

HEBREWS: REPLACING MAN'S RITUALISM WITH CHRIST
"Part VIII: Leaving 'Doctrinal Ritualism' To Mature In Christ"
(Hebrews 5:11-6:3)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

On my study desk is a plastic stand given to me by the 1988 Nepaug Youth Group with Psalm 27:14 on it. The verse reads: "**Wait** on the Lord: be of courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart." In part, as a result of reading that verse over the ye rs, I have **waited** for God's work to bring certain goals in my experience to fruition.

However, is there a point where we should cease WAITING and somehow MAKE things MOVE? Consider the following:

(1) Not long ago, a believer shared with me how disillusioned he had become over the "backsliding" activity of a "respected elderly believer" he had known in the area. When the respected believer learned he had a terminal illness, he startled other Christians in his fellowship by starting to use profanity and turning sour in his attitude! It created confusion in those who had always looked up to him!

Well, how LONG should it take for one to get victory over a "foul" mouth or look *forward* to HEAVEN? Can he take too long even in GOD'S eyes? What is the answer, and WHY?!

(2) Over the years I along with the Church Board have received suggestions from the congregation about various needs in the Church facilities or ministries with the suggestion that we leaders could be "less patient" with the congregation as a whole. Some have felt we should pressure people to make things **MOVE ALONG!**

Well, IS there a time for us leaders to cease WAITING and get the congregation to "*move*"?! How do we know, and what is the answer?!"

(We turn to the sermon "Need" section . . .)

Need: "Though God asks us to be patient with all men, can a believer **WRONGLY STALL in his growth? If so, how is this state identified, **WHY** does it occur, and **WHAT** is the **SOLUTION**?!"**

- I. **The writer of Hebrews complained that his readers had **WRONGLY STALLED** in their spiritual growth in Christ:**

 - A. The writer of Hebrews informed his readers that he had many things to teach them about Christ in His High Priest role, Heb. 5:11a with 5:10.
 - B. However, this truth would be difficult for him to explain to his readers because they were "slow to learn," Hebrews 5:11b NIV.
 - C. This learning deficiency arose from a spiritual **fault** with the *readers*:
 1. According to the writer of Hebrews, enough time had elapsed for his readers to mature so they could **teach** other believers, 5:12a.
 2. However, these readers needed someone to teach them the **basic** truths of Scripture all over **again** instead of their being able to take in the deeper truth of Christ's High Priestly work, Hebrews 5:12b.
 3. Thus, the author **blamed** his *readers* for this stalled growth!

- II. **To stimulate and inform his readers, the author of Hebrews went on to **DEFINE** and **CONTRAST** stalled growth versus maturity:**

 - A. The author defined stunted growth as the inability of a believer to discern good from evil; conversely, maturity discerns these, Heb. 5:14c
 - B. Accordingly, the **cause** for stalled growth is failure to **apply** Scripture to **living** where **maturity** arises out of **making** that application and obtaining a "hands-on", good-versus-evil insight, Hebrews 5:13, 14.
 - C. One can accordingly **measure** this growth by the **level** of **doctrines** that a given believer has in the **FOCUS** of his thinking (Heb. 6:1-3):
 1. Both spiritual babes and growth-stunted believers are **preoccupied** with **good but *ELEMENTARY*** doctrines as follows (Heb. 6:1-3):
 - a. Immature believers tend to **dwell** on **basic** beliefs like the need to repent from dead works and trust in Christ to be saved, 6:1.
 - b. They **dwell** on comparing errant Jewish proselyte baptism with John's more righteous one, and of relishing in the superiority of Christian baptism even to that of John's baptism, Hebrews 6:2a.
 - c. Immature or stunted believers are often **preoccupied** with the good yet **basic** resurrection and eternal judgment doctrines, 6:2b
 2. However, the mature believer **replaces *focusing* on **basic** theology with **concentrating** on **interacting** with Christ in **LIVING**:**

- a. The writer of Hebrews wanted to tell his readers about Christ's High Priestly ministry but felt impeded by their immaturity, 5:10f
- b. Well, as we discovered in our study of Hebrews 4:15-16, that High Priestly ministry was useful for believers to find **practical help** from **CHRIST through a LIFE** of prayers of faith!
- c. Thus, spiritually **mature** believers launch **out** from depending on merely **KNOWING** sound, **basic** doctrines as do the immature. They **interact** with God in their **LIVES** through prayer to see God **bless** them in their **walk** (see John 14:21-23; 14:12-14).

