

The Finish Line in Bible Study

Hebrews 5:14

Nutshell: Scripture study that isn't as serious as athletic training will not reach God's goal.

I. Context: The Hebrews' unreadiness to learn.

II. Text

Heb 5:14 But solid food belongs to mature *ones*. *These are the ones whose opinions were opinions already* having been athletically trained for *the* discrimination of both good and bad-*this* by reason of *long* routine.

Literal Standard Version with modifications

The next four outline items, III. - VI., are based on the 4 uses of Scripture listed in 2 Tim 3:16 AND the 3 depictions of preaching in 2 Tim 4:2.

III. Teaching

- A. Paul wrote an inspired book to a Jewish audience; 2 Pet 3:15-16; 1 Pet 1:1; 2 Pet 3:1. Hebrews is the only possibility.
 2. The "us" of Heb 2:3 only puts the author outside the original 12
 3. Peter speaks of the Apostles in the 3rd person as well, 1 Pet 1:12
- B. Outline of Hebrews

Authority: God has at last spoken In Son (*Ἰ**ῥ**o**p**h**e**t*), ← follow this font
His express image, 1:1-3a

Theme: **The SON** purified us from sin (Priest), then sat in authority (**King**), **1:3b**

I. **Supreme over** the angels, Inheritor by ordeal, 1:4-14
Therefore hear Him, 2:1-4

II. **Supreme as** man, 2:5-9

Psalm 8- Since man must inherit, 2:5-8a
but man failed, 2:8b, Christ became man, 2:9a

Theme reprise: crowned with glory and honor (King), **2:9b**
to taste the death of "each one" of His own (Priest), **2:9c**
to bond with them and help them, 2:10-18

freeing them from bondage to Satan and fear, 2:14-15

Therefore, think hard on Him, 3:1

III. A better stewardship than Moses, 3:1-6

Therefore hear Him, unhardening our hearts, (*Ἰερεφῆτ*)

Ps 95- for Moses' folk didn't inherit God's rest, 3:7-19

IV. A better Rest than Joshua, 4:1-11

Therefore, fear, 4:1a, lest we also miss God's rest

Ps 95- David told his people not to miss that rest, 4:1b-3

The Promised Land was a type of God's 7th day rest,
which itself was a type of Salvation, 4:4-8

Christ's Salvation has become the final *Sabbatismos*, 4:9,
the Son resting from the work of Salvation as the
Father had rested from the work of Creation, 4:10.

We must EXERT ourselves to enter Christ's Rest, 4:11

For the Word penetrates, exposing us before God, 4:12-13

Theme reprise: Having the highest high priest (Priest), the
Son of God (King),

Let us hold to our confession of Him (*Ἰερεφῆτ*), 4:14

especially since He felt all our temptations +, 4:15

V. A better priesthood than Aaron, 4:14-10:18

VI. Exhortations based on Christ's supremacies, 10:19-13:21

VII. Concluding remarks, 13:22-25

C. "Let us approach" (Προσερχώμεθα) in 4:16 and 10:22

brackets the material between them

1. The material between = proofs of the superiority of Jesus' priesthood (the bulk of the book)
2. The "let us approach" outside the brackets say that the point of Jesus' priesthood is for us to approach God
3. Prayerlessness, then, is a dismissal of Jesus' priesthood

Kid-speak: Since Jesus died on the cross to bring us before God, we have to be SURE to _ . (Pray)

D. 5:1-10 (a chiasm): God founded the OC priesthood on

Aaron (v 1-4). He founds the NC priesthood on
Melchizedek- the order Christ followed (v 5-10),

1. The *basics* of Christ's priesthood involve **Melchizedek**,
but their improper foundation hid this from them, 5:11
2. 5:12, The Hebrews were babies needing spiritual milk,
despite being Christians a fairly long time
3. 5:13, The criterion for spiritual maturity is "the Word of Righteousness," particularly HOW MAN IS MADE RIGHT

- WITH GOD (justification). ♦ Man's self-righteous nature leans towards shadow/ symbol (OC) over substance (NC).
- a. Harder to detect in OC times, since they still employed the OC symbols- yet constantly rebuked by the prophets
 - b. Not particularly difficult to detect today, since some borrow from the OC unapologetically
 - c. Others simply prefer symbol over substance by making Baptism or the Lord's Table more than symbols
4. They were "inexperienced" in the Word of Righteousness
- a. Though many Hebrews were *very* Biblically literate
 - b. *When we put Scriptural data together wrongly, it's always a spiritual issue, never just an academic one*
5. Best case scenario: "Oh, I see how I misread that. Now I get it." We all do that.
- a. But the Hebrews were *persisting* in their misreading, walking in falsehood, refusing the Word of Righteousness. Enter the corrective book of Hebrews.
 - b. The best we can hope for Catholics, etc, is that *we* haven't shared Hebrews with them yet

Kid-speak: If you see a Christian leader dressing up like an OT priest, whose priesthood is he following? Aaron. Whose priesthood does Jesus follow? Melchizedek.

