

First Principles

Mike Connell



Audio Transcripts of Sunday Sermons

Smashwords Edition

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First Principles

The Foundational Principles of Christianity, according to Hebrews 6:1-3.

Jesus is saying we need to get off foundations and move into maturity, not laying again the foundation. Then he begins to describe the foundations, which are explained in depth through this seven-part teaching.

“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.”

[Repentance from Dead Works \(1 of 7\)](#) This is not talking about repentance from sin, but from living a self-centred life at the core of our being, a life lived out of duty, obligation, legalism, my efforts to be loved, needed, valued, feel good. The life of God flows out of a vital love relationship with God. He is the centre, not us. Our identity is with him. His life flows through a life that's yielded and open, and in love with God as a father.

[Faith towards God \(2 of 7\)](#) What is Faith? How would I know if I had it? How do I get it? Can it be grown and developed? How can I grow and develop it? Turn towards God to receive his love, receive identity in Him, receive positioning in Him, so you can bring forth good works, living works.

[Baptised into Christ, Baptism in Water \(3 of 7\)](#) A foundation of believing that causes you to step up to the reality of who Jesus says you are. I am immersed into something that I was not in before. I am a totally new person, connected to God vitally, and connected to the body of Christ. Water Baptism is my testimony to the world that to the spiritual powers, that old person died, I'm joined to the living God, the power of sin is broken. I'm a free man, there's a new person risen up, born again.

[Baptism in the Holy Spirit \(4 of 7\)](#) Immersion into the person, and power and presence of the Holy Spirit, so it lives around you, and is on you, and flows freely from within you. The entrance into a supernatural living.

[Laying on of Hands \(5 of 7\)](#) In the laying on of hands, in the spirit, there is a flow from one person to another. God has called you not just to experience Him, but to connect to people tangibly, and release what He has given you.

[Resurrection of the Dead \(6 of 7\)](#) There is a difference between a person being raised from the dead, to extend his life and then die, and the teaching of resurrection. Jesus was the first-fruits, the first-born to be resurrected from the dead, and appear to many in a resurrection body - immortal, incorruptible, able to vanish in and out, no longer constrained by the physical world. He was a pattern for all that is to follow. This teaching covers the first resurrection, 1000 year reign of Christ on earth, and the second resurrection. Which one will you be in?

[Eternal Judgment \(7 of 7\)](#) Sometimes we focus a lot on the grace of God, the goodness of God, the mercy of God we forget or overlook that there is another side, that God is also holy and He's just. His justice requires that He deal with how we've governed our life and what we've done in our life. All of you have an appointment to keep with this. There is no exception. Matt 16:27 I come and my reward is with me, to give to every man according to his work.

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Repentance from Dead Works (1 of 7)

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This is not talking about repentance from sin, but from living a self-centred life at the core of our being, a life lived out of duty, obligation, legalism, my efforts to be loved, needed, valued, feel good. The life of God flows out of a vital love relationship with God. He is the centre, not us. Our identity is with him. His life flows through a life that's yielded and open, and in love with God as a father.

[Prelude]

Open your Bibles with me in Hebrews 5:12, I want to begin a new series. Last week we shared with you about the parable of the unforgiving servant, and we saw how a person experienced the grace of God, came into what you'd call salvation type experience of the grace, the forgiveness, the blessing of God and then did not stay in that place of grace. By being unloving and judgemental to fellow believers in the house, he shifted himself out of being under the flow of grace, and ended in his own life under judgement and demonic torment. There's a tremendous principle to understand of the need for us to remain in the grace and the light of Jesus Christ, so we're going to do a series in this coming seven weeks called First Principles, or the foundational doctrine of Christ.

[Message]

Hebrews 5:7 - "Jesus, who in the days of His flesh, when He lived on the earth, He offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears, to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of

His godly fear. Though He was a Son (the Son of God), He learned obedience by the things He suffered, and having been made perfect, He became the author (or the originator or the one who brings a flow of salvation) of eternal salvation, to all them who obey Him. Called by God as a High Priest, according to the order of Melchizedek (so Jesus is a High Priest within a particular supernatural order called the order of Melchizedek), of whom we've a lot to say but hard to explain, since you've become dull of hearing."

