

Grow Up!
Heb 5:11-6:20

Intro: Do you remember the thrill of getting a new pair of shoes? As I was growing up, my mother, much like your mother probably did for you, would take me to the shoe store to buy a pair of shoes. After trying on a few different pairs of shoes and walking around the store with them we would find a pair that we liked. Then, and only then, our mothers would give the ultimate test, the Thumb Test. Using their thumb, they would push down on the end of the toe to make sure that the shoe had plenty of what? Growing room. Why? Because they wanted to make sure that the shoes allowed for our feet to grow, rather than only being comfortable for a short time. Does this sound familiar?

Now that I am full-grown I no longer use this thumb test; I am no longer growing, no longer do I need the extra room. For the rest of my life I will wear the same shoe size. It is one of those limitations that God placed on these bodies of ours. I will never be any taller than I am now, I might grow a little around the middle as some of us have a tendency to do in later years, but as a general rule we are done growing - or are we? Perhaps we should look beyond the physical to our minds, our character, and even our personalities. All of these were meant to keep on growing indefinitely! The great thing about life is that there are no limitations on how much we can grow and develop. Unfortunately most people don't tap into their growth potential. Benjamin Franklin's thoughts captured on this gravestone inscription are very true:

"Died - age 25
Buried - age 70
Here lies the average person"

Most of us complete our education and we stop learning and growing. What a tragedy, what an utter waste of a great life!

The message from Hebrews today is continue to grow or grow up. The message is actually the third of five warnings, this one is the warning to grow up.

[Read Heb 5:11-6:20/pray/dismiss Jr. church]

The Hebrew children had gotten saved and stopped growing spiritually and now it appeared that, like their ancestors of old, who when they came to the Jordan River and were afraid to cross into the Promised Land, were willing to return to the bondage of the Jewish system rather than trust totally in Christ. The reason is they were acting like immature babies. If you study Barna's research you will find a trend the says most American Christians are just like these Hebrew Christians. Listen to some of these titles of his findings in the last year or so:

The Concept of Holiness Baffles Most Americans
Americans Have Commitment Issues, New Survey Shows
Most Adults Feel Accepted by God, But Lack a Biblical Worldview
Christians Say They Do Best At Relationships, Worst In Bible Knowledge

We are expected to grow and mature as Christians just like we should grow and mature as people.

1. How Spiritual Babies behave Vv. 5:11-14

A. They demonstrate Dullness toward the Word V. 11

- 1) They began this backward journey by **Drifting for the Word** (2L1-4), progressed to **Doubting the Word** (3:7-4:13);
 - (a) the result was **Dullness of Hearing**
 - (b) Unable to listen to the Word; Unable to receive it and then Act on it
- 2) They were not like the Thessalonians; **"¹³For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe."**

- 3) One of the first symptoms of spiritual backsliding is a dullness toward the Bible
 - (a) SS class is dull
 - (b) Preaching is dull
 - (c) Anything & every thing spiritual is dull
 - 4) The problem is not usually the SS teacher or the preacher but **US!**
- B. They Are Satisfied with a Baby's Diet Vv. 12-13**
- 1) The Baby's Food
 - (a) Milk is predigested food and perfectly suited for babies; Only those with teeth can eat and enjoy meat
 - (b) **"Milk"** is **"the first principles of the oracles of God"** V. 12
 - (c) The meat of the Word is the teachings of Jesus who is now at the right hand of God and the writer wanted to give them this meat but they weren't ready for it
 - (1) The **"Milk"** of the Word = what Jesus did on earth—His birth, life, teachings, death, burial and resurrection
 - (2) **"Meat"** of the Word = what He is now doing as our Great and Unique High priest in the order of Melchisedec.
 - (d) We begin our Christian life on the basis of His finished work here on earth; we grow in our Christian life on the basis of his unfinished work in heaven
 - (e) Even mature adult need milk; as believers we can still learn much from our Lords earthly ministry—But we cannot allow it to stop there—we must continue to grow
 - (f) Our spiritual growth is a process that begins with our acceptance of Jesus Christ as our savior and ends with our translation into His presence.
 - 1) **They are Unskillful in Using the Utensils [the Word] V. 14**
 - (a) **Developing Spiritual discernment isn't a priority**
 - (1) As we grow in the Word we learn to use it in our daily lives.
 - (2) Every time we apply God's word to some situation in our life we are exercising our "Spiritual sense" and developing spiritual discernment.
 - (3) One of the characteristics of a child is a lack of discernment.
 - (i) A baby will put anything he his mouth
 - (ii) An immature believer will be listening to some radio preacher and they are unable to discern weather or not what he is preaching is Scriptural or not.
 - (b) **Developing proper diet isn't important [Spiritual diet]**
 - (1) Physical bodies have senses that we need to function—our spiritual man has "spiritual senses" for example:
 - (i) **"O taste and see that the LORD is good..."** Ps 34:8
 - (ii) **"...blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear."** Matt. 13:16
 - (2) As we feed on the Word of God daily and put in to practice in our daily lives, our inner "spiritual senses" get their exercise and become strong and are developed more
 - (3) Paul called this process; exercising ourselves unto godliness (1 Tim 4:7-8).
 - (c) **Knowing right from Wrong needs to be learned**
 - (1) The ability to discern good and evil is a vital part of Christian maturity.
 - (2) The nation of Israel in Moses' day lacked this discernment and failed to claim its promised inheritance.
 - (3) It is impossible to stand still in the Christian life: **we either go forward and claim God's blessing, or we go backward and wander about aimlessly.**
 - (4) This is the message of the children of Israel and their wandering in the wilderness for 40 years.
 - (d) An old pastor was speaking to a group of new pastors one day and said **"Most Christians you will ministering to will be "betweeners."**

