

The Final Word of Warning

1. Intro

- When our kids were babies we used to give them a dummy to help settle them when they were tired and wanting to go to sleep
 - When you've got 4 kids under 5 all still at home ... you'll try anything to manage that little tribe!
- Dummies are great for a while ... but eventually there comes a point there they need let go of it ... they need to move on
 - It's part of growing up ... no one wants to see a 16 year old going off to school with a dummy pinned to his shirt
- When Jordan was a baby he loved his dummy and his blanky
 - He used to shove the dummy in his mouth, hold his blanky up to his face and lie down in his cot / bed and go off to sleep happy as Larry
 - This was fine while he was a baby and toddler ... but as he was getting ready to go to ~~high school~~ pre-school we realised the dummy needed to go
- So we prepped him up for the big occasion
 - "When you turn three, on your birthday, we're going to get rid of the dummy because you'll be a big boy and big boys don't need their dummies anymore"
 - Lots of reminders, cajoling him along
- The night before his 3rd birthday we reminded him again and when he fell asleep, we took the dummy away never to be seen again
 - The next day all was fine ... until it was time to go to bed that night
 - As Liana was putting him down he looked up with his big eyes and said
 - "When can I be 2 again?" :)
- He didn't want to grow up
 - He wanted to stay two
 - He wanted to stay and baby and not mature ... because it was going to be hard and be a challenge for him
- This was the problem that our writer to the Hebrews is addressing in this section of his letter
 - His readers don't want to grow up in their faith
 - They want to stay where they are in a spiritual infancy ...
 - Because it seems they realise the implications of maturing and growing as a Christian means they'll be challenged and it won't be easy

- You can sympathise with a 3 year old kid who doesn't want to grow up because we know it's not so serious
- But our writer to the Hebrews isn't so sympathetic ... because he knows that Christians who don't want to grow up is serious
 - And so he challenges his readers by warning them of their need to keep growing in their Christian maturity
 - Because if they don't ... they're in real danger of falling away

2. Keep growing in Christian maturity

- Last week we were looking at Hebrews chapter 5 which outlined that Jesus is our merciful and perfect high priest who
 - Because he's fully God he's supremely qualified to atone for our sins
 - Because he's fully man he's able to sympathise with us in our weaknesses
- In v11 he says *"We have much to say about this [Jesus being our high priest], but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn."*
 - Our writer really wants to continue teaching them about Jesus and the significance of him being their great high priest ...
- But there's a problem with his readers
 - v12 – *In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food!*
- At first glance it seems like his readers are unable to take in what he wants to say because they're still spiritual babies who need milk ... the basic teaching ...
 - Rather than the more advanced teaching – this solid food ... of Jesus and his priestly role for us
 - It seems like they're unable to understand and take it all in
- But if you look a bit closer you'll see it's not just that they are unable to take in this teaching
 - It seems the real reason is they're unwilling to take in this teaching
 - This is food they can't stomach
- What reasons is there to think that?
 - If they really were spiritual babies / spiritually immature ... then what they really need is milk ... the basics of Christianity
 - And if that were the case ... then the writer would be doing that

- But he doesn't ...
 - He's being giving them pretty solid / meaty stuff so far
 - He says 6:1 he's not going to give them elementary teaching / milk any more ... he wants them to have solid food
 - Ch 7-9 he returns to the solid food of Jesus being a priest in the order of Melchizedek anyway
- So it seems he doesn't think they're spiritual babies
 - Because he has already been giving them and will continue to give them solid food
- So what's going on here?
- I think a clue is in 6:1-2 where he lists out these 'elementary truths' / this milk they've been relying on
 - Repentance
 - Turning your life around > having a changed mind about God and following Jesus > turn away from sin
 - Faith in God
 - If repentance means your turn away from sin ... you need to turn to something > and the thing you turn to is faith in God > trusting him / believing in him / following him
 - Baptism and laying on of hands
 - Process of recognising a person coming to faith and becoming a member of the church
 - Resurrection of the dead
 - Sure and certain hope for those whose trust is in Jesus
 - Eternal judgment
 - Destiny of those who reject God's saving grace and persist in their sinful ways
- They're all the basics of the gospel
 - By the amazing grace of God ... you'll be raised from the dead for eternal life and spared from eternal judgment
 - Not because of anything you or I have done ... it's only by God grace
 - All we can do is repent and put our faith in God
- But what our writer is saying here in these verses is ... you can't just stay there
 - You can't just stay in spiritual nappies your whole life
 - *6:1 Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity*

- Saying ...
 - Yes you need to understand the gospel ... but you can't just stay a spiritual baby your whole life
 - You guys need to move forward in your maturity and work through the **implications** of the gospel to their life ...
 - You need to work out what it looks like to live a godly life that honours God and amazing grace he's shown us in Jesus

