

TITLE: PERSONAL COMMITMENT TO SPIRITUAL GROWTH
TEXT: Hebrews 5:11-14; Eph 4:13-15
THESIS: The purpose of this sermon is to encourage each member to make a commitment to do what is necessary to grow spiritually during the new year.

INTRO: It's been 17 years since I played high school football. And to this day, I still cannot tell you exactly why I did it! Today I love football (playing, watching, discussing, etc.). But back then, I just didn't care that much about it. *So why did I do it?*
Unfortunately, it seems that there are many in the church today who might, if they were honest, say the same thing about their Christianity. "I'm really not sure why I'm a Christian!" Maybe their parents or someone else pressured them into it. Maybe a spouse was the encouragement and the real reason they did it. *Because of this attitude, they never grow spiritually. They may be "here" when the doors are open, but their Christianity doesn't leave this building.

I. DANGER OF SPIRITUAL STANDSTILL:

- A. You can't (won't) be taught (**Heb 5:11-14**) (you can't teach yourself; you can't teach others)
 - 1. REASON = dull (lazy) of hearing (**v. 11**) – *lack of effort*, not lack of ability
This is usually the case. We *can* do it, if we just would. Following God hasn't made it to the top of the priority list.
 - 2. By now you should be teachers, but instead, you need someone to teach you (**v. 12**).
Notice, he doesn't say you need someone to teach you the in-depth spiritual things, but the rudiments (1st principles!)
 - a. Does this describe you?
 - b. Do you know people who have been Christians for years, but still can't locate basic passages?
-Who aren't even able to state why they are Christians?
-Who can't provide any scriptures for why we believe what we believe?
-Who can't articulate the distinctive characteristics of the New Testament church?
 - 3. You're on milk; unskillful (ignorant) in the word of righteousness (**v. 13**)
 - a. Does this describe you?
 - b. Would you consider yourself "skillful" in the Bible? If not, why not? Have you come up with a good reason? Is this important to you? What will your excuse to God be? 2 Cor 5:10 – "we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ"
 - 4. You need spiritual exercise (**v. 14**)
 - a. Solid food is for spiritual adults
 - b. We become adults by use (habit, practice). I've memorized scriptures because of how often I've seen/heard them.
 - c. This practice exercises our senses (judgment) to discern (judge) between good and evil.
 - d. Dullness (laziness) prevents this practice, and failure to practice hinders judgment, causing us to sin.
- B. You can't distinguish truth from error; you can't recognize false doctrine (**Eph 4:13-15**)
 - 1. You remain children
 - 2. You're tossed to and fro, and carried about by every wind of doctrine
 - 3. You're tricked by the sleight of men (e.g., kids are easy to be tricked). Would you allow me to trick you (in doctrine)?
- C. You accept sin in your life
- D. **Heb 6:4-6** – You won't repent (and sin brings death – **James 1:15**)
- E. An entire congregation can become lukewarm (**Rev 3:16** – Jesus will spew that congregation out of his mouth)

II. NECESSITY OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH:

- A. It is commanded
 - 1. **1 Pet 2:2** – "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby"
 - 2. **Mt 5:6** – We are to hunger and thirst for righteousness...then we're promised that we will be filled!
Psalms 119:172 – "all thy commandments are righteousness," not *our* ideas (His ways are not our ways – Isa 55:8)
Neh 8:1 – The people did this. They told Ezra to read to them the book of God's law. A preacher's dream! So he did it (v. 2).
 - 3. **2 Tim 2:15** – Study (give diligence; earnest zeal) to show yourself approved (tried and accepted) of God (not of men).
A mere glancing at the Bible now and then will not get us to the spiritual level we're commanded to achieve! It takes STUDY!
- B. It is necessary for you
 - 1. To grow (**1 Pet 2:2** – to get beyond the milk and to the meat)
 - 2. For all spiritual wisdom and understanding – **Col 1:9** – Paul prayed they would be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding. For the Colossians, this may have meant through spiritual gifts (gift of knowledge – 1 Cor 12:8), since the written Word was not available. For us, *the Bible* is the source of all knowledge.
 - 3. It is your guide (**Psalms 119:105** – Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path)
Psalms 119:104 – "Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way"
- C. It is necessary for the church
 - 1. A congregation is only as strong as its individual members. One or two weak members can destroy a congregation.
There are so many who have lots of zeal for God, but without knowledge of God's word (**Rom 10:1-3**).
 - 2. *Change agents* are crafty (as seen in **Eph 4:14**).
 - a. They rely on Biblically unknowledgeable members (like those mentioned in Heb 5:11-14)!
 - b. They don't teach the Word (they use other materials)
 - c. Many times they won't encourage individual Bible studies
- D. It is necessary for the world
Mt 28:19 – Go into all the world and teach (make disciples of)
Lack of knowledge causes lack of evangelism (don't know enough to teach someone). Spiritual growth brings desire to evangelize.

CONCLUSION: A challenge: to each one of us to read the entire Bible in 2005. Don't let Satan discourage you in this. He does NOT want you to do this! Don't let him win! What will you do? Will you step up to this simple challenge? Or will you become another casualty in the spiritual war?