

WARNING THREE (PART I): THE DANGER OF IMMATURITY OR OF FALLING AWAY HEBREWS 05:11–06:03

Introduction

This is the beginning of the third warning in the Book of Hebrews, a warning that must be heeded by every believer and church member. It is a warning that strikes at the very foundation of millions of lives. Millions of professing believers and thousands of churches are guilty of this very failing: immaturity or falling away. In this day and time there is the danger of immaturity, of falling from Christ.

- I. A person becomes immature because he is slow to learn (v. 11).
- II. A person becomes immature because he refuses to grow (v. 12).
- III. A person becomes immature because he is not acquainted with the Word (v. 13).
- IV. A person becomes immature because he does not train his mental and spiritual senses (v. 14).
- V. A person needs to get the past the ABC's of teaching (ch. 6, v. 1-2).
- VI. A person must be determined to grow in Christ (v. 3).

I. *Hebrews 05:11 Immaturity of Slow Learning*

A person becomes immature because he is slow to learn. The word “slow” (nothroi) means sluggish, lazy, lethargic, forgetful. The writer to the Hebrews had much that he wanted to teach, especially about the Lord Jesus Christ and His Priestly ministry, but he was unable. Why? Because the Christian faith — the Word of God and the Bible — is difficult to understand. No person can grasp the Word of God and its truths by simply reading it. A person must study, meditate and practice the Word of God in order to understand it.

The Hebrew believers had become mentally lazy and sluggish and spiritually complacent and slothful. They were sitting and listening to the preachers and teachers, and they were reading the Scriptures, but they were not listening or paying attention. Their minds were wandering about and unwilling to exert the energy to concentrate and study.

Note: some of the Hebrew believers were already slow to learn. Some had already become immature; they had already fallen and were no longer growing spiritually.

Thought I. If a person is going to understand God's Word, he has to study it:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| => he has to read and concentrate | => he has to read and meditate |
| => he has to read and ponder | => he has to read and take notes |
| => he has to read and memorize | => he has to hear and concentrate |
-

=> he has to hear and meditate

=> he has to hear and ponder

=> he has to hear and take notes

=> he has to hear and memorize

Col 1:10 *And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God.*

2 Tim 2:15 *Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.*

2 Tim 3:16 *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,*

1 Pet 1:13 *Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed.*

1 Pet 2:1-2 *Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy and slander of every kind. Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation,*

2 Pet 1:10 *Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall,*

Psa 1:1-2 *Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.*

Prov 13:4 *A sluggard's appetite is never filled, but the desires of the diligent are fully satisfied.*

Thought 2. This point is full of meaning to the preacher and teacher as well. William Barclay states it clearly:

“Now here is something which has something to say to everyone whose business and whose duty it is to preach and to teach; in fact, it has something to say to everyone whose business it is to think, and that is to say, that it has something to say to everyone who is a real person. It often happens that we dodge teaching something because it is difficult; we never face trying to explain it because exposition and explanation are hard. It often happens that we defend ourselves by saying that our hearers or our congregation or our pupils would never grasp or understand that. It is, in fact, one of the tragedies of the Church that there is so little attempt to teach people new knowledge, new approaches, and new thought. It is true that the task of such teaching is difficult. It is true that often to try to teach in such a way is to meet the lethargy of the lazy mind and the embattled prejudice of the shut mind. But the task remains. The writer to the Hebrews did not shirk to bring to men his message, even if his message was difficult and the minds of his hearers were slow to learn. He regarded it as his supreme responsibility to pass on the truth he knew” (The Letter to the Hebrews, p. 48)

Luke 24:25 *He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!"*

John 8:43 *Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say.*

Acts 28:27 *For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.*

Rom 3:11 *There is no one who understands, no one who seeks God.*

1 Cor 2:14 *The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.*

Heb 5:11 *We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn.*

Psa 32:8-9 *I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my loving eye on you. Do not be like the horse or the mule, which have no understanding but must be controlled by bit and bridle or they will not come to you.*

Psa 49:20 *People who have wealth but lack understanding are like the beasts that perish.*

Isa 27:11 *When its twigs are dry, they are broken off and women come and make fires with them. For this is a people without understanding; so their Maker has no compassion on them, and their Creator shows them no favour.*

