**GROW UP!**

February 14, 2016

Hebrews 5:11-6:20

Key Verse 6:1a “Therefore let us move beyond the elementary teachings about Christ and be taken forward to maturity.”

Everybody loves babies! Part of what makes babies so appealing is that they are constantly growing and learning. When a baby DOESN’T grow up, we start to worry. That is also the first sign of spiritual trouble. Look at verse 11. “We have much to say about this, but it is hard to make it clear to you because you no longer try to understand.” Let’s think about how serious it is not to grow up in Christ.

**First**, How Spiritual Babies Look (5:11-6:3). For one thing, Spiritual Babies keep jibber-jabbering a bunch of baby talk long after they should have out-grown it. Even after years of being Christians, they still can’t articulate their faith. In fact, these fat little babies are still drinking milk out of bottles when they should be eating steak. They expect someone else to feed them when they should be able to feed themselves. Another problem with Spiritual Babies is that they are clueless when it comes to right and wrong. In their little minds, they can’t be held responsible if they do something wrong. After all --- they are just babies. Let’s take a minute for a personal inventory. How is your own maturity level looking?

Are you able to talk about your faith in Christ?; Are you able to explain what the gospel is?; Do you study God’s Word on your own, or do you wait for someone else to feed it to you?; Do you base your moral choices on God’s Word and the leading of the Holy Spirit? Or are you looking for someone else to give you a list of rules that you can follow without having to think for yourself?

Growing up as a Christian is no small matter. The author of Hebrews gives a very harsh warning when it describes the kind of damage Spiritual Babies can do.

**Second**, What Spiritual Babies Do (6:4-8). Look at verses 4-6. “It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age, if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance, because to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace.” That is a harsh warning! In fact, it is one of the most severe warnings in the New Testament. People get into all kinds of theological arguments about these verses. They argue over whether someone can “lose their salvation.” But these verses don’t talk about “losing” anything.

It is about spiritual babies not being secure about their salvation. In his book, In the Grip of Grace: When You Can’t Hang on, Bryan Chapell tells this story: “On Sunday, August 16,1987, Northwest Airlines flight 225 crashed just after taking off from the Detroit airport. One hundred fifty-five people were killed. Only one survived: a 4-year-old, named Cecelia. She survived because, as the plane was falling, her mother wrapped her arms and body around her, and then would not let her go. Nothing could separate that child from her mother’s love — not tragedy or disaster, not the fall or the flames that followed, not height nor depth, not life nor death.” This is the kind of love our heavenly Father has for us. We are secure in the fact that he will do whatever is necessary to keep us near his heart. He will wrap himself around us and never let go. We are safe in him.

But spiritual babies do not feel this way about God. They are constantly afraid they are going to accidently slip away from God and no longer be a Christian. They see God as unpredictable, ill-tempered and angry. When you want to give up because you think God has given up on you, you need to understand one thing: You cannot “lose” your salvation. You don’t wake up one morning and realize God is gone. Today is Valentine’s Day; People try to show their love to their loved ones. But we also see people who receive sudden and startling bad news from their marriage partner. As far as they knew, everything was fine in their marriage, when suddenly their spouse announced that they were not in love with them anymore and wanted a divorce. It came out of the blue. One day they thought they were in love and their relationship was secure, and the next day there was nothing. Some people act as though God’s love is just as uncertain and undependable. One day he finds you acceptable, and the next day he is leaving you. God is not like that at all. God is not against us, he is for us. His real interest is in forgiving our sin, not punishing our sin. His arms are continually stretched out toward us, inviting us to come to him. Even when we rebel and move away from him, he pursues us. His love is always pursuing us, even when we are running away from him. Paul wrote: “For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:38-39).

God will never give up on us, but we can reject God. God continues to love us, but we may no longer love him. He chooses us, but we may not choose him. This is the danger for a Christian who fails to Grow Up. You see, growing is not just an option for a Christian. Growing is the definition of a Christian. A Christian should grow to be like Christ. It is transformation. Growing up is not optional! In fact, it would not be an exaggeration to sum up the message of Hebrews 6 this way: Grow up or Die. If that seems too harsh, look at verses 7-8. “Land that drinks in the rain often falling on it and that produces a crop useful to those for whom it is farmed receives the blessing of God. But land that produces thorns and thistles is worthless and is in danger of being cursed. In the end it will be burned.” Perpetual Babies become so hardened that they can’t produce anything but thorns and thistles. This passage calls such a person worthless and in danger of being cursed. It goes on to say: In the end it will be burned. God does not give warnings like that lightly. And we should not take his warnings lightly. A Christian who is not growing is in imminent danger of falling away.

Then the author changes his tone in verse 9: “Even though we speak like this, dear friends, we are confident of better things in your case–the things that have to do with salvation.” In other words, “Don’t worry. None of those terrible things I described need to happen to YOU. Why? Because God has better things in store for those who are saved!” The next verses tell us how Spiritual Babies can Grow Up in Christ.

