

INTRODUCTION

Two Sundays ago Elder Dan Gaither taught from Hebrews 5:1-10, which introduces the key theme of Hebrews – namely, Jesus as our great high priest in the priestly order of Melchizedek. This is the theme on which the author will take us deeper in our understanding in subsequent chapters. Then last Sunday Elder Bruce Byers taught from Hebrews 5:11-14, where we are urged to grow deeper in our faith, feeding on “solid food” rather than just “milk.”

Today it is revealed what this “milk” is – the doctrines which make up the foundation of our faith. It is not that they are unimportant – they are critically so, as is milk to our early physical development. But the author wants us to “press on to maturity” (which is also a key theme). So before we “press on” in Hebrews to deeper matters and richer spiritual food, let us pause in our study to learn what are these essential and critical foundations of our faith. Let’s be sure that our faith’s foundation is strong, being well understood and secure in our belief.

THE BIBLICAL TEXT

Hebrews 6:1-3 *Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of instruction about washings and laying on of hands, and the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment. And this we will do, if God permits.*

So we observe that this “foundation” from which he desires to move on, involves six elements:

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| 1. “repentance from dead works” | REPENTANCE |
| 2. “faith toward God” | FAITH |
| 3. “instruction about washings” | WASHINGS |
| 4. “laying on of hands” | HANDS |
| 5. “the resurrection of the dead” | RESURRECTION |
| 6. “eternal judgment” | JUDGMENT |

1. **First, may I reiterate the essential nature of this foundation.** It is not that the author deems these six items elementary in that they are childish or unimportant. Rather, he deems them elementary in that they are foundational and should be well established in the fabric of the Christian, just as the “A-B-C’s” are foundational to most all other learning. It is not that he would dismiss the critical importance of repentance, faith, and the rest. Rather, he longs to take the Christian into deeper and richer spiritual territory, especially upon the theme of Christ as our great high priest, “connecting the dots” between the Old Testament sacrificial system and the New Testament teaching of “saved by grace.”
2. **Secondly, observe that these 6 foundational elements are given in pairs.** We see this from the “and” between the pairs of thought. Notes: “repentance ... AND faith ...”, “...washings AND laying on of hands”, “resurrection ... AND eternal judgment.”
 - a. The first pair speaks of what is PAST in our spiritual experience – turning from our sin (dead works) and applying faith in God to initiate our Christian relationship with God.
 - b. The second pair speaks of what is PRESENT in our spiritual experience – what might be called our “spiritual breathing.” We “breathe out” our daily sins in the washing of confession and we “breathe in” the forgiveness and provision of God as He puts His hand of blessing upon us.
 - c. The third pair speaks of what is FUTURE in our spiritual experience – our ultimate resurrection with Christ and the subsequent judgment to come. There are really two different judgments of which the Bible teaches, but more on that later.

3. **Thirdly, let’s view these six doctrinal elements as foundation world views.**

Rather than examine them merely as doctrinal truths of which we should be quite aware, let's view how each of them create for us a world view that in most cases is quite different from the world view of our contemporaries who don't know Christ as Lord and Master of life. As we do so, personally evaluate whether your world view is consistent with what these foundational doctrines teach. For some of you, this might be a time of revising and conforming your thinking to the way God wants you to view your world and relationship to it. Borrowing from the apostle Paul:

Romans 12:2 *And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.*

World view #1:

I. MAN IS BASICALLY SINFUL, IN NEED OF RESCUE ("repentance")

If you were asked "Is man basically good or evil?", how would you answer?

This is a "world view" issue, the answer to which will determine your world view.

For the Christian, man is either basically good, and just needs a little help from God, or man is basically evil and needs a complete "makeover" from God.

The temptation is to answer that man is basically good, because we find that people are basically good-natured, positive, loving, and possess a moral conscience of right and wrong. This is true, because all are created in the image of God and have the "stamp" of God or godliness on them. But it does not mean that they are basically good, or else they would not need to "repent" and would not need a Savior.

Remember the apostle Paul's words about the nature of man from Romans 3.

Romans 3:10-12 *There is none righteous, not even one. There is none who understands; there is none who seek for God. All have turned aside; together they have become useless. There is none who does good; there is not even one.*

And his description of "non-good" goes on even deeper, if you care to read it.

Bottom line, our world view must be that man is basically evil. That is what the foundational doctrine of repentance demands. Since the fall of Adam and Eve, all have been born with a sin nature. This is called "original sin" and is further explained in Romans 5:12 and following. When Paul says "There is none who does good, not even one" he means that even our seemingly good deeds are regarded by God as evil, or as the Hebrew writer calls them, as "dead works." The call of the Old Testament is "repent" and the first words of Jesus as he entered his ministry was "repent" and then he added "and believe." (Mark 1:15).

Now if I were asked "Is man basically good or evil?" I would reply that man has many qualities of good, since he is created in the image of God, who is the ultimate good. But I would continue to reply that because of the fall, all are born with a rebellious spirit and propensity for wrong choices. As it has been well-said: "You don't have to teach a baby to be ugly; you only have to teach a baby to be nice." History shows this to be true through the continual fall of civilizations, and observation of individuals shows this to be true in the universal nature of selfishness and inability to stay on a righteous path by self-effort. Man is basically evil, and needs REPENTANCE FROM DEAD WORKS, meaning agreeing with God that he is helpless and rebellious without divine intervention and needs divine help to turn from evil ways.

