

A. Introduction

1. Admonitions^A

2. That Was Then; This Is Now^B

B. The Diagnosis

5:11-14

1. A Pause from Deeper Teaching (verse 11)^C

2. Arrested Development (verses 12-14)

a. Laying the Framework^D

b. Respecting Teaching (12a)

c. Respecting Growth (12b-14a)

d. Respecting Living (13-14)^E

C. The Prescription

6:1-3

1. The ABC's Are Just a Start

a. Grow Up! (6:1a)^F

b. In Matters of Living (6:1c)^G

c. In Matters of Practice (6:2a)

d. In Matters of Doctrine (6:2b)^H

2. Build on the Foundation (6:1b, 3)^I

^A 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Hebrews 2:1, 3:1, 8, 12, 4:1, 11, 14

^B Mark 4:18-19

^C Psalm 110:4

^D Mark 7:3; Acts 15:10; Colossians 3:16

^E Romans 8:29; Titus 2:14

^F 1 Corinthians 13:11

^G Galatians 5:19-21; Habakkuk 2:4

^H John 5:28-29c

^I Philippians 2:13

(can we point our fingers at others)?

- b. this book addresses those coming out of Judaism into Christianity, or, those searching and enquiring in that direction – with them was the ever present danger of their falling back into Judaism from Christ
- c. that is not, as far as I know, the case with any of us here today
- d. so, do these verses and truths apply to us? Yes!
- e. we, as they, are besieged with pressures to fall away from Christ – you are all aware of them in your own lives, but Jesus summed them up in the Parable of the Soils with these words, “... these are the ones who have heard the word, but the worries of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.” (Mark 4:18b-19)
- f. though the pressures we face may differ from theirs, we should take warning nevertheless from these admonitions given to them
- g. especially as the same disturbing symptoms appear in today’s church

B. The Diagnosis

5:11-14

1. A Pause from Deeper Teaching (verse 11)

- a. this book, as we have been seeing over the past few weeks, has been addressing the important subject of the Jesus’ High-Priestly office
 - (A) an idea to which the Jewish readers might not readily take, for their history was that the high priest, indeed every priest, was descended from Aaron, Moses’ brother – an inviolable rule
 - (B) so the writer of Hebrews, quoting from Psalm 110 – a psalm which was recognised by the Jews as prophetic of the coming Messiah – the Christ – these words concerning Him: “The Lord has sworn and will not change His mind, ‘You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek.’” (Psalms 110:4)
 - (C) Melchizedek – a mysterious OT figure – only mentioned twice, and the subject of much speculation by the Jewish teachers; a person of whom there could be a great deal of misunderstanding
- b. so the writer pauses for a necessary digression
 - (A) “Concerning him we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing.” (Hebrews 5:11)
 - (B) he recognizes that the subject of Melchizedek, of his being a type of the priesthood of Jesus Christ,

- is not one easy to be understood, and one that may readily being misinterpreted
- c. but not as much as from the difficulty of the teaching itself
 - (A) as from the difficulty of the students to learn
 - (B) because they are 'dull of hearing' – literally, their hearing had no push to it, no get up and go, being sluggish
 - (C) when a subject came along that required some thought, they turned off their internal hearing aids
 - (D) this indicated not a physical problem with their ears, but instead a spiritual problem with their thoughts
 - (E) he pauses to warn them that they suffer from ...

2. Arrested Development (12-14)

- a. Laying the Framework
 - (A) let us take a moment to understand how we are influenced by our background in learning truth; indeed, in coming to Jesus Christ
 - (B) background, both of a religious and secular nature, arises from upbringing, education and experience, and colours our thinking
 - (C) the background of early Jewish Christians was Judaism
 - (1) which needs to be distinguished from OT teaching, for the scribes and Pharisees had added to it practices and traditions
 - (2) Jesus rebuked them for teaching these, "thus invalidating the word of God by your tradition which you have handed down; and you do many things such as that." (Mark 7:13)
 - (3) and Peter described them as "... placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?" (Acts 15:10)
 - (D) as it is easy for us to carry over into Christianity our pre-Christian ideas from our background, it was easy for Jews to emphasize those elements of Christianity with similarities in Judaism
 - (E) hanging onto their backgrounds had affected them in 3 ways:
- b. One: Respecting Teaching (verse 12a)
 - (A) For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, ...

