

## Hebrews 5.11

### Hard of Hearing

The writer of Hebrews begins an aside which is a little out of the way of his main point with this verse. But not as much as it may appear at first glance. For his pique is about their rejection of truth for lies, the fact that they have heard the truth and they had made a beginning of following. It is very important for us to understand something about the congregation in Jerusalem (and everywhere) It was filled with saved and lost people. And some of those lost people had said they were Christians. He begins to chide the Jews in Jerusalem for their stubbornness, blindness and deafness for returning to the law as a means of righteousness. They needed this letter with its clear display of Christ as superior to all the old ways, as the fulfillment of them... and so do we. For all too often, if we will be honest and examine our lives, we will see ourselves doing the same thing. We will see that we have placed our faith in something other than Christ. Sometimes it is about believing that by NOT doing this one thing we are superior, sometimes it is about believing that we have DONE this one thing we are

safe. But always, when we look closely, what we find is that the core of our faith is in something OTHER than the shed blood of Jesus. And if that remains true, what it ultimately means is that we are not saved at all. For it is only the blood of Jesus that brings forgiveness of sin. The indicator that the writer used was that the people were not able to understand the truth that he was writing. He judged that they could not take it all in, BUT, and this is an important but, they SHOULD have been able to take it all in. In fact they should have been able to teach it to others by now, but the truth that he was preaching was entirely beyond their ability to comprehend.

## **I. I DON'T UNDERSTAND:**

So here is the heart of this verse. IF you are not understanding truth, if you are hearing the truth proclaimed and it makes NO SENSE to you at all there are 2 broad possibilities.

a. The first possibility is that the preacher is doing a crummy job of explaining the truth (and that surely cannot be discounted, and although it is

hidden in this verse, it is not the point of this sermon) the best indication of that is EVERYONE is NOT understanding what is being said, even those walking in truth and evidencing genuine conversion in every area of their lives.

- b. The second broad possibility is that there is a current lack in YOU that is hindering the understanding. And that is really the implication of the verse. When the writer says that it is hard to explain, he is acknowledging that it is a hard thing he is discussing in some ways, but the next words give the real focus. "you have become dull of hearing". Hard of hearing, spiritually deaf. The Greek word "dull" is from nothros (νοθρος), meaning "slow, sluggish." It is a combination of two Greek words, one meaning "no," the other "to push," hence, "no push," thus "slow, sluggish." These Hebrews were slow, sluggish, stupid, numbed, in their apprehension of the teaching of New Testament truth. This made it difficult to teach them. The difficulty lay therefore not in the writer but in them. This also has 2 possible reasons. There are basically 2

categories of people who are spiritually dull of hearing:

- i. those who are unsaved but might have been showing signs of the preliminary working of the Holy Spirit towards repentance
- ii. Those who are saved but have backslidden into a season of spiritually barren dryness, they are in the desert spiritually.

## II. WHO ARE YOU?

Which kind of person might someone be?

a. It is a question that we absolutely cannot answer for anyone else in the moment with any authority. The only way to know the truth is the perspective of time –

**1John 2:20**

b. It is a question that we sometimes cannot even answer for ourselves in the moment without hard soul searching leading to repentance for things that we have allowed to

creep into our lives, our minds, our hearts, our souls.

- c. This searching is something that we should do, are commanded to do in scripture

2 Corinthians 13:5 (NKJV)

Examine yourselves *as to* whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you are disqualified.

- d. Yet how many of us have heard someone tell them that once they walk the aisle, say the prayer, sign the card they are never to question their salvation, that it would be calling God a liar to do so...
- e. Leaving the whole discussion of the invitation system on hold for a moment, that is just bad counsel. Especially since Paul clearly tells us in inspired scripture that we ARE to examine, to question, to confirm that we have repented. Because John indicates that some will walk with us for a season then fall away and not come back

because they were false converts. Because the writer of Hebrews is about to embark on one of the most misinterpreted sidebars in all the Bible about the very question...

### **III. SAFE FOREVER –**

Here is the basic position of scripture in a nutshell

a. Those who are saved will NEVER be lost. The doctrine is called the perseverance of the saints, and it is the capstone, the crown jewel, of true Biblical doctrine. Referred to commonly as Calvinism. There are five distinctive doctrines all tied inextricably together.

- i. Total Depravity
- ii. Unconditional Election
- iii. Limited Atonement (Particular Redemption)
- iv. Irresistible Grace
- v. Perseverance of the Saints

b. The idea quickly is that God is the total and final author of all salvation. He will save ALL that He has determined to save, and because the work is all His, we know that it will be

accomplished. For he is no God who cannot do what He pleases. But our God IS such a God!!