6. Hebrews now fills its special niche, like all the Epistles. But is it being used? Will I be the oddball for bringing it up in conversation?

Outline:

- I. God **means** for us to arrive at completion/ maturity
 - II. God's **means** for our arrival is Scriptures
 - III. Our **means** of using Scriptures is athletic-like
 - IV. Athletic training **means** transformation of our opinions
 - V. Transformed opinions know what both good *and* evil **mean**
- E. We began to consider Heb 5:14 last time
1. The maturity/ completeness of the spiritually mature is defined by a successful regimen of *athletic-like training* in Scriptures: "gymnasized"

2. Untrained folk can't simply step into an athletic event. They are not up-to-speed with those who've been training. Even their mentality is unprepared.
3. *Scriptures are an athletic-like training*
4. One can *dabble* in Scriptures, like a hobbyist, *but dabblers haven't begun considering The Word of Righteousness yet*
 - a. They don't have the breadth of knowledge to pull together the Biblical data on Justification (being declared righteous) by Faith, including Tabernacle pictures
 - b. AND/OR they fail to make the connection between Justification and Sanctification (being made righteous)
 - c. Etc.

Kid-speak: People whose job is playing sports- how much of their life is training? *All of it!* It's about their muscles and running, but it's also about what they eat and when they sleep. Christians have to train that hard- but in the BIBLE.

- F. The Mega-Church movement (read "This Little Church Went to Market") has had a huge influence on the worship model followed by *most* churches today
 1. Their market approach (surveys- How could our church adapt to suit you?) has unapologetically sought out the least -common-spiritual-denominator
 - a. The idea is to get people in
 - b. The rationale is that if we can get them in, they'll learn about Jesus and possibly convert
 2. NO RIGOROUS TRAINING MODEL THERE.
- G. There is a clear division of direction in worship. As Eccl 5:1 divides it, there's *our* offerings to God (prayer, song) vs. *His* speaking to us ("Hear"). Hearing takes absolute precedence.
 1. Solomon warns that worship is spoiled when the focus is *our* offerings *to* God rather than us hearing *from* God
 2. Our offerings are absolutely essential, but their character is determined by whether or not we are l-i-s-t-e-n-i-n-g (loving it and good at it)
 3. This is in keeping with Heb 5:14
- H. The worship service models **rigor**, 2 Tim 4:2, "Proclaim the Word. Stand on it opportunely and inopportunely. Convict, rebuke, encourage, with all forbearance and instruction."
 1. There the mentality developed is taken into our private

settings, where we exhort one another to love and good works, Heb 10:24

2. IT'S ALL PART OF AN *ATHLETIC*-TYPE REGIMEN
 - a. Fun Run stuff? No, *real athletics*, with a competitive mentality, competing vs. sin, the world, and **Satan** (someone trying to destroy us), *not* vs. other people
 - b. Paul states the seriousness of the mentality, 1 Cor 9:27, its completeness (body) and its consequences

Kid-speak: Do people get tired of studying the Bible and praying and helping others- and they quit the Christian race? Yes. Will *we* get tired? Yes. But what can we *not* do? Quit!

3. The sweat and the payoff include the fruit of the Spirit- which is serious stuff too. But it's seriously *helpful*- for those who'll discipline themselves to the regimen.

What you do with Scriptures AFTER you're converted tells how you received Scriptures WHEN you were converted.

- I. "Mature *ones*" is the adjective *teleios*. "Complete" is the best English equivalent. "Perfect" (which meant "complete" in 1611) is the KJV word.
 1. Though the process of spiritual growth never *stops* in this life, "complete" describes the final STAGE of spiritual growth, wherein most of our Christian life should be lived (as with physical maturity)
 2. Earlier stages are listed in 1 Jn 2:12-14
 - a. "Little children" (which remains a name for all Christians as well, 1 Jn 2:1)
 - b. "Youths"
 - c. "Fathers"- the final product
 3. Q. Would *we* have detected spiritual immaturity in the Hebrews? Probably not.
 - a. The issue of priesthood and covenants is not our ordinary conversational fare. Bad on us.
 - b. We remain fleshly (1 Cor 3:1) wherein we let our *personal impressions* of people (their demeanor) form our opinions of them
 4. "Spiritual ones" is Paul's name for the mature in 1 Cor 3:1
 - a. Our "fleshly" mentality must be grown out of, displacing

- human instinct and opinion with Scriptural criteria
- b. A process requiring testing unto pinpointing of immaturities

Kid-speak: Kids, you're not done growing up yet. How will you know when you're grown up *spiritually*? When you know the Bible better than you know *anything*.

