

Hebrews

Hebrews 5:11-6:3 – Spiritual Maturity

February 15, 2009

I. Introduction

- A. **Hebrews 5:11- 6:3** . . . Concerning him we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. [5:12] For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. [5:13] For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. [5:14] But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil. [6:1] Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, [6:2] of instruction about washings and laying on of hands, and the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment. [6:3] And this we will do, if God permits.
- B. Last week I spoke to you about growing up to spiritual maturity in a reasonable and measured amount of time. I said that it is my opinion that though there is recognizable and measurable spiritual growth taking place in most of us, nevertheless, the overall picture is one of taking longer to get to a basic level of spiritual maturity than we ought.
1. I went on to say that our problem is not that we aren't pursuing God and godliness – for it is obvious to me that we are.
 - a. Our problem is that we haven't yet come to that place where we are wholly committed to being wholly holy. We want to put off the old, sinful nature, but not completely. We want to pursue godliness, but not all the time. We want to be like Christ, but not in everything. We want to love God supremely and our neighbor as our self, but we also want to be self-centered – at least in some things.
 - b. So though by now we ought to be able to teach others how to be wholly holy, we can't. And though by now we ought to be able to understand some of the deeper truths of God which are only understood by those committed to being wholly holy, we don't. WHY? Because we are dragging our feet when it comes to going from spiritual infancy to a basic condition of Christian adulthood.

2. Then I illustrated my point concerning this problem of dragging our feet by giving you this example – if our children were taking as long to get through grade school, middle school, high school and college as we are taking to get to a basic adult level of spiritual maturity, we would be appalled – and we would be searching for every possible remedy available to get our children back on the track of reasonable and measured growth so they would achieve adult maturity in what we deem is a natural amount of time.

C. Today, I want to talk to us about the elementary teachings as described in **Hebrews 6:1-2**. Why? For two reasons –

1. First, because these teachings are important in that they form the foundation upon which we build spiritual maturity.
2. And second, because I believe several of these teachings haven't gotten the attention they deserve. And one of them we have either missed or skipped or only half-heartedly dealt with – and that teaching is the first one mentioned – repentance.

D. Prayer

II. Marks Of Spiritual Infancy – Elementary Teachings – Yet They Are The Foundation For Spiritual Maturity

A. **Hebrews 6:1-2** . . . Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, [6:2] of instruction about washings and laying on of hands, and the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment.

B. I am going to start at the end of the list and work backwards in order to end with the matter of repentance in the hope that we will leave with this truth fresh on our minds.

1. **Eternal Judgment** – we all must stand before God to give an account of what we have done during this life-time. Those whose names are not found written in the Lambs Book Of Life will be condemned to eternal damnation and cast out of the presence of God and into the Lake of Fire along with the devil and all his cohorts. Those whose names are written in the Lambs Book of Life will be rewarded according to their deeds and brought into God's eternal kingdom to live with God forever.

a. **II Corinthians 5:10** . . . For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed

for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

- b. Are you prepared to explain your choices and behavior – say just over the past year – to God?
- c. Do you really want to go into eternity impoverished for having lived an impoverished spiritual life?
2. **The resurrection from the dead** – eternal life.
3. **Laying on of hands** – setting aside for service or in praying for healing.
4. **Instruction about washings** – Baptism, and purity of heart, mind, passions, emotions, will, tongue and behavior.
5. **Faith toward God** – a settled faith, not only in the existence of God but also in the goodness, faithfulness, will, and word of God.
6. **Repentance from dead works** – possibly those good deeds and religious rituals that have very little to do with one's character and very much to do with one's religious efforts to appease of God and gain the approval of man. (Isaiah 58)

C. Repentance – the often missed teaching and step in becoming a Christian and living as a Christian

1. Repent – the **first word** of the Gospel:
 - a. **Matthew 3:1-2** – John the Baptist,
 - b. **Matthew 4:17** – Jesus teaching,
 - c. **Mark 6:12** – Teaching of the Disciples,
 - d. **Luke 24:46-47** – Jesus final words to his disciples,
 - e. **Acts 2:37-38** – Peter's first sermon – on the day of Pentecost
 - f. **Acts 3:17-19** – Peter's second sermon – after healing the lame man,
 - g. **Acts 11:17-18** – The Jerusalem counsel's conclusion after hearing Peter's report of preaching to Cornelius,
 - h. **Acts 26:19-20** – Paul's claim of what he taught.
2. What is repentance? In simplest terms, repentance is a change of mind – a change of mind that produces a change of life.
3. For those who would become a Christian or those who are Christians, repentance is a change of mind about God, self, sin, and righteousness that results in obvious changes in our thinking, feelings, desires, choices, and behavior.
 - a. For the sake of those among us who tend to take things to the extreme, the kind of repentance that leads to salvation is not a change of mind that produces immediate perfection.

