

“And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.” (1 John 5:11-12 NIV)

A babe in Christ *must* be encouraged to continue to feed upon the “milk of the Word” even though many questions will be stirred up for him. During that period of growth, he may make much use of not only the grace of God but also the cleansing blood of Christ while striving to remain in fellowship with God during the difficult and often confusing progress toward becoming a mature Christian.

Just as physical life has stages of maturity, so also does the Christian life. An infant is of course, not born with the same abilities that a 4 year old has. Walking for example, is not an easy task to learn. There are usually bumps and bruises obtained during that process and there are almost *always* some tears that result from falls. It is not much different for the new babe in Christ. Those first few steps can seem overwhelming at times and difficult to master. But with endurance, practice and determination — maturity will be reached. Physical babes don’t quit *trying* because they don’t like the bumps and bruises they get or the tears they shed because of it. They just keep trying until they get it right. Those little toddlers will *eventually* become *young* men and women and those young men and women will eventually become *mature* men and women. But it will take much effort as well as great determination and patience — not only on *their* part but also on the part of those around them.

“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 if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins.” (II Peter 1:5-9 NIV)

Having no desire to progress toward maturing in ones faith results in a very perilous position. We read earlier in this article of Demas *deserting* Paul because he loved this world. So one should never be content with spiritual immaturity as it will *perpetuate* weakness and lack of understanding. A new babe in Christ that sins due to lack of growth time is one thing — intentionally *choosing* to not “*grow up in your salvation*” because it’s too difficult to *continue* to repent (or turn away from as knowledge increases) — is another.

“But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.” (II Peter 3:18 NIV)

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Dennis and Sherri Owens — Cincinnati, Ohio  
diligence@gorfsystems.com — <http://diligence.gorfsystems.com/>



# DILIGENCE

“We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure.” — Hebrews 6:11

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## Hear, Believe, Repent, Confess, Be Baptized,

### And Repent—And Repent—And Repent—And Repent—And Repent

The “steps of salvation” are very familiar to all of us. Many of us have led souls through those steps numerous times. And it has been with much pain that we have sometimes seen those very souls drift away from their saved status and return to the world just as Demas did in the New Testament.

“Our dear friend Luke, the doctor, and Demas send greetings.” (Col. 4:14 NIV)

“Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends you greetings. And so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas and Luke, my fellow workers.” (Philemon 1:23-24 NIV)

“Do your best to come to me quickly, for Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me and has gone to Thessalonica.” (II Tim. 4:9-10 NIV)

Demas had apparently been a useful worker in the Kingdom but, because “he loved this world,” had left. That’s all we know about Demas. We don’t know exactly what it was that he loved about the world that caused him to desert Paul — we just know that he *did*.

It seems that too often, the easy part of evangelism is getting a lost soul to realize his or her need to be baptized for the remission of sin. The more difficult part is getting him or her to realize that a *commitment* is involved and that commitment will never end as long as he or she is on this earth. Many of those with whom we study the Bible *readily* understand and accept that they are lost in sin and must be baptized to remedy that problem if they wish to look forward to an eternity with God. They hear, they believe, they confess and they repent — and so they are baptized. They *believe* that —

“...all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,” (Rom. 3:23 NIV)

They *believe* that —

“...the wages of sin is death, ...” (Rom. 6:23 NIV)

They *believe* that —

“...God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” (Rom. 5:8 NIV)

They *believe* that —

“...the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Rom. 6:23 NIV)

They *believe* that they must —

“Repent and be baptized,...in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of [their] sins...” (Acts 2:38 NIV)

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It's simple, it's easy and they understand their need for salvation — and they understand that salvation is through the blood of Christ. So — they become a “new babe in Christ.”

*“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.”  
(1 Peter 2:2-3 NIV)*

This new “babe in Christ” already *knew* about the 10 Commandments and probably considered himself to be a reasonably good person. He didn't steal, take the Lord's name in vain, murder, commit adultery, etc. etc. etc. So other than finding out that ALL men sin and fall short of the glory of God and that the *wages* of that sin is death, there really isn't much that needs to *change* in his life. Sure — he repented of the sin that ALL are guilty of — but other than that — he's in pretty good shape. Oh, he realizes that he needs to worship regularly now with the other saints — but that won't be too difficult. He can handle *that*.

What he may not understand at this point is that —

*“Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.”  
(Heb. 5:13-14 NIV)*

So this new babe in Christ starts to study the Word. He begins to learn things that go *way* past the 10 Commandments. In fact, he even learns that *they* were part of the *Old Covenant* and while *most* of them are repeated in the New Testament, they aren't the *only* things that God expects of one of His children. God expects him to dive into more “solid food.” Only — some of that more “solid food” is somewhat disturbing to him. All of a sudden he seems to have more questions than he has answers. Some of the things he has practiced, believed and accepted *all* of his life — well — he's starting to think *now* that some of those things aren't the way he always *thought* they were — at least not according to what he's reading in the Bible. *Now* — he is faced with a choice. Does he just quit studying and go on doing, believing and accepting the things he has for all of his life — or does he continue to become better acquainted with the teaching about righteousness and train himself to distinguish good from evil?

*“We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn. 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! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.” (Heb. 5:11-14 NIV)*

If he chooses to continue to study God's Word, he may have to repent of (or turn away from) a *whole lot* of practices and beliefs he's always lived by. This could get pretty difficult. He may need to repent, and then repent (turn away) from something

*else* and repent again and again — if he intends to “*grow up in [his] salvation.*” The more he learns, the more he discovers that the Scriptures *actually do address* many of those things that he always *thought* were nothing more than just a matter of ones own personal choosing. Those 10 Commandments all of a sudden seem to be the *easy* part of the Word. He begins to understand things that he didn't know before about the Scriptures. He starts to think he may even have to change his position on numerous *social* issues as well as many activities he always enjoyed doing. Worse than *that*, he starts to think that his deceased relatives might not be in heaven! Could this possibly be the point at which Demas decided to desert Paul?

Maturity of a Christian is often a difficult process. It is relatively easy for a lost soul to accept Christ as their Savior. It is much more difficult for that soul to accept Him as *Lord*.

*“If you love me, you will obey what I command.” (John 14:15 NIV)*

*“So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness. See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.” (Col. 2:6-8 NIV)*

Accepting Christ as ones Savior is *somewhat* a self-serving action. Accepting Christ as ones *Lord* however, is a self-less action. Christ as a *Savior* is — in a way — based on self-preservation for eternity, so it is a very difficult step to move to the self-less action of accepting Him as Lord. It *must* however be taken and those around the individual can help him do so. Paul understood the status of those in Corinth and helped *them* to address their need to mature.

*“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. You are still worldly.”  
(1 Cor. 3:1-2 NIV)*

Paul also knew that the Galatians were fighting the battle of being pulled in a direction that was *away* from God. He *knew* that they were still *infants* in Christ.

*“Those people are zealous to win you over, but for no good. What they want is to alienate you from us, so that you may be zealous for them. It is fine to be zealous, provided the purpose is good, and to be so always and not just when I am with you. My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you,”  
(Gal. 4:17-19 NIV)*

It is important for *us* to remember that stumbling babes in Christ *have* eternal life even though they undergo many struggles on their road to maturing enough to accept Christ as their *Lord* and becoming *dedicated* to complete obedience to His Word.