- (B) the writer is not here addressing the teaching class in the church
- (C) but that which is the duty of every believer
- (D) that teaching enjoined in Colossians 3:16, "Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God."
- (E) they had been Christians long enough that they should have had the experience and inclination, the word of Christ dwelling so richly within them, to be passing on counsel to others
- (F) but rather, their understanding of Christianity had stopped so early, and their thinking upon its truth had been neglected so long, that they needed a refresher course in its essentials
 - (1) perhaps it was self-satisfaction, 'I know all that already'
 - (2) perhaps it was a lack of any interest, 'I have come to Christ and am saved; that is all I need'
- c. Two: Respecting Growth (verses 12b-14a)
 - (A) ...and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. But solid food is for the mature
 -
 - (B) a diet of milk or mush is for those who are in either their first or second childhood – so be warned!
 - (C) milk is very necessary for babies – the perfect food for them to digest and to give them strength and start their growth
 - (D) those ABC's – the elementary principles of the oracles of God – are the milk that given to one who is new-born in Jesus Christ:
 - (1) A – All have sinned
 - (2) B – Believe on the Jesus Christ
 - (3) C – Confess Jesus as Lord
 - (4) we use these verses to introduce people to salvation
 - (5) but even those verses are incomplete and there is so much more for them to learn if they are going to grow to maturity
 - (E) that word maturity can also be translated as complete or perfect
 - (1) when you see a new-born child, you can rightly exclaim, 'What a perfect baby', even though it's all red and wrinkly

- (2) you have checked it out; it has two of what it should have two; one of what it should have one ... yes, it's complete
 - (3) but six months later you expect that baby to have changed, for completeness in a child includes its development
 - (4) which is also the case spiritually, namely that maturity is not a final state but a stage in the progress of a Christian's being transformed into the likeness of Jesus Christ
 - (5) maturity means the going on from the ABC's to the learning of the difficult lessons for the word by the Holy Spirit
 - (6) take care lest your spiritual growth be arrested
- d. Three: Respecting Living (verses 13-14)
- (A) For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.
 - (1) growth has a purpose on a human level,
 - (a) physical growth prepares us for work and for life
 - (b) intellectual growth prepares us to be parents
 - (2) growth has a purpose on a spiritual level, too
 - (a) we have already mentioned the ultimate – being conformed to the image of Christ (Romans 8:29), but ...
 - (b) on the way are growth in grace, love, knowing the Lord
 - (3) these purposes are found here in two phrases
 - (a) 'accustomed to the word of righteousness'
 - (b) 'trained to discern good and bad'
 - (B) 'the word of righteousness' can refer to
 - (1) one, that righteousness of Jesus Christ which is accounted to our credit through our faith in Him
 - (a) although that must underlie the emphasis of this verse
 - (b) the context suggests that what is intended here is
 - (2) two, that practical righteousness in living of the child of God who is following Jesus Christ in his or her life

- (a) "who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds." (Titus 2:14)
- (b) that practical rightness goes hand in hand with
- (C) 'senses trained to discern good and evil'
 - (1) brings in the whole matter of self-discipline like an athlete
 - (2) this discernment does not simply happen by chance
 - (3) it is the result of good habits, spending time habitually in the word of God and in prayer, that just as usage strengthens our physical muscles, so usage also does our spiritual muscles

C. The Prescription

6:1-3

1. The ABC's Are Just a Start

a. Grow Up! (verse 6:1a)

- (A) Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, ...
- (B) back in 5:12 we had the phrase 'elementary principles' which was used to signify in Greek the idea of the ABC's
- (C) here we have the phrase 'elementary teaching' which literally is 'the first words' – such as those first words by which we teach Cubbies about Jesus and salvations – child words
- (D) they are important words, but they are to be left behind: "When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things." (1 Corinthians 13:11) is how Paul illustrated this.
 - (1) we leave them as a scholar leaves the writing of ABC's to go on to use them in words to acquire or to express ideas
 - (2) we leave them as the plant leaves the root to grow a trunk and to produce fruit, yet ever drawing upon the root's vital sap
 - (3) we leave them as a builder leaves off pouring the foundation in order to erect upon it a building dependent upon its strength^{3}.
- (E) he then lists these foundational truths
- b. In Matters of Living (verse 6:1c)
 - (A) ... repentance from dead works and of faith toward God,

(B) **'dead works'** are those works that lead to spiritual death

(1) it includes an erroneous dependence upon our good works, the works of the law by which no one is justified

