

Hebrews 5:1-6:3

Reading: Hebrews 5:1-6:3

Seek Spiritual Maturity

You will observe this morning that my sermon is primarily focused on chapter 5 beginning at verse 11. I have chosen to quickly deal with the first 10 verses. The first part of the sermon reaffirms the teachings of last week concerning Jesus as the Great High Priest. My fuller message will follow focusing on verses 11 through the first 3 verses of chapter 6. So, in a way you get 2 sermons in 1 morning – Now isn't that exciting!

Religion or Relationship?

Last week the theme was; *We are boldly called to enter into God's presence, to receive mercy and find grace through the sacrificial work of Jesus Christ, the Great High Priest!* This is based on the fact, Jesus came to earth to live as both man and God, the incarnate God, enabling Him to understand and sympathize with mankind's suffering and temptations. Jesus is greater than a Jewish elected high priest because He was not elected by man but is the Living God. Jesus was and is the perfect sacrifice, the eternal sacrifice, the final sacrifice and His work on earth is finished while it continues from heaven until His triumph return and eternal reign. Jesus is King, Great High Priest and God Most High.

The Jewish system of worship was to be symbolic until the Great High Priest or Messiah or the Christ came, but over hundreds of years the Jewish system had become a man-made system of laws and religion without relationship with God. The Jewish temple was man-made stone, the Christian temple is a living temple of flesh. The Jewish sacrifices provided temporary covering for sin but did not take sin away. Jesus' sacrifice as the Great High Priest forgives sin and removes sin. The festivals

and feasts were to remind the Jews of God's many great provisions, blessings, and the promise of the coming Messiah. These were replaced by Jesus fulfilling God's promises, instituting the Lord's Supper celebrating Jesus' provision and blessing of salvation and for all people for all time completed by His sacrifice on the cross. Jesus replaced the entire Jewish symbolic system of religion with salvation by grace as the eternal living God-Man and giving those who believe by faith an eternal relationship with God.

This is the reason the writer here brings in the priest Melchizedek and takes his readers back to Genesis 14 and Psalm 110 the only 2 places this mysterious priest is found in the Old Testament. The writer of *The Letter to the Hebrews* relates Melchizedek to the doctrine of Christ 8 times, more than all the Old Testament. This theme begins here in chapter 5 and ends in chapter 7. The divine appointment to the office of Great High Priest is supported by his referring to Melchizedek in Genesis. Please turn in your Bibles to Genesis chapter 14, while I read verses 18 to 20, “Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. (He was priest of God Most High.)¹⁹ And he blessed him and said, ‘Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth;²⁰ and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand!’ And Abram gave him a tenth of everything.” Melchizedek is mysterious and some believe he is the preincarnate Christ or a Theophany, while others hold the position, he was a real man who foreshadowed the coming of Christ. Daniel chapter 3 speaks of the preincarnate Christ, in the fiery furnace, so, we know that there is evidence of Theophanies in Scripture. However, the debate is ongoing. Now, Back to Genesis, by Abram paying tithes to Melchizedek, he recognizes he is a greater “[priest of God Most High](#)”. By the writer of Hebrews comparing the Aaronic priesthood to that of Melchizedek which was a higher priesthood, he is comparing men to the divine. The priesthood of Aaron was a succession of men from the line of Aaron, but Jesus is the Great High Priest, the one

and only, forever. By comparing Jesus and Melchizedek the writer is saying the priesthood of Jesus is timeless and began before creation. Both Moses and the writer of Hebrews also bring forth this relationship between Melchizedek and Jesus in verse 18 of Genesis 14 where Melchizedek brings “out bread and wine” as a symbol of the blessings provide by the “God Most High” to Abram, as Jesus also did during the Last Supper representing the bless of salvation the Great High Priest offers all mankind. Melchizedek blessed Abram who became Abraham and Jesus blessed His disciples who became His apostles and commanded all believers continue the Lord’s Supper until His return.

As Christians, we not only have a High Priest, we have the Great High Priest. We have literally the Priest of priests, for He passed through the heavens to come to earth and be born and live as man to execute the Father’s plan for salvation and He passed through the heavens to sit at God the Father’s right hand. We are not only spiritual children of Abraham but also by faith we are brothers of the Great High Priest, Jesus, who paid the only sacrifice that is eternal, the one sacrifice that covers all transgressions for all time. Through Christ God gives His children blessing after blessing. Amen!

Now to prepare our hearts and minds to study of God’s call through the writer of Hebrews for Christians to grow in spiritual maturity – let me pray.

Marks of Spiritual Maturity (v. 14)

I remember when I was traveling the country preaching at variety of denominations and churches on evangelism and missions, usually after the message, I would be assured that the sermon topic was well picked and exactly what the church needed to hear. I believe that the Gospel should make an appearance in every sermon in some form. However, if all the church hears is the basics of the Gospel and it never hears any more than that, the church will be, at best, filled with baby Christians.

