

# Failure to Grow & Mature

Hebrews 5:11 – 6:6

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## INTRODUCTION:

- A. How old are you? . . . Or, how young are you?
1. Not in Chronological years . . . But in Christian years.
  2. Examples: (Counting from 2008)
    - a. Born in 1935 and obeyed the gospel in 1950 . . . Chronologically you are 72 years old, but in Christian years you are 58 years old.
    - b. Born in 1960 and obeyed the gospel in 1975 . . . Chronologically you are 48 years old, but in Christian years you are 33 years old.
    - c. Born in 1980 and obeyed the gospel in 1995 . . . You are 28 years old chronologically, but in Christian years you are 13 years old.
    - d. How old are you in Christian years? . . . How old are you in terms of spiritual growth?
      1. You don't look seventy two! . . . You may not look your chronological age.
      2. But do you act at the maturity level of your Christian age? . . . Many in the 1<sup>st</sup> century did not.
- B. Background of Lesson Text.
1. The Book of Hebrews was written between 64 and 68 A.D., some 34 to 38 years after the establishment of the Church and some 2 to 6 years before the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans.
  2. Many Jewish Christians, having stepped out of Judaism into Christianity, wanted to reverse their course in order to escape persecution by their countrymen.
    - a. The Hebrew writer exhorts them to “go on to perfection.” **6:1**
    - b. His appeal is based on the superiority of Christ over the Judaic system.
      1. Christ is better than angels, for they worship Him.
      2. Christ is better than Moses, for He created him.
      3. He is better than the Aaronic priesthood for His sacrifice was once for all time.
      4. He mediates a better covenant than the old one.
    - c. In short, there is more to be gained in Christ than lost in Judaism.
    - d. Pressing on in Christ produces tested faith, self-discipline, and a visible love seen in good works.
  3. The author provides a series of four warnings/dangers throughout the book.
    - a. 1<sup>st</sup> warning: Hebrews 2:1-4 – The Danger of Neglect.
    - b. 2<sup>nd</sup> warning: Hebrews 3:7 – 4:23 – The Danger of Unbelief.
    - c. **3<sup>rd</sup> warning: Hebrews 5:11 – 6:20 – The Danger of Not Maturing.**
    - d. 4<sup>th</sup> warning: Hebrews 10:26-39 – The danger of Drawing Back

4. It is the third of these warnings that we wish to consider in this study.

C. **Hebrews 5:11 – 6:6** - “We have a great deal to say about this, and it’s difficult to explain, since you have become slow to understand.

<sup>12</sup> For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of God’s revelation. You need milk, not solid food.

<sup>13</sup> Now everyone who lives on milk is inexperienced with the message about righteousness, because he is an infant.

<sup>14</sup> But solid food is for the mature—for those whose senses have been trained to distinguish between good and evil.

<sup>6:1</sup> Therefore, leaving the elementary message about the Messiah, let us go on to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, faith in God,

<sup>2</sup> teaching about ritual washings, laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.

<sup>3</sup> And we will do this if God permits.

<sup>4</sup> For it is impossible to renew to repentance those who were once enlightened, who tasted the heavenly gift, became companions with the Holy Spirit,

<sup>5</sup> tasted God’s good word and the powers of the coming age,

<sup>6</sup> and who have fallen away, because, to their own harm, they are re-crucifying the Son of God and holding Him up to contempt. ”

D. Foundational instructions are tools.

1. Say ABCs. All the letters one will ever need to write out any word in the English language. These are foundational tools for writing, spelling speaking, vocabulary, etc.

a. ABC’s are foundational tools

b. Form them by printing them

c. Learn to sound them

d. Learn to arrange them to formulate words

e. Learn to use them phonetically

f. Learn to use individual letters to formulate words . . . Then words to formulate sentences . . . Then sentences to formulate paragraphs . . . Then paragraphs to formulate complete documents.

