

The Department of Church Growth and Development:
Evangelism, Home Mission, Church Extension
2014 Spiritual Emphasis Theme Explored

Theme: Reaching Our Full Potential in Christ - A Journey to Spiritual Maturity

Subject: Laying a Foundation [Establishing a Relationship with Christ] Hebrews 5:12 - 6:3

Proposition: We should desire not only to be saved, and to know the elementary truths, but to be advanced scholars in Christ's school, so as to handle the deeper doctrines, and teach them to others.

I. All Healthy Babes Should Know and Grow.

1. For a time babes in Christ require milk, the plainest and simplest doctrine. He 5:12
2. Only mature Christians can digest the meat of the word. (Deeper truth) He 5:13
3. Babes are unskilled in how to use and apply God's word. He 5:13
4. Mature Christians have developed spiritually through practice. He 5:14

II. Mature Christians Contribute to the strength of the Church - Discuss the following statement: Spiritual maturity allows us to build up and strength the ministry of the Church. Too often we learn and unlearn. Our progress is slow, and we remain babes when we ought to be full grown men in Christ. We draw upon the church's strength when we ought to be contributing to it.

III. Six Foundational Truths Every Believer Should Know - Children are to learn their letters in order that they may go on to higher branches of education, and believers are to know the elements of the faith, but are then to advance to the higher attainments, and endeavor to understand the deeper mysteries.

1. **The foundation of repentance from dead works** - This was essential in laying the foundation. All men are commanded to repent. Repentance is essentially a change of the will, the rebellious will becoming a will to serve the Lord. He 6:1
2. **The foundation of faith toward God** - Some try to save themselves by trusting in their works but they are as vain to save as though they were dead. Faith as well as repentance enters into the foundation. The sinner must believe upon the Lord, and repent. See Ac 16:31 and Ac 2:38. He 6:1
3. **The foundation of doctrine of baptisms.** - There is but one baptism in water when the penitent is baptized into Christ (Eph 4:5; Ga 3:27). There is, however, another baptism which was promised before Christ came which was not of water. See Mt 3:12. Of the spirit in the Holy Spirit, as fulfilled on the day of Pentecost. He 6:2
4. **The foundation of laying on of hands.**- In the primitive church the extraordinary operation of the Holy Spirit was imparted by the laying on of the Apostolic hands (Ac 8:17). He 6:2
5. **The foundation of resurrection of the dead.** One of the fundamental but primary principles of Christian teaching. He 6:2
6. **The foundation of eternal judgment.** All were to be rewarded according to the deeds of this life. He. 6:2

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Subject: Bearing Fruit [Maintaining a Vital Connection with Christ] Hebrews 6:4 - 8

Proposition: We must maintain our vital connection with Christ because if once the real work of grace fails it cannot be commenced again, the case is hopeless forever. It is absolutely necessary to persevere to the end. To draw back totally would be fatal.

1. This stern warning comes to those who have been vitally connected with Christ. He. 6:4

- a) Those who have been enlightened by His Word. (4)
- b) Those who have tasted the heavenly gift. (4)
- c) Those who have been partakers of the Holy Ghost.(5)
- d) Those who have tasted the good word of God. (5)
- e) Those who have experienced the power of God. (5)

2. The apostle describes the case of those who have cast away both the power and the form of godliness; who have lost their faith, hope, and love, (Heb 6:10) and willfully abandon God.

- a) Apostates are those who fall away or abandon their faith. (6)
- b) Apostates are those who crucify to themselves the Lord afresh.(6)
- c) Apostates are those who put Christ to open shame. (6)

3. The evidence of total apostasy.

- a) They lose the capacity to repent. He. 4:6
- b) They reject Christ as those who crucified Him the first time. (6)
- c) They sin and act sinfully without remorse. (6)
- d) Esau found no place for repentance
- e) Judas found no place for repentance
- f) The men of Genesis 6:4; Isaiah 63:10 and Jude 1:4, 10, 16-19 were lost.

4. There is a difference between apostasy and backsliding. Those meant are not those "overtaken in a fault" [Ga 6:1], or backsliders only, but men once Christian professors who not only turn away from but oppose Christ.

- a) Backsliders can be reclaimed and restored.
- b) Backsliders feel guilt and remorse.
- c) Backsliders can received forgiveness and favor.

5. Apostates are compared to a unproductive field that has received good seed, proper care and nurture without fruitfulness or usefulness.

- a) They received rain in due season. (7)
- b) They received pure herbal seeds. (7)
- c) They received proper care (7)
- d) They bear nothing but thorns and briars; a harvest to be burned (8)

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Subject: Enduring Tough Times [Cultivating a Persevering Faith] Hebrews 6:9 – 15

Proposition: Although apostasy is a real threat, true believers can look forward to better things and a better end for two main reasons: their preserving faith in God and God's undying love and grace towards them.

1. The Apostle has confidence in the future of these immature believers for several reasons:

- a) Because of the graces of God's Spirit found operative to them He. 6:9, 10
- b) Because of their faith in Christ is a working faith.
- c) Because of their love to others is a laborious love.
- d) Because God will not forget their love in action.
- e) Because of God's faithfulness in remembering and rewarding.

