

Hebrews 6:1-3: The Elementary Principles of Christ

“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)

I. REVIEW

- a. The writer takes a pause in his writing because there is spiritual immaturity amongst his readers. He desires to go into a greater depth into the perfection of Jesus, but is concerned that their immaturity will keep them from understanding
- b. There are three discernible signs that people have not simply gotten dull, but that they have actually regressed in their faith and are babes in the faith
 - i. They are tossed to and fro...and easily swayed by other messages (*Ephesians 4:14-16*)
 - ii. They glorify and pledge allegiance to ministries (*1 Corinthians 3:1-4*)
 - iii. They are unable to discern or use spiritual gifts in love and for the edification of others (*1 Corinthians 14:20-26*)
- c. Justin also gave context to the season that the people were in by looking a little further in the book of Hebrews chapter 10. Previously the people had gone through a time of persecution and tribulation. They had come alongside those who were being persecuted and become a spectacle to the world. But, when the persecution ended...so too did their confidence in hope and the rewards of the promises of God. It was then that dullness and regression set in. (*Hebrews 10:32-36*)

II. REGRESSION OCCURS IN ISOLATION

“Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.” (*Hebrews 10:23-25*)

- a. The trials brought forth unity, compassion and even joy in the people. Persecution often leads to unity and intimacy among people...and comfort often leads to isolation and dispersion. In times of comfort, we often start to lose that desperation for the Lord and desire to see the return of Jesus. We either suppress the longing or are simply ignorant to our need for Him. In such times, we do not feel physical pain or sorrow...and so we cling to the comforts of the world and what we can build in our own strength. In doing so...we stop considering God and we stop even considering anyone other than ourselves.
- b. Our confession of hope was meant to be made without wavering WITH a family...a company of united people who are longing for and expectant of the return of Jesus.
- c. The writer of Hebrews encouraged the people to continue to meet and encourage one another because so many had forsaken gathering and being in fellowship with others. These people had stopped looking to the foundation of Jesus and longing for His return. They had stopped gathering and started to build their foundations on the sand of their own kingdoms. As the return of Jesus draws even closer, people will grow more independent and more isolated. And just like Zerubbabel and Joshua in the days of Haggai...the writer of Hebrews is calling people to forsake the building of their own kingdoms and return to the established foundations of Christ and the kingdom of the Father.

III. CONSIDER YOUR WAYS: THE ZERUBBABEL CALLING

“‘Thus speaks the Lord of hosts, saying: ‘This people says, “The time has not come, the time that the Lord’s house should be built.” ’ ’ Then the word of the Lord came by Haggai the prophet, saying, “Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, and this temple to lie in ruins?” Now therefore, thus says the Lord of hosts: “Consider your ways! “You have sown much, and bring in little; You eat, but do not have enough; You drink, but you are not filled with drink; You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm; And he who earns wages, Earns wages to put into a bag with holes.”’” (Haggai 1:2-6)

- a. Haggai was a prophet who spoke to the Israelites after they were released from Babylonian captivity after 70 years. The Lord’s kindness allowed His people to be taken into captivity because they had turned their hearts from Him. Their captivity and trials were a means of producing repentance in their hearts to call out to Him. During captivity, their hearts turned to the Lord...for sometimes God’s judgments ARE His mercies.
- b. It was when the Israelites were released from captivity and into freedom that the people started to build foundations apart from God. Rather than build the foundations for the house of the Lord...the kingdom of God, the people build their own houses and their own kingdoms apart from God and even one another.
- c. I believe that the Lord is calling people today to be like Haggai, Zerubbabel and Joshua who call people to return to the Lord and restore the rightful foundations to see the kingdom of the Father and the Son have the first place in our hearts.

IV. THE IMPORTANCE OF FOUNDATIONS OF THE ELEMENTARY PRINCIPLES

- a. The elementary principles of Christ put all believers on the same playing field. While not everyone belongs on a platform teaching the masses...the writer makes it clear that every believer should be able to instruct another believer through discipleship on these teachings. But, how many of us could say with confidence that we could instruct someone on each of these? How many of us can actually say that WE have ever been instructed on these principles? And I mean...instructed from a right and biblical perspective with divine revelation and understanding given by and through the Holy Spirit.

“These things we also speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.” (1 Corinthians 2:13)

- b. One of the great issues of the church is that we think that we know things or we simply pretend to know them. Our shameful (or blissful) ignorance or our prideful arrogance get in the way of setting foundations that are immovable and will lead us into greater maturity. We wonder why the church at times seems unsteady and why so many people seem to turn away from the Lord...and yet too few leaders or congregants are able to instruct in these elementary teachings. The question is...**WHAT DO WE HOPE TO BUILD ON FOUNDATIONS THAT ARE WEAK?**
- c. Maintaining vs. Sustaining
 - i. To maintain something is to preserve it from failure or decline. Maintenance provides no ability for growth, building or maturity.
 - ii. To sustain something is to provide strength and support. Sustenance provides the means to see something be build up and make something new.

