

Undeveloped Capabilities

by John Hames

The sermon emphasizes the importance of moving beyond spiritual infancy to achieve Christian Perfection through maturity and discernment.

Scripture: Joshua 5:12, 1 Corinthians 3:2, 1 Corinthians 13:1, Ephesians 5:18, 2 Timothy 2:15, Hebrews 4:12, Hebrews 5:11, Hebrews 6:1, Hebrews 12:14, 1 Peter 2:2

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Christian Maturity"

Description

John Hames preaches on the importance of progressing from spiritual babyhood to Christian Perfection, as outlined in the letter to the Hebrews. He emphasizes the need to move from a state of dullness in hearing God's voice to having senses exercised to discern good and evil. Hames highlights the dangers of remaining stagnant in spiritual growth, such as being unskilled in the word of righteousness and lacking progress in maturity. He urges believers to transition from a milk diet to solid food, symbolizing a deeper understanding of God's truths and the ability to distinguish between human and divine aspects of faith.

Transcript

"Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing. For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk and not strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." Heb. 5:11-14.

The letter to the Hebrews stands pre-eminently above all other epistles in one particular feature; that is, to prove Christian Perfection to converted Jews. All those types and shadows mentioned throughout the epistle are for the express purpose of teaching Christian Perfection from the Old Testament Scriptures.

The apostle has several great arguments in Hebrews, on Perfection. The first is drawn from the two crossings; namely, the Red Sea crossing, which represents sanctification. Then he takes up the two veils, and tells us that the first veil stood for conversion; here the priest went into the first Sanctuary daily and ministered before the Lord. But the second veil, which led into the Holy of Holies, represented the sanctified life. The high priest entered into this inner sanctuary only once a year. Then he takes up the two Pentecosts, the one given at Mt. Sinai, where God wrote His laws on tables of stone, and the second, Pentecost, where God poured out the Holy Ghost on Mt. Zion and His laws in the believer's heart.

But in the fifth chapter of this epistle, the apostle draws a contrast between the liquid food and the solid food believer, and tells us the great difference between them. The baby Christian is fed on the liquid diet, but the perfect believer, who has his inner senses enlightened, lives on solid food, which stands for the deep things of God.

This brings us up to our subject: The danger of remaining too long in the babyhood state. There are several complaints which the apostle brought against these baby Christians. Let us notice some earmarks of babyhood:

1. "Dull of hearing." (We are quoting from the fifth chapter of Hebrews). That does not mean that they could not hear, but that their sensibilities had been benumbed and deadened by the remaining carnality in their hearts, until it incapacitated them to know God's voice from that of their own human clamoring. A baby a few days old can hear, but it cannot distinguish between sounds. There are several voices speaking, and unless we are clarified and quickened in our inner senses, there is danger of taking our own human desires and impressions, for the voice of God. Then there is the voice of Satan. He makes impressions upon our human feelings. But there is a wide difference between the impression the Holy Ghost makes and that which Satan makes. Whenever the Holy Ghost speaks or makes an impression, there is a depth to it, there is a solemnity and a thoughtfulness, there is a calmness. God works on our spiritual nature. Satan makes his impression on our human feelings, but the Holy Ghost goes deeper and makes His impressions on our conscience and spiritual nature. Now, the great difference between the liquid and the solid food Christian is, the baby Christian is liable to follow his human feelings, or be led by an impression from the devil.

What I am trying to get you to see is that as long as you remain in an unsanctified babyhood state, you choke God's channels and hinder Him from pouring rivers of living water through you to bless a lost world. Deity is limited by unsanctified humanity.

As I have studied this subject, I have found that the apostle was not the only one who was hindered by unsanctified channels. Notice the words of Jesus in what was almost His last message to His disciples. He said, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." Why? Because of their incapacitated state.

Here is Jesus Christ "in whom dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." In Him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, in Him there is power to do exceeding abundantly above anything humanity can ask or think, in Him are "rivers of living water." All that humanity needs is in the heart of Deity. Here is a poor, broken Sahara, half-damned world, but Jesus Christ could make it blossom as a rose. He could make waters break out in its wilderness, and streams in its deserts. Jesus Christ is all this world needs. But He must reach it through His disciples, and they have choked the channel.

Notice, "I have many things to say," and the world needs them, but you have no capacity to get them to the world. I have rivers of living water for the desert of the world's need, but you have choked the channel. Who knows but that Jesus Christ had to go to the cross with great truths smoldering in His heart, which He wanted to utter, and He had to go to the cross without uttering them because there was no one capacitated to receive them?"

"Thousands of believers who are truly the servants of God," says G. D. Watson, "are yet almost totally ignorant of their religious capabilities." Your capabilities for endurance, for faith, for vividness of spiritual understanding, for witnessing, for praying, for self-sacrifice, for intensity of love, for victory over trial, for

courage and gentleness, for steady zeal and tireless work, -- you will never know nor even dream of until you are filled with the Spirit.

"To be filled with the Spirit, to be drinking every day deeper and yet deeper of the nature of God, will purify, adorn and expand every God-given capability of man."

"What unction in preaching, what sweetness in song, what glowing testimony, what fervency of prayer, what generosity of giving, what heavenly thinking, what patience in sorrow, what stretches of faith, what heroism of toil, what penetration of vision, what diligence of application, are brought into exercise by the fulness of the Spirit."

2. The second complaint the apostle brought against the baby Christians was the lack of progress. "When for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again." It is a sad thing to think we are advancing, and growing in grace, but to awake to the fact we are still in our babyhood. It is indeed a pitiful condition when one thinks he is making progress when really he is only "marking time," and he awakens to his true state to find the same low state of grace, the same weakness and sensitiveness, the same disposition to take offense, and indisposition to forgive wrongs and injuries, lying about in the soul.

