

God's Word – and Spiritual Maturity (#10)

Text : **Hebrews 5: 11-6:3**

INTRODUCTION :

A. March 15, 2010 *He Pingping* died at the age of 20.

1. He was the world's shortest man. **2 ft. 5 in.**
2. Everyone else in his family was normal sized.
3. Was short because he had a disease *Osteogenesis Imperfecta*

B. Pingping tried to lead a normal life, but remained an oddity.

1. He managed a restaurant.
2. He had a normal sized girlfriend.
3. But his lack of growth dominated his life.

C. Imagine your reaction if your child never got waste high to normal people.

1. You would take them to doctor after doctor seeking assistance.
2. You would have every test known to man performed seeking as solution.
3. It would as traumatic for you as it would be for the child.

D. NOW – apply this to God.

1. Imagine how God feels when He sees the growth of His children stunted, dwarfed.
2. He loves His children so much He dies on a Roman cross to give them life.
3. After birth they become diseased with spiritual *Osteogenesis Imperfecta*.

E. This is a very real spiritual condition which affects many Christians today.

1. Physically they look like everyone else, but spiritually they are dwarfs.
2. We've all know people who grew up physically, **but** their mental maturity was retarded.
3. Their bodies grow strong, but mentally they remain children.

* **ILL -** *Grey-haired man with mind of a child.*

- a. Parents love them and care for them.
- b. They can't survive without a parent or other caregiver.
- c. Though loved, the retarded never become productive members of society.

LIKEWISE, the spiritually retarded or dwarfed are loved, but they cannot be productive members of the kingdom of God. This is the problem our text deals with so let us observe some principles of spiritual maturity from it.

I. Spiritual maturity does not automatically occur with the passing of time.

A. Vs. 12 .. When sufficient time had passed these brethren had not developed.

B. Even, in the physical realm effort is required for healthy growth.

1. Healthy development starts in the womb.

ILL - Mission gave prenatal vitamins to prevent mental dullness.

2. Good food and proper exercise will make a youth grow strong and healthy.

ILL - The average height of Japanese has increased 6 inches sincere WW 2.

3. Couch potatoes grow fat, but are not strong.

C. It is the same in the spiritual realm.

1. Spiritual milk is required to create spiritual growth.

1 Pet. 2: 1-3 Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, **2** like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, **3** if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.

a. When the Christian is “**born again**” he must change his lifestyle.

b. He must strongly desire the word of God. (*He longs for it, not like medicine.*)

2. Spiritual growth ONLY occurs when one longs for the words of God.

a. Healthy children don't have to be forced to eat. (*Won't eat = problem*)

b. They have to be trained what to eat. (*Junk food tastes good, but doesn't nourish.*)

c. They will often want to eat things they are not yet ready to digest.

3. It takes the milk of the word to develop one so he can handle the meat of the word.

D. When the text says, “**by this time you ought to be**” it indicates there is a normal progression in one's spiritual maturity.

1. One thinks little of a 9 month old baby nursing, **but** a 9 year old child still nursing IS problematic **and** at 19 it is unheard of.

2. Every pediatrician's office has child progress chart on the wall.

a. When they should start eating solid food.

b. When they begin taking steps, etc. (*Discuss developing social discernment.*)

3. God also expects His children to progress at a normal rate.

a. There is a time when God expects us to feed ourselves, to stand on our own, etc.

b. As in a physical family, the older children must help with the younger children.

4. Each generation must to produce the next generation or the family ends.

II. Spiritual maturity can be lost and the Christian can regress.

A. These Hebrew Christians had regressed.

1. Vs. 11 .. “.. since you have become dull of hearing.”
 - a. They had not always been dull of hearing.
 - b. They lost their ability to understand spiritual things.
2. Vs. 12 .. “.. and you have come to need milk and not solid food.”
 - a. They had matured past the milk stage.
 - b. Now they “.. need again for someone to teach ..”

B. Those who are spiritual do not always stay that way.

1. **Gal. 6:1-** Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted.
2. To be “restored” is to be returned to a former condition. (spiritual)

C. Spiritual maturity is not to be confused with bible knowledge.

1. One can be a bible scholar and not be spiritually mature.
 - a. Some learn just because they enjoy learning, studying, researching.
Acts 17: 21- (Now all the Athenians and the strangers visiting there used to spend their time in nothing other than telling or hearing something new.)
 - b. Some acquire knowledge, but never learn what it means or how to use it.
II Tim. 3: 6-7 For among them are those who enter into households and captivate weak women weighed down with sins, led on by various impulses, ⁷ always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. (*Learn facts w/o understanding*)
 - c. Knowledge is only of value when it is understood and applied.
2. Many today have become like the Jewish leaders of old.
 - a. They memorize that which is taught by great teachers, don't understand truth.
 - b. The Sadducees are a good example of this.
Matt. 22: 29- But Jesus answered and said to them, “You are mistaken, not understanding the Scriptures nor the power of God.
3. When one has spiritual struggles, he does not forget all he knows about the bible.

D. Dullness of hearing is a spiritual disease.

1. “Dull” translates a word used only once in the New Testament.
 - a. “*nothros*” means : slow, sluggish, indolent
 - b. This is a spiritual condition, NOT a physical condition.