- But it seems those he's writing to are being spiritually lazy
 - Seems like they're unwilling to work out the deeper implications of the gospel in their lives
 - They just want to keep sipping milk

- Not saying they need to move on from the gospel
 - Not saying you need to leave behind the truth of God sending Jesus into the world to die for your sin and the need to repent and believe
 - Not saying that you're saved by the gospel and then you need to move on to some other special type of knowledge that you need to become a proper Christian

- No ... the basics of the Christian faith are ALWAYS the foundations of our faith
 - You can never let go of the death and resurrection of Jesus ...
 - If you do ... like taking away the foundations of a building ... it just collapses
 - Take away the foundations of gospel and Christianity crumbles

- But what he is saying is ...
 - You need to keep growing in your Christian maturity as you work out the implications of the gospel for your life

- **Illustration – Music**
- Like a piano tutor saying to their student ...
 - If you want to learn to play Chopin and Beethoven ... you can't just keep playing chopsticks
- Guitar teacher saying
 - If you want to play like Eric Clapton, you can't just keep playing Smoke on the Water
- In both instances you need to do the training, lay the foundations of scales and sight reading and music theory

- But use those foundations to become a more accomplished musician
- **Application**
- The particular issue our writer wants the Hebrews to understand is the significance of Jesus death for sin as the fulfilment of the OT sacrificial system and role of the high priest
- That's true for us too ... but it applies to everything that flows out of the gospel
- First thing is ... you need to understand the gospel
 - If you don't, that's okay ... let me explain
 - Mankind has rejected God > alienated us from him > deserve judgment > God sent Jesus, his Son, into the world > fully God / fully man > to die on a cross as a sacrifice of atonement to take the punishment our sin deserved > so free us to be reconciled to God
 - All we need to do is repent of our sin > thank you to God > trust in and follow him
 - That's the foundation
- But you don't stay there
 - As a Christian you need to keep growing and understanding the full implications of the gospel and what it means for your life
- If Jesus came to earth and died for your sin to reconcile you to God ... that changes EVERYTHING
 - There's not a single aspect of your life that isn't impacted by that truth
 - The gospel shapes your
 - Work life
 - Retirement
 - Leisure
 - Way you use your money
 - Parenting
 - Marriage
 - Way you use your time
 - How you use your gifts
- Gospel impacts all of life
- And the challenge of these verses is to go on to maturity and work through and allow the gospel start to have a deep impact in your life

- **Illustration**

- A friend I spoke to recently ...
 - Grew up in church > youth group > met wife in church
 - But they drifted away
 - He says he believes in Jesus and his death and resurrection and forgiveness of sin and heaven etc
 - If I asked him "do you believe the gospel?" he'd say "Yes!"
 - But he doesn't want to work through or think about the implications of the gospel for his life
- I think deep down he knows this
 - I think he knows that the gospel means he ought to take Jesus seriously and bring his life under the Lordship of Christ
 - But he avoids the issue by not coming to church
 - Because it means he's not confronted by it
 - He doesn't have to think about it
 - He doesn't want to know ... he wants to avoid the implication of the gospel and the impact it ought to have on his life
 - He wants to go so far with Jesus and then draw the line and go no further
 - I don't want to grow anymore, because the cost is too high
- So question for all if us is ...
 - Am I willing to grow in my Christian maturity?
 - Or do I want to avoid all that Jesus means for me & my life because the cost is seemingly too high?
 - Am I withdrawing from Jesus in a certain area of my life ... where I'm not prepared to live out the gospel and what the gospel means for my life?
- Now I must say I have real concern for my friend
 - Because being unwilling to grow is a real threat to our eternal future and our relationship with God
 - In fact, it can be such a threat, that our writer goes on to say that it can lead to us falling away
 - So he pleads with them in v4-12 ... keep living out the gospel

3. Keep living out the gospel (6:4-12)

- v4-6 start this section with a serious warning
 - *It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit,* ⁵ *who have*

tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age, ⁶ if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance

- These verses cause considerable discussion because at first sight it seems to be saying that the person who is a Christian can fall away and lose their salvation
 - However this view doesn't tie in well with other parts of the Bible
 - *John 10:27-29* ²⁷ *My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.* ²⁸ *I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand.* ²⁹ *My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand.*¹
- I think a better way to understand these verses as describing those who only **seem** to be Christian
 - These verses are referring to those who show outward signs of faith but aren't really Christian
 - They've dipped the toe in the water but not jumped all the way in
- He seems to be thinking of ppl who
 - have been part of a church for a while, taken part in its common life
 - but who decide it's not for them and
 - they abandon their membership,
 - and join in the public contempt for Christ and his church
- NT makes it clear that such ppl exist ²
 - Think about the Parable of the Sower told by Jesus
 - Sower scatters the seed and the seed falls on the road, rocky soil, thorns and good soil
 - Seed that falls on the rocky soil sprouts up quickly but quickly withers because it has no root
 - Seed that falls amongst the thorns grows up but is eventually choked by the thorns
- Jesus explains that the seed is word of God / gospel that gets scattered among all different types of ppl and they all respond differently

