

A CONFIDENT FAITH FOR CONTROVERSIAL TIMES

9. "Keep Going or You'll Stop Growing!"

Scripture: Hebrews 5:11 – 6:3

Theme: "Spiritual maturity results only when Biblical information transforms into behavioral transformation!"

Introduction

In the past, it was the pastors and religious leaders of America who generally defined spiritual terms for the average person. But this is no longer the case. Today has given rise to a new group of prophets, philosophers and spiritual guides. Now movie theaters all across America show a steady stream of movies that deal with spiritual themes. Sometimes, humorously, sometimes seriously, sometimes subtly. Look at the people impacted by "The DaVinci Code?" The view of angels has been shaped by the TV Program "Touched by an Angel." Thoughts of the after life, communication with the dead, etc are popular subjects put on by today's media. Christology is taught in TV specials such as Peter Jennings: "The Search for Jesus." Through broadcasts like these, millions of viewers have been informed that most of what the Bible says about Jesus was invented by the early church and that accounts such as: the birth of Jesus, the resurrection and other miracles attributed to Jesus didn't actually happen.

Sadly, many Christians and Church attenders have little or no biblical grounding. When confronted by these challenges. The Bible for many has become regarded as a "Rule-Book" or as "God's guide to become healthy, wealthy and a positive thinker." Sadly, God is thanked from end zones during football games and awards podiums, or is laughed at in films like "Bruce Almighty." People remain hungry for the spiritual emptiness in their lives to be quenched. But, tragically, the message being communicated and listened to from the prophets of our day is not a biblical one.

Similar issues concerned the writer to the Hebrews. Instead of Christians growing in their spiritual understanding of the person and work of Jesus, many of the believers of that day were influenced by surrounding culture and philosophies and did not desire or take the time to grow deeper. This condition he now addresses in the remaining verses of chapter five and the beginning of chapter six.

I. **The Condition Affecting Many Christians** (Heb. 5:11 – 14)

1. How does the writer describe the group of Hebrew believers in this passage? (5:11)
 - What criteria do James and Jesus set that determines whether or not a Christian "has learned?" (James 2:14 – 17; Mt 7:21)

2. What was lacking in the lives of these Hebrew Christians? (5:12, 2 Tim. 2:2)
 - How would you distinguish between “milk” and “solid food” when it comes to knowing God’s Word? (II Pet 1:3 – 9)

3. Of what are infant or baby Christians often ignorant? (5:13; Rom. 8:28 – 29; Gal 2:20; 4:19, 5:22 – 23)

4. What is the benefit of “solid food?” (5:14)
 - From where can Christians “dine on” solid spiritual food? (II Tim 3:14 – 17)

 - What attitudes and actions would you expect to find in a “mature” Christian? (Phil. 2:3 – 5; Gal. 5:22 – 23)

5. How does it disgrace Christ when a person lapses back into his or her old ways of life? (Rom. 2:23 – 24).
 - If you or some one you know does lapse back, what are you called on to do? (Psa. 32:3 – 7; Gal. 6:1 – 3; Jn 1:9)

II. The Challenge Addressed To All Christians (Heb. 6:1 – 3)

1. What new challenge does the writer of Hebrews present to his readers? (6:1)
 - What do you suppose is the first foundational truth that Christians must know if they expect to mature? (Jn 1:14; 14:6; Acts 4:12; 2 Cor. 3:11).

- What foundational response must take place if maturity is to result? (Acts 2:38 – 39; Jn. 1:12 – 13; Rom 10:9 – 10).
 - Explain: “repentance from acts that lead to death...”
2. What other foundational truths does he describe in 6:2?
- Why are these topics considered to be foundational truths for Hebrew Christians?
3. If they are “foundational” and “elementary,” then how would you explain them?
- Repentance and Faith:
 - Baptism (washings)
 - Laying on of hands
 - Resurrection of the dead
 - Eternal judgment
4. In the end, what enables Christians to achieve spiritual maturity? (6:3)

Application

What changes can you make in your daily routine over the next three days to combat spiritual laziness and to exercise spiritual discipline?