

Receiving & Rejoicing (Part 2)

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Preacher: Ryan Bogard

[0 : 00] Chris is out of town this week as you may be gathering right now.

! Thank you for allowing me to come and speak before you today.! We will be continuing our Spiritual Disciplines series today.

And what we affectionately called part two of last week's message. Last week, Chris discussed elders and them bringing the word to the congregation and the congregation's response to the word.

And that being a discipline that will help us treasure Christ over anything else. That will help us to live by the Spirit as opposed to living by the flesh.

And that's what we're going to be continuing to discuss today. If you will look at Hebrews chapter 5 and stand when you get there. Chapter 5 verse 11. And we're going to start there with some verses.

[1 : 15] Hebrews 5 verse 11. Amen. Amen. May God bless the reading of his word.

Father, thank you for bringing us here today. Thank you that we get to learn from your word and we get to hear what you have to say. I pray you give us ears to hear you and belief to believe everything that you've said.

And I pray that we apply your words to our life and that we grow more each day. Train our discernment to know you. To know who you are and what you want and what you've done and what you are currently doing.

And keep us from evil. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. If you'll go ahead and switch to Hebrews chapter 10 for me. We're going to talk about the Hebrews for a moment.

The Hebrew Christians in which this book is written to. See, the author of Hebrews has a message for them. And he kind of hits upon it throughout the book.

[2 : 45] And he's got some exhortation for them in 10. Then we're going to jump back to 5. So 10, starting in verse 32. See, the Hebrew Christians had started off so strong.

See how it said? Once you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings. They had sufferings. They were publicly exposed to reproach and afflictions.

They were partners with those treated. So their friends were treated the same way. They had compassion on their brothers. They were in prison. They joyfully accepted the plundering of their property.

That is what happened to them. But that's not what made them successful. What made them successful is the next verse there. So they knew that they had a better possession.

An abiding one. They knew they had Jesus. And they were able to ignore everything else. They were able to joyfully ignore everything else.

[4 : 24] They were able to minister in that time. Even though during times of great affliction and trials and turmoils. And that's what they did once they first became enlightened. Did you catch that?

That's what they were doing. But now they have need for endurance. They have need to keep going. And so that's what the writer of Hebrews is trying to get to these Hebrew Christians.

It's how to give them endurance. How to give them perseverance to make it through. How do they keep that joy they once had and now don't? Or don't seem to.

You see, he's got a message for them. If you don't turn there. But turn back to chapter 5 actually. But in chapter 2, 1, he said, pay close attention to the message you've heard.

Lest you drift away. In chapter 3, verse 8, he said, don't harden your hearts like Israel did in the wilderness. In chapter 3, verse 12, he said, take care lest you have an evil heart of unbelief.

[5 : 21] In chapter 4, verse 1, he said, fear lest you fail to enter God's rest. In chapter 4, verse 11, he said, be diligent to enter God's rest lest you fall by disobedience.

And in chapter 4, verse 14, he said, hold fast to your confession. So there's a sin trap that these Hebrew Christians were falling into. And the question is, why were they falling? Why were they in this trap? Why did they lose their joy? And that's where we pick up chapter 5. That's where he says, in chapter 5, verse 11, he says, about this we have much to say. Now, about this we have much to say. He's talking about Mechizedek. That is a big name, Mechizedek. And it's a hard thing to understand, especially if you've forgotten the beginning, the oracles of God.

If you've forgotten those things, it would be really hard for you to understand Mechizedek. And the writer of Hebrews is about to explain to them who Mechizedek was and what he did and how come that matters to you.

[6 : 28] But he had a hard time to explain it. And why? Because since you have become dull of hearing. Now, hearing is a crucial word in Hebrews.

In fact, it's said over and over and over again. And if you just flip, it's probably on the same page it is on my Bible. In chapter 3, verse 15, he says it over and over again.

Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion. And that's a quote going back to Joshua and also back to Moses' time.

When the people were in the wilderness and they were taking over the lands. And over and over, the leaders told them, today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.

