

# Some Dangers in Not Going on to Perfection

by John Hames

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of spiritual growth and maturity, warning against the dangers of remaining in the milk stage and encouraging believers to go on to perfection.*

**Scripture:** Joshua 5:12, Hebrews 5:11-14

**Topics:** "Spiritual Growth", "Christian Maturity"

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## Description

John Hames preaches on the importance of spiritual growth and maturity, highlighting the dangers of remaining in a state of spiritual babyhood, where believers are dull of hearing, lack progress, and are unskillful in the word of righteousness. He emphasizes the need to move from consuming spiritual milk to solid food, symbolizing a transition from immaturity to maturity in faith. Hames urges believers to develop their spiritual senses through the power of the Holy Spirit, enabling them to discern between good and evil and navigate the mixed realities of the world and the church.

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## 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 of 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.

This letter to the Hebrews is the outstanding epistle of the New Testament in richness, in illumination, in types and shadows, to prove to the converted Hebrews Christian perfection from the Old Testament Scripture.

In the fifth chapter, the Apostle shows us the danger of remaining too long in the milk-baby stage. It is a sad state of affairs to see the majority of church-members of today still in their babyhood, crying for their bottles, when they should be giants for God. The doctor's diagnosis in the condition of a child who fails to grow is "arrested development." Let us notice some dangers of not going on to perfection:

I. Dull of hearing. That does not mean that they cannot distinguish sounds, but that they were dull concerning the possibilities of the higher life and of the deep things of God.

In conversion the spiritual senses are quickened, but because of remaining carnality and the mixed state of the heart, young Christians often get the voice of God and of self confused. God's plan is to cleanse and strengthen the inner senses, that the still small voice and the faintest whisper of the Holy Ghost can be heard.

The complaint that the apostle brought against the Hebrews was that they had so long remained in babyhood and failed to grow until they had no capacity for the deep things of God. There are thousands of Christians possessing latent capacities and dormant gifts which, if only baptized with the Holy Ghost, would cause the possessor to shine and glow for God. He would resurrect and inflame these powers until it would really be amazing what they could accomplish in love, prayer, faith, endurance, and understanding of the Scripture. One can never know to what extent the latent powers of the soul can be developed nor the tied-up capabilities for service until filled with the Spirit.

II. A lack of progress: "For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again."

When Israel refused to go over into Canaan at Kadesh-barnea, and turned back into the wilderness, they wandered around in circles and recrossed their track and zig-zagged for nearly forty years; yet were they no nearer Canaan than two or three decades before. In their marches they often came upon the remains of old campfires and ashes that they had left years before.

It is indeed a pitiable condition when one thinks he is growing in grace and making progress in the life Divine, when really he is only "marking time," and he awakes to his true state, as one expresses it, "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." If the truth were known, half the professed Christians would confess that they had more patience, tenderness of conscience, kindness and sweetness of spirit the first part of their Christian experience than after perhaps many years lived in this state. The fact is, there is no decided growth and progress made until one receives the cleansing baptism of the Holy Ghost, which thus removes the hindrance to development.

"And are become such as have need of milk, and not strong meat (verse 12)." Milk is adapted to a baby, and has in it all of the needful ingredients until the teeth appear, when there is need of solid food. A young Christian should not live in the milk stage any longer than it is necessary to cut his spiritual teeth. With proper light and teaching, this should not be long.

As long as Israel remained in the wilderness, God fed them on manna, a soft diet, which has its counterpart in the milk for babes. But we read in Joshua 5:12: "And manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn of the land." The "old corn" has for its anti-type the strong meat or solid food, which stands for firmness of character and for the deeper truths of the Bible. One could live a long time on milk alone, but it has not in it the ingredients to produce bone and muscle. This is true in a spiritual sense. Those who for years remain in the milk stage are lacking in spiritual firmness. Many who receive light on holiness, instead of going on to Christian perfection and leaving that miserable dwarf state, consult some carnal-minded person, or a tobacco-using preacher, and get their views and opinions on the matter before their final decision is made.

One characteristic of a baby is its easily hurt feelings; it cries for toys and pouts if it cannot get them. Some baby Christians become offended when they are not elected to a certain office in church; others will leave the church, or, perhaps, conference, unless they get their coveted desire. Oh, this wretched state of

having to be petted to be kept in a good humor!

We will never take the world for Christ as long as the greater part of the church is in the nursery, instead of being like an army with banners.