2. The Apostle exhorts them to persevere in their faith and faithfulness. He 6:11

- a) Because persevering faith will be rewarded with present pardon.
- b) Because persevering faith will receive the full assurance of hope.
- c) Because persevering faith will receive future glory.

3. The Apostle exhorts them to persevere in their diligence. He 6:12

- a) Avoid the temptation to get weary in well doing. (12)
- b) Avoid the temptation to be slothful. (12)
- c) Follow those who through faith and patience inherit the promises. (12)
- d) Follow Godly men and women like Abraham who endured and received. (12)
- e) Follow on because the promises of God are sure and steadfast. (13,14)

4. The apostle encourages these believers to keep hope alive as an anchor for the soul.

Hebrews 6:16-20

- a) Because God himself is the Guarantor of the promise.
- b) Because the covenant promise and oath guarantee their security. (16)
- c) Because of two immutable things: It is impossible for God to lie or His word to fail.
- d) Because of the strong consolation we have, all our doubt and fears are swallowed up.
- e) Because we can lay hold on the hope set before us-On Christ, the object of our hope, and the glory we hope for through him. (19,20)

As the High Priest entered within the veil into the Holy of Holies, so our High Priest has entered for us, and before us, into the heavens. Every Jew felt safe and secure because of the work of the High Priest. How much more secure ought we be who have faith in Christ!

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Subject: Growing to Maturity [Experiencing Christian Perfection] Hebrews 7:11- 28

Proposition: Growing to maturity and experiencing Christian perfection is tied to our understanding of the priestly ministry of Jesus the Christ. In Melchisedec, the majestic and priestly offices were united, and he received his priesthood not by inheritance, but by an immediate divine ordination.(Hebrews 7:1-10)

1. Experiencing Christian perfection is Not possible through the Levitical Priesthood
(Hebrews 7:11-13)

- a) Aaron's priesthood was a type, temporary, and changing. (11)
- b) Aaron's assignment as a priest was temporary (priest served to age 50).(12)
- c) Aaron's atonement under the Law covered sin one year at a time. (12)
- d) Aaron's priesthood were selected by inheritance. (Sons of Levi)
- e) Melchisedec was a different kind of priesthood – permanent, unchanging. (13)
- f) Melchisedec was of a different tribe and by divine election.
- g) Melchisedec received his priesthood not by inheritance, but by an immediate divine ordination. Christ's priesthood was after the order of Melchisedec.

2. Experiencing Christian perfection is only possible through faith in Christ (He 7:14-16)

- a) Because Christ sprang from the tribe of Judah, a different tribe. (14)
- b) Because Christ after the similitude of Melchisedec, divinely appointed. (15)
- c) Because Christ has the power of an endless life. (He cannot die or be replaced. (16)
- d) Because Christ is God's high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec. (17)
- e) Because Christ brought in a better hope, something the Law could not do. (18, 19)
- f) Because God by an oath made Jesus the surety of a better testament. (20-22)
- g) Because Christ Jesus was given the only unchangeable priesthood. (22-24)

3. Experiencing Christian perfection is possible because Christ: Hebrews 7:25-28

- a) Christ had no personal sin to confess or need of personal forgiveness.(25-28)
- b) Christ had the power to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him. (25)
- c) Christ ever liveth to make intercession for those who sin and repent. (26)
- d) Christ our high priest was holy, harmless, undefiled, made higher than the heavens.
- e) Christ has no weak or inability. He is more than able to forgive, pardon, cleanse and restore all who come in faith believing.

The law made men high priests that had infirmities. They were weak, mortal, and sinful. God made His Son a high priest, who is consecrated for ever-Who being now free, both from sin and death, from natural and moral infirmity and remains our priest forever! His Priesthood is capable of perfecting the saints and presenting them faultless before God.

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Subject: Developing Character [Experiencing Change from the inside out] Hebrews 8:1-13

Proposition: Believers can only experience true Christ-like character development as we acknowledge that we are the temple of God and we must allow His Spirit to flow through us. We must experience the change we need on the inside first.

Having finished his description of the type in Melchisedec, the apostle begins to treat directly of the excellency of Christ's priesthood, beyond the Levitical Law to the place of Grace. Hebrews 8:1-4

1. We, believers can experience the change we need from the inside out because:

- a) Christians have the kind of High Priest as they needed. (1-4)
- b) Christians have a High Priest who took upon himself human nature.
- c) Christians have a High Priest who appeared on earth. (1-4)
- d) Christians have a High Priest who gave himself as a sacrifice to God for us.
- e) Christians have a High Priest who can approach God for us.

2. We, Believers can approach God through Christ Jesus without fear. (5)

- a) Christians can approach God in prayer and worship, depending upon Christ' merits
- b) Christians are accepted only in the Beloved. In all obedience and worship, we should keep close to God's word, which is the only and perfect standard.
- c) Christ is the substance and end of the law of righteousness for the believer.
- d) Christians have the promises of all spiritual blessings, and eternal life, revealed in the gospel, and made sure through Christ, the High Priest.