Did you ever notice what happened to Israel of old when they came up to Kadesh-Barnea and refused to go over into Canaan? They turned back into the wilderness, and for forty years went round and round; they marched and counter-marched, zigzagged and failed to make progress. This is a true picture of the average American church which has failed to go on unto Christian Perfection. If the truth were known, half the professed Christians of today had more patience, tenderness of conscience, kindness and sweetness of Spirit, the first part of their Christian experience, than they have today. The only cure for such a state is to have the remaining carnality burned out of the heart and go on unto perfection.

3. Still another mark of babyhood is the milk diet. "And are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat." Milk is a mighty good thing for a baby, and has in it all the necessary ingredients to keep it growing and healthy, until it reaches that state where it can take solid food. Some one might ask, "When should a young Christian be given solid food?" Just as soon as he cuts his spiritual teeth. With proper teaching and light, this should not be long. As long as Israel remained in the wilderness, they had to feed on manna, a soft diet, which has its counterpart in the milk for babies. But we read in Joshua 5:12, "And the manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn of the land." The "old corn" has for its antitype the solid food for the perfect believer, which stands for firmness of character and the deeper things of God.

4. Still another complaint the apostle brought against these baby Christians who had lived in a low state of grace, was that they were "unskilful in the word of righteousness." It takes an illuminated mind to know how to rightly divide the word of truth. It is not because of lack of a trained intellect that we do not understand the deep things of God, but because of lack of spiritual illumination.

"There is in the human soul a native darkness that no amount of learning can dispel, though we walk with Solomon or talk with the bodily Savior. Conversion cannot fully remove it, conversation with the Lord Jesus for three years could not remove it. It is something that nothing but the entire sanctification of our souls will ever remove."

The Holy Spirit is a quickening force to the consecrated intellect. Minds that have been dull and obscure before, have risen beneath His touch to the highest intellectual attainment. There is a quickening and a

distinct baptism with the Holy Ghost for the mind as well as the heart. This wonderful quickening and illumination gives soundness of judgment, clearness of expression, pungency of thought and power of utterance.

The danger of an unsanctified mind is that one may get truth and heresy mixed in his teaching, no matter how well educated he may be. Hence the baptism with the Holy Ghost is the only divine cure for spiritual heresy. It is truly wonderful how the Holy Ghost illuminates the mind as well as the heart, and how the soul grasps the deeper revelations of God which were impossible to receive before.

Notice God's remedy for spiritual babyhood. "But strong meat (solid food) belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." God recognizes man as a threefold being, consisting of a spirit, soul and body; and in his immortal spirit are the fine spiritual senses. Sin renders these senses dead and inactive. In regeneration these inner senses are quickened and restored to life, and under the mighty baptism with the Spirit, they are purified, clarified and rendered keen and vigorous to perceive facts of the spiritual world. Now, the apostle tells us that the perfect believer, who lives on solid food, has his spiritual sense so quickened by exercise and use as to be able to discern, by the power of intuition, both good and evil. We are living in an age when everything is tremendously mixed, when good and evil, truth and error, loyalty and the spirit of compromise, true and false holiness, in a thousand forms and shades, are so blended that we can never make our way through this spiritual forest unless we have our spiritual senses quickened and rendered keen to know where to draw the line between the things that are different. We need a mighty, divine, love-sense, in order to be able to discriminate between the things of God and the things of the flesh.

To cite only one sample instance: There is a wide difference between the human self and the carnal self, yet in some instances they closely resemble each other. Holiness is consistent with human infirmities, weakness, ignorance and mistakes of the head. But it is not consistent with carnality, such as stubbornness, supersensitiveness, jealousy, and a dictatorial disposition. Some professors of holiness who have allowed the tender spirit of love to leak out of their hearts, manifest an ugly spirit when under pressure, and excuse it under the pious name of "human infirmity." Then, on the other hand, it is quite as wrong for some over-conscientious person, because of mistakes and ignorance, to cast away his confidence, and term infirmities traits carnality. This is where we need our inner man flooded with light and love in order to be able to discriminate between the two.

Then, too, we should be able to make a distinction between temptation to sin, and a yielding to sin. Temptation is an appeal or persuasion to evil. Yielding to sin means a consent of the will and brings condemnation. The pure in heart may be tempted and suffer awful pressure, and yet remain perfectly loyal to Jesus.

There is a difference between human and divine love. Human love is earthly and fallen, and often proves an easy channel to fleshly lust. In the New Testament there are two words for love. One is "Philos," which is the word for natural human love which exists throughout the human family apart from divine love. The word "Agape" is invariably used to express divine affection imparted to the soul by the Holy Ghost. Now, while human love is beautiful and can be developed and refined, yet it can never evolve itself into divine love, which can only be imparted by a supernatural act of the Holy Ghost. As one mature saint puts it, here is a great distinction between being sober minded or self denying, and being of a sour, caustic severe sort of religion."

The work of Christian holiness has been greatly damaged in many places by its teachers insisting upon a rigid, severe, butcher-type of religion, not knowing the difference between keeping the law of love and being in bondage to the old law of righteousness by works.

"Oh, how we need a God-given, intuitive sense to discriminate between these and a thousand other things which outwardly seem alike, but in reality are at antipodes." There is no limit to the illumination and strengthening of the spiritual senses, rendering them keen to detect not only the approach of evil but the still small voice of the blessed Holy Ghost. The keynote of the epistle to the Hebrews is: "Leaving the baby, milk stage, let us go on to Christian Perfection."

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