Jer 4:22 *"My people are fools; they do not know me. They are senseless children; they have no understanding. They are skilled in doing evil; they know not how to do good."*

Jer 5:21-24 *Hear this, you foolish and senseless people, who have eyes but do not see, who have ears but do not hear. "Should you not fear me?" declares the LORD. "Should you not tremble in my presence? I made the sand a boundary for the sea, an everlasting barrier it cannot cross. The waves may roll, but they cannot prevail; they may roar, but they cannot cross it. But these people have stubborn and rebellious hearts; they have turned aside and gone away. They do not say to themselves, 'Let us fear the LORD our God, who gives autumn and spring rains in season, who assures us of the regular weeks of harvest.'"*

Micah 4:12 *But they do not know the thoughts of the LORD; they do not understand his plan, he who gathers them like sheaves to the threshing floor.*

II. Hebrews 05:12 Backsliding – Refusing to Grow Spiritually

A person becomes immature because he refuses to grow up spiritually. The Hebrew believers refused to move beyond the elementary truths of God's Word. "Elementary truths" (stoicheion) means the basic principles of God's Word, the elementary teachings,

the ABC's of God's Word. They are the very basic teachings of salvation and of spiritual growth, such teachings as...

- a person should be saved
- a person should live righteously
- a person should keep the rituals and ceremonies of religion
- a person should grow spiritually
- a person should worship

Such basic truths as these are the milk of God's Word. They are truths that are to be preached and taught, but they are the truths for the unsaved and for young believers, for babes in Christ. They are to be learned and learned quickly by believers, and then the believer is to move on to maturity. Note that the Christian life is compared to physical growth. A young believer is said to be a babe in Christ and the first principles of God's Word are said to be the milk upon which he is to feed. A young believer is to feed upon the milk of the Word, the elementary truths, but he is expected to grow until he is feeding upon the meat of the Word — studying and growing a mature understanding of the Christian life.

The situation among the Hebrew believers was tragic: they were spiritual dwarfs, deformed and undeveloped. They should have been mature and fully developed. Note the verse: they should have been teachers, that is, bearing witness to Christ, sharing the glorious message of Jesus Christ with their friends, neighbours and fellow workers. But they were unable. Why? Because they were immature — so immature that they themselves needed someone to re-teach them the elementary truths of God's Word.

Thought 1. How many people have professed Christ and never grown? They professed Christ years ago and have remained spiritual babes for years. Imagine no growth for five, ten, twenty, thirty, fifty years. Yet, tragically this is the spiritual life of so many in the church. They should be teaching, that is, sharing Christ; but instead they themselves have the need to be taught the basics all over again.

1 Cor 3:1-2 *Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly — mere infants in Christ. I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready.*

1 Cor 14:20 *Brothers and sisters, stop thinking like children. In regard to evil be infants, but in your thinking be adults.*

Eph 4:14 *Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming.*

2 Pet 1:5-10 *For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; And to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; And to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your*

knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But whoever does not have them is near-sighted and blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their past sins. Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall.

Heb 5:12 *In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food!*

Deu 6:7 *Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.*

III. **Hebrews 05:13** *Word of God, the Teaching of Righteousness*

A person becomes immature because he is not acquainted with the Word. The Hebrew believers remained unacquainted with the teaching of righteousness. This means two things.

- a. Jesus Christ is “the teaching of righteousness.” He is the righteousness of God. A person must believe and stand in the righteousness of Christ. A person has to believe, trust, and throw himself upon the Lord’s righteousness. The righteousness of Jesus Christ is a person’s only hope of ever being acceptable to God. Note something: this is the very message of the gospel; it is the gospel of salvation. But the Hebrew believers — some of them — did not fully understand the message. They did not understand and had not experienced the righteousness of Jesus Christ. The words “not acquainted” (*apeiros*) mean to be inexperienced. They professed Christ and His righteousness, but they had never grasped or experienced Him — not fully — not in a mature sense. Note the verse: although this person is a church member, “he is still an infant.”

