Go On To MATURITY!

Hebrews 5:11-6:20

6-6-2021

Introduction:

*** Each one of us must *go on to maturity!***

4 Reasons why we should mature in Christ:

I. We must go on to maturity because
<u>COMPLACENCY IS DANGEROUS</u> (5:11-14)

II. We must go on to maturity because
<u>STARTING OVER IS IMPOSSIBLE</u> (6:1-6)

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Introduction: Being a baby is great; unless you stay there. Growth is expected.

Nothing was so feared by seamen in the days when ocean vessels were driven by wind and sail as the doldrums. Occurring usually in the part of the ocean near the equator, the doldrums abound in calms, squalls, and light, baffling winds. There, the weather is hot and extremely irritating. The old sailing ships, when caught in the doldrums, would lie helpless for days and weeks, waiting for the wind to blow again.

Have you been caught in spiritual doldrums? Or have you been mechanically going through the motions of outward Christianity, but have lost the joy and assurance of your salvation?

Hebrews is a book of rebuke, encouragement, and exhortation. These Hebrews were Jewish Christians who were experiencing pressure and friction from within and without. In their "former days" when they had just been saved, they endured afflictions and mockings. They had confidence in the promises of God, and patiently did His will. Now, however, discouragement had begun, which led to doubt, then to neglecting the benefits of the salvation which they possessed. Because they ceased to go forward in their Christian life, they began to face the temptation of drifting back.

Hebrews 6:1 says to *"go on unto perfection"* (completion or maturity). "Go on" = be carried onto - passive (God moves us on!)

* Each one of us must *go on to maturity!*

4 Reasons why we should mature in Christ:

I. We must go on to maturity because
<u>COMPLACENCY IS DANGEROUS</u> (5:11-14)

6:1 - *"Therefore"* -- a continuation of thought from chapter 5.

The writer in chapter five described how Christ was superior to the Old Testament priesthood and the writer was about to compare Him with the Old Testament priest and king Melchizedek, but abruptly stopped to interject a parenthetical warning (exhortation).

A. Complacency can cause spiritual dullness (v. 11)

The saying "use it or lose it" could apply to these believers ("Evangelize or fossilize"). Because of neglect, they became apathetic and lazy - acquired an inability to perceive the Word of God.

"Dull" - slow moving in mind; to be forgetful

Acts 7 - Stephen's message brought conviction - they stopped their ears (refusal to believe closes the ears).

Unbeliever = deaf
Backslider's ears are dull of hearing spiritually (calloused)

They became dull on their own (active tense).

Simple-mindedness necessitates simple explanations.

B. Complacency can cause stunted growth (v. 12-14)

"Age" alone does not produce maturity. Can't just say, "Give me time and I'll grow out of my hot temper, selfish ambitions, jealous spirit, etc."

ILLUS: of principal of school whose chose a teacher with ten years experience to fill an administrative job. Another teacher was upset and said, "I have 25 years of experience. Why wasn't I chosen?" The principal replied, "No, you are wrong. You do not! You just have one year of experience 25 times."

ILLUS: Stunted fish because of the lack of food/water conditions.

"First principles" - rudiments, A-B-C's, basics

Their need for a teacher indicates they never grew.

Their need for milk indicates they never grew (nothing wrong with milk, but something is wrong if you stay with only that - I Pet. 2:2)

ILLUS: New Britain Memorial Hospital: crippled/retarded people. Physical and mental retardation is a sad thing, but spiritual retardation is even sadder. It's inexcusable.

Typical of the book of Hebrews is the sharp contrasts which it makes of people. Verse 14 describes the Christian who does not need pre-digested food. He is of full age (mature). He has his senses exercised (trained).

"Who by reason of use" - habitual application of God's Word; stepping out by faith.

Result: Skillful perception; spiritual sensitivity

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V. 11- 14 - The writer of Hebrews (and God) feels the sorrow that a parent would feel if their child only matured so far.

V. 12

Every believer should eventually be equipped to teach - it's expected! (Jews who boasted of authority in spiritual matters [and thus obligated themselves] lacked ability).

They had been saved for some time (long time since conversion).

"To whom much is given, much is required" (accountability).

"Again" indicates that they were taught before.

Because they needed the basics taught to them, this shows that they even forgot simple A-B-C's/ Old Testament truths. They actually regressed, went backwards (like forgetting Greek or Hebrew if not acted upon and used).