2. Those who willfully hang on to the world's values, will have difficulty receiving spiritual instruction.

I Cor. 2: 14-15 But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. ¹⁵ But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one.

3. If you have difficulty comprehending spiritual truth, **look at your values.**

E. Knowledge and faith are linked but knowledge does not insure faith.

Likewise, knowledge is essential for spiritual maturity, but it does not insure it.

1. Therefore :

- a. The ability to become spiritually mature does not depend upon one's I.Q.
- b. The ability to become spiritually mature does not depend upon education.

* *The scriptures were written BY uneducated men FOR uneducated men.*

ILL - Some illiterate men have become very spiritual. (Native preacher)

2. Because a spiritually mature person can regress there is NEVER a point of retirement for the Christian.
 - a. There is NEVER a time when a Christian can say, "I've done enough."
 - b. We never stop telling what Jesus has done for us, or stop reading, or praying, or ..

III. Spiritual maturity can be observed in one's life.

A. Both spiritual maturity and immaturity can be seen in one's conduct.

1. Maturity is not :

- a. Just a mystical feeling or a holy ora one projects.
- b. Being able to use a special vocabulary or holy tone of voice.

2. Immaturity inhibits the proper functioning of a congregation.

I Cor. 3: 1-3a And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ. ² I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, ³ for you are still fleshly. ...

B. Some Signs of spiritual immaturity.

1. **I Cor. 3: 2** ... In ability to receive instruction. (*Want ear candy .. I Tim. 4: 3*)
2. **I Cor. 3: 3** ... In ability to work together.
3. **Heb. 5: 12** ... In ability to share the gospel with others.
4. **Heb. 5: 13** ... In ability to digest anything except spiritual milk.

* *Milk is not a bad thing, but when your 15 yr. old is still on it, there is a problem.*

C. Immature Christians are (Vs. 13) unskillful in the word of righteousness.

1. This is NOT just in reference to academic knowledge.
 - a. Memorization is not maturity.
 - b. Maturity involves diligently and correctly “**handling**” of the word of God.
II Tim. 2:15- Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.
2. The immature does not approach the word seeking to be changed by it.
 - a. They approach it seeking to prove what they already believe to be true.
 - b. They study to be able to point out the errors of others.

D. Spiritual maturity is made apparent by one's discerning skill with the word.

1. (Vs. 14) The mature Christian has his “**senses**” trained for spiritual discernment.
 - a. Not academic training.
 - b. Trained by practice ... using ... doing
2. His ears are attuned to the practical application of the word.
 - a. What does this means that I should do ?
 - b. How can I conform my life to this teaching ?
3. This is the same thing the Apostle Paul taught the Ephesian Christians in Chapter. 4.
 - a. All of the leaders of the church much train the members to become like Jesus.
 - b. Every Christian must contribute all he can for the church to be strong.
 - c. Becoming like Jesus must change our lives :
 - 1) Stop lying
 - 2) Control our anger
 - 3) Stop stealing and help others
 - 4) Limit our tongues to efficacious words
 - 5) Maintain peaceful relationships based on love
4. One who has spiritual discernment will know when something is right or wrong.
 - a. He knows the character of God.
 - b. He looks for the mind of God, **not a rule.**
 - c. No discernment is necessary when a clear rule is stated. (Don't kill, steal, lie, etc.)
 - d. 90 % of the daily things are not listed in the rules. (Use time, where to go, etc.)

*** The person with spiritual discernment has no problem functioning w/o rules.**

E. Spiritual Maturity naturally results in teaching.

1. **Vs. 12-** “.. by this time you ought to be teachers, ..”
2. When one comes to understand the word of God he develops a passionate desire to share it with others.
3. Increasing understanding gives increasing motivation.
 - a. Mature people eat healthy food. (*Working people need more than ice cream.*)
 - b. Mature people seek to help the weak.
 - c. Mature people seek to improve themselves.

CONCLUSION :**A. Only the immature Christian dwells in the comfort of the first principles.**

1. We all need to first principles to start us on our walk with God.
2. An occasional reminder can be productive.
3. Eventually the training wheels must come off if we are to progress normally.

B. We must leave the security of our comfort zone to walk in Christian freedom.

1. We know the basics of faith, repentance, baptism, the resurrection, judgment, etc.
2. We know the basic dos and don'ts.
3. We must now proceed on to the surrendered and sanctified life. (*make decisions*)

C. Having become an older brother we must now reach back to assist the younger.

1. The older women mentor the younger women. **Titus 2: 3-5**
2. The older men commit the gospel and the doctrine to the younger men. **II Tim. 2:2**
3. The strong mentor the weak and all train each other. **Gal. 6: 1-2 & Eph 4**

D. The mature are responsible to produce the next generation.

1. It is not the babes who reproduce, but the adults.
2. One lost generation will destroy the church.
3. God has place the fate of the church in our hands. **What are we doing with it ?**

INVITATION :

Lesson Text :

Hebrews 5: 11 – 6:3

5: 11 Concerning him 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 have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. **13** or everyone who partakes *only* of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. **14** But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.

6: 1 Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, **2** of instruction about washings and laying on of hands, and the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment. **3** And this we will do, if God permits.