

## Hebrews 5:11-14

*About this we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. 12 For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, 13 for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. 14 But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.*

Those are blunt words that the writer wrote to the Hebrews: “*you have become dull of hearing.*” But facts are facts. Those to whom he was writing had been in the church long enough that they should have progressed much further than they had. And the problem wasn’t the instruction that was available, or the preaching that was taking place, but rather the fact that they hadn’t put in the effort listening and taking to heart what was set forth. We sometimes think of hearing as being more a passive activity than an active thing, but that is indeed not the case for the Christian. Hearing is a responsibility. Both the preacher or teacher and the hearer have a sacred task. Hearing takes work. It takes focus. It involves discipline, setting aside distractions, worries, and other concerns. To hear the hearer must prepare his heart, quiet his mind, and open his ears. God’s Word deserves nothing less, and otherwise it is squandered on rocky soil unfit for cultivation at the moment. Hearing takes practice, and practice requires persistence. We don’t give up if at first we don’t get everything any more than a basketball player quits practicing if she misses her first free throw. We don’t wave the white flag if it takes some time to learn how to listen and process what is proclaimed and presented anymore than a mathematics student surrenders if he misses a step in his first equation. No, we practice because we need the work, not because we have already perfected it. We strive to make progress, for while children take milk, “*solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.*”

Next time you prepare to study, to meditate upon God’s revelation in the Scriptures, to ponder Christ and hear preaching and teaching centered in Him, do so prayerfully, with sincerity, and with the determined intention to make yourself available to the Spirit who has worked faith in you to begin with. When someone is talking during our favorite television show, we might turn up the volume, or pause it, if we have a DVR. We don’t want to miss something important for understanding what comes next. So also, when we take the time to listen to God speak through the Bible, we should be equally resolute not to lose the train of thought or miss something important for what follows. Yes, a baby might cry, or someone might crinkle a bulletin, or there might be coughs and sneezes, but we are not there to focus or fixate upon any of that. We are there to listen. So if that means moving up a pew, move up. If that means not sitting next to the distraction next time (even if that baby sure is cute), it means finding a new seat. If that means wearing one of the hearing devices available in the narthex even if it doesn’t look cool, put one on. If it means making yourself take a vacation from all the baggage you brought in with you, insist that you do so. Children grow up, and so should Christians. While we rightly begin with milk, with the basics, we do well to move on to solid food in due fashion. There’s meat in the Scriptures, indeed, the flesh of Christ to be partaken of through faith (John 6). He is the kernel of all that God has had written for our faith and edification, and we do well to dig in and savor His goodness.