3. We, Believers have a better High Priest in Jesus the Christ. Why? Hebrews 8:6-8

- a) Christ has obtained a more excellent ministry. (6)
- b) Christ is the mediator of a better covenant. (7)
- c) Christ's better covenant was established upon better promises.(8)
- d) Christ transmits the covenant in a better way-in our minds and hearts. (9-11)

4. Jesus the Christ can change believers from the inside out. We can experience total character transformation if we:

- a) Allow His Word to fill their minds. His Word will open their eyes, and enlighten their understanding, to see the true, full, spiritual meaning thereof.
- b) Allow His word to dwell in their hearts; inwardly experience whatever God have commanded. (10)
- c) Allow God to be their God; their all-sufficient portion, and exceeding great reward. (10)
- d) Allow themselves to be His people. His treasure, beloved, loving, obedient children.

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Subject: Pursuing Holiness [Being Set Apart for God's Service] Hebrews 9:6 – 14

Proposition: Since God desires a holy, set apart place to dwell, believers should live in pursuit of holiness. We are His spiritual dwelling place.

The first covenant had ordinances of outward worship, and a worldly, visible, material sanctuary, or tabernacle. In books of Exodus, Leviticus and Hebrews, notice God's attention to the details. God gave Moses directions for building the tabernacle and warned him to follow the directions exactly (Exodus 25:9). No doubt one reason for such care was that the tabernacle was to be a symbol of the church, His holy dwelling place that was to come centuries later (Hebrews 8:1, 2; 10:1) (Hebrews 9:5).

I. The First Tabernacle Set Apart for God's Service. Details of the symbolism are not given in Scripture, but are generally taken to be as suggested below:

1. **The court** or yard about the tabernacle measured 150 feet by 75. It is taken as a symbol of the world.
2. **The altar of burnt offering** was seven and a half feet square and four and a half feet high. Sacrifices were burned upon it, symbolizing the sacrifice of Christ for the sins of the world.
3. **The laver** was a large basin where the priests washed their hands and feet before going into the Holy Place. It is a symbol of Christian baptism.
4. **The Holy Place**, 30 by 15 feet, symbolized the church separated from the world (the court) and entered by ways of Christ's sacrifice (the altar) and baptism (the laver).
5. **The table of shewbread**, on which twelve loaves were placed every week, was a symbol of the Lord's Supper.
6. **The candlestick**, more properly a lamp stand holding seven lamps, gave light for the Holy Place. Thus it was a symbol of God's Word, which enlightens the church.
7. **The altar of incense** provided a place where incense was burned. The sweet-smelling smoke ascended like the prayers of God's people.
8. **The veil** was a curtain between the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place. It symbolized the separation between heaven and the Christians on earth.
9. **The Most Holy Place**, perfect cube fifteen feet long, wide, and high, was a symbol of heaven, the particular place of God's presence.
10. **The ark of the covenant** was a wooden chest covered with gold and having a golden lid bearing two golden cherubim. The ark contained the Ten Commandments symbolizing God's government; a dish of manna, recalling God's providence; and Aaron's rod, a reminder of God's power among His people (Hebrews 9:4). Once a year the high priest sprinkled the top of the ark with blood, a symbol of Christ's blood by which we are cleansed.

II. The First Priesthood and the general foundation of these priests in the sanctuary:

1. The persons administering, the Priests only of the posterity of Aaron: All others were forbidden upon pain of excision.
2. They entered into holy place, but were to go no farther; they must not so much as look into the holy of holies; no, nor yet abide in the sanctuary when the high priest entered into the most holy place.
3. The time of this their entrance into the sanctuary to discharge their service, always; that is, every day, and at all times, as occasion did require.
4. The service itself, accomplishing the service of God; these services were either daily or weekly: Daily, were dressing the lamps, supplying them with holy oil, morning and evening; also the service of the golden altar, on which the priests burnt incense every day. The weekly service of the sanctuary was the changing of the shew-bread every Sabbath in the morning.
5. The high Priestly duties could be done by Aaron after he had atoned for his sin. The Holy of Holies was not open to all men, but only to Jews; and not to all Jews, but only to priests; and not to all priests, but to the high priest alone; and not even to him at all times, or indeed at any time, except upon one solitary day in the year.

III. The First Tabernacle and the First Priesthood were limited. (Hebrews 9: 8-10)

1. Only one man could enter seeking atonement.
2. Only entry per year was permitted' (6-8)
3. Only one solitary day in a year. (6-8)
4. Only sins for one year could be covered temporarily.(10)
5. They could not expiate sin, and consequently could not give the conscience peace. (9)

IV. The Final High Priest and His Perfect Sacrifice for All Time. Hebrews 9:11-14

1. Christ was a high priest of good things to come.
2. Christ built a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands. (11)
3. Christ with his own blood, entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. (12).
4. Christ' blood purges even the conscience of sin and guilt.
5. Christ's blood frees from dead works to serve the living God. (14)
6. Christ frees the believer from guilt and shame to live a holy life. Tit 2:12 "Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;"
7. The believer is free to pursue holiness and live holy. 1 Thess. 4:7; Eph. 1:4; Romans 6:19