And so that is the first thing he tells them, is they become dull. They've hardened. They have forgotten and have quit focusing on the oracles of God, the word of God.

[7 : 31] They have let that slip by. And so he tells them, you have become dull of hearing, 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. So here it says you ought to be teachers. And hear me today say right now, I don't think that means that you yourself should be a teacher in the church necessarily. It says that by now you should have been teachers. Now listen, what do teachers do? And let's look and see what a teacher does, what someone who is able to teach does.

And that is they take the milk, they take the food of God's word, and they make it into milk. They take and they go, okay, well this big passage, and we're going to chomp it down and make it to where people who need the milk of God's word, that need that, explain to them, that is what happens.

See, milk is pre-digested food, right? A mom, it's amazing to me how oftentimes one of my children, when we were nursing, when they were all very little, would be upset, have an upset stomach because of something that my wife ate.

[8 : 53] In fact, we ran across a mom who knew without a doubt that her kid did not like spicy food because of the reaction that she got any time she ate salsa. And it's just amazing.

So the milk of God's word broken down into little pieces. And so I don't think that what he's saying here is that everyone should be teachers because in James 3.1, James encourages that not many of you should be teachers.

So what he's saying here, though, is that you should be so familiar with God's word that you should have it so well founded in your being that you are able to understand it and that you are growing in it.

And so I'm not saying that you should be a teacher. I'm saying even though many of you are, especially if you have kids, you have to teach your kids. That is commanded in Scripture that you teach your kids the word of God.

We've been looking at Deuteronomy in my home study. We've done an inductive study into Deuteronomy. And one of the main passages there in Deuteronomy, which many of you have looked at, is that you are to look at the word of God as you're going, as you're walking, as you're up, when you're down, when you're sitting by the road, when you're walking down the road.

[10 : 06] And it just throughout. And it basically means all the time be thinking about the word of God and dwelling on the words of God and teaching those to your children. And so even though you may not have a place of teaching in the church, you do have the necessity to both teach you and yourself and your children the word of God.

So here it says that you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. Now, I want to tell you a story about myself. I was saved without a doubt.

I got saved when I was seven. I was sitting in the middle of the pews on a Sunday evening service, and I knew that God had died for me and redeemed me.

And I didn't tell my parents or anything. I just went straight forward to the pastor and talked to him and prayed and repented of my sin.

But shortly after that, I didn't have many opportunities to learn more about God. I was given a Bible that year. That year. And so I was given it as a gift, but I didn't realize that meant you were supposed to read it.

[11 : 22] And so years later, as I have been tossed here and there through different houses, and my parents were divorced, and so I moved with each one, going back and forth.

And years later, when I'm faced with this choice of whether or not I should be obedient to God or whether I should not and should disobey, and I had this choice.

And I was like, why at this point? Why? Because I had forgotten, and I'd become dull of hearing because I had not been disciplined at all.

The little that I did know, it was so very little. I knew that Jesus was great, and I knew Jesus died for my sins, and I knew that I should seek him.

But I also knew that I had this fleshly desire to do other things. And I'm a 15-year-old boy, and I just rebelled for several years.

[12 : 23] That was my life. But it became easy to rebel. It became easier because I was dull of hearing. And God, through his miraculous ways, called me back and said, you are not of this world, and brought alongside this little church, smaller than this one, to minister to me and to teach me that I was supposed to open that Bible that had so much dust on it and had moved with me everywhere, but I had never read.

And so I studied, and somehow I end up here today. And God has just been wonderful in that, taught me how to study Scripture for myself, and learned that and brought me here.

So the basic principles of the oracles of God, the gospel. These Hebrew Christians had the need to be reminded and be taught again the basic principles of the oracles of God.

They needed to hear the gospel. They needed to know that Jesus died on the cross for their sins, that they had been completely sinful their whole lives, and they chose to live by that sin, and that they needed Jesus to pay for their sins.

And they needed to know that and be reminded that often. They needed to hear that he rose again on the third day, so that way he's preparing a place for us in heaven, that he rose up to heaven, so that way he could send the Holy Spirit down and work amongst us.