III. **Having shown the DIFFERENCE between the stunted and mature states, the writer of Hebrews called his readers to MATURE, 6:1!**

Lesson Application: (1) *Though we must be patient for maturity to occur in the Christian life, those who FAIL to go BEYOND dwelling on basic doctrines and APPLY truths to INTERACT with God in life end up with STUNTED growth.* (2) *So, YES -- God wants us to (a) trust in Christ for salvation, John 3:16. (b) YES, He wants us to repent of via confession of sin so we can live a holy life, 1 John 1:9. (c) YES, He wants us to appreciate and hold to right DOCTRINE in contrast to apostate error, cf. Jude 3-4. (3) HOWEVER, God ALSO wants us to MOVE BEYOND merely FOCUSING on such good beliefs so that we interact with Him in a LIFE of FAITH for PRACTICAL BLESSING (Eph. 4:13-16)! That takes (a) using the CURRENT work of Christ to intercede for us so that we PRAY for help in times of needs, Heb. 6:1; 4:15-16. Thus, by way of application, it also means (b) ACTING in life's situations in FAITH that God will uphold His Word that applies to THOSE situations so that we SEE God BLESS us in them, Jn. 14:21-23. [(4) Acc. to 1 John, we can measure personal growth: (a) one is a BABY if he gets preoccupied with good but basic doctrines only to be "burned", for he relies on those in Christian groups for blessing only to find them to be inadequate "gods", 1 Jn. 2:12, 13c, 18 -27; 5:21; (b) believers who START to grow ("young men") follow Scripture instead of people to gain blessing, but are "stung" into defeat by using pride, body drive gratification and aesthetic appeal fulfillment to DEFINE what is GOD'S blessing, 1 Jn. 2: 13-17; (c) mature believers ("fathers") find ALL needs met by TRUSTING Christ and thus REST in Him without leaning on others or feeding their lusts, 1 Jn. 2:13a, 14a!]*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the sermon lesson . . .)

(1) Marthe Ereminas has been in prayer about getting her Dad and Mother placed in separate homes suited to their individual needs! Well, a special place has opened up for her Dad and another one for her Mother that are separate, but close enough for her Mother to visit her Dad by walking across the street! The geriatrics doctor had never seen such an arrangement open up like this before, and stated that the hand of **God** had to be in it! That helped persuade Marthe's Mother that it was right for her to move! It all came about because of the **prayer of faith!** That is what God wants us to practice -- **applying His Word to LIFE so that we enjoy His blessing in our experiences!**

(2) For years we have known about needs in our Church's building and furniture. Since we **didn't** want to **push** re: them, we simply **prayed!**

For example, some of the folding tables have deteriorated so far that their edgings have loosened to become hazardous! Also, it has long been hard for the ladies to **set up** the tables as they need to **carry** them from storage. We've also had to bring up tables from downstairs!

Also, teachers of small children have long reached out across tables in assisting students in back-tiring work.

Well, in **response to prayer**, a party has recently bought some tables as a gift to the Church. Ten folding tables can be kept on a table dolly in Fellowship Hall that will be given so the ladies can transport them. We can then dispose of all the tattered tables and keep the other good ones downstairs! (The table shipment is due to arrive late June.)

Also, 2 adjustable red "horseshoe" tables & their sets of plastic **stacking** chairs will come, re-supplying both the 2s-and-3s and the 4-year-olds classes! This will free up their **currently** operated **fully adjustable** class tables for use for **any other** classroom!

Then, a party has offered to pay the \$600 to rent a "cherry picker" so that repairs can more safely be done on the bell tower!

Further, to add to the communion services, a party had given a large, new, embossed tablecloth and napkins for the communion table!

The Lord has answered prayer in special ways, and I believe in part because He is encouraging us to APPLY our doctrinal beliefs to life and ACT upon them by FAITH!