

“LET US GO ON TO PERFECTION”

“Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God” (Hebrews 6:1 NKJV).

The word “perfection” is defined as, “*teleiōtēs*; gen. *teleiōtētos*, fem. noun from *téleios* (G5046), perfect, one who reaches a goal. Perfection or perfectness, stressing the realization of an end in view, the state achieved when a goal has been accomplished (Colossians 3:14; Hebrews 6:1).”

Introduction

1. The Hebrew writer rebukes the brethren for their lack of spiritual growth: “For though 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” (Hebrews 5:12), and then he says, “Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God” (Hebrews 6:1). So, on the one hand, they needed to be taught again the rudiments of the faith, but then, ignore this and declares his the depths of advanced explanations have been offered believe the solution is this: “A

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on the other hand, he seems to intention to go on and explore Christian doctrine. Several to explain this paradox, and I final explanation is simpler and much more profound. It points out that, apart from apostasy, no retrogression is possible in the Christian life. Failure to progress brings danger of spiritual collapse. The only way of recovering lost ground therefore is to forge doggedly ahead. Moreover, an intellectual failure to advance towards a mature understanding of the Christian faith results not merely in intellectual but also in moral and spiritual inertia. Relentless forward movement is thus the only real cure for lack of growth. This being true, the writer inexorably plows ahead without looking back to see if his readers are with him” (Daniel H. King, Sr.).

2. This lessons aim to encourage us to *go on to maturity*. We shall do this by looking at several reasons some Christians remain spiritual babies, and then consider several things that promote spiritual growth.

I. THE FAILURE TO PROGRESS

A. There are various exhortations to mature in knowledge/faith:

1. To the Colossians, Paul explains the goal of his preaching: “Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, **that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus**” (Colossians 1:28). As we take heed to the admonitions and teachings of the gospel, so we continue progress toward maturity.
2. To the Ephesians Paul explains the reason Christ gave gifts to the church (apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers): “...for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, **till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man**, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head - Christ” (Ephesians 4:12-15).

The word “perfect” (*teleios*) does not mean “flawless” but suggests continual development according to our abilities.

B. Why do some Christians stay spiritual babies?

1. Some people are **double-minded**. They have never fully established their allegiance to Christ. Jesus warned: “No one can serve two masters...” (Matthew 6:24). These are people that always measure obedience against competing desires and opportunities.

2. Some people **base their lives on emotion/circumstance**. Those who fail to develop are undisciplined and measure everything by the here-and-now and their feelings. Such a Christian is “unstable in all his ways” (James 1:8).
 3. Some people **lack true faith**. Their service is outwardly conforming but is offered out of habit, social interests, guilt and other less noble motives. This promotes vulnerability to the cunning craftiness and trickery of men (Ephesians 4:14).
- C. If we fail to grow we will go backward spiritually (Hebrews 5:12). The nature of the world and human life is corrosive. Unused things deteriorate, including minds.

II. THINGS THAT PROMOTE SPIRITUAL GROWTH

- A. Attitude: Christians must have an appetite for growth. Jesus said, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled” (Matthew 5:6). Peter says, “...desire the pure milk of the word that you may grow thereby” (1 Peter 2:2).
- B. Study: There is no substitute for energetic, industrious study of the Scriptures (2 Timothy 2:15; Acts 17:11). It is through studying that we grow (1 Peter 2:2). There are those who have never learnt *how* to study the scriptures, and it is these who are “always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth” (2 Timothy 3:7).
 1. Many things compete for Bible study time but if one truly has the desire, he will find the time. Those who claim they don’t have the time simply reveal a lack of desire to study God’s word.
 2. Learning is an inherently uncomfortable process. Our erroneous notions may be exposed; we may have to confront our personal shortcomings. But we must leave “the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ...and go on to perfection” (Hebrews 6:1).
 3. The most challenging aspect of learning the Scriptures is to apply principles to real-life situations. This we may call wisdom. Such wisdom comes from God through prayer (James 1:5).
- C. Testing: We will never progress unless we are tested. James says, “Let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing” (James 1:2-4). This understanding puts a different spin on hardship: Paul says, “Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Corinthians 12:10).
- D. Goal: Paul says to the Galatians, “My little children, over whom I once more suffer birthpains **until Christ is formed within you**” (Galatians 4:19). The meaning is that, Paul once again suffered birthpains “until a mind and life in complete harmony with the mind and life of Christ shall have been formed in you” (Mike Willis). The goal of our growth and development is perfection or maturity.
- E. Cooperation with the work of evangelists/elders/teachers (Ephesians 4:11-16). We all need help to grow and reach the goal; we need the guidance, wisdom, knowledge and stimulation of other Christians to provide an environment of growth.

Conclusion

1. The scriptures contain various exhortations to mature in knowledge and faith (Colossians 1:28; Ephesians 4:12-15) and a failure to do so is likely due to double-mindedness (Matthew 6:24), basing one’s life on emotion and circumstances; making one’s self unstable (James 1:8), or a lack of true faith by which one is made vulnerable to the cunning craftiness and trickery of men (Ephesians 4:14). Such a failure to grow means we are actually going backwards. This is the way of things in the world and human life – unused things deteriorate, including minds.
2. It is essential, then, that we pursue those things that promote spiritual growth: we need to ensure we have the right attitude; we must have an appetite for growth (Matthew 5:6; 1 Peter 2:2); we must have an intense craving for God’s word because it is by it that we grow (1 Peter 2:2); we must welcome times of testing as opportunities to grow (James 1:2-4; 2 Corinthians 12:10); we must keep our goal in the forefront of our minds – Christ formed in us (Galatians 4:19); and we must cooperate with the work of teachers (Ephesians 4:11-16).

God knows us better than we know ourselves. He knows what we can handle and what will destroy us. But we must work cooperatively with Him and trust Him so that we can take advantage of growth opportunities.