

Lenten Devotional Reflection
17 March 2020 (Lent Day 18)

Scripture: Hebrews 5:11-6:12 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

¹¹ About this we have much to say that is hard to explain, since you have become dull in understanding. ¹² For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic elements of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food; ¹³ for everyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is unskilled in the word of righteousness. ¹⁴ But solid food is for the mature, for those whose faculties have been trained by practice to distinguish good from evil.

¹ Therefore let us go on toward perfection, leaving behind the basic teaching about Christ, and not laying again the foundation: repentance from dead works and faith toward God, ² instruction about baptisms, laying on of hands, resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. ³ And we will do this, if God permits. ⁴ For it is impossible to restore again to repentance those who have once been enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, ⁵ and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, ⁶ and then have fallen away, since on their own they are crucifying again the Son of God and are holding him up to contempt. ⁷ Ground that drinks up the rain falling on it repeatedly, and that produces a crop useful to those for whom it is cultivated, receives a blessing from God. ⁸ But if it produces thorns and thistles, it is worthless and on the verge of being cursed; its end is to be burned over.

⁹ Even though we speak in this way, beloved, we are confident of better things in your case, things that belong to salvation. ¹⁰ For God is not unjust; he will not overlook your work and the love that you showed for his sake in serving the saints, as you still do. ¹¹ And we want each one of you to show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope to the very end, ¹² so that you may not become sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

Message

The writer uses milk as a symbol of beginning of spiritual life, similar to neurologist Freud's theory. Man cannot avoid going through infancy and growing up to have solid food. Paul encourages us to develop from an infant to a mature person towards perfection.

Paul also reminds us that we have forgotten the most basic teaching of Christianity. Some Bible scholars believe the teaching is basic but necessary, which includes both God's words in the Old Testament and His son's teachings in the New Testament. If we leave behind this teaching, then we "have fallen away, since on our own we are crucifying again the Son of God and are holding him up to contempt." (Heb 6:4-6).

Although Paul criticizes man falling away from the faith, He still believes "God is not unjust; he will not overlook your work and the love that you showed for his sake in serving the saints, as you still do". (Heb 6:10). The righteous God cares for us and accepts our work and love done in His name, even though we are sometimes led astray and fall away from the faith. This is not to say that we can continue to sin and forsake God. On the contrary, God grants us strength to rise up and be His witness again after we fall into weakness.

During Lent, let us avoid falling into the temptation, hold fast to the faith and hope given by God, strive to grow spiritually to leave the infant stage and become more mature and like Christ.

Reflection

1. Try to recall what behavioural characteristics do you have when you are a new believer who lives on milk? Looking back, do you think you were very immature? Can you share this experience to other new believers?
2. Forsaking faith is not accepted by the Lord. Have you experienced such a situation in your spiritual life? How did you get out of the slump? Would you say a word of gratitude to those who have helped you?
3. During Lent, what can you do to respond the loving and merciful God?

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