[14 : 07] And they needed to hear the basic oracles of God, so that way they could get back to growing and developing.

Now, this message is not just for the church, but it is for the whole church. That was including the elders. They were all dull of hearing, and they were all having those issues.

Now, look at the next verse there. For everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. That was me.

Unskilled. I had no idea. Nothing, no real knowledge about it. But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment, trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.

That is the difference between a babe in Christ and a mature believer, is that they have, by practice of being skilled in the word of God, they have the ability to know what's of God and what's of evil.

[15 : 11] What God is doing, where he's going, they put on the mind of Christ, right? Romans 12, 2, Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may know the perfect will of God, the perfect good will of God.

That is how you do it. You take in God's word. And instead of focusing on your fleshly lives, you take in God's mind.

You're renewing your mind. And God does a miraculous work in your life, and you grow. You grow. You grow.

And you become to where you can hear. And what happens when you hear God? You believe. And your belief grows. And the more faithful you are, the more you mature, the more you grow.

The more you'll know what is of God, and the more you'll know what is of Satan, what is evil, what is of our flesh. It'll help you to raise your children, so you'll know what's the important things with your children.

[16:19] It'll help you to know, it'll help you to minister to your friends, so you'll know that, how you can tell them to proceed in their lives. It'll help you to proceed in your own lives, because you'll know what is good, what is of God, and what is of evil.

So, this, this, this, training of your powers of discernment. Now, powers of discernment, there are other, there are other translations that say it differently, that say, they're senses, but specifically, senses, senses, to have your, I believe it's New American Standard says, that have your senses trained.

Those are powers of discernment, and specifically, they're not physical discernment, it's spiritual discernment, meaning, meaning that it is, the spiritual discernment of, of, of God, what is spiritually good, and what is spiritually evil.

Those are the things that you're having trained in your life. So, what is, what specifically is, this training look like?

It's becoming skilled, in the words of righteousness, it's becoming skilled, in the ways, of the mature, the, the, it's diving deep, into the solid food, of God's word.

[17:42] It's focusing on the oracles, of God. Now, there are different principles, you can use for study, in scripture. I, I personally do, and love the inductive study method.

Now, some people like to have, Bible study classes, and I highly recommend, you start one, or find one, with other people, have a group, to encourage one another, that's what the church is for, is to come together, and encourage one another, to learn how to study scripture, to, to dive deeply, into God's word.

The first thing, you need to know, about Bible study, is you need to believe, the word. That is, we live in this, postmodern era, where there's more attacks, on the, the authenticity, and the, and the, the, the, correctness of scripture.

There's more attacks, on that now, than ever. And I've seen, so many believers, get so sidetracked, with seeking out, the manuscripts, and, and trying to disprove it, that they end up, falling away, because, because they attack, their own belief.

But you, are to believe the scripture, and know that as God breathed, that it's the sword of the spirit, that it's sharper, than any, two-edged sword, right? That's able to cut, the division, down to the marrow, right?

[19:08] That's the thing, about the word of God, is it does cut. It's going to, trim off, your flesh. It's going to. Have you ever thought, about that illustration? The metaphor, of the word of God, cutting, and being a sword, and that being, what God uses, to trim.

It's, it's cutting away, those fleshly desires. He will do that, with the word of God. Because you're in the process, of having your senses trained, and, determining, what is good and evil.

Well, I have to tell you this, but, but you were evil, right? You were evil, and you're in the process, of becoming good. You're in the process, of becoming sanctified.

You are sanctified, and that, that is your place, in Christ, that Christ has done this, but, as we've, as we've discovered, over the last couple weeks, he doesn't just leave you there.

Instead, he is in the process, of changing you. He's in the process, of sanctifying you. That last half, of Hebrews, Hebrews 12, where you, the, he loves you, like a father, loves a son.

[20:14] You were a son, and he's not going, to leave you there. You were a daughter, and he's not going, to leave you, in your miry muck, of evil. Instead, he's going, to make you good. He's in the process, of doing that.

