

# Pursuing Spiritual Maturity and Cultivating Biblical Discernment

Hebrews 5:11-6:3

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**Sermon Theme:** This passage warns us that true believers ought not ever become content with remaining, undiscerning, immature children in the faith. It lovingly exhorts us: There is a time to be a child, but then there is a time to mature and grow up as well.

- Our justification is monergistic—an act of God alone. Our sanctification on the other hand is not monergistic; it is synergistic. Synergistic means together.
- In sanctification God works and we work as well. Sanctification is not “let go and let God.” Rather, God commands us, in full dependence upon the Holy Spirit and resting in our justification, to work out our salvation with fear and trembling (Phil. 2:12)
- God also commands us “be transformed by the renewal of your minds that by testing you might be able to discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect (Romans 12:2).”
- The difficulty is, that even as genuine believers whose hearts have been powerfully regenerated by the Spirit of God, we can still at times be quite sluggish when it comes to our part in sanctification. We don’t always—every day— cooperate with the Spirit’s sanctifying work as fully or as wholeheartedly or as zealously as we ought. We don’t always think -- “What I really need today is for my mind to be renewed by Gods word” “What I really need is to grow in biblical and theological knowledge and wisdom and discernment” “What I really need is to put my sin to death and grow in godliness.”
- Due to pre-occupation with the affairs of life and sometimes just plain laziness, we can at times be guilty of neglecting this critical biblical priority.
- Growth in godliness, growth in biblical wisdom and discernment -- is also not something the broader evangelical church often emphasizes. And we see the consequences. We see the consequences in increasing conformity to the sinful ways of the world, as well as a readiness to modify previously held theological convictions for the sake of cultural acceptability.
- The sober reality is, to the degree we ourselves fail to emphasize the priority of spiritual growth in our own church and in our own lives, we too will bear consequences. Yet thankfully the opposite is also true. When in obedience to His Word, we prioritize growth in discernment and maturity and godliness, we can expect God to bless our efforts holy and thereby help us to bring Him great glory in our generation.

## Questions for Discussion/Application:

- Consider taking time to read Hebrews 5:11-6:3 out loud. What initial insights or observations of the text do you have?
- How would you define justification? What is sanctification? How at times can we be sluggish in our own role in the sanctification process?
- In the sermon introduction the verses below were referenced. What does it mean practically to 'work out our salvation with fear and trembling' and to 'be transformed by the renewing of our minds'?

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. - Philippians 2:12-13

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. - Romans 12:1-2

- Hebrews 5:12 says "though by this time you ought to be teachers" indicating an expectation that believers over time should mature as Christians in their wisdom, discernment and understanding of core Christian doctrine. What are the implications of this for believers? How does this apply to us?
- What do your own Bible study habits look like? In what ways have you seen God's grace in your life in this area? How would you like to grow?
- Consider taking time to pray, asking God to help us all to continue by God's grace to mature and grow as believers.
- Resources for growth in understanding biblical doctrine and theology:
  - Bible Doctrine: Essential Teachings of the Christian Faith, by Wayne Grudem
  - God Is: A Devotional Guide to the Attributes of God, by Mark Jones
  - What Is Reformed Theology? Understanding the Basics, by RC Sproul