- b. But the kind of repentance that leads to salvation produces a change of mind that produces –
 - (1) a settled commitment to be done with every and any kind of rebellion against God and replace past rebellion with submission to God's will and word in all things.
 - (2) a settled commitment to be done with all unbelief and replace unbelief with complete trust in God, in His goodness, His will, and in His Word.
 - (3) a settled commitment to be done with sin –
 - (a) from single occasions of sin to the practice of sin,
 - (b) from the sins you deem reprehensible to those you cherish or hide from others or justify on the basis of other's sinful behavior.
 - (c) Of course, to repent of sin is to make a settled commitment to taking on Christ-likeness in every area of thought, desire, word, and deed.
 - (4) a settled commitment to no longer live for myself but Jesus Christ, the one who died and rose again on my behalf.
- 4. **Example:** For the Christian, getting married assumes you have made a settled commitment to put away all relationships that might in any way compete with or compromise the relationship you are entering into with your spouse. And this commitment is not only required for entering marriage, it is required to protect your marriage until death separates you.
 - a. In one way, this commitment is a general commitment.
 - b. But in another way, this commitment becomes very specific as it is applied to any momentary or even repeated temptation to stray.
 - c. So it is with us in relation to the repentance that leads to salvation.
- 5. **Example:** You would never say to a 25 year old friend or a family member who is dating several people at the same time they he or she should get married – **and could do so** without giving up all the other relationships. You would never tell anyone that it is okay to be a married adulterer.
 - a. And in that same way, I can't imagine any of us saying anyone else that it would be alright for them to be a Christian

adulterer, or a Christian drug seller, or a Christian thief, or an angry Christian, or a bitter Christian, or a prideful, arrogant Christian, or a Christian spouse abuser, or a Christian child-molester, or a greedy Christian, or a worldly Christian, or a fearful Christian . . .

- b. Yet, do we not imply that it is perfectly alright for us to be a Christian _____ when we hold on to selected sins, ungodly habits, fleshly desires, and worldly ways?
6. Now I want to say that this problem isn't entirely our fault. Too often sinners are invited to put their faith in Jesus Christ for salvation without being told about their need to repent. I suspect most of us came into the Christian life through this same door. And what is the result? We haven't yet made that general, carry me through the rest of my life, decision to repent.
- a. Now I am not saying we haven't repented of anything. I think all of us have repented of certain sins or specific behaviors – **which is good in itself**, but incomplete.
 - b. What I am trying to get across is that we are like a groom who comes into marriage without having made a settled commitment to a faithful and pure monogamous relationship.
 - (1) Such a groom says his vows with his mouth while in his heart he is still clinging to a few treasured relationships with girls other than his bride,
 - (2) And as he moves through the years of marriage, he still believes – or at least he lives as if he still believes – that he can keep at least one or two treasured relationships as long as he can keep them hidden from his wife and the public.
 - c. When we have the attitude of this groom, or if we deny having such an attitude but live as if we did, we show by our attitude and life that we have not repented in the way God calls us to repent.
7. The repentance that leads to salvation is a change of mind leading to a complete commitment to love God and live a Christ-like life, to leave the world behind and live for God, to die to self and come alive to the Lordship of Jesus Christ – not in part, but in whole.
- a. If you are still deciding if you want to put off a particular way of thinking or a habit or a behavior pattern that you know is

selfish or is rooted in unbelief or is hurtful to those you claim to love or is clearly shown to be sin by the Word of God – than you haven't yet repented of selfishness and sin. This is a sure sign of spiritual infancy and immaturity.

- b. If you are practicing some sin – whether you hide it or justify it or try to live in denial about it – then you haven't yet repented of rebellion against God, of unbelief toward God, of selfishness, and of sin. This is a sure sign of spiritual infancy and immaturity.
 - c. If you are have been doing things that show disrespect or disobedience to your parents and you are continuing to do those same things – then you haven't yet repented of disobedience to God and the ungodly love of self. This is a sure sign of spiritual infancy and immaturity.
 - d. If you have been doing something that you know is detrimental or destructive to your marriage relationship, and if you are continuing to do it – then you haven't yet repented of self-rule, selfishness, stubbornness, and demanding your own way. This is a sure sign of spiritual infancy and immaturity.
8. I am not saying you won't be sorely tempted once you have repented. But if you have repented of rebellion against God, of unbelief in its varied forms, of selfishness and sin, then the decision to die to self and resist temptation and flee from sin is already settled. That part of your battle against sin, self, the world and the devil won't need to be fought again.
- a. Instead, you will be devoting your energy to saying no to what you know is wrong and yes to what you know is right and moving on with God from there.
 - b. And should you sin, you will devote your energy to confessing your sin to God, making things right with those you have sinned against here on the earth, and getting back up and moving forward with God.
 - c. **Languishing in sin or continuing in sin is not the mark of the repentant Christian. Nor is it the mark of a Christian who has come to that basic level of spiritual maturity.**

- D. Two more thoughts on this topic of repentance.
1. Repenting in that way that is our first step toward salvation does not mean can't fall away sometime in the future. To be sure, you can repent of your repentance and go back to living a life ruled by selfishness and sin.
 2. Repentance leading to salvation is not feeling bad or having feelings of sorrow for sin's committed. Sorrow before repentance can happen, but not necessarily so. However, repentance and then sorrow (broken-heartedness) over subsequent sin do go together. Why? Because we have changed our thinking about God, self, sin, and righteousness. (**II Corinthians 7:9-11**)

III. Conclusion

- A. Repentance is to leave the sin I've done before and show that I in earnest grieve by doing it no more. Therefore, anything labeled repentance that does not lead to a changed mind, heart, and life is not repentance at all.
- B. Though repentance is the first word in the gospel and the first step in saving faith, it is also essential for moving beyond spiritual infancy to a basic level of spiritual maturity.
- C. If you have not settled this issue of repentance in the way God intends it to be settled by everyone who calls upon the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation – then now is the time to settle.