

# Go On To Maturity

By Senior Pastor Prince Guneratnam

*“Of whom we have much to say, and hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. For through by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are full of age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. Therefore, leaving the discussion of elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works of faith toward God, of doctrine of baptisms, of laying of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this we will do if God permits” Hebrews 5:11 – 6:3*

The writer of Hebrews wants us to caution us of the danger that lies ahead of us. In this message, I would like to talk about the dangers of immaturity. Immaturity can happen in the physical as well as the spiritual aspect of a person. The age of a person does not affect his or her level of maturity. We can be old in age but still immature in our attitude and outlook of life. Likewise, we can be young and matured. We mature when we learn well from ours all well as from others life’s experiences.

The writer of Hebrews gives us two illustrations to explain to us the meaning of maturity.

## 1. The Teaching Profession (5:12)

A student is immature in the field of his study while the teacher is mature in his. Here, he says that instead, they are still immature like students.

## 2. The Growth Process of a Human Beings (5:13)

Babes or infants drink milk while adults have mature and gone on to solid food while they, like immature babies still need milk.

The writer of Hebrews goes on further to give us the six elementary teachings or doctrines which every babe in Christ needs to know and believe and then moves on in the maturity process.

### The Doctrine of Repentance

Repentance is to turn around from the old lifestyle to face the new direction that God has pointed out and to walk in it. It is turning away from serving the god of this world to serve the true and living God. It is the elementary stage of a new believer’s life. He needs to come to the point of realization of his sinful state, recognizes the need to repent from it, turn around and walk away to live his life in obedience in God. This does not mean we do not sin anymore. As we live for God, we may fall but when we repent, we pick ourselves up and move on.

### The Doctrine of Salvation by Grace

We are saved by grace. It is not what we have done or have not done that can save us. Neither is it because we attend church, give our money and time and read our Bibles that merit salvation. We do not become children of God because of our works. We become children of God by His grace. Salvation is a gift. We cannot earn it. It is an act of God’s grace. God picks us up from where we are, saves us and because we are God’s children, we come to church, read our Bibles, pay our tithes and do the rest.

### The Doctrine of Baptism

There are two kinds of baptism. There is water baptism and baptism of the Holy Spirit. After we have accepted Jesus as our Saviour, we get baptised in water in obedience to Jesus’ command and example. The baptism in the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues is a gift to all believers. It is given to us so that we might have power to witness: “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). Both are elementary stages in the believer’s life.

### The Doctrine of Laying On of Hands

In the choosing for the seven men for service, the disciples laid hands on them: “Whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them” (Acts 6:6). The laying on of hands was also practiced in the Old Testament times. In the selection of Joshua to be Moses’ successor: “And the Lord said the Moses: ‘Take Joshua the

son of Nun with you, a man whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him” (Numbers 27:18). What is the doctrine of laying on of hands? It is the recognition of ministry. It is the recognition of God-given talents and giftings for service. The laying on of hands shows the acknowledgement of ministry in the respective areas.

### **The Resurrection of the Dead**

Physical death is not the end of all things. The Bible says that there is a coming resurrection for those who believe. We shall be raised from the dead. Our physical death marks the beginning of our eternal life. The righteous will enter into the kingdom of God while the unrighteous will be eternally separated from Him.

### **The Eternal Judgment**

There is coming a day when all of us will have to stand before our Maker. All Christians will stand before the judgment seat of God to be judged for our works. Some will stand before God during the Great White Throne Judgment during which the sheep (believers) will be separated from the goats (non-believers). These are elementary truths of the Bible. These are doctrines we must know. Do you know and believe them? Did you allow them to change your lifestyle? The writer of Hebrews says that when we are born again, we become infants in Christ and need to learn these elementary truths in order to grow. We need to understand the truths and feed on them. The Christian life must grow to maturity.

### **What Can Hinder Our Growth?**

We need to be careful not to stay as infants for the rest of our lives. We need to grow for the elementary teachings to maturity. But there are things that can hinder our growth process. What are some of the things that can hinder our growth as Christians? The passage of Scripture shows us several things that can hinder our growth.

#### **~ Dullness in hearing (5:11)**

What does “dullness in hearing” mean? It simply means being sluggish, lazy, lethargic, forgetful, complacent and disinterested. Other than being dull in hearing, we also have hearing that is different, critical, cynical, mocking and selective. Such kinds of hearing will definitely hinder our growth. What can we do if our hearing becomes dull?