In other words, Paul is saying: Jesus Himself was ushered into a priesthood of supernatural life and power. We want to talk to you more about that, but because of your immaturity, you can't handle the truth! That's virtually what he's saying: you're dull of hearing.

So now he starts to talk about spiritual immaturity. "Now by this time you've been Christians for many years, you ought to be teachers. You need someone again teaches you the first principles of the doctrine of God; you need milk and not solid food. For everyone who takes milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness. He is a babe." (and that's not kind of "babe" babe - this is a "baby" baby)

"...and solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. Therefore leaving the discussion of the doctrine or the first principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection". Jesus was made perfect. Jesus grew into that maturity.

He's saying: "we need to get off foundations and move into maturity, not laying again the foundation" - then he begins to describe the foundation: "repentance from dead works; faith towards God; the doctrine of baptisms; laying on of hands; of resurrection of the dead; of eternal judgement - and this we will do if God permits." What we will do: we will go on to maturity - IF God permits. It's possible God will not permit you to come to the fullness of what you're called to, unless the foundations are properly laid, so let's open our heart on this.

The key in this particular passage is the challenge of the apostle for us not to remain childish or baby, but to actually grow to maturity; and so this is about the first principles of Christ - the foundation of Christ. It's not just about Jesus Christ and what He's done, it's the foundations for us to become what God wants us to become. If these foundations are not laid properly in our lives, we will wrestle, struggle, we do the best we can; but never get to where God wants us to get to. This is why this is called "foundations".

So there are many things that are basic in the Christian life, so I might ask you what's basic to the Christian life? What would you say? Well you'd say: prayer; read your Bible; come to church; get fellowship - you'd say a whole lot of things. You notice none of them are mentioned there? So this is nothing to do with that - these are the foundations for building. It's about how your life is built, and you becoming all that God wants you to become. These must be put in there. These are not just a set of teachings. It's not just six steps and now I'm away. It's not that at all. It actually is a foundation.

You notice when a building is first being constructed, they lay a foundation. You don't see the foundation, but it carries the whole weight of the building. Now you never remove the foundation. It always remains there, and the stability of the building depends on the foundations being present, being strong, and being able to support what you're building. So what he's saying is: this doctrine of Christ, or the first principles of Christ, is a body of teaching on how to live your life in such a way, we can corporately become what God wants us to become. Christian life is never a single or alone life; it's always lived in community. It is what you call a "living foundation", so each part of this is something to be living inside you. It's something you live out in your daily life. It's not something - I heard that tape, I'll pass it on. This is something that needs to be operative continually in your life if you want to progress.

If any of these areas are not operative in your life, you can't progress. You'll be around a long time, but there's a huge difference between: being a 10 year old Christian; and a Christian who's had one year's experience 10 times - just repeated the same stuff. So you notice then, the first things are these are the foundations to Christ, the anointed life, the anointed one; and we know there is Jesus Christ who is the pattern, but it also refers to the body of Christ of which you and I are a part. That's the first thing.

Second thing is, it's foundation to your identity, and how you do your life with Jesus. It's foundational - the foundational substructure. Notice he calls it the First Principles. The word first comes from the word arché, from which we get principality. It's something which is the beginning. If this isn't there, you don't go any further. You just keep busy, but you don't go further.

Notice these first principles - the word 'principle' means: a foundation on which, or the beginning of something from which, everything else springs. Or putting it simply like this, it's your ABCs. If you don't learn your ABCs, then you remain illiterate. It doesn't matter how hard you try - and I'm sure you try real hard - but if you haven't learnt your ABCs, you experience a sequence of failures. You can't put your finger on what's wrong - it's not because you aren't trying; it's the foundations aren't there.

It's like learning your times tables. You know, one of the things we had to learn was our times tables. You just had to learn it. If it wasn't learnt, and it wasn't in you, then you could not proceed in maths. You'd get so far, you'd try the best, and you struggle as much as you can. No matter how well intentioned you are, no matter how much effort you put in, you just don't get anywhere. You just have a sequence of failures. Why? The foundations essential to going forward are just not there.

