

Is Your Exciter Broken?

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[0 : 0 0] those of you who are staying in here please take your Bibles and open up to Hebrews 5 there we go there's the excitement I didn't believe for a moment that it was only temporary last week Charles Templeton lived from 1915 to 2001 and he first professed faith in 1936 and became an evangelist that same year in 1945 he met Billy Graham and the two became friends rooming and ministering together during a 1946 Youth for Christ evangelistic tour in Europe but by 1948 Templeton's life and worldview were beginning to go in a different direction than Graham's doubts about the Christian faith were solidifying as he planned to enter Princeton Theological Seminary less than a decade later in 1957 he'd publicly declare that he'd become an agnostic in his 1996 memoir Farewell to God

Templeton writes I oppose the Christian church because for all the good it sometimes does it presumes to speak in the name of God and to propound and advocate beliefs that are outdated demonstrably untrue and often in their various manifestations deleterious to individuals and to society what a chasm from his professed faith and evangelistic zeal of the late 30s and 40s to a denunciation of those beliefs in the late 50s and afterward what happened to draw this guy away from the truth of scripture and the gospel I believe this next section here in Hebrews gives us part of the answer not just for Charles Templeton but for all whose evangelistic zeal and commitment to the gospel is all but vanished the book of Hebrews as you recall is written to show that Christianity is better than Judaism it's written to Christians to give them confidence that they made the right move when they trusted in Jesus as the Messiah if you recall the first Christians were Jews converted Jews so thus the book of Hebrews makes sense to have to be written to help these folks understand what they were leaving and what they were going to last week we saw the author's explanation of Jesus being the superior high priest on the line of the Aaronic high priest in Israel he met the qualifications he even exceeded them went above and beyond what man could produce this week the author is going to put that explanation on hold until chapter 7 in order to address a very important truth that his readers and us need to be exhorted about let's go ahead and read verses 14 sorry verses 11 through 14 of Hebrews 5 verse 11 about this that is the fact that Jesus is a high priest after the order of Melchizedek about this we have much to say and it is hard to explain since you've 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 for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness since he is a child but solid food is for the mature for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil father help us to understand so there in verse 11 the writer of Hebrews is saying there's a lot more that needs to be said about this matter but you're not ready the priesthood of Christ after the order of Melchizedek is a doctrine of primary importance to the converted Jew remember last week how we looked at the requirements of the high priest and how Jesus met and exceeded them and among those requirements was the need for the high priest to intercede on behalf of the people he offered sacrifices for their sin and represented them before God and represented God to the people atonement and representation before God are very important matters to everybody but especially especially to the converted Jew and this doctrine of Christ being designated by God

a high priest after the order of Melchizedek speaks directly to one of the greatest needs in the mind of a Jewish individual however the author says this doctrine is hard to explain it's hard to explain for the author because of one big reason the readers have become dull of hearing they've become dull of hearing this indicates that their excitors are broken when something becomes dull you're not excited about engaging with it you lose interest you want to move on to something else you see this all the time with children right they're happily playing with a new toy that someone gave them for their birthday and they're enthralled with it for 30 minutes straight and it feels like an eternity to you that little motorcycle has ventured up and down every couch cushion every piece of furniture every arm and leg that everyone in the house has at least five times then the moment happens they put the motorcycle down and they move on to something else and everyone forgets about it until you step on it with your bare foot and curse the person who gave them that motorcycle but that's never happened in my house but that example about the child with the toy they get a toy at Christmas or for their birthday and they're so excited about it they're enthralled by it they give it all their attention and their energy and they're just to the moon happy about it and the things they do with that toy like just makes no sense it's a motorcycle that's flying through the air and you know saving Superman or whatever whatever they decide to do whatever it is they decide to do they're excited about it

I have this new toy I have this new awesome thing that I got for my birthday and I can't get enough of it and then they do get enough of it they put it down it's dinner time come eat and they put it down and then after dinner they forget about it they move on to something else something different that is the idea of becoming dull of hearing great excitement rushes over a newly converted person and they burn with an unrelenting passion to tell people about Jesus and I remember that I was saved when I was 13 we moved to New York from Florida living with my grandparents I wanted to go to church with them I loved my grandparents had a great close relationship with them until the day they died and I wanted to go with them I was not saved I didn't know much I just knew God existed and I should go to church and while I was there

