

The Elementary Principles of Christ (1)

Hebrews 6:1-3

Introduction

1. Communication is predicated on mutually understood principles. We cannot express our thoughts without being on some common ground with the one we are communicating with.
 2. There are times we begin discussing a matter with someone we think we share common ground with only to realize the common ground we share starts at a point further back than what we thought.
 3. The Hebrew writer found himself in a similar situation – **Hebrews 5:9-12** – he sought to speak about an important matter which required a certain foundation his readers didn't have due to their own neglect.
 - a. He calls them to push forward – **Hebrews 6:1-3**
 4. While the context of the passage is one of rebuke, and a forward press to matters of greater complexity, it establishes well the place and necessity of **"the elementary principles of Christ."**
 5. Without establishing myself in these principles I cannot go on to greater things God has planned for me as His child.
- I. The First Principles
- A. The ABCs of God's Word
 - a. **"elementary principles of Christ" (6:1) – "the word of the beginning of the Christ" (YLT)**
 - i. **"elementary"** – *archē* – first, or beginning.
 - ii. **"principles"** – supplied by translators, implied by previous section – **5:12** – **"the first (*archē*) principles (*stoicheion*) of the oracles of God"**
 - b. **"principles"** – *stoicheion* – "primarily signifies any first things from which others in a series, or a composite whole take their rise" (VINE)
 - i. "generally, the rudimentary elements of anything, what belongs to a basic series in any field of knowledge; in grammar, the ABCs; in speech, basic sounds; in physics, the four basic elements (earth, air, fire, water); in geometry, the axioms; in philosophy, the givens" (ALGNT)
 - ii. **2 Peter 3:10-12** – the physical elements of the universe.
 - c. **"of the oracles of God" – "of Christ"**
 - i. What is initially learned, the basics, established in revealed infallible truth which relate to everything else.

- ii. These are necessary to be learned before moving to the complex.
- d. Importance of the first principles:
 - i. **2 Peter 3:15-16** – the longsuffering of the Lord is mishandled by some who are untaught and unstable.
 - ii. They, not being settled in the **“first principles,”** are making a mess of the more complex.
 - iii. In context – **2 Peter 3:3-9** – longsuffering counted as slackness, forgetting the fundamental concept of God’s judgment on wickedness. (a calling to repentance)
 - 1. **Romans 2:4** – as Paul wrote, the longsuffering is not slackness, but grace provided for repentance and reconciliation.
 - 2. **I.e. His goodness and longsuffering despite your evil is not license for evil, or indifference toward it.**

B. The Milk for Babes

- a. There is infinite depth and value to God’s wisdom – **Romans 11:33; Colossians 2:3**
- b. All things revealed belong to us – **Deuteronomy 29:29** – including the complex matters – **2 Peter 3:16** – he wrote to them about it.
- c. Without the building blocks there is not the ability to see and understand the deeper and grander themes and revelations.
 - i. **Hebrews 5:9-11** – the High Priesthood of Christ according to Melchizedek is extremely important, but complex in a way which will not be grasped without **“first principles”**
 - ii. **Hebrews 6:1-2** – each of these, in a way, relates to the topic he wishes to consider.
- d. Milk before meat – **Hebrews 5:12-14** – the milk has its purpose, but there is a weaning process in moving on to bigger and better things.
 - i. ABC’s are learned, but then rearranged into different orders to form words – this takes exercise, and eventually leads to reading sentences, etc.
 - ii. **(vv. 13-14)** – doctrinal and practical/moral – there is a use of these principles in practice and inner renewal (**cf. Romans 12:1-2**) that leads to the ability to handle more complex matters which God considers necessary for us to know/experience (else He wouldn’t have revealed them).

II. The Foundation

A. The Substructure of Christian Faith

- a. The Hebrew writer utilizes further imagery to demonstrate the importance of these **"first principles,"** and also the need to progress beyond them.
 - b. **"not laying again the foundation"** – *themelios* – "(1) the supporting base for a structure, foundation; (2) the basis for someth. taking place or coming into being, foundation" (BDAG)
 - c. Physically – **Matthew 7:25, 27** – the reason for not falling and falling was the foundation.
 - d. Figuratively/conceptually:
 - i. **Acts 17:28-29** – the notion that God takes on the form depicted in idol structures made by man cannot be supported by the fact that He made man – such is illogical – that substructure leads to a difference conclusion – He is not like that.
 - ii. **Matthew 22:41-46** – the notion that the Messiah would just be an ordinary man cannot be supported by the fact that inspired scripture recorded David calling Him Lord – leads to a different conclusion, He is greater than David, namely His God.
 - e. **Hebrews 6:1-2** – these are at least some of the elements which lead to the doctrines revealed and established in the faith, and also the very nature of the relationship with God we're called to.
 - i. Example – **"faith toward God"** – **Hebrews 11:6** – without faith impossible to please Him – understanding the very nature of that faith would even determine what follows.
 - ii. Without them there cannot be forward progress – **"I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able" (1 Corinthians 3:2).**
- B. The Purpose of a Foundation
- a. **"The hands of Zerubbabel Have laid the foundation of this temple; His hands shall also finish it." (Zechariah 4:9)** – foundations are laid for buildings to be put on top of them!
 - b. **Matthew 7:24** – hearing the sayings and doing them – building on the foundation provided.
 - c. The Hebrew writer provides yet another illustration to show the folly and danger of not progressing – **Hebrews 6:4-8**
 - i. **(vv. 4-6)** – warning of apostasy connected with the beginnings not being built upon or leading to further pursuit.

- ii. **(vv. 7-8)** – when what God gives is not followed with what corresponds to it, or with something for which it is intended, it will be rejected.
 - d. What happens to a foundation that is laid, but is never built upon? It disappears under accumulation of earth and vegetation.
- III. The Necessity of Maturing
 - A. The Will of God for Perfection
 - a. **“let us go on to perfection” (Hebrews 6:1)** – *teleiotēs* – completion, maturity.
 - b. Who is to be a perfect man? – **Ephesians 4:13** – **“till we ALL”**
 - c. Misunderstandings that lead to a lax approach or even indifference to growth to maturity in knowledge and practice:
 - i. Salvation is descriptive of one moment in time, not a process – **Philippians 2:12-13**
 - ii. Denominational errors on the salvific work of Christ (death, not perfect life) – **1 John 2:6** – to walk as He walked.
 - iii. The gospel is simple. No need to complicate things – **2 Peter 3:16**
 - d. **Hebrews 6:1-2** – what is listed, if understood, beckons us to grow, not just in a matter of interest or gratitude, but of necessity.
 - B. The Dependence on God for Perfection
 - a. **Hebrews 6:3** – the Hebrew writer understands that nothing is accomplished separate from God.
 - b. **Philippians 2:12-13; 1 Thessalonians 2:13** – He works in us.
 - c. He calls us to activity and assures us HE will do His part – **1 Thessalonians 5:19-24**
 - d. However, first things first – The Hebrew writer’s rebuke was that the foundation was already laid, but they didn’t build on it. However, there can be no building without the foundation! The learning and establishment of the elementary principles of Christ is vital.

Conclusion

1. It is imperative that I ground myself in the first principles of the oracles of God.
2. I cannot expect to understand the deeper things of God without first knowing the fundamentals.
3. However, it is equally imperative that after being grounded in the first principles I go on to perfection. To neglect progress is to miss the whole point of the **“first principles”** – they are necessarily first, but not final.