



Spiritual Maturity

One of the most challenging experiences of parenting an infant is helping your baby transition from milk to solid food. I've experienced this firsthand with my beloved son, Joshua. I can see why Jews in the Old Testament threw a party after a child was weaned. It is in fact a very big deal. To God, it's the same with our spiritual maturity as believers in Christ.

Galatians 4:1

I mean that the heir, as long as he is a child, is no different from a slave, though he is the owner of everything,

The word *child* in the Greek is the word *nepios*, meaning "an infant". In other words, as long as we remain infants spiritually speaking, we are no different than a slave. The slave doesn't have an inheritance but a son does; however, this is saying that even though every believer in Christ is an heir, we would be no different than an unbeliever because we aren't able to receive what Christ died to give us. That's deep.

For example, when my son was 6 months old, he was gifted a ride-on electric car for toddlers. Even as I write this, he is still not of age to receive it. Even though it's his, he is no different than not having one because he is still an infant. It's the same way spiritually.

Galatians 4:3

In the same way we also, when we were children, were enslaved to the elementary principles of the world.

The stunner is that the apostle Paul equates being an infant with being under the law because they remain under the basic principles of the world, "Do good, get good. Do bad, get bad." The very reason why infants are not able to receive and enjoy the inheritance of Christ is because they remain under the law. The law makes the inheritance of Christ of no effect.

This means if we relate to God based on our self-righteousness, try to please God with our performance, pursue obedience as the means to receive blessing from God, then we are spiritual infants because we're under the spirit of the law. Like the apostle Paul says, they're under an external guardian and tutor like spiritual training wheels, which is not the new covenant way.

Galatians 4:4-5

But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.

In this verse, the word *sons* in the Greek is the word *huios*, meaning “mature sons”. Mature sons are believers in Christ that are under grace and relate to God based on the gift of righteousness and are established in the new covenant and the truths of the gospel of grace.

Many believers in Christ think that they are spiritually mature just because they know the Bible, are a pastor or hold a position in a local church, or their self effort to live a holy life. None of these make us spiritually mature. In fact, all these are indicators that we’re still spiritual infants. If you come to think of it, all these things the Pharisees did.

In the context, every believer in Christ are supposed to be spiritually mature but they continue under a performance based Christianity. The spirit of the law mindset will keep you from grasping grace. It will keep you an infant as a believer in Christ.

Hebrews 5:13

For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe.

Notice that those who are spiritually mature are skilled in the teaching of righteousness, which comes as a gift in the new covenant. Maturity is not about walking holier than the rest but being established in the message of grace and the gift of righteousness by the finished work of Jesus. Maturity is about getting more established in the gift of righteousness.

Unfortunately, these spiritually infant believers in Christ continue to feed only on milk, never moving on to solid food. The guise is they believe they are feeding on solid food and growing spiritually, but, the truth is, they are not moving an inch.

Many mistakenly believe that grace is milk for infant believers in Christ but holiness, obedience and performance is solid food towards maturity. That’s not what this verse is saying. In the context, the writer is speaking to Jews who professed to be believers in Christ but went back to the law. In other words, to feed on messages filled with the spirit of the law that challenge you to be more performance driven and obedient, replacing the grace gospel, is to go back to milk.

On the other hand, to feed on messages full of the grace and the finished work of Christ that encourage to rely on the gift of righteousness for holy living, obedience and works is to move on to solid food.

Hebrews 5:14

But solid food belongs to those who are mature, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

Grace is the solid food towards maturity. It belongs to mature believers in Christ and to those who want to grow spiritually. These are able to discern between self righteousness and the gift of righteousness, law and grace, old covenant and new covenant. And the more we feed on the grace of Christ, the more we will receive everything Christ provided us via His finished work.

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