

GOODNEWS LETTER

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DULL of Hearing

"Concerning Him (Jesus) we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing," Heb 5:11.

There isn't too much difference between man's physical action and his spiritual ones. In either case - after he has been saved, he can walk, talk, feel, taste and hear spiritually, just as he does physically. Sadly though, when it comes to sleeping, men stay in the spiritual bed much more than the physical place of rest. Today, mankind has become like those Hebrew Christians - **DULL** of Hearing.

Notice. They **BECAME DULL OF HEARING**. This means that, at one time, they had an ear that gladly listened. We think men are the same, in any time period. Without responding to the Holy Spirit, people's elated "Oh" becomes "Oh, well" and excitement about each wonderful passage of truth, starts to wane. The response then, to spiritual matters, becomes the normal: "I'm just fine and happy, right where I am."

Well, Paul wasn't happy where they were. "For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food," Hebrews 5:12.

Like so many, these brethren forgot about the resurrected life of Jesus and became complacent. When this happens, the daily fulfillment of the Holy Spirit's work occurring in His body, the church, loses its power and therefore, joy goes out the window. People may still meet together, but it's a matter of only going through the motions. Paul tries hard to bring them back to faith; "to pay closer attention to what they had heard" (2:1).

However, a few definitions cited below may put some new light on 'just where everyone is, actually;' maybe, even wake some of them (us) up. That was Paul's desire.

Our first quote is **Webster's** definition - adj. Dull: **mentally slow, stupid and lacking sensitivity.** (Ouch!)

Then, **Wikipedia** offers - adj. dull·er, dull-est, **Intellectually weak; stupid. Lacking responsiveness or alertness; insensitive. Dispirited; sluggish: Arousing no interest or curiosity;**

Well, you can imagine how Paul's correct estimation of the Hebrew brethren would be received today. Religious converts appear to be doing so much and going so many places; all the while, wrapping Jesus around everything that is done, causes them to think they have acute hearing, to say the least. After all, **"It's all in the name of Jesus!"**

However, when we look at other words that are used to define **"dull,"** people might need to rethink the goings and doings. One defining word is **languid.** It means: **"Without vigor or vitality; drooping; weak. without interest or spirit; listless, indifferent; sluggish; slow.** By using the word **"dull,"** Paul isn't referring to activity. He's talking about the Word of God and its obedience. He references the Law, spoken by angels, as a starting point (2:2). Then, after stating that the **Lord's words** were confirmed by the Apostles (2:3), Paul asks, **"How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation."** Paul says a Christian's influence must come by the Word, not some great religious movement going on in the world; either, then or currently. **(Are you going to every church service? Are you staying awake?)**

Another word is **indolent,** which means: **disliking or avoiding work; idle and lazy.** **Webster** also gives the meaning as it applies to medicine - **causing little or no pain.** I like that thought because, when it comes to Bible study, most become indolent and fall out because of the pain brought on by comparing spiritual things with spiritual. Discerning passages is not an easy task.

Concerning Bible study, the wisdom of Solomon needs to be fully understood by all. **"...the preacher also taught the people knowledge; and he pondered, searched out and arranged many proverbs. The preacher sought to find delightful words and to write words of truth correctly. The words of wise men are like goads," Ecclesiastes 12:9, 10, 11.**

Thus, words **of** the Spirit are words **to** our spirits. The inspired writings provide the only sure source for spiritual liberty. Other books, the preacher says, are **"wearisome to the flesh," verse 12b,** rarely solving even the little spiritual

problems of this life. Yet, men will keep on writing human ideas down in books as long as men keep buying worldly thoughts. However, we must put a lid on other writings; or, what little time we have might not be enough to receive God's **admonitions, corrections** and **doctrine** of life that is recorded in the 66 Books of the Bible.

In Hebrews 5, Paul exposes the laziness of the Hebrew brethren. But, what does Paul mean by calling them "**Dull in hearing?**" Besides the fact that too many other things take up their time, what's behind the reason the Hebrew brethren became dull of hearing?