One of the new pastors asked, "What do you mean by that?"

"They are between Egypt and Canaan—out of the place of danger, but not yet into the place of

rest and rich inheritance," he replied. "They are between Good Friday and Easter Sunday— saved by the blood but not yet enjoying newness of resurrection life."

(e) Are you a **Betweener**?

2. **The Growth of Spiritual Babies 6:1-12.** No one can escape coming into the world as a baby that is the only way to get here! But it is tragic when a baby fails to mature.

A. **Growth means to make Spiritual Progress** Vv. 1-3

1) If we are ever going to grow we have to leave the childhood things behind and move forward

(a) Verse 1 literally reads, **"Therefore, having left [once and for all] the elementary lessons [the ABCs] of the teaching of Christ."**

(1) When I was in kindergarten, the teacher taught us our ABCs (We didn't have television to teach us in those days.)

(2) You learn your ABCs so that you might read words, sentences, books—in fact, anything in literature.

(3) But you do not keep learning the basics; you use the basics to go on to better things.

(b) Growth means to make progress; the phrase, **"let us go on"** should be translated **"let us be carried forward"**

2) It is God who enables us to progress as we yield to Him, receive His Word and act on it.

(a) A baby does not grow himself—he grows as he eats, sleeps, exercises, and permits his body to function the way it was designed to function.

(b) Nature, as ordained by God, carries the baby along day after day, and gradually he matures into an adult.

(c) It is normal for Christians to grow; it is abnormal for them to have stunted growth.

3) The writer lists six foundational truths of the Christian life that are essential to our progress:

(a) The first two items (**repentance and faith**) are *Godward* and mark the initiation of the spiritual life.

(1) Repentance means to *"Change ones mind"* or to turn and go a different direction.

(2) Once one has repented he is then able to exercise true faith in God.

(b) The next two items (**baptisms and laying on of hands**) have to do with a person's relationship to *the local assembly of believers*. **V2**

(c) The last two items, the **resurrection of the dead** (Acts 24:14-15) and the **final judgment** (Acts 17:30-31), have to do with *the future*.

(1) Jews and Christians alike believe in these two doctrines—as well as Muslims.

(2) The OT has a teaching on the resurrection but it is not all that clear

(3) The NT makes it very clear; there will be a resurrection of the saved and also a resurrection of the lost: John 5:24-29; Rev 20:4-6

4) The lesson from these three verses, **"You have laid the foundation. You know your ABCs. Now move forward! Let God carry you along to maturity!"**

B. **This Growth process does not affect your salvation** Vv. 4-6

1) These 3 verses along with those in 10:26-30 are some of the most misinterpreted verses in all of Scripture—**IT DOES NOT TEACH YOU CAN LOSE YOUR SALVATION!!!**

2) Those who interpret this passage as teaching that one can lose their salvation also teach that you can be restored; the problem is the passage does not support that teaching, listen to the passage again:

"For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened...And have tasted the good word of God...If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance..."

(a) This clearly teaches that if one falls away or loses their salvation it is **impossible...to renew them again unto repentance..."**

(b) Besides the phrase **"fall away"** actually means *"to fall along side"*

(c) They were **"enlightened"** this means *"enlightened one and for all"* also used in Heb 10:32 indicates a true salvation experience.

(d) They **"tasted of the heavenly gift"**, and **"tasted the good word of God", and the powers of the world to come."**

(1) To believe they had tasted but did not consume is like saying when Christ **"tasted death for all men"** He simply sampled death on the cross not actually tasted death.

(2) Taste carries the idea of "experience" and these believers had "experienced" salvation

(e) They **"were made partakers of the Holy Spirit"**

- (1) To suggest they only went along with the Holy Spirit to a certain extent is to ignore the simple meaning of the verb—It means **“to become shares”**
- (2) These same believers were not only shares of the Holy Spirit, but also, according to 3:1 shares of the **heavenly calling**, and shares of **Christ**, according to 3:14
- 3) The truth of the matter is that this is a warning to all Christians to be careful not to **“...put Him to an open shame”** by our actions and the writer says that as long as we continue in that situation-- bringing shame upon Him we cannot be brought back to repentance
 - (a) How do we **“...put Him [Jesus Christ] to an open shame?”** how do we disgrace his name?
 - (b) By calling our self a Christian (taking on His name) and then living an ungodly life.

