

ON TO PERFECTION

Hebrews 6:1–3 — *"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. And this will we do, if God permit."*

It is a difficult thing to say here, "leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ". As fundamentalists, we stress highly the principles, or the fundamentals of the doctrine of Christ. What do we consider those fundamentals:

- Jesus Christ is Lord
- Jesus Christ is the Word, who was with God in the beginning and at that time, i.e., from the past "days of eternity" He was and is God
- Jesus Christ is God manifest in human flesh
- Jesus Christ died for our sins — the gospel
- Jesus Christ was buried and rose from the dead
- Jesus Christ ascended back to heaven
- Jesus Christ is seated at God's right hand
- Jesus Christ will return
- We get this from the Bible, the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments, which is the final authority that is not subject to changing opinions but from "it is written"

There are many more things that we would say are fundamentals. The point here is that these fundamentals are not what is referred to here.

Again, we must ask the question: to whom is this written?

Hebrews was written to Hebrews, or the whole house of Israel. These were the people who of whom it could be said that unto them were committed the oracles of God (Romans 3:2).

The doctrine of Christ as said in this chapter does not have to do with the foundational things that are true and those things that are the fundamentals of the faith. It has rather to do with the things that could be said "the doctrine of *the* Christ", or the "doctrine of the Messiah", if said that way we could get the idea from a Hebrew (Jewish) perspective.

It would be all of those things taught that would lead to the coming of the Christ so that when He was manifest among the people in their presence, they would know what they could and should expect.

These were things such as when Jesus Christ asked the Pharisees, "what think ye of Christ? Whose son is He?"

This, and other teachings (doctrines) could be asked about, and they could be answered from the Law and the Prophets, what we now call, as does the Apostle Paul, the Old Testament. These are the principles of the doctrine of Christ, and now that Christ has come, these things are settled. Christ was born, as prophesied, in Bethlehem of Judea, Micah 5:2/Matthew 2:5-6, Luke 2, etc.

He brought the physical blessings of His reign as King with Him, although not fully manifest. If we do a study in the gospels of the phrases “gospel of the kingdom” and preaching the kingdom, it will always be followed with signs: healing, casting out devils, raising the dead, sight to the blind, and many other great and wonderful things that would be fully manifest in the reign of God’s Christ on earth.

These are the principles of the doctrine of Christ. Now they are settled. We are not looking for signs to tell us who He is, that is made plain. We know who Christ is from those elementary doctrines, that have found their fulfillment in the person of Jesus Christ.

The principles of the doctrine of Christ could be said to be the law as well:

Galatians 3:22–25 — “But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterward be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.”

If we look at what we are moving on from, we are talking again about the things that are things of the Old Testament. *“The foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God”* is the very theme of the Law and the Prophets. If you want to understand what John the Baptist meant when he preached the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins (Luke 3:3), you must have a foundational knowledge of the prophets. Jeremiah 7:3, for instance:

“Amend your ways and your doings” was the phrase, again repeated in verse 5. If you know the Old Testament calls for repentance, when we get to the message in the Gospels, we understand its meaning, even if the exact words used are not the same. The message is clear: turn back to the covenant made with your fathers and walk in it.

But at that time, and still now, that time is past. Christ came in the flesh and was crucified. What the people demanding His death and those that did it accomplished was to show themselves as truly the enemies of God. What God accomplished by it was the means by which He would make available the salvation of sinners, and the way by which all of the covenants of promise could be fulfilled to a people who were undeserving of them. What God accomplished was making the propitiation for sins so that all who would come to Jesus Christ by faith would be made righteous “freely, by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Romans 3:24). This is the groundwork for how the New Covenant, first called that in Jeremiah 31, would be fulfilled. This is also, incidentally, the theme of much of the rest of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

As we go on, we have “of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands”, which things have much to do with the ceremonial rituals of the Law. While these things were God given and authoritative to the people of the Covenant to walk in, they were the things of the schoolmaster, as we spoke of in Galatians 3. These were things having to do with priestly service and the succession of such.

When we go on to the next two, we have resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. These are truths that we hold as of utmost importance, as did the people of the Old Covenant. They were looking to a future resurrection and eternal judgment. But why would we want to leave those principles?

It is because these things are set. They will happen, and it is in the manifest person of Christ that they are solidified. If one expects to escape eternal judgment, he can do so because of the “so great salvation” that came through the Son of God, expected to be understood and believed as true, and personalized when one bows the knee to Christ and believes all that He accomplished by the cross.

But we are getting a little ahead of ourselves here. The point is that the scripture speaks again and again about these things, but if people won’t listen to what the scripture teaches about the way to be made right so that when the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment does come, they will be on the right side of it, there is no reason to stay there and not move on.

If we understand this group of Israelites to be a couple of sub-groups, we can see where this is going. Think of a class of school children. There are those that don’t pay attention because they don’t care. There are those that actively refuse to learn. There are those that struggle to learn but make the effort. There are those that are eager to learn and want more.

If the teacher always taught to the level of those that won’t learn, no one would ever learn, because some just don’t care or rebel.

This is a call for those who will learn to move on. They are being called to go on to perfection. They are being called to graduate, to move on from the schoolmaster.

We have discussed in past sessions about what perfection is in these contexts. Just like in the last chapter where it is said of Christ that He was made perfect through suffering, and it meaning to become a finished product, so these Hebrews who will believe and take their place in God’s working through His Christ, are being called to go on and leave the rest behind. When we get to verses 4-6 in the next study, they pick up right where these left off:

“And this [going on to perfection] will we do, if God permit. For it is impossible...”

This is how we must read the and understand the Scriptures. We have a continuous flow of thought, the mind of God, being expressed to us in written communication. We should not jump in to get our ideas of meaning in the middle of a chapter devoid from all of what led to it. The entire Bible is really that, the story of what God is doing and how it has and will happen in the future. In that story God is speaking to us now in the light of what Christ has accomplished by the cross.

We should know the “principles of the doctrine of Christ” so that we see how He was manifest and how He truly did fulfil everything that God’s Christ would be. But we cannot remain there, as under the schoolmaster, when the substance has come and we need to take that next step of obeying Him by believing the gospel. To those that obey Him, He become the author of their ETERNAL salvation, Hebrews 5:9. Those that want to stay behind, they will stay behind. Don’t let them hold you back. Go on to perfection. That is the point beginning here in the first part of Hebrews 6. The second part continues just that. It answers the question as to why we⁹ move on and leave them behind.

⁹ It is hard not to use “we” in all of this and apply it to us now. It should be understood though that this is about Hebrew people during the time of the apostles teaching about Christ to those around the time that the very things happened. It is just as relevant for us now two millennia removed that some just refuse to hear and will forever hold us back if wait for them before we move on.