

## On To Perfection

*"Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this we will do if God permits."* (Hebrews 6:1-3)

*"Literally, leaving the word of the beginning concerning Christ. The Greek word Ἀφέντες translated leaving or dismissing does not imply ceasing to believe in elementary truths or to regard them as unimportant, but leaving them "as a builder leaves his foundation in erecting his building" (F.F.Bruce). No one ever forgets the first principals of math (2+2=4 etc.) when studying algebra, trigonometry, and calculus. But neither does one dwell on basic addition and subtraction because it is easy. So also, the basic principles of the gospel are steps to a fuller understanding of godliness.*

*The word of the beginning of Christ is the rudimentary view of Christ's person and office, which begins with the promises in Genesis, becomes flesh in His birth, continues to His ascension, which leads us into the doctrine of his high priesthood. As the story of the life of Jesus unfolds, there are many interesting details that can occupy our studies and meditation. But in all the stories there are deeper lessons to be understood. What is the real lesson of a baby born in Bethlehem, of one who walked on the water, calmed the wind and sea? What is learned from the bread that came down from heaven or the water of life? What happens when washed in the blood of the lamb?*

*In writing to Timothy, Paul says, "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, Justified in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Preached among the Gentiles, Believed on in the world, Received up in glory." (1 Timothy 3:16) Jesus was born, lived, taught, died, resurrected, made both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36) and carried up to heaven. In each stage of His existence there are fundamental truths that are easy to learn and enjoyable to meditate upon. But Jesus expected His disciples to look beyond the incident or story to the deeper truths behind each.*

*For instance, in Matthew 16:11 Jesus said, "How is it you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread?--but to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees." And in Luke 9:44-45, "Let these words sink down into your ears, for the Son of Man is about to be betrayed into the hands of men." But they did not understand this saying..."*

The Hebrew writer lists the rudimentary aspects of the gospel that were the subject of the Law of Moses. The Hebrews to whom the book of that title was written should have been prepared by the fundamentals and types for the real substance, the meat, of the gospel. In

John 3 Jesus said to Nicodemus, "Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not know these things?" referring to cleaning by water and spirit.

**Repentance from dead works.** Anything that is not commanded, or is changed in anyway is a dead work. The teaching of the law for returning to a "clean" condition to reenter the worship with God's people showed the terrible nature of sin and how to cover it up until Christ came to remove it. We should be able to teach others about it.

**Faith toward God.** There is a teaching that God exists, that He created all things, and that He loved us enough to send His Son to die for us. But there is a deeper need to understand Him as our Father, to put our full trust in Him as a loving care giver and guide to the blessings He has promised since Genesis 3.

**The doctrine of baptisms (washings).** Physical dirt is removed by soap and water. Spiritual dirt, sin against God, is removed by doing what God said to do. To Israel, that was cleansing by faith in water and offering the sacrifice specified. For us, it is faith in the blood of Jesus applied in the waters of baptism.

**Laying on of hands.** Shows mutual participation. The term is used of touching the sacrifice and acknowledging that the one sacrificed is taking the place of the transgressor and sinner. We deserved death for our sin, not the one being sacrificed. Christ died for us. We "touch" Him by obeying Him.

**Resurrection of the dead.** A resurrection to life after death has been taught or alluded to since creation. Abraham waited for it, the types in the tabernacle and temple pointed to it, David acknowledged it, and the prophets anticipated it. The fact of it should not be questioned but it is. A godless society says there is no resurrection.

**Eternal judgment.** Mankind has always feared being judged. But God has always judged the faith and actions of people. Adam and Eve were found guilty of eating the wrong fruit. Evil was, is, and will be judged until Christ comes again. Then all humanity, alive and dead will stand before a righteous judge to determine the eternal destination of each individual.

So, as Paul says in Philippians 3:12-14, Let us "*press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.*"