Psalm 115:3 (NKJV)

But our God *is* in heaven; He does whatever He pleases.

Before we get upset, understand this simple thing. John Calvin did not invent Calvinism. He penned the ideas in a logical, concise manner at the request of the church to publish the official orthodox response to the heresy of Arminius. All he did was give synopsis of sound Biblical doctrine.

c. Jesus Himself is the one who initiated this doctrine.

John 6.37-40; 44-45; 63-65

i. Jesus Himself initiated this doctrine in the midst of the very teaching that proved this greater point. That amongst the crowd of followers there are always going to be this mixed company. Those who are saved and those who are not. Because in the aftershock of the bread of life discourse ALL of the

- hangers-on left. Tens of thousands of false followers could no longer abide the truth that they were hearing and the teaching was TOO HARD for them to process. So they left, proving that they were not yet of the kingdom. (v66)
- ii. Understand that this "not yet" is important. For many of them just might have been among the thousands that were saved on the day of Pentecost.
  - iii. The truth was too much for them and they left proving that they were not being truly drawn by the Father, and may not be among those given to Jesus BY the Father.
- d. Jesus spoke of the paradox of false converts in the parable commonly referred to as the "parable of the sower". I believe that it should be called the "parable of the soils".

**Matthew 13.1-9**

**Matthew 13.18-23**

- e. In between these two things, Jesus also speaks about a key component in this question of hearing, of dullness, and of true conversion.

## Matthew 13.10-17

- i. God does not give light to those He is not drawing. He does not do the work in our souls that will allow us to hear.
- ii. But we have all done the work in our lives that makes us deaf

Psalm 115.3-8

Psalm 135.15-18

Isaiah 44.9-20

- iii. This is why Jesus was so fond of the saying, "he who has ears, let him hear". Spiritual hearing is NOT something that everyone has!

1 Corinthians 2.14

## IV. HEARING PROBLEMS –

But even for those who HAVE known the truth, HAVE been born again, HAVE been written in the Lamb's book of life; we just might find ourselves becoming "Hard of Hearing." This happens for a host of reasons. But most of them can be boiled down to one thing. Laziness about the things of God. We are easily distracted and consumed with

other things. We are apt scholars for the world, swift to hear news and tales, but slow and dull in hearing of the Word of God. So that we may justly suffer Jesus' rebuke...

**Luke 24:25**

SO some things to be on our guard against:

a. Carelessness or lack of diligence

**Proverbs 4.20-23**

**Proverbs 12.27-28**

**2 Peter 1.5-11 (spouday)**

b. A mind possessed with other things

**Psalms 119.9-11**

The things we fill ourselves up with are often the very things which keep the gospel out of our hearts and minds. For the Hebrews it was having a high opinion of the ceremonial law and Levitical priesthood. For us it could be an obsession with politics, games, work, family, pleasures.

Remember that not all of these things are bad, but none can replace God as the primary

affection of your life. A barrel full of bad water cannot receive wine.

c. Lack of meditation.

Joshua 1.8-9

1 Timothy 4.15

there is a kind of reciprocity as well, for the more we meditate, the more we understand as God opens our minds and hearts to hear and understand His truth.

Psalm 119.27

d. Lack of reading and conferring

Acts 17.11-13

Notice the incredible difference between the two groups of people, and the only real distinctive was that the Bereans took the time and effort to study out the scripture and make sure of the truth.

e. Lack of prayer.

- i. This is the very stuff of life, we are to be always on our guard praying for God to guide and protect us because we are seriously outmatched.

**Mark 13.32-37**

- ii. But with Christ in us we are more than overcomers!

**Romans 8.37**

- iii. We are commanded to pray without ceasing-

**1Thessalonians 5.17**

- iv. But our glibness with this gets us in trouble, for we often neglect the duty of scheduled, earnest sustained, and regular prayer because we "pray all the time". This is a trap. Yes, you must have a heart that seeks God in all things, but you also must set aside time to make prayer a priority in your life.

**Psalm 63.1-2.**

Remember that Jesus often spent all night in prayer and rose early as a habit to pray alone without distraction.

## **V. HEARING SOLUTION –**

The glorious good news of scripture is that the solution for either condition is the same. Repent. 1John 1.9 God always calls us to repentance and more, He always promises forgiveness TO those who DO repent. It is glory unbounded and it is ours in the shed blood of the only sacrifice that ever mattered. The blood of Jesus Christ. (which is the point that the writer of Hebrews is laboring so hard to make)