Phil 3:9 *And be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ — the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.*

Rom 3:21-22 *But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference.*

Rom 10:3-4 *Since they did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.*

1 Cor 1:30 *It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God — that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.*

- b. The Word of God is “the teaching of righteousness.” Righteousness means all the teachings and doctrines of God’s Word. It is the Bible that teaches us all about God, Christ, man, life, the world, and how to live righteous and godly lives. But think for a moment: think about God, just one of these subjects. Think about how vast and glorious God is. How much study and how long it would take to study and grasp

the truth of God? The Hebrew believers were unwilling to put the time and energy into learning about God. They were unwilling to study and learn the teaching of righteousness. Therefore, they never experienced the righteousness of God's Word. They were not living righteous or godly lives; they were not experiencing the fullness of life that Christ had come to give them. As the verse says about each of the professing believers: "he is still an infant."

Mat 4:4 Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

Acts 20:32 "Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified."

1 Pet 2:2-3 Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.

Job 23:12 I have not departed from the commands of his lips; I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my daily bread.

Jer 15:16 When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight, for I bear your name, O Lord God Almighty.

Ezek 3:1 And he said to me, "Son of man, eat what is before you, eat this scroll; then go and speak to the people of Israel."

IV. Hebrews 05:14 Growing Spiritually Mature

A person becomes immature because he does not train his mental and spiritual senses. Note these facts.

1. Note that it is possible to be mature in the Christian life; it is possible to reach maturity in Christ. A person can grow spiritually until he is fully grown and mature in Christ. This is what God expects of us all.
2. Note what a mature person is. A mature or fully grown person is a person who distinguishes between good and evil. He is a person who lives a righteous and godly life. He has gone beyond...
 - just attending worship and Bible studies
 - just keeping the rituals and ceremonies of religion
 - just giving money
 - just reading the Bible
 - just praying

The mature believer does all of these things, yes, but he does more, much more.

=> He studies the Word of God.

=> He sets blocks of time aside every day to pray and worship.

- => He lives and moves and has his being in prayer; that is, he continually prays.
- => He keeps his mind and thoughts upon Christ and obedience to Him.
- => He witnesses for Christ, sharing the glorious salvation from the evil and death of this world.
- => He distinguishes both good and evil, and does the good.

The mature believer is able to distinguish between true and false religion, true and false claims, sin and righteousness. He knows...

- when to look and when not to look.
- when to eat and when not to eat.
- what to drink and what not to drink.
- when to go and when not to go.
- what socials to attend and what not to attend.
- what do listen to and what not to listen to.
- where Christ is really preached and taught and where He is not.
- who to fellowship with and who not to fellowship with.
- when to speak and when not to speak.
- who teaches the truth and who does not.

The mature believer lives for Christ. He distinguishes between the good and evil.

3. Note how a person matures in Christ. By training his mental and spiritual senses or faculties. A person has to train his mind and spirit. He cannot be lazy and slothful, comfortable and complacent — neither mentally nor spiritually. He has to be alert and alive to control and discipline himself. He has to exert energy and effort, to concentrate and focus his mind and life upon Jesus Christ, His salvation, mission and purpose.

Eph 4:23 *To be made new in the attitude of your minds;*

Phil 4:8 *Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable — if anything is excellent or praiseworthy — think about such things.*

2 Cor 10:5 *We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.*

1 Cor 7:35 *I am saying this for your own good, not to restrict you, but that you may live in a right way in undivided devotion to the Lord.*

Isa 26:3 *You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you.*

Rom 8:6 *The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace;*

Rom 12:1-2 *Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is — his good, pleasing and perfect will.*

1 Cor 6:19-20 *Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own. You were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your body.*

2 Cor 6:17-18 *“Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters,” says the Lord Almighty.*

V. **Hebrews 06:1-2** *Going Beyond the ABC's of Christian Living*

A person has a great need to get past the ABC's of God's Word. Scripture is direct and forceful: “Leave the elementary teachings, the ABC teachings of Christ, and go on to maturity.” This does not mean that we are to forget the basic teachings about Christ. We are never to ignore, neglect or forget how we are saved by Christ nor how we grow in Christ. What this means is that we are to take the basic teachings about Christ and store and lay them up in our hearts. They are to be part of our lives, in fact, the very foundation of our lives. *But once the foundation is laid, we are to build upon it.* The basic teachings of salvation in Christ are to be built upon. We are to go on to maturity, learning all the truth about Christ and the Word of God. No believer is to stay in the ABC's of Christ; no believer is to lay the foundation of salvation over and over again. What are the ABC's of Christ, the foundational teachings of salvation that we are to get past?