World view #2:

II. MAN IS DEPENDENT UPON DIVINE INTERVENTION ("faith")

After Jesus came into ministry calling for all to "repent" he added "and believe," going on to explain that this belief was believe in Himself as Savior and Lord.

Humanism seems to be the prevailing world view of most Americans: that is, the human spirit will prevail if given the freedom to do so. "You can do it" is the challenge given to our young. And though we certainly want to teach confidence and the importance of striving hard to achieve, we must be careful to not simultaneously and unwittingly teach a lack of dependence on God. A Christian world view must include a deep conviction that "I can do all things" but only "in Him who strengthens," (Philippians 4:13) meaning in dependence upon divine intervention.

The writer of Hebrews will go on to give us an entire chapter on the importance of faith (Hebrews 11) including the powerful truth:

Hebrews 11:6 *And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that His is a rewarder of Those who seek Him.*

World view #3:

III. MAN NEEDS A TOTAL MAKEOVER ("washings")

Jesus said it this way as He spoke with Nicodemus:

John 3:7 *"Do not be amazed that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'"*

Understand: Christianity is not a "crutch" or a "band-aid" or even a "major renovation." Rather, it is a complete makeover from the inside out. To use another analogy, it is the invasion of an alien being (God) taking over our very being, leaving us appearing the same, but having been completely transformed (for the good).

Paul spoke of this complete transformation in this descriptive way:

2 Corinthians 5:17 *Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.*

The Hebrews writer's use of "washings" might throw us off track in our thinking, but his is merely speaking of the well-known Jewish ceremony of being cleansed by water as symbol of being cleansed by God from the inside out. That he uses the plural of "washings" indicates that he is speaking about the ongoing, day-by-day, process of our confessing our sins before God and being washed or forgiven of those sins and made righteous once again. The apostle John speaks of this basic Christian principle:

1 John 1:9 *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

So, the "total makeover" that we need is not just a one time makeover from our sin (salvation) but a daily makeover of cleansing from our sins.

Most of our contemporaries believe in the world view that man is endowed with all that he needs to achieve a meaningful and satisfying life. The Christian worldview is altogether different. We believe that though we are endowed with amazing potential, we are flawed from birth by original sin and therefore need a complete, divine makeover from the inside out. This is what spawns our missionary spirit introduce others to the transforming power of Jesus Christ.

World view #4:

IV. MAN IS NOT AN ACCIDENT, BUT A PRODUCT OF DIVINE PROVISION ("hands")

"Laying on of hands" is seen Biblically in three occurrences: (1) the transfer of one's sin onto a sacrificial animal - which is not the apparent meaning here, (2) the bestowing of blessings and (3) the appointing to ministry - both of which seem to be the meaning intended.

So the author of Hebrews tells us that a foundational doctrine is that we are blessed and appointed by God, as if by the laying on of His hand upon our lives. Thus we are not a product of chance, left to fend for ourselves to be whatever we would choose to be in this life. Rather, we are blessed by God as His children and endowed with unique personality and gifts, each appointed to a special purpose to fulfill God's mission in this world.

"You can be whatever you want to be" may be a true challenge to our young, yet better that we

teach them that they must discover God's unique and wonderful purpose for them. Our world view is not that we carve our own destiny, but that God carves it perfectly for us, as we yield to Him. Our friends, families, careers, possessions, ministries are all a provision from Him and for Him.

World view #5:

V. MAN IS DESTINED TO EXIST BEYOND THIS LIFE ("resurrection")

Since this is true for all, this life matters and is a preparation for the life to come. Though many believe that this life is all there is, so "eat, drink and be merry" as Solomon once wrongly believed (Ecclesiastes 8:15), we must embrace the truth that all will be resurrected.

Acts 24:15 *Having a hope in God, which these men cherish themselves, that there shall certainly be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked.*

Our world view, therefore, must be that all will exist beyond this life – but some to eternal joys with God and others to everlasting punishment. This make our life here as a "training ground" or "boot camp" for the real life to follow. That is why our passion must be to point as many as possible to the salvation found in Jesus Christ. And that is why our greatest joy in life must be to serve and please the God of our eternal destiny.

World view #6:

VI. MAN WILL FACE JUDGMENT IN THE LIFE TO FOLLOW ("judgment")

Finally, we are reminded that there is a judgment coming for all. Though the Hebrew author does not here specify, the Bible teaches of two specific and independent judgments, and we must understand the distinction.

1. There will be a "**white throne judgment**" described in Revelation 20:11-15 which will be the separation of those who have their names written in the book of Life (Christians) from those who do not. It is also described as the separation of the "sheep" from the "goats." Again, this is why following Christ as Lord in this life is so critical.
2. There will be a "**seat of Christ judgment**" mentioned in 2 Corinthians 5:10. From the Greek, this is often referred to as the "Bema Judgment." This will be the judgment of Christians and the giving of reward, based upon the good or bad done as His servants. This should be a high motivation for we as believers to serve Him faithfully and fervently through this life of ours – for what we do for Jesus counts "big-time" in the hereafter.

2 Corinthians 5:10 *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.*

It is not hard to see that these 6 world views are radically different from the world view of our unsaved friends – and sadly, even different from that of some of our saved friends. I challenge us each to "transform our minds" to God's way of thinking.

Repentance – I am basically sinful, in need of rescue

Faith – I am dependent upon divine intervention

Washings – I need a total makeover

Hands - I am not an accident, but a product of divine provision

Resurrection – I am destined to exist beyond this life

Judgment – I will face judgment in the life to follow