J. Heb 5:14, "Opinions"

1. It is those whose "opinions" are athletically trained who are mature/ complete
2. "Opinions," Gk αἰσθητήρια, an organ of perception; sense; faculty. Only here in the NT. The verb form is used in Lk 9:45, "perceive."
3. "Perceptions" is good. "Senses" and "faculties" are most common. ESV goes with "powers of discernment."
- ‡ 4. The problem for us is figuring out exactly WHAT I'm supposed to subject to this athletic-type discipline- physical senses or faculties? my mind? my conscience? my emotions?
 - a. I chose "opinion" to indicate how *deeply* our perceptions must be saturated
 - b. The actual definition of "opinion" is "a view, judgment, or appraisal formed in the mind about a certain matter."
 - c. Our Scripture study must 'take' so permanently, that every aspect of our appraisal of reality (self, God, others, world) is "taken captive," 2 Cor 10:5

Kid-speak: Can the Bible relate to EVERYTHING I can think about? Yes. It's *supposed* to!

5. Spiritual flab must become spiritual muscle
 - a. False doctrine lets you off the hook. I took the shortcut, so I don't need more study.
 - b. *Or* it wraps you so tight around the axel that you burn out
 - c. Only Scriptures are attenuated to bring us to a harmonious maturity
 6. What are our perceptions athletically trained FOR?
- K. "For discrimination," *diakrino*, "thorough separation"
1. The *verb* form (19x) is in Matt 16:3, 1 Cor 11:29, 31 in the sense of "discerning" (the sense in our verse)

- a. It's also used for "contending," Acts 11:2; Jude 1:9, in the sense of separating *from*
- b. ! And it means "doubt" in Matt 21:21; Acts 11:12; Rom 14:23; Jms 1:6, in the sense of separating myself from a reality or proposition
- c. This, then is deep discernment
2. "Separation" **begins** with our treatment of the Word of God, 2 Tim 2:15. "Cutting straightly."
 - a. As our vision improves, the Bible is no longer one big blob of info. It *divides out*.
 - b. A properly categorized Bible can then properly categorize us
- ‡ 3. The separating we do reflects the overall separation in **Matt 13:47-50**,
4. because the spiritually mature has trained himself for the "complete distinguishing" of-
- L. "Both good and bad"
 1. *kalos* and *kakos*, an apropos pairing
 2. Note- not distinguishing good *from* bad, though that is necessarily involved
 3. We have to be able to identify **both**: "THIS is good, whereas THAT is bad."
 - a. Kind of like a farmer has to be able to tell *both* a healthy cow or plant *and* a sick one
 - b. Or a repairman can tell when a machine is working properly *and* can see signs of something going wrong
 4. **Proverbs** is wholly both: identification of the wise *and* fool, immoral *and* righteous, lazy *and* diligent, etc. Everything is categorized.
 5. Good and bad *what?* Good and bad doctrine, Good and bad behavior, Good and bad people, Good and bad in *me* (the good perhaps being harder to discern)

Kid-speak: Are we supposed to be able to say "God says THAT is right and THAT is wrong" about *everything*? Yes.

6. Rigorously-trained spiritual adults have *regained* what was lost in the Fall: *God's* perspective on good and evil
 - a. We opted for • our *own* perspective of good and evil in the Fall, for • "knowing" intimately (same word Gen 4:1) good and evil

- b. Now our vision and discernment are so thoroughly warped that every degree of blindness we *invested* in has to be *divested piecemeal*...
 - c. The Bible is a big book because man is a complex being with numerous particulars to correct
 - d. If the whole book isn't our regimen, there is NO PATH to spiritual adulthood. The Spirit has no tools!
7. This suggests a model for the kind of Christian who can expect to attain completeness
- a. When you finally see the **Bible** (the “Word of Righteousness”) as a complete structure, the framework of your own **soul** is thus ‘framed in’. After that, the process becomes *filling in*.
 - b. When the filling in is done, you’re “complete”. After that, it’s a matter of *furnishing* and *improving*.
 - c. Gazing into the Bible, you take on its likeness. God’s words become *you*. His thinking becomes yours.
- M. “Good” and “evil” in the same verse: Rom 7:21; 12:17; 2 Cor 13:7

IV. For the Walking Wounded (1 Thess 5:14, “Uphold the strengthless”) God is patient *if* we don’t give up on the goal of maturity.

V. Conviction (2 Tim 4:2, “Convince, rebuke”): **What have I done wrong? How have I lost righteousness?**
Is my approach to Scripture like an athletic regimen?

VI. Correction/ Realignment (2 Tim 4:2, “Exhort/encourage”):
How will I correct my error? How will I regain uprightness?
I will accept God’s goal of my completeness.

VIII. Schooling in Righteousness: **How do I take this on the road?**
I will attain completeness by mastery of Scriptures.

Wrap-up: All Christians are, by *birthright*, on a path to spiritual maturity. Either God gave us a learnable book or He didn’t. Our generation has pretty much given up. Even serious study is not pursued unto **mastery**. Again, it can either be learned-meaning completely- or not. I’m either on that path or not.