1. We are to get past repentance from acts that lead to death, from dead works.

Repentance means to turn to God and away from the world. *Dead works* can mean...

- the acts or behaviour of the world that are sinful and defiling and that lead to death.
- the acts of formal and ceremonial religion that fail to give true life to men. Such works of religion are dead acts, leaving men “dead in your transgressions and sins” (Eph 2:1).

We are to repent from the *acts that lead to death* of this world, but once we have repented, we are to joy in Christ for so great a salvation and move on to maturity.

Thought 1. Think how many people are always having to repent and repent because they do not understand salvation and are not living for Christ like they should. Every evening before going to bed millions mutter prayer for God to forgive them and promise to do better. The scene is repeated almost every day of their lives.

2. We are to get past faith in God. We are to look to God for approval, to believe in Him and trust Him. We are not to look to men nor to their ability and science to save us.

Our hope for salvation is in God and in God alone. But once we have placed our faith in God, we are to move on beyond faith for salvation. We are to move on and grow in all the teachings of God's Word.

3. We are to get past the instruction about baptism, that is, of the meaning of baptism and of the need to be baptised as Christ demands. When a person believes in Jesus Christ, he is to be baptised immediately. It is the public sign and seal that he is a true follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not an optional ritual; the true believer is to be baptised. But once he has been baptised, he is not to stop there. He is to go on to maturity by learning and doing all the commandments of God.
4. We are to get past the laying on of hands. This was the symbol that showed a person was being called to serve God. This has always been the primary meaning of laying on of hands, although the act has been used for other purposes at various stages of Christian history. In both Old and New Testament times when a person was being called and set apart to serve God, the hands of other believers were laid upon him as a sign of his call. When God or the church calls us to serve, we are to begin serving and not back off. We are to get past having to be called and called upon to serve; we are to begin serving. We are to go on to perfection.
5. We are to get past the resurrection of the dead. This is our great hope and it is one of the primary reasons we accepted Christ. But we are to get past end time sermons and studies; get past the basic teaching of salvation and move on to all the Word of God. It is the only way we can mature in Christ.
6. We are to get past eternal judgment. Once we have been truly saved, we are saved from judgment. God has not appointed the believer to wrath. The true believer is saved — saved from eternal judgment. We are to get past the fear and thoughts of judgment and learn to rest in the assurance and security of Christ. We are to go on to maturity, studying all the Word of God.

Mat 5:48 *“Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”*

Eph 4:11-15 *It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.*

Col 1:28 *We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ.*

Acts 20:32 *“Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.”*

2 Cor 9:10 *Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness.*

1 Th 2:13 *And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe.*

1 Tim 4:15 *Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress.*

2 Tim 2:15 *Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.*

Heb 6:1 *Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God,*

1 Pet 2:2 *Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation,*

2 Pet 1:5-6 *For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; And to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness;*

2 Pet 3:18 *But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.*

Psa 84:7 *They go from strength to strength, till each appears before God in Zion.*

VI. Hebrews 06:3 Determination to Grow in Christ

A person must be determined to grow in Christ. We must have a spirit that will cry out with the author of Hebrews: “we will do so.” We must be determined to go on to maturity. We must move beyond the ABC elementary teachings of God’s Word. But we must do something else as well: we must cry out “And God permitting.” This simply means that we must express a dependency upon God, for we are dependent upon Him. God wants us to grow spiritually, but we cannot grow apart from His strength. We are totally dependent upon Him for help in understanding His Word and for the power to live as He tells us how to live. No person can do anything unless God permits. Our very breath, life, understanding, strength and determination to keep on growing are dependent upon God and His presence and power in our lives.

We must be determined — strongly determined — to go on to perfection. We must grow and mature in Christ. But we must have God’s presence and power to do it. Therefore, we shall grow in Christ — this will we do if God permits — if God gives us the understanding of His Word and the strength to live for Him.

John 3:27 *To this John replied, “A man can receive only what is given him from heaven.”*

Phil 3:12-14 *Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.*

James 4:12-15 *There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you — who are you to judge your neighbour? Now listen, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.” Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, “If it is the Lord’s will, we will live and do this or that.”*

Heb 6:1 *Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God.*

2 Pet 1:5-6 *For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; And to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness;*

2 Pet 3:18 *But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen. ■*