2. The power of the 26 letters of the English alphabet.

a. Of the estimates 2,700 languages in the world today, more than 750 million people use the English language.

b. *The Webster’s Third New International Dictionary* has a vocabulary of over 450,000 words.

c. “An average educated person knows about 20,000 words and uses about 2,000 words in a week.



- b. “What is the Largest known prime number? (A prime number is a positive number divisible by only itself and 1 — for example, 2, 3, 5, 7, 11, etc.)
  - c. The team at Central Missouri State University, led by associate dean Steven Boone and mathematics professor Curtis Cooper, found it in December, 2005 after programming 700 computers years ago.
  - d. The number that the team found is 9.1 million digits long.
- E. Letters or numerals all begin with the basics as foundational tools . . . And from there one moves on with its uses.
- F. Foundational instructions are tools. They are meant to give you the skills that you need in order to discover truth. Like reading, writing, and arithmetic, they allow you to discover. Foundational teachings do the same thing. They give you a frame of reference about the things that accompany salvation . . . Learn them . . . Use them to move one.

### **HEBREWS 5:11-14**

- A. After having spoken of some of the most majestic things possible, the author of Hebrews now makes a rather startling charge . . . They had become dull of hearing.
1. What is dullness? The word “dull” has the meaning of being slow to understand, or lusterless, or lifeless. Disciples of Jesus were like this in John 16:12.
  2. What causes spiritual dullness?
    1. Poor teaching may cause it.
    2. Never getting above the milk stage may cause it.
    3. Poor appetite for spiritual things may cause it.
    4. The failure to exercise and practice spiritual things may cause it.
    5. Failure to partake of God’s Word regularly may cause it.
    6. Failure to protect oneself from sin may cause it.
    7. Etc.
- B. 11-13 – Spiritually speaking, there is a beginning place . . . The ABCs and 0-9 numerals principles of the Bible. Christianity has a beginning place in every life that embraces it.
1. Designated by such references as:
    - a. God’s Plan for Man’s Salvation
    - b. The Plan of Salvation
    - c. First Principles
    - d. Becoming a Christian.
    - e. Etc.
  2. All of this is just the beginning of one’s becoming a Christian and living the Christian life.
- C. In so obeying the Gospel of Christ, one becomes a new convert . . . A babe in

Christ . . . “Baby Christian . . . Fully forgive on all past sins . . . Added to the Church . . . A home in Heaven awaiting them.

1. Now God expects one to grow in their salvation.
  - a. **1 Peter 2:2** (NKJV) – “As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby.”
  - b. **1 Peter 2:2** HCSB) – “Like newborn infants, desire the unadulterated spiritual milk, so that you may grow by it in [your] salvation.”
  - c. **1 Peter 2:2** (NIV) – “Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation.”
  - d. **1 Corinthians 3:2-3** – “I fed you milk, not solid food, because you were not yet able to receive it. In fact, you are still not able, <sup>3</sup> because you are still fleshly. For since there is envy and strife among you, are you not fleshly and living like ordinary people?”
  - e. **Ephesians 4:13-14** – “Until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of God’s Son, [growing] into a mature man with a stature measured by Christ’s fullness. <sup>14</sup> Then we will no longer be little children, tossed by the waves and blown around by every wind of teaching, by human cunning with cleverness in the techniques of deceit”
2. God wants you to use what you have done as a foundation and build upon it. Once one has obeyed God’s will (the Gospel), God expects him to move forward and obey God in other matters. This is called spiritual growth.
  - a. Growth is more than just a matter of time . . . It is a matter of proper effort.
  - b. Time without effort and proper diet and nourishment can result in stunted growth and a sickly appearance.
  - c. The inspired writer of the Hebrew letter is addressing people in our lesson text who did not move one . . . who did not grow.
3. Please do not misunderstand.
  - a. What they did initially was important.
  - b. The “rudiments” and “first principles” were important and timely at their initial obedience.
  - c. The problem is that they did not endeavor to grow beyond that and presently were in need that someone even teach them those things all over again.
  - d. True spiritual growth comes as the result of:
    1. Prayer
    2. Study
    3. Meditation
    4. Faithfulness
    5. Diligence
    6. Successful struggle against temptations