I heard the gospel presented clearly trusted Jesus as my savior and the rest is history but I remember those first few weeks after being saved and my grandparents took me to the local Christian bookstore can you believe at the time that they actually had Christian bookstores still I haven't seen one in years I don't know if they still have them maybe down south somewhere but we went to the Christian bookstore and I remember they were going to buy me my first Bible and I love my grandparents so much and I was so attached to them I said I want one like yours you know with all the these and nows and like all that old I want that that's what I want for my Bible King James is what it was I didn't know what it was no but they did so they bought me my first Bible I still have it it's on my desk in the office and I was so so excited I was in I was reading the word and I was taking the Bible to school with me and I highlighted everything I read I didn't know why people highlighted it in their Bible it didn't make sense to me but I was like alright I'm gonna just highlight everything I read pastor read a passage

[9 : 26] I'm gonna highlight that too I don't know what I'm doing but I was so excited I was on fire for Jesus because of what he had done the transformation that had taken place in my life and I dealt with the harassment from the students at school why are you carrying your Bible around that's weird that's dumb that's stupid whatever I didn't care opened up my Bible and said thou shalt not well anyway and that's what I did right I was so excited but the day came that I didn't take my Bible to school and I don't think I took my Bible to school any day after that it was something that was exciting and new and I was excited to tell people about it and live it out and dig into it and I was good on my Bible reading plan I was gonna beat the Bible in a year plan like I was Genesis Exodus and then the middle of Leviticus and I was done well you know that's kind of where you stop right like oh man if I deal with one more you know offering thing or one more feast thing or oh my word

I'm gonna like cry blood that's just how bad it was I was like oh man this is so bad but it's because I was immature in the faith too and I didn't really know what I was doing didn't have someone to disciple me until later on but anyway the point of the matter is this so we get into the word we get excited about Jesus saving us we want to tell everybody about it we want to give into that excitement and keep and keep sharing and keep growing and keep growing and keep reading and keep doing but then in time there's a point where interest is lost that wanes a little bit that fire kind of dims down becomes more of an ember and then you lose interest in the things of Christ excitements have become broken and that's what happened with these people in time they lost interest in the things of Christ their excitements became broken and their interest in the matters of Christ waned they became dull of hearing they didn't want to read it no more they didn't want to hear about it no more and not only have they lost interest the Greek word used for dull leads to the idea of lazy or sluggish

I like the way the Amplified Bible puts it verse 11 says concerning this we have much to say and it is hard to explain since you've become dull and sluggish in your spiritual hearing and disinclined to listen these folks there was a fire there was a passion that burned at one time that's now smoldering ember clinging not to be quenched and put out for good Spurgeon says it's true of many Christians that they learn very little to any purpose they learn very little to any purpose and always need to be going over the ABC of the gospel there are many many people in churches who are saved for 20 30 even 50 years and they still have not learned much beyond the basic call of the gospel that Christ died for your sins and rose from the dead at one point in their life they heard the gospel call they responded in faith trusting Jesus for salvation and there was that fire that raged at the beginning but has petered out and now for 20, 30, 40, 50 years however long they've been saved they need to be reminded of what the gospel is let alone the deeper matters week in and week out they sit in Sunday school classes in church pews and they numbly listen to the teacher or preacher share the nuggets of truth that they've mined for throughout the week and these matters of truth become interesting facts that they never thought of before when in fact they've heard them hundreds of times before they just forgot they did not take the teaching seriously the first time they heard it they've become dull of hearing that's what's meant by dull lazy sluggish hearing there's no real desire to internalize the truths of scripture what they hear goes in one ear maybe and out the other and how do we know this to be the case because of the next verse verse 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 that is a damning statement for his readers these people believe for so long that they ought to be teachers by now they ought to be reading and conversing over the deeper theological truths of scripture and instead they're still wallowing in their baby pool of theology this is a direct violation of the clear commands given to us in scripture colossians chapter 1 verses 9 and 10 paul writes and so from the day we heard we have not ceased to pray for you asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding so as to walk in a manner worthy of the lord fully pleasing to him bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of god paul praying for the church at colossi says we are praying that you will be filled with the knowledge of his will that you increase in the knowledge of god second peter 3 verse 18 in red for us this morning peter says but grow in the grace and knowledge of our lord and savior jesus christ never was there ever an intention from a gospel preacher that the audience who responds stay seated at the teaching of christ died