Immaturity is revealed by the diet - ***"milk"***

V. 13

Note the use of sarcasm - equating them with infants.

A milk diet indicates inexperience.

The word of righteousness includes more than basic elements.

V. 14
Just as milk is for the infant, solid food is for the adult.

"Who by reason of use" - habitual application of the Word results in skillful character, disposition, or condition.

Increased knowledge of the meat of the Word results in increased perception, sensitivity in spiritual matters.

Perception comes through habitual exercise.

A baby is prone to put anything and everything into his/her mouth.

Spiritual perception is for distinguishing between good and bad (like the banker who knows counterfeit money because of habitual contact with the real thing).

Applications for 5:11-14 -

These Hebrews were going through <u>same</u> experiences year after year. Today many Christians suffer from prolonged adolescence, merging into premature senility! They come to church and sit, soak, and sour!

They had no answers to help anyone else out of a problem (ILLUS: of Harold Camping, who can't explain the simple gospel).

A mark of immaturity is:

1) Inability to instruct others
2) Inability to discern good from evil (EX: Galatians)
   --they are doctrinally undiscerning
   --give in to passing theological fads
      a. Some are emotionally gullible - moved by emotional appeal, hence are personality followers
      b. Some are intellectually gullible - attracted to speakers who sound great - but tie in philosophy, human logic, etc.

Immaturity is <u>costly</u>! <u>You</u> lose out on deep truths you are to be knowing and living. Your people will lose out (if you are a pastor).

Maturity comes by practice - Acting on what you believe, stepping out on it, putting it into practice . . . *"Therefore, go on to maturity"* (6:1).

II. We must go on to maturity because
STARTING OVER IS IMPOSSIBLE (6:1-6)

When a Christian becomes complacent, he hears the Word of God preached it rolls off him like water off the back of a duck. He becomes a dead Christian, a backslider, a doubter of the Word of God (Many people feel that they lose their salvation and need to be saved again).

A. Your Christian life is a life of **GROWTH** (v.1-3)

They were to leave the teaching about Christ, teachings that led them to Christ, preparatory teachings. Like elementary school which is preparatory. As a calculus student has moved on from elementary math.

"Let us go on unto perfection (maturity)" -

Paul, writing to the Philippians, said, *"Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended* (attained total perfection), *but this one thing I do . . ."*

To go on to perfection (maturity) is to fulfill the purpose for your being saved.

(Salvation is not just a fire escape from hell)

We have become God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works (Eph. 2:10).

Our goal should be *"to be conformed to the image of Christ."*

"Not laying again the foundation" - key words

They feared falling away. Rather than trusting, they went back.

Foundation teachings did not need repeating. Foundational principles - preparatory; pointed to Christ.

1. ***"Dead works"*** = works with no connection to character; motions of religion. For most Jews, life was a ritual - continual sacrifices.

2. ***"Baptisms"*** = teachings about Jewish ceremonial washings, and also the baptism of John the Baptist (cp. 9:18). Levitical cleansings.

3. ***"Resurrection"*** = Old Testament saints looked for. Job cried out that after his body had decayed, *"yet in my flesh shall I see God."* (Job 19:25-27; Ps. 17:15; Is. 53:10, 12).

4. ***"Judgment"*** = motivation to turn from sin (Is. 66:24).

These truths pointed out to a Jew that life on this earth was not everything, but, as John the Baptist preached, they must *"flee from the wrath to come."*

They were to go from shadow to substance . . .
from type to antitype . . .
from husk to kernel . . .
from dead ritual to living reality.

*These truths pointed to the Author and Finisher of our faith (Jesus). Because they were saved, they did not need to re-lay these foundational truths again, since they had the Foundation Himself.

ILLUS: of a sky scraper continually re-laying foundation.

Their besetting sin was lack of faith in the Word of God. So they tried re-examining their salvation.

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V. 1

"Having left" - graduated from elementary school which prepared men for full revelation in Christ.

Maturity is a work of God - Note passive verb; cp. v. 3 - *"If God permits."*

Believers must yield, allow God to carry/move them on to it, with no resistance! (*"He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it. . ")*

Maturity should be the goal of every believer.

Immaturity is seen by unnecessary repeated activity.

