

Pressing On To Maturity

Introduction. The scope of Hebrews is both broad and sweeping. Its teaching encompasses both God's earliest communications to man through His prophets as well as His final word spoken through His Son. The writer's pen sweeps from the grandeur of the Son in eternity past to the culmination of His glorious kingdom which cannot be shaken. The book constitutes a perfect inspired example of the correct relationship and balance between doctrine and practice. The purpose of Hebrews is to exhort Christians; its occasion for being written is the faltering of the faithful.

The exhortation to "go on unto maturity" expresses a goal for both writer and readers, teacher and students (Hebrews 6:1-3). The believers are exhorted to advance from the rudiments of the faith to the maturity of the message. The "maturity" that is spoken of is doctrinal. The doctrine will necessarily affect the Christian's manner of life. It will protect us from evil and motivate us to obedience. It will inspire us to work and encourage us to reverence and worship of God. It will train us to run the race well. It will affect every aspect of the Christian's life.

To say that life is getting more hectic each year is to say the obvious. But whatever problem it may present for others, the pace of life ought to be a critical concern for the Christian. If we become too busy to spend time in the activities God has designed for our personal spiritual growth, we are in serious jeopardy (Luke 8:14).

We must make sure we understand the implications of doctrinal maturity. This is not an emotional appeal to become better people; it is an appeal to become efficient in recognizing the true teaching from the untrue, the lie from the truth. We need this teaching because we must avoid apostasy. This lesson is intended to encourage us to leave the rudimentary elements and develop powers of perception in the application of mature faith and judgment. It is much like a builder who has laid a firm foundation and goes on to complete the house. Let us study the demands of maturity.

I. Maturity Demands The Proper Beginning

- A. Jesus said that one must be born of the water and the Spirit to enter the kingdom so that one can be saved (John 3:1-5).
- B. Being "born of the Spirit" means that you have been born again by God's word (1 Corinthians 4:15; 1 Peter 1:22-25).
- C. One can increase in knowledge from year to year, but without the proper beginning it has no effect. An Episcopalian baptized as an infant can feel closer to God through study, but what have they gained?

II. Maturity Demands The Proper Growth

- A. Peter knew that people could be drawn away from the truth, and the answer was to grow (2 Peter 3:14-18).
- B. Personally, as we grow in Christ, we draw closer to God; as we draw closer to God, we push the devil further away (James 4:8; cp. Psalm 145:18; Jeremiah 3:21-22; Zechariah 1:3).
- C. Congregationally, we have to grow up in every way, and when we do, the body builds itself up in love (Ephesians 4:15-16). It becomes a stronger force for good in the world.

III. Maturity Demands The Proper Diet

- A. You cannot grow on junk food. One should go from milk to meat (1 Corinthians 3:1-4; Hebrews 5:12-13; 1 Peter 2:1-2).
- B. A true workman learns to “rightly divide of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15). Timothy had known the scriptures from a child, and they had made him “wise unto salvation” (2 Timothy 3:15).

IV. Maturity Demands The Proper Exercise

- A. “Use” in Hebrews 5:14 refers to a habit of body or mind indicating not the process but the continuous disposition of character produced by past exercise.
- B. The goal of training is the distinguishing of good and evil (Philippians 1:9-10; 1 Thessalonians 5:21). This equals maturity which ultimately equals a stronger, more faithful Christian.

V. Maturity Demands The Proper Environment

- A. A mature walk begins with walking in the light and having fellowship with one another (1 John 1:7; cp. Ephesians 5:3-8).
- B. If anyone is ever going to grow, they must be isolated from those who teach them to compromise (1 Corinthians 15:33). It is hard to grow with non-Christian friends, no matter the age.

VI. Maturity Demands The Proper Time

- A. Maturity cannot be accomplished “on the run” (Hebrews 5:12). Time is our most valuable asset. If I lose all my money, I can make that back, but I can never recover lost opportunities to grow (Galatians 6:9-10; Philippians 3:13-15).
- B. Not taking time for “maintenance” is always risky — rarely is it possible to increase productivity by diminishing maintenance. In fact, one of the ways we add value to something is to demonstrate our diligence in maintaining it.
- C. When it comes to spiritual matters, you may be generous with money, but stingy with time. If you cannot “afford” the time it takes to grow, you may need to “reallocate your resources” in your use of time (Luke 10:41-42).
- D. None of us come close to being as pressed for time as the Lord (Mark 3:20), but one can make time to commune with God just like Jesus did (Matthew 14:13-14, 22-23; Mark 1:35; 6:30-32; Luke 5:16; 6:12).

Conclusion. Without maturity, all is for nothing! Our progress will not be evident if we do not meditate on spiritual matters and give ourselves entirely to them (1 Timothy 4:15). Can we learn to distinguish between the urgent and the important — and devote adequate time to the latter? Turn off the television and let others see you in quiet devotion to God. Significant time for spiritual growth must be more than a resolution we keep for a few days and then fall back into our old ways.