TAKING THE NEXT STEP
(Hebrews 5:11-14 – 6:12)

A. We sometimes think of the end of a gospel meeting as being the end of a period of growth.

1. But we ought to view it like we do a baptism or a restoration – a new beginning that requires taking the next steps toward maturity.

B. Remember measuring the height of your children & the joy on their faces as they saw the change?

1. Their growth didn’t come as quickly as they hoped it would, but occasionally they would notice a great change.

2. We need to have that same joy in regard to spiritual growth of ourselves & others.

   a. But like physical growth, spiritual growth requires taking in the proper nutrition.

1 Pet 2:1-3 – Therefore [explain previous verses], laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, & all evil speaking, 2 as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby. 3 if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.

[The Hebrew saints were not growing as they should have been, & so they were urged to take the next step in the direction of spiritual growth. But first there were 2 things stunting their spiritual growth.]

I. CAUSES: SPIRITUAL STAGNATION

A. A milk of the word diet.

   1. But wait a minute. Didn’t Peter tell us to “desire the pure milk of the word that we may grow?”

   a. Peter’s meaning is that we should desire the Word of God as an infant craves pure milk.

Heb 5:13 – “For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age”
2. Well then what kind of “milk” is he talking about here in Hebrews?

Heb 6:1-3 – 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 & of faith toward God, 2 of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, & of eternal judgment. 3 And this we will do if God permits.

3. You may be thinking, that doesn’t sound like milk that sounds like meat!

   a. But bear in mind that these people had been Christians for years; they should have been able not only to understand but to teach the “meatier” subjects of the gospel, but they had become “dull of hearing” (5:11).

4. Now bear in mind, there is nothing wrong with studying the milk of the Word of God, in fact that is to be encouraged.

   a. Some of us have a little milk every day; it helps to build strong healthy bones.

b. And for our spiritual bodies, the milk of the Word helps to build a strong healthy mind – the mind of Christ.

5. However, if, after many years, we still do not understand nor do we apply “the elementary principles” – then we need to be concerned.

   a. There may be an underlying cause for being spiritually underdeveloped, as there was in the Corinthian church.

   1 Cor 3:1-3 – And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. 2 I fed you with milk & not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, & even now you are still not able; 3 for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, & divisions among you, are you not carnal & behaving like mere men?

   b. Do you remember what Paul’s (or God’s) solution was to their spiritual immaturity? (1 Cor 13)

[What will prevent us from growing spiritually? A “milk of the word” diet, which does not enhance our desire to learn more for the purpose of doing everything that our Lord commands.]
B. A failure to exercise.

1. Spiritual growth is not measured by how much Scripture we know, but how much & how often of it we practice.

2. If you tie one arm to your side & leave it unused for months, it will soon lose its strength.

   a. The same it true of our faith; it must be exercised.

   b. Back in our text in Hebrews, there are 3 exercises essential for growing Christians.

   Exercise Of Teaching – 5:12 – For though by this time you ought to be teachers

   The Jews fancied themselves instructors, teachers, a guide to the blind Gentile world, but they did not obey their own law – so they were unqualified to teach anyone (Rom 2:17-24).

   Exercise Of Discerning – 5:14 – But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised [trained] to discern [distinguish, judge] both good & evil.

Do you pay attention as to how the words & actions, both of yourself & others, relate to the Word of God?

Exercise Of Serving – 6:10 – For God is not unjust to forget your work & labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, & do minister. And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end.

A Christian, who is always actively attentive to the needs of the saints, discerning good from evil & teaching, is a growing Christian.

It’s like watching someone work out with weights; you just know that person is growing stronger physically.

[What will happen to us if we don’t understand the milk of the Word well enough to exercise our faith?]

II. CONSEQUENCES: SPIRITUAL STAGNATION

A. A falling away from God.

1. It’s easier to start something than it is to finish it, e.g., improvements around the house.

   a. That happens in our spiritual lives too, the only difference is the results.
Heb 6:4-6 – For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, & have tasted the heavenly gift, & have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, & have tasted the good word of God & the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, & put Him to an open shame.

Heb 6:7-8 – For the earth which drinks in the rain that often comes upon it, & bears herbs useful for those by whom it is cultivated, receives blessing from God; but if it bears thorns & briers, it is rejected & near to being cursed, whose end is to be burned.

[The Holy Spirit is serving notice; we are growing & useful OR stagnant & dying, destined to the eternal fire.]

III. CONFIDENCE: SPIRITUAL GROWTH

A. Thankfully, the Hebrew writer does not end with verse 8.

Heb 6:9 – But, beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you, yes, things that accompany salvation, though we speak in this manner.

1. We can become very negative in our outlook of the church – but aren’t you amazed by the confidence the apostle had in these Christians.

Heb 6:12-11 – And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith & patience inherit the promises. [Abraham given as an example in vss. 13-14]

[Quite a contrast with the words he used in verses 4-8.]

CLOSING

A. Spiritual growth is not a sprint; it’s a marathon.

1. It’s not when you start; it’s how you finish that’s important.

2. And we can finish stronger than we started, if we don’t put our spiritual growth aside for something else.

B. How are you running this race?

1. Did you get off to a good start only to find that it requires more of an effort than you want to give?

2. Assurance of victory can be yours, if you will shake off the sluggishness of spiritual lethargy.

3. The stakes are high, but the Lord’s offer is unquestionably the best available; nothing compares to it (John 14:1).
GOD’S PLAN FOR OUR SALVATION:

Hear the gospel of Jesus Christ; read it in your Bible: Acts 2; 3; 13; Rom 10:17

Believe Jesus to be Lord and Christ, the Son of God and Savior: Acts 2:36; John 3:16; 8:24; 20:30-31; Acts 4:12; Titus 1:4

Repent of your sins: Acts 2:38; 3:19; 17:30; 1 John 3:4

Confess your faith in Jesus Christ: Matt 10:32-33; Acts 8:37; Rom 10:9-10

Be baptized for the forgiveness of your sins: Acts 2:38; Rom 6:3-4; Gal 3:27; Acts 2:38; 1 Pet 3:21

Be obedient to the Lord, He will be your Judge: Titus 2:11-12; Heb 5:9; 2 John 9; Rev 2:10; John 12:48