The crying need of the twentieth-century church is for fathers and mothers in Israel who will weep between the porch and the altar, and travail in prayer until a mighty revival of the early Methodism type is brought forth - one which will sweep the church on to Christian perfection and gird her with Pentecostal power.

III. The third danger of remaining in babyhood as mentioned by the Apostle, is that such are "unskillful in the word of righteousness." As the skillful, kind-hearted surgeon, with sharp instrument in steady hand, seeks only to remove the diseased spot in order to save the patient, so a well-trained, illuminated, skillful worker does not go in for the mangling and cutting of God's people, but only to remove the hindrance to their soul's growth. We have seen unskilled workers, with a Jehu zeal, start out, and it was cut, lash, brow-beat, scalp, knock down, drag out, until it reminded one of an Indian war-chief, with his painted cheek and feathers and the scalps of his victims dangling from his belt.

Workers of the above type, in their teaching often get truth and error confused. "There in the human soul a native darkness that no amount of human learning can dispel, though we walk with Solomon or talk with the bodily Savior. Conversion cannot fully remove it; it is something that nothing but the entire sanctification of our souls will ever remove. Hence, the baptism the Holy Ghost is the only safeguard again heresy."

An able minister, known from ocean to ocean after preaching a great sermon on the higher life, told the writer that sin is located in the blood, and no one, therefore, can ever be sanctified on this life. Thousands are tainted more or less with some form of heresy until sanctified wholly.

Let us remember that the Holy Ghost is the only conservatory of orthodoxy.

One trait of the "solid-food believer" is a keen sense of spiritual discernment. "But strong meat belongeth to those that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."

When the heart is flooded with Divine love it renders the inner senses strong, keen and quick to perceive the realities of the spiritual world; and the more one is filled with the Spirit, the more acute do the spiritual senses become to grasp things Divine.

We are told that there are three forms of knowledge: instinctive, which predominates mostly in the lower animals; rational, which prevails principally in the natural, soulish man who is without the Spirit; and the intuitive, which obtains among spiritual, illuminated beings. Now, the Apostle tells us that solid food belongs to those who have their spiritual senses so quickened by use of exercise that they can discern by the power of intuition, both good and evil.

We are living in an age where everything is tremendously mixed; as, for instance, the world and the church; politics and so-called religion. Most believers are living in a mixed state - partly carnal and partly spiritual. Things are so blended that there is danger of losing our bearings unless we are endowed with spiritual, intuitive perception, and are thus able to discriminate between the things of God and the things of the flesh.

There is, in various tempers, such a close resemblance between the natural and spiritual that, unless we have a mind which is illuminated by the Spirit, we are liable to become confused. For example, there is a wide difference between the infirm, human self and the carnal self, yet in some instances they closely resemble. Holiness is consistent with human infirmities, weakness, ignorance and mistakes of the head. But it is not consistent with carnality, such as stubbornness, super-sensitiveness, jealousy and a dictatorial disposition. Some professors of holiness, who have allowed the tender spirit of love to leak out of their hearts when under pressure, manifest an ugly spirit, 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 errors of ignorance, to cast away his confidence, and term infirmities traits of carnality. It is possible to have a heart filled with perfect love, and at the same time have a body that is loaded down with infirmities.

We should make a distinction between temptations to sin and yielding to sin. A sanctified soul can be sorely tempted, and still have no condemnation. But when an unholy object becomes pleasant and fascinating to the fancy or imagination, it is then that impurity creeps into the heart, the will is weakened and sin pollutes the soul.

Solid-food believers should be able to discriminate between human and Divine love. While there are some similarities between the two, there are also great differences. Human love has its seat in the soul, that part of the being which opens up through the five senses to the outward world. Divine love has its seat in the spirit, or spiritual part of the being which unfolds through the inner senses to the eternal world. 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 the supernatural act of the Holy Ghost. Human love is earthly, fallen, love is pure and heavenly. Human love is selfish, and seeks its own gratification. Divine love is unselfish, and seeks to pour itself out in good works to bless others. Human love is easily offended. Divine love can suffer all kinds of injuries and ill treatment, and still be patient and kind.

There is no limit to the illumination and strengthening of the spiritual senses, to the extent that the spirit not only detects the approach of sin, but even the fine lines of compromise.

The keynote of the Epistle to the Hebrews is, "Leaving the baby-milk stage and going on to perfection."

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