for your sins and rose from the dead foundational teaching that needs to be built on over time in ephesians 4 verse 15 paul again writing rather speaking the truth in love we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head into christ grow up is what paul told the church in ephesus as we fill ourselves with the knowledge and will of god we will be well nourished and satisfied in righteousness psalm 1 tells us that the man whose delight is the law of the lord is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season do you delight in the law of the lord do you delight in the word of god is it your nourishment is it your sustenance fruit does not appear on a tree that has not first experienced a certain amount of growth for the believer a fruit that we ought to be bearing is that of teaching others the truth of scripture but we cannot reach that point if we were stuck at the starting block continuing on he says at the end of verse 12 you need milk not solid food for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness since he is a child but solid food is for the mature for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil just two weeks ago we celebrated

Owen's second and Galen's seventh birthdays blessed to have both boys have birthdays four days apart because it makes for one party and one thing I realized as I was thinking about that in light of this passage time flies when you're busy and having fun it really does every parent in this room can identify with the feeling of their children growing up too quickly my oldest is only 11 and I already feel like he's grown up too quickly like me you can probably remember bringing them home from the hospital how dependent they were on you for everything they could not roll over or sit up they couldn't move themselves they certainly couldn't change a diaper or their clothes or the clothes that contained what the diaper couldn't they couldn't prepare their own bottle and they certainly were not going to eat meat right now that's kind of weird to mention right but duh we know babies can't eat meat silly because they don't have any teeth they're not there yet and that's precisely what the author of

[18:52] Hebrews is getting at the readers were not ready to hear more about the high priesthood of Christ because that is meat and they're still stuck on the milk and since they were still on the milk they were unskilled in the word of righteousness this phrase describes someone who lacked experience they lacked this experience because they had failed to develop the skills which their conversion had made available to them and the readers themselves were to blame for this stunted growth there was a fire there was intensity there was passion it was there and then now it's not grown dull appearing I cannot tell you I questioned whether I wanted to share this with you or not and I feel like I will just because I cannot tell you how many times as a pastor or elder or just a member of the church that I've had the conversation with another believer complaining that the teaching was over my head or I just don't understand it it's as if people were born without the ability to reason or ask questions to seek out the answers

I've had I've had people no okay so a little transparency here I've had people leave the church tell me that their the teaching is over their head they don't get it never once have I received an email a text message a phone call or have them appear in my office or even after search service talk about a pastor I don't really get that can you explain it to me can you help me better understand this passage or this word or whatever it is you meant by this point no you know what oftentimes more often than not a pastor gets good sermon preacher good sermon thank you very much we hear all the good sermons but then all the people who aren't getting those good sermons apparently are walking out the door I'm not saying this based on any recent experience but what I'm saying is that people sit in the pews and they hear a preacher preach and they hear a teacher teach in Sunday school or whatever

Bible study they may be sitting in and they have questions they don't genuinely understand I don't get this I don't understand this but rather than seeking out the answers and an explanation and rather than having a discussion over this matter which is what brings about the growth in the believer they'd rather just say I don't get it we're leaving going somewhere else so rather than wrestle with it and to wrestle through the hard stuff sometimes and experience the growing pains of being a disciple of Christ they'd rather look for the spoon fed teaching of shallow theology that does not lead to true maturity in the faith the hearts of these people that the author is writing to and I dare say the hearts of those people who are leaving churches without seeking answers without wrestling with the text without growing and seeking to grow in Christ their hearts are dull and disinterested their intellects were preoccupied and uninformed

