

Pentecost 12
Hebrews 5:11- 6:3
August 23, 2009

Dear People for Whom God Has Great Blessings as We Study His Word.

From this wonderful writing of Hebrews itself, we learn that the original recipients of this letter were mostly Jewish Christians. Jesus had completed His work of redemption and salvation just a few decades earlier. There was a pressure, yes, a temptation for these Jewish people to abandon their faith in Jesus and just sort of ease back into a pre-fulfillment Judaism. You know – family (things also able to be idols), culture, tradition.

There are several urgent warnings in this book about the spiritual calamity that would befall any who did leave Jesus' fulfilled and completed salvation. Only God's judgment, only fire would remain.

Our temptations and pressures today to abandon Jesus may be somewhat different but are just as dangerous and persistent. To stay with Jesus, to grow up into Him, to resist everything that weakens us in the faith is the concern of these verses, this book.

Go on to Maturity in Christ Our Savior! / Exercise continually in God's Word.

No punches pulled here, but neither is there any desire to be insulting or hurtful. In fact, the aim is perfect love, is to safeguard, to help, to rescue and to save. Let's be thankful that God, by these words, cares about us, too, and seeks to prevent us from drifting away from our Savior, our food Lord.

The reason for these words are given by these words. The people were slow in learning Christian doctrine. Doctrine is simply specific, but connected teachings.

Evidence of their slowness was in the fact that considerable time had gone by since they first learned and embraced the ABC's of Christian truth.

No progress had been made by them in their understanding of Christian teaching in all that time. Is it possible that they had even gone backward? He does say they needed to have the elementary truths of God's taught them all over again!

Repentance and faith in God – those were the basic words of John the Baptist and the first words out of Jesus. Confess your sins and rely on your Savior-God for forgiveness. It's what St. Paul taught when he came to a new place on his missionary journeys.

They needed even to hear about baptisms and laying on of hands again. Did they already forget how Jewish washings of various kinds and laying on of hands pointed forward to Jesus who truly cleanses us from all sin and whose blessing hands have given us the Holy Spirit Himself!

Did they really need again to learn about the resurrection of the body on Judgment Day, when Jesus would give life – eternal, glorious life – to our mortal bodies, judge us righteous in Jesus Himself and give us eternal life as a gift?

By now they should have been teaching others these things, like their children, grandchildren, families, neighbors and friends, yes, and anyone else with whom they had an opportunity. Apparently, they were not doing that, not leading. Instead, they so much needed to be given elementary Christian teaching, to be led.

Do some need to confess this today? We have so much need for teachers and leaders in the congregation. We need Sunday School teachers. We need a financial secretary, a treasurer and various other leaders and helpers. Mr. Law is very sick. He had He had served as treasurer for about 14 years. We are happy that it looks like someone else is stepping forward, but what of all the other needs? Why isn't more being done about this and that in the congregation? It's usually NOT due to a lack of ideas, but there simply needs to be more people helping to do it!

The real problem back then with slow Christian learning and slow Christian maturity and so few teachers and with temptations to leave God's Word and its Savior was that they had not continues to exercise in God's Word, The Word of righteousness. So, they didn't keep learning more from God's Word, so the Spirit has less to work with for the strengthening of their faith. So of course, they also could not distinguish between good and evil. This had to do not only with moral questions but the evil of not appreciating who Jesus is and what He did and how He proved it by raising Himself from the dead. Are we even aware of the evils trying to pull us away from Jesus?

The solution to this danger is simple but maybe a little surprising. Let us be truly thankful for the Word of God we still have. It is what is studied in our Bible classes and what is proclaimed from this pulpit. Let's repent of any laziness or recklessness toward our hearing and reading of God's Word. Let's pray for God's strength and victory over sin and satan. Ask His help in encouraging us to follow a personal home Bible study plan as well as make use of our worship services and Bible classes and see to it that our children learn The Word.

After saying they were slow to learn and that it was hard to teach them, he surprises us by saying, "Let's get into some solid Scripture food." It's time you move beyond the ABC's. Surely, we must always teach the Bible ABC's because there will always be literal little ones and people new to the Christian faith. They need the milk; they must have it, but let the rest, who have been around God's Word a while, do some spiritual chewing on The Word. Let's do that so that everyone can get strong enough to serve, to help, to lead, to teach, and so forth.

This does call for a faithful exercise in God's Word. This does call for solid food, study, thought, application. What do these words of God say? For what do these words make me thankful? Of what do these words lead me to confess? For what ought I pray? What

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ideas do I get from these words? And what do these words of God say I should do or change?

Ask God to help us be fast learners so that we can all be teachers for some other people. Many, many people still have never heard even the ABC's of Christianity. Go on to maturity I Christ Our Savior. Amen.