4) This text does not teach that you can lose your salvation--

C. The Growth Process Will Result in bring Forth Fruit Vv. -10

- 1) The use of the field as an illustration makes us think back to Jesus' Parable of the sower (Matt 13:1-9,18-23) and of Paul's teaching of the testing of our works by fire (1Cor 3:6-23).
- 2) A field proves its worth by bring forth fruit; a true believer, as he makes **spiritual progress**, bears fruit
- 3) According to the Parable of the sower, not every believer bears the same **amount** of fruit (some 100 fold, some 60 and some 30), but every believer will bear the same **kind** of fruit as proof that he is a child of God.
 - (a) Mainly, this is the fruit of mature Christian Character: Gal 5:22-26
 - (1) Behavior characteristics of **“...love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance...not...desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.”**
 - (2) In addition to these behavior characteristics the fruit will also be **walking in the Spirit as we live in the Spirit.**
 - (b) He says that they had some evidence of these characteristics in their lives **V.10** their love, they had worked and labored for the Lord; they had ministered to other believers and were still ministering.
- 4) A sure sign of salvation is your **“...work and labor of love...”** toward your fellow believers.

D. The Growth Process Demands Due Diligent Effort Vv. 11-12

- 1) It is true that it is God who **“carries us along”** to maturity, it is just as true that we have our responsibility in growing to maturity.
- 2) We are not to be lazy (**slothful** here is the same word translated **dull** in 5:11) but apply ourselves to the resources God has provided.
 - (a) Do you realize what a blessing it is to even have the Bible in your own language?
 - (b) According to **the Seed Company** a subsidiary of **Wycliffe Bible Translators** there are over 2500 language groups around the world who still do not have the Bible in their own language.
 - (c) I recently heard the testimony of a man who said, **“Finally, God speaks to us in our own language”** when he received his first NT in his native tongue
 - (d) Yet many of us take the fact that we have a Bible in our own language for granted.
 - (e) Our Bible is rarely read and even more rarely studied to find answers to our most difficult decision in life.
- 3) This Bible is full of God's promises that if we truly understood them and then acted on them and lived by them walking by faith would be some much more easy.
- 4) We must become like Caleb and Joshua we must believe God's promises and go out and claim the land for Him.

3. Finally, Even Spiritual Babies Can be Sure of the Love of their Father Vv. 13-20

A. All of us are not making the progress toward Spiritual maturity that we should but we need not fear that God will condemn us.

B. The writer gives us three proofs for the certainty of our salvation:

1) **God's Promises** Vv. 13-15

- (a) God made great promises to Abraham in Gen 22:16-17 to give him a great nation.
- (b) And in spite of his many failures and sins God kept His promise and Isaac was born.
- (c) Many of God's promises do not depend on our character but on His faithfulness.
- (d) The phrase **“patiently endured”** is the exact opposite of **“Slothful”**

- (e) Christians today have more promises than Abraham! What is keeping us from making spiritual progress?
- (f) We do not apply ourselves by faith.
- 2) **God's Oath Vv. 16-18**
 - (a) God not only gave Abraham a promise, but He also confirmed that promise with an oath.
 - (b) When a witness takes an oath in court, he is confronted with the words "so help me God."
 - (c) We call on the greater to witness for the lesser. None is greater than God, so He swore by Himself!
 - (d) He has made the same oath "immutable" oath to "**heirs of promise**" that's us.
- 3) **God's Soan Vv. 19-20**
 - (a) Our hope in Christ is like an anchor for the soul.
 - (b) The anchor was a popular symbol in the early church.
 - (c) At least sixty-six pictures of anchors have been found in the catacombs.
 - (d) The Greek stoic philosopher Epictetus wrote: "**One must not tie a ship to a single anchor, nor life to a single hope.**"
 - (e) As Christians we have but one hope—Jesus Christ

Conclusion: So why do people stop growing? Is it a conscious choice - or more a lack of a making a choice? You see, upon reaching adulthood, most people find an "environment" that they feel comfortable in, much like a worn pair of comfortable shoes. The choice that has to be made is that of stepping out of our comfortable environment into one that is bigger than we currently are in, the same way we used to get a pair of shoes that we could grow into. Figuratively, find a pair of shoes for your mind that gives you room to grow. Step out and step up to a responsibility that is "too big" for you right now and that requires your growth in order to fulfill it. Find an environment where you are forced to grow just to keep up. Keep stepping out and stepping up for as long as you want to grow. Because you will never find a shoe for your mind so big that you cannot grow into it.

Give your life the Thumb Test; step out of your comfort zones, take on new challenges, and stretch yourself. Do things that you never thought you could do. Take on a responsibility that is more than you feel like you can handle so that you will be challenged to live up to it. Don't ever get a pair of shoes for your life that fit you perfectly; always provide some growing room. If the shoe fits, don't wear it. Experience once again, or maybe for the first time, the thrill of learning, of conquering! The thrill of growing into a new pair of shoes.