Because, if you weren't a son, or a daughter, he would just leave you, where you are. And so, and so, that, is, is what God, is in the process, of doing.

And, and, and so, believe him. Believe him, in what he says. Be diligent. When you're, studying scripture, be diligent.

Don't give up. Just because, you've run into a hard place, or life is busy. In fact, this is probably, the number one thing, I've seen, on people, who start studying, a Bible study, an in-depth Bible study.

They give up. They get tired, they get tired of the homework, or they just don't make time, to do it.

They get tired, of studying, and, and, and, and, digging deeply. R.C. Sproul says, we fail in our duty, to study God's word, not so much, because it is difficult, to understand.

[21:17] Not so much, because it is dull, or boring, but because it is work. Our problem, is not a lack, of intelligence, or a lack, of passion. Our problem, is that we are lazy. Be diligent, in your scripture study.

Dive deeply. Why? Because if you don't, we've already seen, you'll be dull of hearing, one day. You'll wake up, and go, why didn't we go to church, this last week?

I don't know. And all of a sudden, you're, you've fallen, away. You've, you've stepped away, for the, the time.

And God is going, to discipline you, and bring you back. But it's better, that you do it. And you can maintain, your diligence, and not fall away. So, dig into a passage.

We're not just talking, about casual reading. We're not just talking, about reading your plan, through a year, which is great. But instead, dive deeply into it.

[22 : 17] Read the same, book, over, and over, and over again. Ask questions, of the book. Or the passage, that you're looking at. Who, why, when, what, where, how.

Ask those questions. Who is the author? Who is it to? What is the context here? Those are questions, you can ask, in your personal study time. Those are what you should, be looking at, to, to, to figure out, so you don't, misuse a passage, or you don't, get lost, in the passage, and try to make it, say something it shouldn't.

But, dive deeply. Be like the Bereans, in Acts 17, 11, who heard what Paul said, and they took it home, to seek the scriptures, to find out exactly, what he was talking about, and making sure, that it was accurate.

Then you also need to look, at what the Bible says, about itself. You see, when you're studying scripture, it's not so much, what my opinion is, on the scripture, it's more about, well, okay, does this line up, with the rest of scripture?

So you, so if you're looking, on a passage about, baptism, you'll look at the whole, rest of the, passages about baptism, to determine, whether or not, that passage is accurate, or whether you've, translated it accurately.

[23 : 34] There's a, and, know this also, that there's only one, interpretation, for a passage, and that is, what the Bible means, what the Bible says, is, is there's only one, correct interpretation, for that.

If you'll look at, 1 Peter chapter 2, in fact, I'll turn there with you. 1 Peter chapter 2, and we're going to look, at verse 10. It helps if I don't go, to 2 Peter.

Chapter 2, 10. Whoa. Hang on. Apparently, I wrote the wrong verse down. Well, it really helps, if you get the right verse.

So, let me find it. Wow. Well, all right, so, I can't find it right now. So, what we're going to do, is say, that what the verse said, was, that no prophecy of scripture, is, is, is, up to the interpreter's, response.

No prophecy of scripture, is up to, one's own interpretation, but, the prophecy, the scripture means, what it means. That's, a really bad paraphrase, but that's what it said. So, I'll find it, at some other juncture.

[24 : 43] But, but, so the Bible interprets itself. You, you allow, you allow one passage, to be interpreted by other passages, because it is all God breathed. It is all inspired, and it's all profitable, for reproof, for teaching, for correcting, for training, and righteousness.

That's, that's, that's what scripture says about itself. So, you can also find, key words, and key passages. Things that are repeated, oftentimes, those are the words, those are the passages, that you want to, that, that, that'll tell you, what this scripture means.

And again, just, just again, frequently, if we find ourselves, jumping to, what did Calvin say, or what did R.C. Sproul say, or what did, you pick your commentator, your favorite commentary series.

We, instead of, reading through the scripture, and, and diving deeply, and finding out what it means, we go listen to somebody else, tell us what it means. That's the same thing, as, as having a teacher, teach it to you.