(2) it includes the **'works'** or **'deeds'** of Galatians 5:19-21, **"Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, ..."** and on it goes

(3) repentance is turning one's back on these, turning to God

(C) **'faith toward God'** is not faith about God, that He exists, etc.,

(1) but faith that moves us towards Him in trust; a way of life

(2) as Habakkuk 2:4 says, **"... the righteous will live by his faith."**

c. In Matters of Practice (verse 6:2a)

(A) **of instruction about washings and laying on of hands, ...**

(B) **'washings'** could be translated **'baptisms'**, a slightly different word

(1) new Jewish Christians would get much instruction on this

(2) the difference between the Jewish proselyte baptism, John's baptism, and the baptism in the name of Christ

(C) **'laying on of hands'** was a way of conferring a blessing or gift– for example, upon new Christians, by the apostles, the demonstration of the gift of speaking in foreign languages by the Holy Spirit

(1) also used

d. In Matters of Doctrine (verse 6:2b)

(A) **of ... the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment.**

(B) two of a number of important teachings of Scripture

(C) and pointing beyond this current world and life to the reality that will follow; the eternal in contrast to this short-lived existence

(D) the resurrection is certain for every man, woman, and child: **"... an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment."** (John 5:28-29)

(E) and just as certain is the judgement: God's justice will out

2. Let Us Build on the Foundation (verse 6:1b, 3)

- a. Verse 1: **Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of ...**
 - (A) all of these matters just listed, practices so familiar to Jews
 - (B) all of them are foundational truths of Christianity
 - (C) we are not to keep laying them; not to be unsettled concerning them; not to keep digging them up and then replacing them
- b. **'let us press on'** speaks of a responsibility on our part
 - (A) but the form of this word is of an action that is impressed upon us from outside ourselves; that we are borne along to maturity
 - (B) it is that submissiveness to God which allows Him to work His work in us: **"for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure."** (Philippians 2:13)
- c. and the writer, for their encouragement, assures the readers that he will join them in their endeavours in this direction
 - (A) Verse 3: **"And this we will do, if God permits."**
 - (B) likewise, let also endeavour as God gives us help

1. © 2014 by Garth Hutchinson, Faith Fellowship Baptist Church of Aurora (Ontario): may be distributed or quoted freely, only let this be done to the glory “of the great God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ” (Titus ii.13). Except as noted otherwise, quotations are from the New American Standard version, used by permission. Various other English versions of the Holy Bible may be used in this sermon. Explanatory additions to the Bible text are shown in (*braces*). Version identifiers are:

ASV	American Standard Version of 1901
AV	Authorized (King James) Version of 1769
NAS	New American Standard version © 1960, 1995 The Lockman Foundation (usually the 1995 edition)
NIV	New International Version © 1984 by the International Bible Society
NKJV	New King James Version © 1979 Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers
WEY	The New Testament in Modern Speech © 1902, 1912 R. F. Weymouth

Some of the commentaries and resources used in the preparation of this message are identified as follow:

Barnes –	<i>Notes on the New Testament, et alia</i> , by Rev Albert Barnes, Gall & Inglis, Edinburgh
BM –	<i>Biblical Museum</i> , Editor James Comper Gray, ca 1870
EBC –	<i>The Expositor’s Bible Commentary</i> , © 1986 Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 49530, Michigan <i>Hebrews</i> , by Leon Morris
EGT –	<i>The Expositor’s Greek Testament</i> , Hodder & Stoughton <i>Hebrews</i> , by Marcus Dods
Gill –	<i>Exposition of the Old Testament, Exposition of the New Testament</i> , by John Gill, D.D.
Kerux –	The sermon & illustration data base compiled by Rev. David Holwick at the web-site, www.holwick.com .
NICNT –	<i>The New International Commentary on the New Testament</i> <i>The Epistle to the Hebrew</i> , by F. F. Bruce
RWP –	<i>Robertson’s Word Pictures of the New Testament</i> , by Dr. A. T. Robertson
TYN –	<i>The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries</i> <i>Hebrews</i> , by Donald Guthrie

2. *“By This Time You Ought To Be Teachers,”* by Rev’d John Piper, Bethlehem Baptist Church, Minneapolis, Minnesota – Kerux sermons #4087
3. Adapted from an illustration, *“First Principles to be Left”* by C. Stanford, BM, *in loc*.