

Hebrews

Hebrews 5:11-6:3 – Spiritual Maturity

February 22, 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 pointed out the importance of the elementary teachings for the new believer's growth to spiritual maturity. I spent most of the time last week trying my best to get across the vital importance of repentance as the first step of entering into salvation and as a continued necessity for pursuing godliness.
- C. Today, I want to talk to us about the other side of spiritual infancy – which is, the basic adult level of spiritual maturity.
- D. Prayer

II. Marks Of Living at the Basic Level of Spiritual Maturity

- A. Generally speaking, **basic spiritual maturity is manifested by** (1) being settled or convinced in mind and heart that God is worthy of your complete trust and that He is perfectly good, (2) willingly and consistently submitting to the rule and will of God, (3) being committed to loving God above all else, (4) being determined to live for God and serve God, (5) pursuing intimacy with God (*i.e., communion and companionship with God*), (6) having a steadfast commitment to growing in godliness so as to persist in putting off the old nature and putting on more and more of the Christ-like nature, (7) fully intending

to live up to what we know is right, (8) evaluating our thoughts, choices and behavior according to the word of God, (9) humility before God and man, (10) the denying of self for the sake of God and godliness, (11) valuing relationships – especially those in the home and church, (12) treasuring prayer, and (13) actively evangelizing when and where possible.

1. Now you may be thinking that this a pretty long list and it may even seem to you like the description of an older, very mature, saintly Christian – the kind we mostly read about but never meet or become.
2. I think the reason we have a hard time discerning what a basic level of spiritual maturity looks like is that we tend to look at entry level Christianity as mature Christianity. Yet as God says to us here in Hebrews 5:11-6:3, entry level Christianity is only entry level. God's intention for each of us is that we grow to spiritual maturity.
3. And so my intention today is to give you five examples of basic spiritual maturity that you can remember and hold out as goals to achieve as preparation for living the rest of your life as a growing Christian who is continuing to become all that Christ saved you to be.

B. One mark of basic spiritual maturity is a “once-for-all” giving of ourselves to God in a way that is acceptable to Him – just like we give ourselves “once-for-all” in marriage.

1. **Romans 12:1** . . . Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies (*a one time act*) a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.
2. **II Corinthians 5:14-15** . . . For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; [15] and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf.

C. A second mark of basic spiritual maturity is the settled conviction that sin no longer has power over us – which means now we can live as those who are dead to sin. Consider the following scriptures:

1. **Romans 6:4-7** . . . Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the

dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. [5] For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, [6] knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; [7] for he who has died is freed from sin. (The power of sin is broken)

2. **Romans 6:12-14** . . . Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, [13] and **do not go on presenting** the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; **but present yourselves to God** as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. [14] For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace. (*Law cannot help us resist sin, but grace does help us.*)
3. **I Corinthians 10:13** . . . No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.

D. Another mark of basic spiritual maturity is having made the decision to die to self and all the selfish passions and desires connected to self.

1. **Galatians 5:24** . . . Now those who belong to Christ Jesus **have** crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.
2. Why is this so important? Because while our greatest enemy may be the devil, our thoughts, desires, imagination, feelings, and fears are equally powerful when it comes to self-centeredness, temptation, and sin.
 - a. **James 1:14-15** . . . But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. [15] Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.
 - b. The devil doesn't have to put sin in front of us to get us to sin, he only has to get us to think thoughts that lead to sin, desire things that are sinful, begin to imagine how happy or rich or satisfied or popular or whatever we would be if _____, or stir up something we fear and would do almost anything to avoid.
3. This is why a portion of scripture like Philippians 4:6-8 is so vital to our spiritual well-being. **Philippians 4:6-8** . . . Be anxious for

nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. [7] And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. [8] Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.

- E. A fourth mark of basic spiritual maturity is the clear understanding that spiritual growth (*sanctification over the long haul*) is a shared experience – shared between God and us. The Christian who has grown beyond spiritual infancy has full confidence in the empowerment of God for godly living and full confidence that we must do our part if we are to attain any noticeable level of spiritual maturity and godly living.
1. **Philippians 2:12-13** . . . So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; [13] for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.
 2. The mature Christian not only understands the dual nature of spiritual growth – he or she is motivated to do their part in a serious pursuit of holiness for the glory of God, the joy of God, the love of God, and the good of those around them.
 - a. **Matthew 5:6** . . . Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.
 - b. **I Timothy 4:7b-9** . . . On the other hand, discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness; [8] for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. [9] It is a trustworthy statement deserving full acceptance.
- F. The last mark of basic spiritual maturity that I want to talk to you about today is a settled commitment to vigilance for the preservation of godliness and for further growth in godliness.
1. Growth in godliness – **Romans 12:2** . . . And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

2. Vigilance – the state or condition of being watchful, alert, careful, on guard so as to detect danger and deal with it accordingly.
 - a. Includes being on guard against unholy thoughts, desires, wishes, imaginations, or anything else that might draw us away from God and open us further to the wiles of the devil.
 - b. Includes studying and memorizing and meditating on the Word of God
 - c. Includes an active and honest prayer life

III. Conclusion:

- A. **Ephesians 4:11-16** . . . And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, [12] for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; [13] until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. [14] As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; [15] but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, [16] from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.