Spiritual immaturity will be the mark of that church. Thus, this is the reason at Canyon Bible we have expository preaching that requires us to work through the entire depth of the scriptures. When I traveled, if I preached biblical doctrine beyond missions and the basic Gospel, I would often get blank stares. I remember one pastor telling I was too serious and needed to tell more stories and jokes and another time, I was told the doctrine I taught from the Bible went counter to their denomination's teachings. Obviously, these experiences are part of what lead me to want to preach the depth of the scriptures and call Christians to engage with the Word of God by living and teaching the message of the entire Bible. As the writer of Hebrews says, [“solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.”](#) (Hebrews 5:14)

During the years I traveled preaching at churches I observed a dynamic often at work; a simple message on the Gospel could be understood by the Christians and they liked it because they did not have to do anything. There was really no application for them. They especially liked it if they thought of someone else that really needed to hear the message and they themselves were just fine with God. It often makes people feel better to know they are spiritually above someone else. In these basic sermons there was no challenge, no call to action. Their toes did not get stepped on. Their thinking was not changed. They almost always commented that it was a great sermon for them to hear – probably because it was comfortable. But the gospel is not comfortable it is a call to an entirely differently lifestyle than that of the world.

So, if you chose to come to Canyon Bible because you thought it would be safe and easy and you could leave after the service without being challenged, well, as it was said in the scene of the movie *“Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade”* you may have [“chose poorly”](#). Let me take you to the scene I am referring to; both Indie and the evil Donovan had found the Grail Knight in the chamber filled with various grails and the evil villain, Walter Donovan asks the knight, [“Which one is it?”](#) He was

trying to determine the true grail of Christ from the false, for he, coveted the supposed grail's power. The Knight answers, "You must choose. But choose wisely, as the true grail will bring life, and the false grail will take it from you." Donovan chooses, drinks and begins to shrivel up until there is no life left within him. The knight simply says, "He chose poorly." The same is true with the Bible and God's doctrine; one must choose wisely, meaning the true Gospel will bring life and false doctrine will take it from you. The true Gospel is an all or nothing choice. If not, even though people think they have obtained what they need to gain salvation - they will shrivel up spiritually out of immaturity or by changing the scriptures to meet what they think is best and they will die spiritually.

My understanding is, a sermon is meant to give the gospel and take the believer further in their spiritual journey and growth, to give the truth of God's calling for His children and how they are to believe and live. These sermons are not always received well because they challenge and make one think and consider who they are in God and what He calls them to be and do. Christianity requires hard work; however, many folks would rather be like a baby in the crib getting its diaper changed and drinking milk than working to move on to maturity. Often, when I preached a sermon meant to help people grow spiritually; some in the audience turned their heads the other way and were probably glad I was a guest preacher that would not be there the next Sunday. I hope this background helps you understand the difference between the "broad" and "remnant" church I often speak of. I believe this difference is found in this text before us today. It is the difference between maturity and immaturity or spiritual milk and meat. Today I want you to choose wisely and choose all of God for this will bring life eternal.

The Scriptures are not really meant for a Christian wants to stay immature and is not spiritually growing, what I mean is the scriptures are not meant to let people remain were they are, but it is meant to challenge people to grow and change into

stronger more spiritually mature children of God. The idea of the nominal Christian just does not work for the Bible. Just as the Jews became social followers of God and even moral Jews practiced lifestyles above other nationalities - over the centuries many were not spiritual Jews but religious Jews and so it is with many Christians. Lazy or complacent Christians are spiritually immature Christians, if true Christians at all. The Scriptural truth is, you are either pressing on to maturity by seeking God, meditating on Scripture and praying for faith, seeking more understanding or for the lazy they are going backwards and for some, possibly they may not be true believers at all. Unbelievers and believers are together in the church, just as the parable of the tares and the wheat in chapter 13 of Matthew. God will separate them at judgment. My beloved, there is no standing still, we must strive to grow spiritually.

The questions I would like to ask everyone this morning is, “where are you in your spiritual maturity as a Christian compared to a year ago? Would you consider yourself more spiritually mature than you were a year ago?” This is as serious as it gets, consider and then with determination decide how this coming year of your life you will bring more glory to God and grow your heart, soul and mind spiritually. Those who make little effort do not reap little but they wither spiritually as the fig tree that was cursed in Matthew 21.