#### **We need to learn to concentrate on what we read and hear**

During the church service, it is important for us to learn how to shut our minds out from every thing other than the message being preached. The only way we can do this is to ask the Holy Spirit to help us. If we cannot concentrate on what we read and hear, we cannot grow and develop.

#### **We need to meditate on what we read and hear**

We need to take time to meditate upon what we have read and heard from God’s Word so that we may learn and grow. The Word of God can renew our minds and change our attitudes and perspectives towards people and circumstances.

#### **We need to take notes on what we read and hear**

We need to take down messages we received from the preaching of the Word of God. Ask yourself these questions when you listen to the God’s Word: “What did God say to me through the message? What can I do after hearing the message? What are the instructions I need to follow? What are the changes I need to make in my own life? This gives us the reason to pray.”

#### **We need to read and memorize God’s Word**

The Lord himself stressed the importance of memorization of His Word: “Therefore hear, O Israel, and be careful to observe it, that it may be well with you, and that you may multiply greatly as the LORD God of your fathers has promised you – a land flowing with milk and honey. And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between you eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates” (Deut 6:3, 6-9). You cannot teach the word of God effectively until it is in your heart.

#### **~ Refusal to Grow (5:12)**

To be forgiven, restored in our relationship with God and believe the promises of eternal life when we die, is not all to being a Christians.

There is life to be lived, a character to be shaped and a victory to be experienced. We must not only be born again but also to grow and become an adult in our new found faith.

The situation with the Hebrew Christians was this. They were still living like babes when they should be living like adults. They could be teachers but were still babes.

The apostle Paul in his letter to the Corinthians also addressed a similar problem: "And I brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ" (1 Cor 3:1) and in 1 Cor 14:20 he says, "Brethren, do not be children in understanding; however, in malice be babes, but in understanding be mature."

The refusal to grow up into adults can also jeopardise our life as Christians. In Ephesians 4:14, Paul alerted us to what may happen to us if we as remain infants: "That we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting."

### ~ Being Unskilled in the Word (5:13)

The verse says, "being unskilled in the word of righteousness." This can mean two things:

#### 1. Jesus Christ is the righteous of God

The righteousness of Jesus Christ is our only hope of being acceptable to God. This is the Gospel – a message of hope for salvation. He is the only salvation in God. "And be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith" (Phil 3:9). "But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God – and righteousness and satisfaction and redemption" (1 Cor 1:30).

#### 2. The Word of God is, the word of righteousness

The Bible is a book that teaches us how to live a life of God's kind of righteousness. To know the word is to know God's righteousness. To know God's righteousness is to know how to live in the light of what is right and wrong.

The Hebrew Christians were not willing to give their time and energy to discipline themselves to learn God's word. Therefore they did not live matured lives as godly people but as babes. They were sinning and being saved every week when they went to church. They were not experiencing God's promises of His grace and power for living but only His grace of salvation and repentance from sins. They professed Christ but did not live like Christians.

Jesus Himself spoke of the importance of God's word in our life: "But He answered and said, 'It is written. "man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" ' " (Matt 4:4). "As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby" (1 Peter 2:2).

### ~ Did Not Exercise Their Spiritual Mind and Senses (5:14)

"But solid food belongs to those who are full of age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern good and evil" (Hebrew 5:14).

A matured Christian belongs to a church and sees his need for a church life to help him in his everyday living. A matured Christians shows a disciplined life by what he does daily.

He:

- Studies his Bible
- Has a systematic prayer life
- Evangelizes faithfully
- Is a worshipper
- Walks by faith
- Is a giver
- Is slow to speak but quick to hear
- Manifests the fruits of the Spirit in his life
- Has the mind of Christ
- Lives a life that pleases God
- Is the salt and light of the world

This is the kind of lifestyle that exercises our mind and senses spiritually. The Word of God has many exhortations for us concerning this aspect. Read Phil 4:8, 2 Cor 10:5 and Rom 12:1, 2 for guidance.

### **Be Determined To Grow**

We must be determined to grow. Once the foundation of the elementary truths have been laid, we must build on them by obedience and faith in God. This will take a lot of determination on our part. Hebrew 6:3 says. "And this we will do if God permits." "If God permits" means that "unless the Lord builds the house, we labour in vain." We cannot do it alone. It is a twinning programme – you and God must work together. "John answered and said, 'A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven' " (John 3:17).

"You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me, I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing" (John 15:3-5)

(All the above quotes are from the New King James)

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