

## To Grow, Or Not To Grow

*"And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God (Luke 9:62)."* The proficient ploughman has the proper completion of his task in mind, and other than to have begun well, is not concerned with what lies behind. To dwell on things past distorts perception of the present, retards growth and accomplishment, and makes the end result of our pilgrimage on earth unnecessarily uncertain. Paul was determined not to allow things past to distract or divert him from achieving the all-important goal of his life (Phil. 3:12-16) and he encourages all Christians to be of the same mind as he. He was goal-setter for whom every minor goal was a step toward the greatest of all goals. Each Christian must also be a goal-setter, for the one who would go to heaven cannot allow his life to be governed by chance. Take a moment to read Hebrews 5:11 through 6:6, and observe the following points.

First, lack of attention to inspired teaching retards spiritual growth and results in a condition of perpetual spiritual childhood, which if widespread enough would completely rob the church and the world of desperately needed teachers of the gospel. This is especially important when the need for church leadership is considered, for too often it is blamed on that slippery character "opportunity" that many men have failed to grow spiritually, and when leaders are needed there are none to be found. This condition occurs where "chance" has been the chief teacher. Concrete, objective, Biblical training must be provided and participated in so that at least some Christians are qualified, equipped and motivated to teach and to lead. Second, the problem with the those addressed in Hebrews 5 was not lack of proper teaching, but that they were neither listening to, nor using, what was being taught. Every Christian must acquire a practical knowledge of the Bible, and make faithful use of it in daily life in order to fully appreciate its value in enabling us to discern between good and evil. Each must strive to develop and maintain the character and qualifications necessary to fill an ever growing role in the church and encourage others to do the same. Third, Hebrews 6:1-6 declares the absolute necessity of growing beyond the "first principles" of Christianity. Failure to do so exposes the Christian to the possibility of falling into such a state of apostasy that repentance and faithfulness are no longer personal concerns. This tragedy (see 2 Pet. 2:20-22; Heb. 10:26-31) can only be avoided by diligent, personal study and application of the word of God (2 Tim. 2:15).

Every Christian is valuable to Christ's mission through His church. It is our personal responsibility to be certain we are trained, qualified, and motivated to serve at every opportunity according to the abilities God has given each of us (Mat. 25:15; 1 Pet. 4:11). Let us not leave our spiritual development to "chance," or chances are we will not develop at all.

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