Marks of Spiritual Immaturity (v. 11-14)

Laziness

The marks of a new believer whose soul has been given life by God is a deep desire to learn everything possible about God the Father, Christ, the Bible and Christianity. When we, when you first become a believer did you not want to read everything we can get our hands on, listening to sermons in church and on the radio and talk to other Christians asking many questions. Were you not like a sponge

soaking it up and taking it all in, which is good, when the information is based on and consistent with the Word of God.

Reading Hebrews chapter 5, verses 11 to 14, “About this we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. ¹² For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, ¹³ for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. ¹⁴ But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.”

I think these Jews converted to Christianity were hungry for God, His Word and Christ in the beginning, however, the writer now addresses a problem. They were probably earnest and zealous once because it says, “since you have become dull of hearing”. However, they were no longer growing spiritually; they had entered into spiritual decay out of laziness. How were they lazy? The writer says they had “become dull of hearing”. What does this mean? They had let the world come in and drown out the Word of God and their spiritual senses grew dull.

It seems they had stopped moving forward and began looking back at where they had been. Judaism still had a grip on them. That is why the writer has spent so much time already in the Book of Hebrews proving that Jesus is superior to all aspects of Judaism. Jesus is superior to the prophets, to Aaron, to angels. What caused their decay was that they were not spiritually moving forward, they had become lazy and in truth, they had not only stopped moving forward, but were sliding back. They were no longer pressing into the Kingdom but had put their spiritual life and maturity on auto pilot, they were complacent. The writer knew he was coming to this very point and he clearly laid the foundation in chapters 2 to 4. He begins chapter 2 with, “Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we

drift away from it.” (v. 1) Then in chapter 3 he writes, ⁷“Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, ‘Today, if you hear his voice, ⁸ do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion on the day of testing in the wilderness, ⁹ where your fathers put me to the test and saw my works for forty years.’” (v. 7-9) In the middle of chapter 4, we read, ⁶“Since therefore it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly received the good news failed to enter because of disobedience, ⁷ again he appoints a certain day, ‘Today,’ saying through David so long afterward, in the words already quoted, ‘Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.’ ” (v. 6-7) The questions the writer was asking these Christians then and he asks Christians today is, “Are you moving forward in spiritual maturity or going backwards? Do you feel as if you have moved closer to the Lord than you were prior? Do you feel as if you are stuck and not advancing like you should?” The clear mark of spiritual decay is laziness when it comes to your spiritual growth and maturity and results in one no longer hearing and obeying the Word of God. One must put forth the effort to grow; study of the Word, meditating on the Word and time spent in prayer. Another mark of spiritual decay in one’s life is the lack of influence in others’ lives. People easily observe one’s lack of dedication to God. As they observe one’s lack of commitment and obedience, they naturally question what it is the person really believes. They do not trust such a person. Finally, with spiritual decay there is a lack of one’s ability to discern true from false and good from evil.

Lack of Influence

The truth here is that these Christians should have been influencing others with the truths of Christ but they were not. In fact, they did not even have a handle on the basic truths of the Gospel. They were spiritually immature. As verse 12 says, “For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food ...” They

should have been influencing others by teaching and living the Word of God, but could not because of their lack of spiritual understanding.

This is like the person today who always gets caught up in the latest and greatest spiritual craze; this new program or the latest discipleship DVD set that comes out. They are being influenced by so many things but they never master the important and deeper things of God. It is the deeper knowledge of God that brings one into more spiritual maturity. Like the Hebrew Christians, they got stuck on some of the most trivial points and missed the big picture. They really did not understand the full gospel and therefore, could not communicate it. For them, they are more concerned about outwards things; like should women wear dresses or head coverings and men wear ties and coats. They are concerned about outward appearances and works and how people perceive them rather than the condition of their souls and their relationship with God.

The writer is wanting to move on to the deeper and more profitable truths but has to start all over again because they are just not willing to leave the milk of the gospel and move on to at least cereal, let alone savoring the rich meat of the full Gospel. Rather than moving on to solid food, these folks are physically grown but spiritually they still need sippy cups. Just like my sarcasm, the writer is using some very sarcastic language with these stalled-out Christians, trying, as it were, to almost shame them into moving past spiritual baby food onto adult food. He is shaming them and telling them it is time to grow up spiritually.

At this point the questions that come to my mind and I put forth to you; “Are you currently influencing other people concerning Christ or are you stuck because you have not gone deeper into God? Are there people currently benefiting from your Christianity? Do people see that you are different from the surrounding world and desire the peace you have?” I say to you, do not miss what we are being told in this

text. The basics of the Gospel are vital and they are of the utmost importance. They are the foundational building blocks on which our faith is solidified and enables growth. The superstructure of one's faith needs to be built upon a rock-solid foundation. However, once, the foundation has been laid with Jesus as the cornerstone it is time to build the building. The sarcasm of the writer is saying quit sitting around and get busy seeking God, growing in your faith, so that, you can be productive for the kingdom. It is time to get serious and to bear fruit for Christ! Let me ask, "Are you like these stalled-out 1st century Christians or are you growing ever deeper in your faith and becoming more productive in declaring Christ to the world?"