Don't try to add legalistic foundations to the pure simple gospel! *"For other foundation can no man lay..."*

Applications for 6:1 -

"Let's get on with it!"
Perfection = not sinless perfection (I Jn. 1:8).

Paul says he and some of Philippians were perfect (3:15), then says he was not yet (3:12).

"Not laying again" - Foolishness of laying a foundation and tearing it up and relaying it over and over.

One man has said, "You know, I have discovered an interesting thing about American Christians. They do not usually comes to church to learn anything. Whatever they do not yet know themselves, they think is heresy! What they want to hear is the same old stuff so they can say 'Amen, brother, Amen, preach it!'."

"Dead works and faith" - conversion truth

"Baptism, laying hands" = ordinances

"Resurrection, eternal judgment" - prophecy

(p. 82, Roy Stedman)

"I ain't what I oughter be, and I ain't what I'm gonna be, but I sure ain't what I was!" (testimony of a simple, but sincere woman).

These people are saved! You can't mature in something you haven't begun. They would not be called infants if they had never been born!

V. 2

Some teachings can cause preoccupation.

Some teachings are stepping stones.

Some teachings are to be left and moved on from - these were teachings taught under the Law (six principles taught in Old Testament to prepare the godly in Israel for coming Messiah).

Washings - oral tradition EX: ceremonial cleansings of Jewish elders (Mk. 7:4; Lk. 11:38). Old Testament cleansing from impurity (EX: touching a corpse); Levitical cleansings.

V. 3

All spiritual growth depends upon God's working. Future plans should always be made in total subjection to divine permission (I Cor. 16:7; Ja. 4:13-15).

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B. Your Christian life is a life of **<u>NO RETREAT</u>** (v.4-6)

In verses 4 - 6 the author paints a picture or describes a situation, to demonstrate the absolute foolishness (folly) of their going back to Jewish foundational teachings again.

1. You have spiritual privileges (v.4-5)

"Those" - speaking about Christians in general (speaking hypothetically)

"Once for all" - complete (do you remember your salvation experience when your eyes were opened for the first time?) (unsaved man is spiritually blind).

"Enlightened" - Heb. 10:32 - *"Former days after. . . you were illuminated."*

"Tasted" - to fully experience, as *"Christ tasted death"* (Heb. 2:9). ILLUS: of child who experiences by putting things in mouth. Ps. 34:8 - *"O taste and see..."* Acts 10:10 - Peter became hungry and *"would have eaten."* Ps. 34:8 - *"O taste and see that the Lord is good..."*

"Partakers" - shareholder; possessor of the Holy Spirit. Participant (3:1 - *"partakers of heavenly calling";* 3:14 - *"partakers of Christ";* 12:8 - *"partakers of chastening")*

"Understand the Word of God" - which came to fruition in Christ.

A Christian in the first century saw: ***"powers"*** (mighty works, miracles, signs) (a foretaste of eternity) (Heb. 2:3-4).

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V. 4
Initial spiritual enlightenment occurs only <u>once</u> - Heb. 10:32 - *". . . former days, in which, after you were <u>illumined</u>."*

Initial spiritual enlightenment occurs only by God's working (passive).

Light ----- gift ----- Holy Spirit ----- Word ----- miracles

Believers are <u>made</u> (by God) partakers of the Holy Spirit.

V. 5

They experienced/saw how God's Word came to fruition in Christ.

They experienced God's sign miracles vindicating the authenticity of His Word.

The Aorist tense in the five participles points to conversion experience.

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2. You cannot begin over (v.6)

"Fall away" - fall beside; side step; get off the main course. (The word used is NOT "apostacia" to apostacize.

(It's impossible to start over, because it's impossible to fall away)

Restate their problem: Fear of falling away; so they retreated and tried relaying foundational truths.

Impossible for a genuine Christian, if he fell away, to be renewed. Why? Because he can't fall away.

v.6 – Illustration: It is impossible once a baby is born for it to be born all over again.

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V. 6

It is impossible to reach the ultimate, then side-step that path and experience something greater!

"Fall away" - can't mean losing salvation -- 7:25 - *"save to the uttermost..."* (forever).

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3. You cannot re-crucify Christ (v.6b)

If it were possible for a Christian to lose his salvation (which it is not), he could never get it back again, unless Christ died a second time.

This is why R.C.C. is blasphemous in the Mass (*"no more sacrifice for sin"* - Heb. 10:26).