¹ See also *John 6:39* ³⁹ *And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day* *Romans 8:30* ³⁰ *And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.*

² *1 John 2:18-19* ¹⁸ *Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come. This is how we know it is the last hour.* ¹⁹ *They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us.*

- And Jesus says
 - ²⁰ *The one who received the seed that fell on rocky places is the man who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. ²¹ But since he has no root, he lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away. ²² The one who received the seed that fell among the thorns is the man who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful.*³

- So it's perfectly possible for a person to be part of the Christian community
 - Heard the gospel
 - Experienced the blessing of being part of God's family and seen the HS work in the lives of others
 - Made their own profession of faith
- And yet be one of those on whom the seed falls that fails to respond wholeheartedly to the gospel and follow Jesus
- And for such a person
 - Who experiences all that ... and yet turns away
 - Our writer says in v4 & 6 ... it's impossible for them to be brought back to repentance

- **Application**
- Not talking about
 - Falling into sin > every Christian will sin
 - Falling into prolonged and serious sin
 - Time when spiritually cold towards God
 - Time when we wander from God and come back

- What we're talking about is
 - Deliberate, conscious, decisive rejections of Jesus ...
 - By a person who knows exactly what they're doing

- That's his point in v4-5
 - A person who's enlightened to the gospel
 - A person who's tasted all those things
- They know exactly what they're doing
 - They know all about Jesus

³ *Matthew 13:20-22; Mark 4:??*

- They understand all about his death and resurrection for the forgiveness of sin
- They know it's true > they know it works ...
- And yet they reject Jesus and the gospel ... and subject him to public disgrace
- To go so far with Jesus, to be in such a privileged position and yet reject him ...
 - That can make your heart so hard ... that repentance is impossible
- **Application**
- You may be asking ...
 - "how do I know I'm not like one of those ppl he's writing about?"
 - "How can I know I won't fall away?"
- One way you can tell is ...
 - Will you repent?
 - Will you come back to Jesus?
 - If you do that ... then it will be clear that it's not you
- The call of the gospel is to repent and believe ...
 - So if you're not sure where you stand with Jesus ...
 - Repent > turn back now > don't delay > don't stay away from Jesus
 - Repent and come back to Jesus
- Many of you here this morning will probably be feeling that you haven't rejected Jesus in this way ...
 - But we must remember why this warning is here
 - He's warning his readers because they're unwilling to grow in their Christian maturity
 - And the point is ... that being unwilling to grow and mature ... could lead them to reject Jesus in this way
- Being unwilling to grow is not the same as rejecting Jesus
 - But it could lead to it
 - If you're unwilling to grow, you're in danger of it
- And so today, if you know about Jesus but are
 - unwilling to grow in him
 - unwilling to work out and live out the implications of the gospel in your life
 - then you are playing a very dangerous game
 - If you carry on down that path ... carry on holding Jesus at arms length

- You may find yourself rejecting him all together and unable to repent
- Having given the warning in 4-8, he then encourages his readers in 9-12 by reminding them of the fruitful work of God in their lives
 - *Hebrews 6:9 – Even though we speak like this, dear friends, we are confident of better things in your case-- things that accompany salvation.*
- He's confident of better things for them ...
- Reason he is confident is v10
 - because of the *'work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them.'* v10
 - Their faith is evidenced by the way they have loved and helped others
 - This he says is motivated by their *'work and love you have for him [God]'*
- These guys are living out the gospel in the way they love others and help them with their practical needs
 - The love of God in sending his son to help us ... has moved these Christians to love and help others
- He so he says to them ... v11-12
 - *We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure. ¹² We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.*
- In other words ...
 - Keep living out the gospel
 - Keep growing in Christian maturity as you work out the implications of the gospel in your life
 - Then as you understand how Jesus death and resurrection shapes that aspect of your life ... live it out
 - Keep living it out, day by day
- **Conclusion**
- We all need to hear and understand the life changing truth of the amazing grace of the gospel
 - We need to hear it and respond in repentance and faith
- But we can't stay spiritual babies
 - We need to grow in our Christian maturity

- We need to allow the full implications of the gospel shape every aspect of our lives
- We can't ignore the fact that the death and resurrection of Jesus must change us through and through

- Keep growing in Christian maturity
- As you do ... keep living out the gospel and allowing the gospel to shape and mould your life

PRAY