

“Let Us Go On Unto Perfection”

Introduction. The scope of Hebrews is broad and sweeping. Its teaching encompasses both God’s earliest communications to man through His prophets and His final word spoken through His Son. The writer’s pen sweeps from the grandeur of the Son in eternity past to the culmination of His kingdom which cannot be shaken. The book constitutes a perfect, inspired example of the correct relationship and balance between doctrine and practice.

The exhortation to “go on unto perfection” expresses a goal for both writer and readers, teacher and students. The “perfection” that is spoken of is doctrinal in nature. Doctrine will protect you from evil and motivate you to obedience. It will inspire you to work and encourage you to reverence and worship God. It will train you to run the race well. In short, teaching which leads to spiritual maturity will effect every aspect of your life.

We have to understand the implications of doctrinal maturity. This is not an emotional appeal to become better people; it is an appeal to become efficient in recognizing true teaching from untrue teaching. We need this teaching because we must avoid falling away. This lesson is intended to encourage us to leave the rudimentary elements and develop powers of perception in the practical application of mature faith and judgment. It is much like a builder who has laid a firm foundation and goes on to complete the house.

I. ***Analysis Of Context***

- A. The people to whom this book is written are racially Jews. Formerly, they were Jews religiously; now they are Christians. Apparently, the readers were losing their faith, hope, and courage in the New Covenant and were contemplating a defection to the Old Covenant. If they yielded, they would be lost. Therefore, this is not a book of correction, it is a book of exhortation (13:22). The writer gives stern words to keep them from faltering and sinning.
- B. The writer wants his readers to fully understand the dire consequences of this action. If they were to fall back to the Old Covenant, they would be crucifying the Son of God again (6:6) and trampling Him underfoot (10:29). They were then warned that it was a terrifying prospect to fall into the hands of the living God (10:31).
- C. The narrow context in which the challenge to press on to full growth is made is the discussion of the Melchizedek priesthood. The heart of both covenants is the priesthood, and the important function of the priest is to represent the people before God. However, the readers’ infantile condition kept the writer from being able to reason with them about Christ’s priesthood.

D. The writer had brought up the Melchizedek priesthood all the way back in 2:17. He intended to go into a full discussion beginning in chapter 5. However, he had to stop and introduce the section on spiritual immaturity (5:11-6:20).

II. ***Causes And Consequences Of Immaturity***

A. The causes of immaturity.

1. They were dull of hearing (5:12). The original word means "lazy," and like children, they wasted their time. The Christians addressed in Hebrews should have been mature Christians, but they were still babes -- they had not grown up in Christ. To be a teacher meant to the ancient mind that one was able to think and act maturely, but they still needed a teacher.
2. They were not accustomed to the word of righteousness (5:13). They refused "solid food." Being lazy of mind, they refused to try to become accustomed with the more demanding doctrine. They did not allow the truth to build thorough concepts in their minds. Like children, they said, "We can't," and they couldn't.
3. They refused to exercise themselves in discerning good and evil (5:14). Their spiritual muscles were flabby. Discerning between good and evil means recognizing what is good and evil when one's views are compared to the truth (Philippians 1:9-11). In their weakened condition, they were susceptible to lies.

B. The consequences of immaturity.

1. They could fall away from God. Even though they were Christians (6:4), they could fall from grace in their infantile condition. This falling away would make it impossible to renew them to repentance because they have placed themselves beyond the power of God's final word through His Son. They would crucify again the Son of God and put Him to open shame. Their doctrinal immaturity had brought them to this threatening abyss.
2. They could lose their anchor of the soul. God encourages men to build up their confidence. However, in their state, they could lose the hope set before them (6:17-19). This unchangeable promise brought strong encouragement to Christians who fled to God for refuge. The hope is an anchor which is sure and steadfast and was personified in Jesus the forerunner. Thus, their immature condition was a thief who robbed them of these God-given treasures.

III. ***Present-Day Applications***

A. Doctrinal maturity is essential to godliness.

1. Some Christians are still plagued by sin, and remain infantile in their knowledge, perceptions, and applications of truth.

2. A holy life is impossible without reverence for God and His word. It is merely accidental when one who does not think and believe right does right.
 - a) Because of a lack of knowledge, some Christians fall victim to the lust to satisfy the flesh (2 Timothy 4:10). Some Christians yield and fall victim to the hardness of their hearts. Some Christians, weary of standing for the truth, become timid and shrink back. Some Christians, giving into discouragement, forget that God allows suffering because it tests and proves His children's faith.
 - b) Reverence for God is more than "offering thanks" for food three times a day and assembling with Christians three times each week. Respect for His sacred word is more than memorizing verses and outlining lessons. It is humbly living every moment in your life obedient to God's will. It is each Christian reading, thinking, and learning the substance of God's word. This, in turn, will produce an appropriate change of behavior. His word will keep us clean (Psalm 119:9; John 15:3; Ephesians 5:26).
- B. Faith comes from believing the clear testimony of truth.
1. One's convictions must come from testing one's conclusions by the truth rather than by accepting views passed down from former generations such parents or preachers (2 Timothy 1:5).
 2. Your motivation for living holy must come from the thrill of receiving truth rather than from psychological manipulations of skilled performers (Deuteronomy 31:12).
 3. Your lifestyle must be the result of personal decision and application rather than the overpowering desire to be accepted by others (Luke 10:26).
- C. Doctrinal controversy is necessary.
1. We must take to heart that controversy is involved in maintaining the faith. Contending for the faith is not repulsive (Jude 3). Paul withstood his brother Peter when he did not walk according to the truth (Galatians 2:11-14; 1 Corinthians 11:19). In the end, our struggle is not against other men, but the devil (Ephesians 6:11-12).
 2. It is a sad mistake when members of the Lord's church bond very strongly to a preacher who mainly preaches motivational and practical sermons, essentially becoming "self-help" gurus. We must have preaching, teaching, and studying on doctrinal matters. Some of the most faith-building sermons I have ever heard are those debates over differing issues or lessons which address a specific doctrine.

D. Discrimination is needed in what we read.

1. Some Christians do not read their Bibles hardly at all and read virtually nothing of what sound brethren write (2 Timothy 2:23; Titus 3:9). A vast number of Christians spend their time reading denominational and Calvinistic literature (cf. Isaiah 34:16; 1 Timothy 4:13).
2. Why should I study, with a view to belief, the nature of God's kingdom from an admitted premillennialist? Why should I study lessons on the church and duties of a Christian from men who are proponents of the social gospel? I do not want my children to learn about love from a homosexual!

Conclusion. It is my steadfast hope that we "go on unto perfection." We need people who are wise in the application of truth; whose lives reflect personal integrity; whose spiritual judgment is reasonable and sound; whose leadership ability is seen in their family; whose personality demonstrates the ability to be entreated as well as to entreat; and, who are entirely free of selfish ambition. The Lord's church needs brethren who have a mindset to preserve, preach, practice, and reverence truth. There is nothing greater to which we can succumb to than spiritual immaturity. So many false doctrines in the world would have never been a problem if we all understood the word of God.

It does not matter how large or small the congregation is, what matters is that we are pressing on with the promises of God in view (6:9-12). If you need to become a Christian, we invite you to do so. There is no way to see love until you see an expression of it. You may say you love God, but until you obey Him you are not showing your love.