**Third**, How Spiritual Babies Grow (6:9-20). Look at verses 10-12. “God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them. We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure. We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.” Here is what these verses tell you to do in order to grow into the image of Christ:

Firstly, show your love of God by helping his people. The most amazing thing happens to those who quit focusing on self and begin to focus on ministry to others. They not only show God how much they love him, they also start enjoying themselves. Ministry is an acquired taste, and the sooner you develop a taste for it, the better … for everybody! When Jesus comes in his glory, we will all stand before him to be judged. He will say to those who showed love to their brothers and sisters in need, “Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.” (Matthew 25:40)

Secondly, give diligence to the very end. If toddlers begin to walk, and give up the first time they fall, they will never end up walking at all. But too many Christians give up at the first failure. No wonder they remain wimpy Spiritual babies. The author encouraged them not to give up, to move on to maturity and not to become sluggish in their faith. He now reminds them of the value of faithfulness by holding out the example of Abraham in both patience and in faithfulness (15).

God called Abraham and promised him that he would bless him and make him into a great nation. When he struggled with God’s fulfillment of the promise, the Lord gave him assurance and Abraham “believed the Lord” and that faith was accounted to him as righteousness (Gen. 15:6). It was a long time before Isaac, the son of promise, was born to Abraham. I am sure that the gap between the promise and its fulfillment was in the author’s mind as he wrote Hebrew Christians to remember the example of Abraham. If things appear slow with God, it does not mean that he has forgotten or that he will not fulfill his promise. And then God told him to do the hardest thing imaginable, to offer his son as a sacrifice upon Mount Moriah, and yet Abraham believed that God could raise him from the dead to continue to fulfill His promise to him (Gen. 22). It was after this testing of his faith that the Lord confirmed through an oath that he would fulfill the promise given to him recorded in verses 13-14, “For when God made a promise to Abraham, since there was no one greater than for him to swear by, he swore by himself, saying, ‘I will surely bless you and give you many descendants.’” The author of Hebrews is reminding these struggling Christians that Abraham, who was living with much less light of revelation than themselves, continued on in faithfulness because God is faithful to accomplish what he has promised. And we too are to be encouraged in looking at these believers, who struggled as we do, yet persevered by the help of the Lord.

Look at verse 19. “We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain….” An anchor grabs onto the floor of the ocean and holds the vessel securely. But the shifting sands of this world offer nothing to secure us for eternity. So our anchor does not go down to the ocean below, but upward into the glories of heaven. For our anchor of hope is “one which enters the inner sanctuary.” The scene is that of the high priest who could only enter the most Holy Place once a year with the sacrifice for the sins of Israel. He trembled as he entered knowing that he was in the presence of the Lord and that he dare not fail to carry out his duties. Otherwise, he would die. Once the duty was done, he immediately turned and walked out of the Most Holy Place. But that is not the case with our anchor of hope! It is firmly anchored in heaven, on one end, and firmly attached to the believer’s soul on the other. An anchor does not do any good if it is solidly hooked onto the ocean floor but not tied to the boat! Our “anchor of the soul” is fixed securely in our lives through the work of Christ. And the pull of the other end is eternally secure in the presence of the Lord.

Jesus is there as the one who went before us as our “forerunner” (v.20). The term as it is used here is one that describes the scouts who went ahead of the troops. Just as the forerunner was one who was ahead of the troops, going before them, Christ, our forerunner, has gone on ahead. And here is what the author wants you to understand: we will be where Christ is, in the inner sanctuary; for He has gone before us to prepare a place that we might be with Him forever. In fact he left us a message in John 14:2-3, “My Father’s house has many rooms…And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.”

The great scientist Michael Faraday was also a great Christian. When he lay dying, some journalist questioned him as to his speculations about a life after death. “Speculations!” he said, “I know nothing of speculations. I’m resting on the certainties. I know that my redeemer lives and because he lives, I shall also.” The director of a medical clinic told of a terminally ill young man who came in for his usual treatment. A new doctor who was on duty said to him casually and cruelly, “You know, don’t you, that you won’t live out the year?” As the young man left, he stopped by the director’s desk and wept. “That man took away my hope,” he blurted out. “I guess he did,” replied the director. “Maybe it’s time to find a new one.” Writing about this situation someone wrote, “Is there a hope when hope is taken away? Is there hope when the situation is hopeless?” We need to grow up and see the hope in Jesus Christ as an anchor for our soul, which entered the inner sanctuary.

Are you ready to take the warnings of Hebrews seriously? This passage warns us: Grow up or Die. A more positive application is to grow into the image of Christ. If you are growing up in Christ, you have nothing to fear. Hold on to Him. He is your anchor, firm and secure.