Which is great, to have teachers teach it to you, but, we must, must dive deeply, on the, the food, for ourselves. Must learn how to study scripture, and dive into the scripture, so we can be like those Bereans.

[26 : 00] We dive in, and figure out what it means. That is the spiritual discipline, of, learning about scripture, about personal Bible study, is, is learning what the scripture means, and diving deeply, and, and I have no need of someone else, to tell me what it means.

Instead, I have, all the means and ability here, that everything God, once I have my, my discipline trained, I have every means I need, to understand the scriptures, and then I can go, into wonderful

commentaries, and find out, well okay, this is what I, saw in this, this is what I found in this, in my deep study, what are these great men of God, men and women of God, what do these people, have to say about the scripture, and then, that is wonderful, to, to get into them, and find out, you know what, I did pretty well, you know I was studying in this, and they, they saw the same things, and, and that's, that's the way to be, that is how you, that is how you, dive deeply into God's word, so, that is how you have, your senses trained, to discern between, good and evil, the spiritual disciplines, that you were, that you were, coming across, the spiritual discipline, of studying scripture, is taking, the meat of God's word, and devouring it, and how does that help you, become, have joy, that is the question right, that is what we're looking at, is choosing joy of Christ, living in this abiding,

Savior that we have, over, living by our flesh, well, it was some time ago, I was, I was on an airplane, I had, been studying the covenant, and all the covenants of scripture, and looking at how they relate, to one another, and I was, diving in deeply, and I was on an airplane ride, to Carolina, and, and, and I, I had been looking, looking at the covenants, starting with, starting with Abraham, and Noah, and, looking at that, and Mosaic covenants, and, all the different parts, of a covenant, the, that they would, oftentimes, when they cut a covenant, they had a meal, a feast, that when, when, when people cut covenants, they, they had signs of the covenant, there were the land, of the covenant, or, or the promises, of the covenant, depending on what it was, that there were ordinances, rules, restrictions, those kinds of things, and, I was on this plane, and, and, providentially,

I had nobody sitting next to me, which was fantastic, you, you, you've, you've gotten on an airplane before, and you, I'm a big guy, and so it doesn't help, a couple weeks ago, I was on an airplane, and, there was a guy, probably my size, and we were both next to each other, in this very small row, and, that was a very uncomfortable experience, but, this time, it was not that way, it was, it was open, so I was able to put, my Bible, on right here, and I was able to have my, notes, and things that I was taking, about it, sitting in the seat next to me, and I was, it was like, I had a desk, it was so fantastic, God had ordained this place for me, I'm telling you, because, because, he had, I was diving in deep, and in these same passages, in Hebrews, and this is why I'm thinking about it, because it's Hebrews, and, but, in these same passages in Hebrews, I came, as I'm looking at covenants, and I'm, and I'm looking, and I, finally, realize, because of the deep study, that I was doing,

I finally realized, completely, what our Savior, had done, for us, that, that not only, did I, have a Savior, who had, given up his life for me, but he, he made this covenant, with me, this new covenant, and we established, and he established this feast, where I get to partake, in, in the Lord's Supper, this feast, that reminds us, of this covenant, he made with us, every time we do it, and that, and that not only, had he accomplished, everything on the cross, because a covenant, is set, right there, he had not just done that, he had also, risen up to heaven, and was, was telling his father, that he made a covenant, with me, but I only understood it, because of diligence, and study in scripture, I only, came to this thing, and realized, exactly, what God had done for me, in that time, [30 : 40] I was, sitting there, in the, in the plane, and going, wow, I have a high priest, who's standing there, that I don't have to, sacrifice anything, that it's not up to me, my salvation, isn't anywhere near, what I've done, but Christ, walked, and cut that covenant, for me, and I'm just sobbing, basically, in the back of this airplane, because my faith, had just gone from here, to here, because now, I'm not dull of hearing, I'm not walking, in unbelief, but I am, standing there, going, father, thank you, for sending your son, to cut that covenant, for me, the personal study, of scripture, will give you, so much joy, so much joy, when you, dig deeply, into the word of God, let's pray, let's pray, let's pray,