

Hebrews 6:1-3

“Moving to maturity”

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I. Introduction

We are back looking at the third warning in this book: **Rejecting spiritual maturity!** In so doing the writer wrote about four groups that made up the fellowship of Hebrew believers in Rome:

- 9. Vs. 11-14 **The prolonged immature**, those who have “*come to need milk and not solid food.*”
- 10. Vs. 1-3 **The maturing believer**, those that have left “*the elementary principals of Christ.*”
- 11. Vs. 4-8 **The stillborn**, those “*who were once enlightened but now were endanger of falling away.*”
- 12. Vs. 9-12 **The reproducers**, those that have, “*ministered to the saints, and do minister.*”

The first general observation is that two of these groups are negative profiles and two are positive profiles:

- C. Negative: The **prolonged immature** and the **stillborn**
- D. Positive: The **maturing believer** and the **reproducers**

That observation leads us to the mysterious reality that **all four of these groups existed**

under the same roof, had the same opportunities to grow under the same teaching

presented to them. The conclusion from this observation is that: **The differences were**

not to be found in differing spiritual diet or lack of spiritual nurturing. Instead the

lack of results was placed solely upon the listener as they were “*dull of hearing*” (Verse

5:11). Though this was no doubt true of the original recipients of this letter, I believe that

this is **NOT always true of the modern evangelical church today.** I’m gravely

concerned that we pastor / teachers bare some of the responsibility for the lack of

maturity in the church today. There are three ways in which we pastor / teachers have

contributed to immaturity with in His Church:

4. **Diet**: The lack of verse by verse expository, systematic bible teaching, through the books of the Bible as originally written.
5. **Discipleship**: The lack of discipleship where there exists an expectation of accountability to apply the truths taught.
6. **Definition**: The changing of the definition of **GROWTH** from “**spiritual maturity**” to “**numerical attendance**”. Where this occurs the focus shifts from Jesus being essential to the believer, to the church being essential to the believer.

With that said we take up focus in the first three verses of chapter 6 of one group that was growing in their faith.

II. Vs. 1a Marks of maturity

Vs. 1a It is at once clear that one of the “***marks of maturity***”, by way of illustration from the physical realm, was a natural change in diet from “**Milk**” to “**Meat**”. In chapter 5 verses 12-14 the writer explains that milk is defined as:

- The “**first principles of the oracles of God, that leaves the believer unskilled in the word of righteousness because they are still discussing the elementary principles of Christ.**” It seems, by way of the author’s definition that, “**Milk**” as far as a spiritual diet is concerned is essential for “salvation” but lacks the substance and nutrients necessary for our “sanctification”. To continue on in a diet that only emphasizes our need to get saved once we are saved would stunt our continual growth in how to daily walk with God.

What is at issue within this mark of maturity is understanding exactly what the author meant by these two exhortations:

3. **Leaving** the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ
4. **Let us go on** to perfection

Without the proper study of these two phrases it would be impossible understand the

point the writer is making to the original reader. The Greek word “*leaving*” is a verb that

means to “*put off*” and is further clarified by the words “*the elementary principles of*

Christ.” The word implies an alteration from the original discussion. It carries the idea

that a person can’t go on without separating themselves from that which they were

attached described here as “the elementary principles of Christ.” In the context of the

letter it seems as though the **prolonged immature** remained in this state due to a fixation

on Jesus atonement as the Christ which they just continued to wrestle against, in light of

the the Levitical sacrifices. **That continual debate kept them from moving onto maturity.**

The words “*Let us go on*” in classic Greek were used to “*bring or carry*”. These two

words help to define the meaning of “*the elementary principles of Christ.*” Which was the

emphasis upon the superiority of Jesus' sacrifice to that of the Levitical sacrifices. All of this will be developed further in the letter where in 7:19 the writer will say that the law with regards to the Levitical sacrifices made nothing perfect where as in chapter 10:12 after Jesus' sacrifice for our sins He sat down.

This is why the writer is urging these professing believers to graduate from milk to meat, from immature diet to solid food, as he says in 5:14, "*Solid food belongs to those who are of full age.*" **The continuation of the exclusivity of the diet had stunted their maturity. As already stated spiritual maturity is not produced automatically by age, neither is it produced by proximity to "solid food" or teaching. It is produced by practice!** Which is what the author had said in verse 14 saying, "*Those who by reason of USE have their senses EXERCISED to discern both good and evil.*" Those two words "USE" and "EXERCISED" support the position that maturity requires the "hear of the word of God to be a doer of the word of God" as James wrote in 1:23. **Spiritual maturity is produced when we act on what we believe,** putting it into practice. But to reach this maturity requires us to leave behind the ABC's, or elementary truths, by which we came to Christian faith. The writer says, "*Not laying again the foundation.*" **While it vital to have a solid foundation to build upon, there is NO ADVANTAGE to tearing up a solid foundation regularly to build the same one again and again.** Instead "repetitive foundation laying" is a sign of arrested development and immaturity. One commentary noted that, "*American evangelicals don't usually come to church to learn anything. Instead what they want to hear is the same old stuff so they can say, Amen too!*"