- e. Matters of right and wrong do not always appear as checkerboard squares of black and white. Satan’s deceptions are tricky.
- 4. The great loss to the spiritual infant is that he may be misled, an eventuality that becomes certain unless he attains some degree of spiritual maturity. The Lord and His church need full-grown men, men who . . .
  - a. Are not blown about by every wind or doctrine.
  - b. Have triumphed over the fleshly things of this life.
  - c. Are a loving and deep personality.
  - d. Able to comfort and encourage the weak and the discouraged
  - e. Prepared to stand against all obstacles whatsoever.
- 5. Spiritual infants cannot satisfactorily do these things because they have not grown to the point of being able to do so. They will be able to in time if they will only grow as the Bible so directs.
- D. Failure to discern between good and evil can prevent spiritual growth.
  - 1. Christians must discern between the Old Testament and the New Testament.
  - 2. Christians must discern between things which build up and things which destroy.
  - 3. Christians must discern between the things of the old Man (nature) and the new creature.
  - 4. Christians must discern between earthly wisdom and heavenly wisdom.
  - 5. Christians must discern between the form of godliness and the real thing.
  - 6. Christians must discern between what is permissible and what is advisable.
  - 7. Christians must discern between the people of God and the people of the world.
  - 8. Etc.

### HEBREWS 6:1-3

- A. Leaving . . . “the first principles” is not enjoined in the sense of departing from those fundamental things, but in the sense of progressing beyond them. They are a foundation upon which the remainder of one’s Christian life must be built.
- B. The “perfection” in Hebrews 6:1 refers to a more extensive and thorough knowledge of Christian principles as compared to a mere acquaintance of the basic fundamentals. **Matthew 5:48** – “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”
- C. Six fundamental Christian doctrines are mentioned as being a part of these first principles . . . Each important in its intended time and place in the Christian’s life.
  - 1. Mentioned are:
    - a. Repentance from dead works
    - b. Faith toward God

- c. The teaching of baptisms. Note the plural . . . We will return to this.
  - d. The laying on of hands
  - e. The resurrection of the dead.
  - f. The eternal judgment
2. Two categories are mentioned in the six doctrines:
    - a. The plan of salvation,
      - 1, Faith
      2. Repentance
      3. Baptism
    - b. Doctrines that pertain to all people collectively.
      1. The laying on of hands
      2. The resurrection of the dead.
      3. The eternal judgment
  3. The use of the plural “baptisms” doubtless sprang from the fact that no less than seven baptisms are mentioned in the New Testament.
    1. The baptism of the Holy Spirit. Matthew 3:11
    2. The baptism of fire. Matthew 3:11
    3. The baptism of John. Matthew 3:16
    4. The baptism unto Moses. 1 Corinthians 10:2
    5. The baptism of Suffering. Luke 15:30
    6. The baptism for the dead. 1 Corinthians 15:29
    7. The baptism of the great commission. Matthew 28:18-20

**NOTE:** The seventh of these is beyond question the “one” baptism of Ephesians 4:5.
  4. “Repentance from dead works.”
    1. Repentance is basic to salvation on the part of both aliens alien sinners and Christians.
    2. “Repentance from dead works” would include:
      - a. Works of human righteousness.
      - b. Works of the flesh.
      - c. Works of mortal achievement.
      - d. Works of the Law.
      - e. Etc.

### HEBREWS 6:4-6

- A. According to verse 3, the writer will make no attempt on his part to re-teach his former lessons on the subject of the fundamentals . . . The reason for this being that it would do no good anyway.
  1. This was true because of the impossibility of rekindling the cold ashes of a dead faith after its life-giving flame had been extinguished.
  2. He does, however, devote some little space in verses 5 & 6 to an explanation of that reason.