ILLUS: Like saying this to a class of students: "It is impossible for a student having once enrolled in this course, if he turns the clock back (which cannot be done) to start the course over. Therefore, let all the students go on to deeper knowledge."

Although we cannot go back, we can go on! No matter what the past.

An epidemic among Christians is doubting their salvation -- Go on to maturity.

SEE: Gal. 3:1-3 (v. 3 - *"perfect"* = mature).

Are you satisfied with your maturity level? Don't come to church and just sit, soak, and sour!

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V. 6

Falling beside/aside is possible! But falling aside and experiencing another conversion experience is not possible. Especially the way the Hebrew Christians wanted or thought they could experience it - by re-sacrifice, etc.

The reason this "neo-repentance" conversion experience is impossible is because there is no more sacrifice for sin! (Heb. 10:26).

Any attempt to place validity in any other sacrifice puts Christ's work to open shame.

There is no second cross, or second cross experience. No such thing as being saved a second time (though it might be convenient sometimes). Can't start the Christian life over.

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III. We must go on to maturity because
<u>FRUIT IS EXPECTED</u> (v.7-11)

Jesus said in Matt. 7:20, *"By their fruits ye shall know them."*

v.7 speaks of a fruitful Christian life that does not try to build "dead works" on the foundation of Christ for salvation.

Verses 7 & 8 teach the <u>identity</u> of the believer.

Verse 7 speaks of a true believer whose fruit is an indication of his heart. Spiritual productiveness is a manifestation (proof) of the operation of divine grace.

Verse 8 in contrast illustrates an unbeliever who brings forth worthless fruit.

Is there an indication by the way you live that you are a believer? If you are not saved, "What are you waiting for?"

Illustration: The man coughing up blood can't ignore such symptoms.

Does your life bear fruit or thorns? (Do you attract others to Christ or drive them away? Do you serve Christ or self? Do you love others or bitterly attack the brethren?

V. 9
"We are persuaded (confident, convinced) ***better things*** (fruits) ***of you"***

ILLUS: Old man on his death bed - regrets life.

My friend, where are the fruits in your life? Fruits of the Spirit? Where is the love, where is the joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance (self-control) in your life?

V. 10
Although these Hebrew Christians lacked fruits now, they did demonstrate them when they first were saved.

V. 11
Your problem may be, as it was with these Hebrew Christians, that you are not diligently showing ***"full assurance of hope unto the end."*** You are not trusting God's promises.

We sing "Standing on the Promises," but do we live it?!

IV. We must go on to maturity because
<u>GOD IS TRUSTWORTHY</u> (v.12-20)

"When God makes a promise, faith believers it, hope anticipates it, and patience awaits it."

A. God's promises are <u>sure</u> (v. 12-17)

V. 12

"Follow" (imitate or mimic) those who are inheriting the promises.

"You are not the first to launch out on the glories and perils of the Christian faith. Others braved the dangers and endured the tribulations before you and won . . . the Christian is not treading an untrodden pathway. He walks where saints have trod."

Read V. 13-15

Abraham received his promise - the Jewish people today are living proof - though he was 100 years old when his son Isaac was born.

B. God's promises are <u>unchangeable</u> (v. 18-20)

1. Because God is unchangeable

He can't break His Word.

We have a strong consolation (encouragement), who have rested in the Son of God.

"City of refuge" - to provide protection and freedom

2. Because Christ is our anchor (a symbol of security)

"Cast all your care upon Him."

The hymnwriter showed this by penning these words: "What have I to dread, what have I to fear, leaning on the everlasting arms; I have blessed peace with my Lord so near, leaning on the everlasting arms."

3. Christ is our forerunner

He rose from the dead and is in Heaven awaiting our following.

Our lives are hid with Christ in God (Col. 3).

Conclusion:

Each Christian is chosen by God to experience a life that is exciting, growing, and maturing. Every day we (as believers(ought to be getting better. The reason is simple: If we don't, we become worse. No one ever stays the same.

"The Christian life is like a bicycle; if you don't go forward, you will eventually fall down."

Go on to maturity, because:

--Complacency is dangerous
--Starting over is impossible
--Fruit is expected
--God is trustworthy

Don't let your life drift, trapped in the doldrums. Get out of your lukewarm mediocracy.

The exhortation to you today, as it was to the Hebrew believers, is - "Go on to maturity."