III. Vs. 1b-3 Six features

Vs. 1b-2 What needed to be set aside was the typology, pictures of the 1st testament that pointed to the reality of the Lamb of God. They needed to let go and move on from the incomplete to the completed work of God in Christ. The phrase “*elementary principles of Christ*” is very different in the Greek. **But it presents a question:** *If these Hebrews had left the 1st testament sacrifices and made profession of the Messiah, why does the writer exhort them to abandon these same sacrifices?* The answer is that **they had only made a mere intellectual agreement** to this that was not being trusted upon under the stress of persecution. **These Hebrews had NOT yet finally and irrevocably discarded the old practice for the new truth!** This “**repetitive foundation laying**” they kept relaying was over 6 things that was ingrained in the 1st testament understanding mentioned in verses 1-2. **We must avoid making our application based upon what we think these six things mean TODAY, to be blunt what they mean today is irrelevant!** What we must investigate is what the intended meaning was to those that read the original letter. The foundation of the 1st Covenant had six features:

7. Vs. 1b **Repentance from dead works:** In the 1st testament this meant **turning away from evil sinful deeds that brings about the effects of death.** Ezekiel said in 18:4 “*The soul that sins will die.*” Turning away from dead works and turning towards God was part of their foundation but what was missing was **HOW** to do so. Early on in the ministry of John the Baptist and Jesus both preached to “*Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand.*” But as we move on past this we note that Paul preached to the elders of the Ephesian Church in Acts 20:21 “*...repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.*” What was missing was “*faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ*”. Jesus had declared in John 14:6 “*No one comes to the Father, but through Me.*” **A person no matter how sincere their repentance can not turn to God apart from faith in Jesus Christ! Jesus IS THE ONLY WAY TO TURN TO GOD!** Repentance from evil works is an important truth but **it was incomplete** if it was not accompanied by faith in Jesus! So the writer tells them that they needed to abandon the partial work for the completed work!
8. Vs. 1c **And of faith towards God:** This is mostly covered in the above segment but in Acts 2:38 we are told that Peter preached, “*Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of*

sins". Clearly there is no repentance apart from faith in Jesus. The only faith acceptable to God is faith in God the Son, as already noted in John 14:6. **Some of the Hebrews addressed in this letter believed in God, but they were not saved. Their repentance from evil works and faith towards God was sincere but couldn't be completed without Jesus Christ.** as Acts 4:12 tells us that, "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

9. Vs. 2a **Of the doctrine of baptisms**: The word "baptisms" is an unfortunate translation. The Greek word is NOT "bap-tizo" which is always used for the ordinance of baptism but is instead the Greek word "bap-tismos" which means **washings**! This fact is yet another indication that this passage is addressing Hebrew professing believers and not true followers of Christ. Every Hebrew home had a basin by the door used for ceremonial washings. **It is these washings that the writer is telling his readers to abandon and move on from.** The reason for this was predicted in Ezekiel 36:25-27 Where we read the Lord say, "Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them." The old washings were symbolic but clearly temporary where as the new washing was once and for all. It was this NEW washing that Jesus spoke of to Nicodemus where He said, "Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."
10. Vs. 2b **Of laying on of hands**: This has nothing to do with the New Testament practice of Acts 6:6, 8:17 and 1 Timothy 4:14 where you place your hands on someone to pray over them but instead is a reference to a 1st Testament practice where the person who brought a sacrifice to the priest would place their hands on it, to symbolize their identification with it on the sacrifice. The writer is telling them to abandon this practice because our identification is with Jesus Christ not by laying our hands upon Him as our sacrifice but because we have trust in His work on our behalf. We now "lay hold" of Christ by trusting in Him.
11. Vs. 2c **Of resurrection of the dead**: The doctrine of the resurrection in the 1st Testament was very incomplete. There was an understanding that there was life after death and rewards for the righteous and judgment for the wicked. In Job 19:26 we read Job's hope that, "after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God" and as such we learn that the resurrection was bodily, and not just spiritual. But in the New Testament the doctrine of the resurrection is detailed and complete and became a major theme of early church teaching. Jesus said in John 11:25 "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live." There is considerable clarity in the New Testament in passages like 1 Corinthians 15 and 1 John 3:2 where we read that "Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." The writer asks

his readers to abandon the incomplete teaching of the resurrection for the complete understanding brought about in trusting Jesus “*the resurrection and the life*”.

12. Vs. 2d **And of eternal judgment**: The 1st testament spoke some on the final judgment like Ecclesiastes 12:14 where we read, “*For God will bring every work into judgment, Including every secret thing, Whether good or evil.*” But in the New Testament we are given a fuller picture like Romans 8:1 where we read, “*There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.*” Or 1 Cor. 3:12-15 where we are told about the believer’s judgment for reward or lack of reward. Or Matthew 25:31-46 of the separation of the sheep from the goats. The final great white throne judgment of Rev. 20:11-15. Leaving the elementary principles on eternal judgment to the fuller understanding that came by faith in Christ is the writers appeal.

Vs. 3 The phrase in “**And this we will do if God permits**” must be understood in the context of “**Leaving** the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ” and “**Let us go on** to perfection” It is a reference of the six foundational aspects these professing believers were holding on to instead of moving onto maturity. There are two possible interpretations to this brief verse: Some see it as the writer saying “*I will go on and teach you what you need to know about these above six things if God permits me.*” Others think that the writer is saying, “*You will go on to maturity if you allow yourself to move on from these six foundational aspects of the 1st testament.*” I think that the writer could be thinking of both of these as maturity is going to require them by the work of the Holy Spirit both a greater understanding and an abandoning of the 1st testament teaching.