often hard to find. There are Christians who purposely leave God out because of lack of commitment. They want to be counted among the Christians, but they have a fear of being too much like Christ.

Sunday, February 11, 2018

II. Stunted Christians refuse responsibility (Heb. 5:12)

Any course of action that constantly refuses responsibility will produce a stunted Christian. The purpose behind being taught is that one may himself someday become a teacher. “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” (v12)! The word translated “time” is the same word from which we get “chronology.” The writer of Hebrews is saying, because of the length of time involved, the people to whom he is addressing himself should be a teacher. This does not mean that every Christian should at some time teach a Sunday School class. What it means is that all Christians should become grounded in the faith to the extent that by their words and actions, they are indeed teachers.

Every young Christian goes through a period of time when he needs to be “spoon fed.” However, it was never intended that he be spoon fed all of his life. Here are people who because of the length of time they have been Christians, should be more mature in their faith, but they still have an improper understanding of “the elementary truths of God’s word.” “Elementary” truths of God’s word refer to the ABC’s of the Christian faith. So at some point in your life you should reach the high school or even the college stage of God’s Word.

When does a person become old enough to take a place of responsibility in the body of Christ? Some people have been Christians for twenty, thirty and forty years and still do not feel “ready” to assume responsibility. Can you imagine a man sixty years of age who continues to tell his childhood sweetheart that he plans to marry her as soon as he is able to assume that responsibility?

Those Christians who never get out of the “milk” stage are those who have never decided to learn obedience by suffering for Christ. They have refused to make any real sacrifice or take any real stand. They are those who hesitate to be tied down by responsibility.

Sundays, February 18 & 25, 2018

III. Stunted Christians promote stagnation (Hebrews 6:1)

Christians who shun Christlikeness and refuse responsibility are promoters of stagnation. The joy offered in the Christian life is dependent on progress. There is no continuing excitement to be had by those who pack up for a summer expedition into the wilderness but decide to hang around the base camp instead of setting out on the journey. The truth is that Christians who are unhappy in their faith are Christians who have never discovered that Christ intends life to be an exciting journey into new areas of service.

One of the main themes of the book of Hebrews is Christian growth. New ventures of faith attempted for Christ should be the daily routine of every Christian. We need have no fear of exhausting the “unsearchable riches of Christ.” The only prescription for stunted Christians is the one prescribed in Hebrews 6:1: “Let us leave the elementary teaching about Christ and go on to maturity.” This admonition carries with it the idea of surrendering to the active pull of the Holy Spirit, allowing oneself to be borne on toward the goal to which God intends.