F.F. Bruce mentions the intellect is not over ready to entertain an idea that the heart finds unpalatable I have no interest in that I have no interest in spiritual things you know why a lot of people are not interested in spiritual things because they don't understand it why people come to church they're on fire they're enthusiastic they're evangelistic they're they're just the passion is there and the flame is growing and they're just everything for Jesus and then it dies out and they go away and never be heard from again because they grow uninterested because they have questions that go unanswered there are things they don't understand and rather than trying to take the time to understand them they'll just walk off and go to somebody that they can understand that speaks at their level if you allow a five year old to decide what they want to do for school and where they want to go for school chances are whatever it is they decide is not going to be something they're going to learn from it's going to be something they enjoy it's going to be something that makes them feel good that ladies and gentlemen has been the ecclesiology of church for quite a while now how do we reach people and make them feel good that they want to stay rather than how do we take the people that are here and help them understand the word of God and mature as believers turn with me to 1 Corinthians 3 real quick 1 Corinthians 3 verses 1 through 9 we're going to settle on my third sermon of the day

I'm just kidding just read this what Paul writes to the church in Corinth he says but I brothers could not address you as spiritual people but as people of the flesh as infants in Christ I fed you with milk not solid food for you were not ready for it and even now you are not yet ready for you are still of the flesh for while there is jealousy and strife among you are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way for when one says I follow Paul and another I follow Apollos are you not being merely human what then is Apollos what is Paul servants through whom you believed as the Lord assigned to each I planted Apollos watered but God gave the growth so neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything but only

[25 : 25] God who gives the growth he who plants and he who waters are one and each will receive his wages according to his labor for we are God's fellow workers you are God's field God's building Paul makes it clear Paul is nothing Apollos is nothing let's bring it into today's vernacular John MacArthur is nothing John Piper is nothing Charles Ryrie is nothing don't become followers of an individual and a person I have something that you already know Pastor Ken is nothing I'm a sinner man I'm a sinner saved by the grace of God I really feel like the only difference between you and me is I'm brave enough to stand up here and tell you but no that's it I'm a sinner I'm broken and I'm just telling other broken people how they can go and get fixed

Paul makes it clear that the watering of the believer comes from many sources but the growth can only be attributed to God look around you this morning appease me by turning your heads look around you there are many sources there are many opportunities to be watered this is one of many there are many people in this building there are many people who are not here today that you can meet with and you can have coffee with oh man coffee and the Bible talk about a great morning right and get a donut in there that might even make it a little sweeter but you can sit down with you can open the Bible with and you can read with and you can look at each other and say I don't get it and then you can start looking for answers you can be searching out scripture together you can be looking for answers asking other mature believers but the fact is this this is not the only place that growth happens there are many watering places go get watered by somebody water each other be in the word together pray together seek answers together ask questions together and I suppose like if it comes down to it like you don't know who to go to you can always come to me

I don't have all the answers don't listen don't hear that wrong I don't have all the answers in fact probably a lot of the questions you have I'll be like man I have no idea I'll tell you what I'll do I'll go look for the answers too let's grow together let's encourage one another it's through this constant exposure to the teaching of the truth of scripture that believers have their powers of discernment trained God works through the ministry of watering to bring about growth in your life but you will not grow if your exciter is broken and you're not giving attention to the word so where are you at is your exciter broken have you been so long a believer that you ought to be a teacher by now but you can't because your growth has been stunted brother sister plead with

God to renew the passion that once burned within for the things of God don't let the pleasures of this world and the concerns of life quench it anymore there's no greater reward than knowing Jesus as your Savior and there is no greater privilege than to serve him with your heart soul mind and strength father thank you for your word thank you for the conviction of your spirit Lord there's a lot this morning that I said that I had to hear Lord I pray for the renewed passion I pray for the fire in my life to be ignited and fanned into a consuming fire for you and Lord

I pray for this body of believers I pray for this church here in this community that our passion for the gospel would be so obvious our love for you would be so sure and Lord I pray that we would take opportunities that we would make opportunities Lord to meet together to be in your word Lord it could be we know there are so many opportunities we have to gather together and we do we enjoy the world series and the super bowl we enjoy going out together on a hunt Lord I pray that somewhere in there we could find the joy that exists in mining the truths of scripture for nuggets of truth and encouragement for us to grow and for us to encourage one another in Jesus name

[31 : 07] I pray Amen