When a building or a soul is neglected, it does not stay solid, it decays. The 3rd mark of spiritual decay is one's inability for discernment.

Poor Discernment (v. 13-14)

Spiritual decay is marked by one's poor spiritual discernment. The writer of Hebrews desires to take his audience into a deeper level of understanding, a deeper spiritual life and deeper relationship with God, but he cannot because they are stalled-out. They cannot discern true from false. Reading verses 13 and 14, "for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. ¹⁴ But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil." The writer is telling his audience I cannot take you spiritually deeper because you cannot digest the spiritual food, I need to feed you baby food first. The writer is comparing milk to the basic teachings of the gospel and meat to the deeper spiritual truths of the gospel that they should already have an understanding of but they do not.

Because they cannot digest or comprehend the deeper truths, they are unable to discern good doctrine from evil doctrine. They are being led back into Judaism because of their poor discernment. Every idea or belief sounds just as good as the

next to them. Have you ever been listening to a sermon or reading a book about Christianity and thought to yourself, *I don't think what was said or what the author wrote is right?* Then you did some investigation and find out what the problem was. This is the problem with these people, they were not willing to put in the effort to separate God's truth from man's ideas that were false. The Jewish teachers were convincing them that what they had left was a whole lot better than what they were currently experiencing. We must not be taken in by the latest convincing teacher that may sweep us away from true doctrine with their false half-truths. We must be diligent at learning so we can stand firm in the day of trial. Also, so we can recognize God's truth from man's sugar-coated false doctrine. This is why the writer tells his audience, ¹⁴“solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.” Because this church community's lack of discernment, the writer will spend the next 5 chapters teaching them about the Great High Priest Jesus Christ and deeper truths of His gospel.

The Path to Spiritual Maturity (6:1-3)

Understanding the basics that builds a strong spiritual foundation is essential for every Christian. This proper foundation enables Christians to live in repentance and faith and know God's grace and mercy. From this foundation Christians grow in maturity to live in obedience to God, to become joyful servants of Christ and be thrilled with who they are in Christ. This allows Christians to give God's grace, mercy and love to others as they share the deep truths of Christ.

Reading verses 1 to 3 of chapter 6, “Therefore let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, ² and of instruction about washings, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. ³ And this we

will do if God permits.” True belief and is built upon the Word of God and accepting it as the foundation and framework to living one’s life.

Foundation

Solid Foundation begins with believing, do you believe these basic truths I now read? “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. ⁴ In him was life, and the life was the light of men. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” (John 1:1-5) When one believes the Scriptures, they recognize they are sinners in the need of Savior and they repent before Christ and believe by faith.

Instruction

With the true foundation laid one’s life begins to be rebuilt and restructured. They receive the Holy Spirit, are baptized, believe in the resurrection of Christ and His return and the judgment to come. Without this God laid foundation one quickly loses their way; this is why the writer is going to review with them the basic knowledge of the Gospel in order to move them into deeper spiritual maturity.

Let me explain what I mean. The alphabet is an important concept for the preschooler and it gives the foundation for learning to read and write. Singing the ABC song is vital for it locks in a child’s memory proper order. Learning how to say and write each letter is important. Years later this former preschooler is now a adult. He uses the ABC’s everyday but he does not sing the ABC song and does not practice making the letters because he knows them by heart. Likewise, we should review the basics of the gospel and learn them well but then we should move on to mature truths. These truths give us the ability to discern between good and evil.

Action

Take the truths you learn from Scripture and practice and put them to use. Stop singing the ABC song and begin writing words and sentences. I wish there was laid out for us here a three-step plan to move beyond the elementary doctrines, but simply, there is not.

Let me ask, could it be that God requires something that we are unable to attain without His divine aid? Could it be that God wants His children diligently working at seeking to understand and applying truths and relying on His aid for it to be accomplished? I think that is clearly what this text teaches. Verses 1 and 2 says they want to teach the truths that will take the readers to spiritual maturity, and then verse 3 says, “[And this we will do if God permits.](#)” Only when one diligently seeks God does He open their hearts and minds to His deeper truths and they “[go on to maturity](#)”.

Here is your assignment; study the Bible and gain good theology and doctrine. Read books by men who have gained spiritual maturity and evaluate their writings against the Word of God. Seek God in regular prayer and you will find He has built the foundation that will enable you to be obedient with gladness, so you can go to your neighbor, co-worker and family with the saving Gospel of Christ. Spiritual maturity will gain you influence among people and God will use that influence in might ways as you act upon His Word. Amen!