3. The object of the writer is to set before his readers the fearful import of the dangers to which they were exposed. If we are not constantly going on in the direction of Biblical perfection, then we are in constant danger of apostatizing and in so doing placing ourselves beyond the possibility of recovery.
  - a. They lose all desire to be a Christian.
  - b. They lose all desire to follow the revealed will of God.
  - c. They no longer have and interest in, or desires for, spiritual matters.
  - d. The light that burned within them has gone completely out.
  - e. They have totally given up . . . They have totally quit.
- B. The most difficult word in this passage is the word “impossible.”
  1. We know that all things are possible with God except that he should lie or deny Himself.
  2. These to whom the writer was addressing these remarks had committed a deadly sin . . . One from which they would not resurrect themselves. Also, **remember that during the context of the time in which this was being written, people were seeing the power of the Holy Spirit being done through the various miracles designed to confirm the power and truthfulness of the gospel message being preached.**
  3. In the first century, a pagan who investigated Christianity and then went back to paganism would make a clean break with the church. But for Jewish Christians who decided to return to Judaism, the break was less obvious. Their lifestyle remained relatively unchanged. But by deliberately turning away from Christ, they were cutting themselves off from God’s forgiveness.
  4. It is **impossible** for people who have professed to be Christians and have experienced all of the beautiful gifts described in these verses, and then turn away from Christ to be restored. Why? **Because they are nailing the Son of God to the cross again by rejecting him.** These people have shown contempt for Christ through their deliberate actions. It would be like personally crucifying Christ again. Many have argued whether someone who turns away from Christ can be restored to Christ. Some point to this passage to prove that a backslider cannot be restored. But “backsliders” are not the subject here. This passage refers to people who walk with Christ for a while and then deliberately turn around and walk the other direction, rejecting Christ. **These people can never be restored because they will not want to be restored.** They have chosen to harden their hearts against Christ. It is not impossible for God to forgive them; rather, it is impossible for them to be forgiven because they won’t repent of their sins.

To the Hebrew Christians, these verses revealed the danger of returning to Judaism and thus committing apostasy. Those who reject Christ will not



be saved. Christ died once for all who believe. He will not be crucified again.

—Life Application Concise New Testament Commentary

5. They preferred their failures, their sins, over fellowship with God.
  - a. No person physically dead is concerned about his physical condition.
  - b. Thus, no person whose life has already been severed eternally from God could have any feeling of guilt, remorse, or anxiety.
  - c. “Dead while living” is their apt choice in life.
6. These addressed and described in verses 5 & 6 are not to be confused with the mere “backslider.” The “backslider” . . .
  - a. Still has faith in Christ, although weak it may be and perhaps almost ready to perish.
  - b. Still has a flicker of the light and life of Christ burning within His heart.
  - c. But with proper care, the “backslider” may be revived and strengthened, restored, at which time, the penitent will then mourn over his sins and transgressions. **Galatians 6:1** – “Brothers, if someone is caught in any wrongdoing, you who are spiritual should restore such a person with a gentle spirit, watching out for yourselves so you won’t be tempted also.”
7. But it is not so with the hardened apostate the Hebrew writer is addressing here.
  - a. He no longer has any faith, trust, confidence, or hope in Christ.
  - b. Hatred has taken the place of love in his heart.
  - c. He no longer values the blood of Christ that formerly cleansed him.
  - d. The church has no place in his life.
  - e. He has become so cold toward all that he formerly was that if it was humanly possible He would crucify Christ all over again . . . That’s how far he has removed himself from Christ.
    1. In Acts 2, some who had helped crucify Christ came to Him.
    2. In our text, some who came to Him would now desire to crucify Him if only they could. It is hard to image someone reaching such a state in life after having obeyed the gospel . . . But that can happen if one does not grown on to maturity in Christ.

## CONCLUSION:

- A. This extreme can be prevented:
  1. Faithfulness
  2. Bible Study
  3. Worship
  4. Fellowship
  5. Service to the Master
  6. Growing toward maturity in Christ.

B. We are warned because we are loved . . . In which direction are you heading today?

C. **God's Plan for Man's Salvation**