
Words of Truth

Hebrews 6:1-2

By: Brian A. Yeager

The recipients of this letter were told it was time for them to mature (Hebrews 5:11-14). Now, the penman of this letter establishes what they needed to do next: *“Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment”* (Hebrews 6:1-2).

The Greek word translated “principles” is defined as: “a commencement, or (concretely) chief (in various applications of order, time, place, or rank): — beginning, corner, (at the, the) first (estate), magistrate, power, principality, principle, rule...” (Strong’s # 746). Most of the time, this Greek word is translated “beginning” throughout the New Testament (KJV). Therefore, the writer of this letter is telling them that they, and he as their teacher, need to leave the first things and move on in their learning process.

The statement, “let us go on unto perfection” is about completion (Strong’s # 5047). The one other time this term is used it is translated “perfectness” (Colossians 3:14). The foundation of what they needed taught had been laid. There was not a need to stay on those things. Before we proceed, it is important to note that there is a time to revisit and review things in the process of spiritual growth (I Timothy 4:1-6, II Timothy 2:8-19, II Peter 1:3-15, II Peter 3:1-2, and Jude 1:5). Now, let’s consider not laying again the foundation with that clarification in mind.

The foundation of our faith includes Jesus, what He taught, what the Apostles taught, and what the prophets taught (Luke 6:46-49, I Corinthians 3:9-11, and Ephesians 2:19-20). That is very broad. So, to be specific, this teacher outlines what he is talking about that they needed to move beyond. He is talking about repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, the teaching of baptisms, laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. In one conversion account, we can see all of these things taught in some manner prior to conversion (Acts 2:22-41). Yet, teaching did not then nor does it now stop at the point of conversion (Matthew 28:16-20 and Acts 2:42).

We are not told whether these saints needed continual teaching on these first principles or not. It could be that, those teaching them only taught on these first principles. Think about how many of us were in congregations of “churches of Christ” wherein the teaching seemed to

almost always revolve around nothing but these and other first principles. Whatever the cause, the penman of this letter is saying there is more to learn than what these folks were learning. Again, to repeat, their limited growth in learning and usage of their senses to discern right from wrong was limiting what they could be taught.

A Christian should know, prior to conversion, about repentance from dead works (Acts 3:1-19 and Acts 26:18-20). However, we see Christians in the first century that needed to be reminded of such things (Romans 6:1-23). We read about Christians, aside from this present context, who needed to depart from things and go onto perfection (II Corinthians 6:14-7:1). Repentance and faith were preached to the lost (Acts 20:20-21).

Think about those who only focus on lessons about faith. In this letter, we will see a whole chapter dedicated to the subject matter of faith (Hebrews 11:1-40). Faith had already been addressed prior to this immediate context (Hebrews 3:7-4:3). If a Christian or group of Christians need taught about faith on a continual basis, what does that say of their proper walk in Christ (II Corinthians 5:7)? Yet, there were congregations that needed taught to help them in what was lacking in their faith (I Thessalonians 3:10).

There were several baptisms taught about in the first century (Matthew 20:20-28, Mark 1:1-11, Luke 12:49-50, and Acts 18:24-19:7). When the letter to the church in Ephesus was written, then there was only one (Ephesians 4:1-6). Christians then and now should be mature in knowledge enough to know what that one baptism is (I Peter 3:20-21; cf. Acts 8:25-39).

The laying on of hands could mean several things. It could mean the appointment to or of a work (Acts 13:1-4). The laying on of hands could refer to the giving of the Holy Spirit through the laying on of the Apostle's hands (Acts 8:5-24). The laying on of hands could refer to healing the sick (Acts 28:8). Either way, these things were all matters one would know before or soon after conversion into Christ in the first century.

The resurrection from the dead is the cornerstone of our faith, but there were congregations that struggled with this subject matter (I Corinthians 15:1-58). Since the resurrection will occur when Christ returns and judges humanity (Matthew 24:35-25:46), the two subjects tie together. It is not a difficult subject, but there were teachers that persuaded people of error on these matters (II Timothy 2:14-18). There were also congregations that just did not fully understand what was going to happen when the dead would rise in the resurrection (I Thessalonians 4:13-18).

We know our Lord expects all Christians to grow in grace and knowledge (II Peter 3:18). That growth needs to include being fruitful in every good work (Colossians 1:10). Instead of being like those written to in this letter, we need to work to have our faith growing exceedingly (II Thessalonians 1:3)!