

Don't Remain as a Baby in the Christian Life

by Zac Poonen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of maturity in the Christian life and encourages believers to press on to perfection, not just to remain at the foundation level.

Scripture: Matthew 5:48, Romans 12:2, 1 Corinthians 11:1, 2 Corinthians 5:10, Galatians 5:16, Ephesians 4:15, Hebrews 5:12, Hebrews 6:1, James 1:22

Topics: "Spiritual Maturity", "Christian Growth"

Description

Zac Poonen preaches on the importance of believers pressing on to maturity in their spiritual journey, moving beyond the foundational teachings to deeper understanding and application of God's Word. He emphasizes the need for Christians to have a Christlike response to temptation, distinguishing between mature saints and baby Christians who react in a human way. Poonen urges believers to examine their actions and motives in light of Jesus' example, repenting from dead works and selfish motives to grow in spiritual maturity and be increasingly like Jesus in all areas of life.

Transcript

In Hebrews 6:1-3, the writer speaks about pressing on to maturity. In Chapter 5, he uses the illustration of drinking milk and eating meat. Now he uses two more illustrations: First, the example of elementary teaching and advanced teaching; and then the example of the foundation of a building and its superstructure. All these word-pictures are meant to contrast babies with mature Christians. The difference between the two is seen in times of temptation. The mature saint has a Christlike response to temptation, while babies have a human response.

Most believers behave in a human way - and not in a Divine way. Let us examine ourselves. For example, when sitting with others, if you crack a joke that embarrasses another person, do you ask yourself immediately whether Jesus would ever crack a joke like that? If you never ask such questions, you will never get light on your human behaviour - and you will always remain a baby-Christian. It is good to check ourselves at different times during each day; to see if we are acting (and reacting) as Jesus would in a similar situation. If you never examine yourself like that, you will never grow. Then you will forever be living with only a foundation and nothing ever being built on it. You will be forever in the kindergarten class, forever drinking only milk. But if you listen to the Holy Spirit, and are serious about advancing in your spiritual education, you will mature very quickly.

To use another illustration: Think of pressing on to maturity like climbing a mountain (of say, 10,000 metres). Jesus has already reached the top. When we are born again we start at the foot of this mountain. Our goal is to follow Jesus and to press on towards the top, no matter how long it may take. Then we can say to our younger brothers and sisters, "Follow me as I follow Christ" (1 Cor.11:1), even if we have climbed only 100 metres.

What is the foundation? What is milk? What do we learn in the kindergarten class? Repentance, first of all (Heb. 6:1). That means to turn away not only from sin but also from dead works. Under the Old Covenant they had only good works and evil works. But in the New Covenant we have good works, evil works and dead works. Dead works are good works done with a bad motive. For example, preaching God's Word is a very good thing to do. But if someone preaches for honour or for money, then it is a dead work. If we do something good, like giving money for God's work but do it unhappily, then it becomes a dead work. There are many such examples. Anything you do without faith and without joy is a dead work, even if it does good to other people. We need to repent from such dead works. We need to repent of our selfish motives.

The other parts of the foundation are faith in Jesus, being baptized in water, receiving the baptism in the Holy Spirit, receiving spiritual gifts ("laying on of hands"), waiting for the resurrection of the dead at Christ's return and being ready for the final judgment (2 Cor.5:10). These are all kindergarten-lessons. Christians who are occupied only with these are still in the kindergarten. Their house is still at the foundation level. We must press on from here to maturity and perfection - to be increasingly like Jesus, in every area of our life.

The burden of the writer of Hebrews is that Christians must go beyond the milk-level to solid-food-level, beyond foundation to superstructure, beyond the kindergarten class to higher classes. In our earthly life, no-one would want to remain a baby forever. No-one would want to stop his education with the kindergarten. No-one would want to have a building with only a foundation. Yet many believers seem to be satisfied with just that. Even many preachers and pastors are babies. The result is that their churches are also full of babies.

In Hebrews 6:1, it says, "Let us press on to perfection." If we are gripped only with foundation-doctrines, we will only produce babies through our preaching. The main message of the New Covenant is not just to get people's sins forgiven. If it had been so, then the Word would have said, "Let us produce more babies"! But we are exhorted instead to press on to maturity. Every baby must grow up to maturity.

It's because churches are full of babies, that they have so many quarrels and court cases, with even leaders falling into adultery and running after money and fighting with each other, etc. Babies will always fight. When we grow up to maturity we don't fight and we won't covet any position or honour in the church. If you fight or covet position or honour in the church, you are still a baby. Unfortunately many leaders in Christendom today are still babies. To build a church with babies is like building a house with just a foundation and no roof or walls.

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