- iii. Foundations need to be something that can be built upon. So many of us are so busy laboring to maintain something and keep it from decline rather than laboring to partner with the Lord, who sustains all things and longs for our growth and maturity. We wonder why we are weary and losing heart...but could it be that we are focused on maintenance when instead we should be focusing on sustenance?

V. THE SIX PRINCIPLES

a. "...repentance from dead works..." (Hebrews 6:1)

- i. The full turning to the Lord away from our sin through the acceptance of our Savior Jesus Christ, who died on the cross (*Matthew 4:17; Luke 24:46-48; Acts 3:19; 1 John 1:9*)
- ii. The understanding that God has prepared in advance good works for us to do and that everything we do should be done unto the glory of God. (*Ephesians 2:10; 1 Corinthians 10:31*)
- iii. The knowledge of the Lord's loving kindness and tender mercies that lead us to repentance. (*Romans 2:4*)

b. "...faith toward God..." (Hebrews 6:1)

- i. In order to have faith, we understand that the Lord has spoken and is speaking to us in various ways...and our faith comes from hearing what He has said and is saying. (*John 1: 14; John 5:19; John 12:49; John 14:26; Romans 10:17; Hebrews 1:1-2*)
- ii. We trust and find rest in His promises knowing that He who has spoken them is fully able to perform them in His perfect timing. Our faith in what He has spoken in the past and even at present...is what gives us a hope for what is unseen and yet to come. (*Romans 4:21; 2 Corinthians 4:16-18; Titus 2:13; 2 Peter 1:4*)
- iii. It is following the commands in which He has spoken which allows us to presently abide in His love and presence. (*John 15:9-10*)

c. "...the doctrine of baptisms..." (Hebrews 6:2)

- i. Baptism in water: The public declaration one has made in repenting and accepting the love of Jesus through His death and resurrection with the understanding that Jesus is the Son of the Father (*Matthew 3:11, 13-17; Luke 3:21-22; Romans 6:3; 1 Peter 3:21*)
- ii. Baptism by fire: The public declaration and release of power through the indwelling Holy Spirit, who bears witness that we are sons of the Father through Jesus (*Matthew 3:11; Acts 2:1-4; Romans 8:16*)

d. "...laying on of hands..." (Hebrews 6:2)

- i. The miraculous way that the Lord uses broken and imperfect man to partner with Him in releasing His power upon the earth (*1 Corinthians 1:27*)
- ii. The manifestation of power and anointing of the Holy Spirit through men (*Mark 16:18; Luke 4:40; Acts 2:8; James 5:14*)
- iii. The kingdom of God coming on earth as it is in heaven (*Matthew 6:10; Luke 11:12*)

- e. *“...resurrection of the dead...” (Hebrews 6:2)*
 - i. The return of Jesus is what will usher in the resurrection of the dead and the millennial kingdom (*Revelation 19:11-16*)
 - ii. All believers are fully perfected and glorified into sons of God through Jesus. (*Matthew 24:31; 1 Corinthians 15:52; 1 Thessalonians 4:16; Revelation 20:4-6*)
 - iii. At this time there will be justice for the martyrs (*Revelation 20:4*)
 - iv. All unbelievers will also be resurrected at the end of the thousand year reign (*Revelation 20:5*)
- f. *“...eternal judgment.” (Hebrews 6:2)*
 - i. The full understanding of the Lord as Judge and King (*John 5:24-30; 2 Corinthians 5:9-11; 2 Timothy 4:1*)
 - ii. The devil and all of those who did not choose God will be cast in the lake of fire (*Revelation 20:7-15*)
 - iii. After this, all things are made new and the Father is able to be fully present with His people. (*Revelation 21:1-27*)

VI. IF GOD PERMITS

And this we will do if God permits. (Hebrews 6:3)

- a. Man does not decide when other men are ready to move on from milk to meat...from immaturity to maturity. We cannot force a man to spiritually mature any more than we can force a baby to physically grow.
- b. We must never allow our pride to make us believe that we have learned any knowledge, wisdom or understanding of God apart from the Lord. And therefore, we must never grow impatient with either our immaturity or others immaturity. And while we must do our part in order to grow in the knowledge of God and keep from regressing...we cannot progress to maturity in our own strength.