Are people lazy, disinterested and dispirited about '**Thus sayeth the Lord?**' Does this mean that "dull" hearing will happen automatically because of such laziness? Further, does this mean that everyone, in every age, can become "dull of hearing" because of insensitivity to God's Spirit and lack of study time?

Of course! You may check all of the above! Man is spiritually lazy, unresponsive to spiritual truth and quite happy sucking on the bottle of easily digestible milk. Even though he quotes the Bible amiss, he's quite satisfied with seeing "The Man in the sky by and by" or "Going to a better place." And, when the kingdom is mentioned, he thinks the JW's have knocked on your door, one too many times.

But, the fact is, Paul was studious. He expected everyone else to be, as well. Paul had written three previous chapters about **heeding** the word (Ch. 2:1); **taking care** of falling away (Ch. 3:12); and, **fearing**, lest we lose the promise (Ch. 4:1).

None of the chapters cited deal with losing one's salvation from condemnation and going to eternal hell. But, Paul wanted every saved church member to know of the complete, **threefold salvation message**: 1) that, men **were saved**; 2) that men **are presently being saved**; 3) that men **will be saved** in the future when the body is glorified. In Hebrews, clearly, Paul's concern is for the present salvation. That is the theme of the book of Hebrews. Simply see Chapter eleven on how present faith operates.

In Hebrews, we have the fact that the first salvation - that of passing from death unto life - is guaranteed. It will never be forfeited. But, that does not mean the other two tenses have that guarantee. The references to Israel of not entering the promised land, are just too vivid for such an understanding. We see Paul **hammering home** the present salvation idea, here; showing that, "**Solid food is for**

the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil," 5:14. Indeed, it is faith and practice, faith and practice, faith and practice.

Then, Paul begins the sixth chapter, not only encouraging believers to "**press onto maturity**," (v1), he also submits some difficult verses that are hard to understand in 4, 5 and six. "...those who have been enlightened...tasted of the heavenly gift...made partakers of the Holy Spirit...tasted the good word of God and the powers of the world to come" verses 4 & 5. Then Paul avows that "...it is impossible to renew them again to repentance" (once having fallen away) verse six.

Briefly, obedience is walking by faith. However, after being gifted by the power of the Holy Spirit in this life and about the world to come and then fall away, removes the **necessary forgiveness** that repentance normally grants. The fallen ones may not be renewed back to where they once were; that of walking in the light and having their sins forgiven through confession (I Jn 1:7-9). Paul relies heavily on the wilderness walk to explain the present walk in the New Covenant. He calls for the Hebrews of his day; along with anyone of faith, to take heed, lest we fall after the same example of unbelief. "**Take care**," Paul writes, "**in falling away from the living God**," 3:12.

It has always been said that the only sin not forgiven is the unconfessed one. But, if one thinks he is just fine, how will confession be made? When we look at Chapter 4:1, "**Therefore, let us fear**," we note that Paul includes himself in the phrase.

We repeat that the warning is not about losing one's salvation. The Hebrew writer believed in once saved, always saved (See I Cor 3:13-15). Our opinion is that Hebrews speaks to one losing his position of service for the Lord. With the thought throughout Hebrews being about "**looking for the city**" (He 11:10), believers must stand on their tiptoes of faith, peering over the next obstacle and submitting to the power of the Holy Spirit, who **leads, guides** and **directs** us to the city's location.

Paul knew that it takes a lot of study time to "**rightly divide the word of truth**." And, if we are going on the straight and narrow road that lead to the entrance of the city, one has to listen to the Word of God as it is written and, as it is preached. Therefore, Paul preaches to Timothy, "**Study to show thyself approved unto God**," 2 Tim. 2:15.

There is no doubt in my mind that people are falling away from the truth because they fail the '**teachers test**' of Hebrew 5:12. Simply put, people are very happy remaining babes in the word and babes in the service of God. Babes love to be, and must be, entertained. But, clearly, childlike faith has to grow into maturity at some time. We must study, pray and have faith in what is written. We've got to get back to the Word, only.