Now this happens with believers as well - if the foundations are not there, the consequence is immaturity. Notice what he says: "you are dull of hearing". You're not actually spiritually sensitive to the things God is saying. In fact, the Bible tells us that in the last days, people will want to hear teachings that tickles their ears, and makes them feel good - not teaching that forms Christ in them. God's plan is not you just get saved and go to heaven. God's plan is that His Son, and the nature of His Son, and His loving life, is formed in you. So the foundations are absolutely essential.

Notice it says that a person who hasn't got the foundations in them - the Bible calls them a babe. That word babe means: one who's so young, they can't talk properly - a spiritual babe. It doesn't mean they don't make sounds; it's just actually there's not a maturity, spiritually, around them. To be of full age means you lack nothing; you've actually been completed in the things God wants to build into your life.

Maturity has to do with being able to exercise your senses to discern good and evil; so a person who is growing in their Christian life - this is what they can do. They have developed their spiritual sensitivity, because their foundations are laid, and they can discern good and evil. Now of course you'll be thinking straight away: well I know good and evil... If someone gets drunk, that's evil; if someone gets sober, that's good. If someone steals, that's evil; if someone gives out, that's good. That's very true, all that's true, but that's not what it's referring to here. It's referring to something different to that.

What was the name of the tree that Adam and Eve ate from, that led them to substitute their relationship with God for something else? It was the tree of good and evil - so you need to compare this with the original - Paul's referring to that. What did they do? They substituted a relationship - a love relationship with God as a Father and provider; they substituted that, with knowledge about what is right and wrong. I'll show you exactly the nature of the fall, because if you don't understand what the fall is, you won't understand why this needs to be laid so strongly.

So to discern good and evil is very simply this: it's the spiritual capacity to tell what is the motivation of something; whether it flows with the life of the spirit, or whether it's just someone putting on a good. Is this real, and the life of God is in it; or is there something at the core of this, you can tell this is just someone really trying hard? In other words, it's the ability to discern what is religious, from what is the flow of the spirit. Many people come into a meeting, they can't even tell the flow of the spirit. Many people don't know how to live the life of the spirit.

If you don't know how to live the Life of the Spirit, you will be living out of the Tree of Knowledge of Good & Evil. God wants us, in this coming season, to grow inside - by putting foundations in us, and then learning how to engage, live in, and bring the life of the Holy Spirit into our daily life - but there has to be some foundational things put in.

Notice now it describes the foundations - it gives an overview, and it describes six of them. The first one is repentance from dead works. Notice it doesn't say there: repentance from sin. Most people when they read it read that - repentance from sin. They think: that's for a sinner; that's someone who's just come into Jesus. No, this is a foundation to be a believer. It's something you have to live in. Repentance from Dead Works - we're going to look at that today, and then: Faith towards God.

So repentance from dead works is, turning away from a life which is: I will do it; it's my way; I will do this - it's out of the will, it's out of the flesh. It actually doesn't have the life of God in it. It's a life lived just out of yourself, trying to do the best you can; and you turn to God - faith towards God is to turn towards God, to receive His love, receive identity in Him, receive positioning in Him, so you can bring forth good works, living works. So it's not stopping doing things, it's actually repenting from the inner motivation of wrong things.

The third is Doctrine of Baptism, which is about separating your life from worldly value systems, a world system governed by the devil, a life of sin and independence of God; and being a part of - connected to God vitally, and connected to the body of Christ; and flowing in a new life, community life, where you love people and you share your life with people.

The fourth one is the Laying on of Hands, which is the impartation by people who are anointed - five-fold ministry, elders - into your life, to active and impart giftings, to get you up and going, to help you go where you need to go. That's part of body life.

The next one is the Resurrection of the Dead – there are many aspects to it, but we'll just keep it at this level - It's about how to flow in resurrection power. You notice the testimony Graham gave today, the feeling of resurrection power coming into his body, caused death to be restrained; and he lived when he should have died - Resurrection power.

Finally, Eternal Judgements, which means a number of things, but one thing it includes is judging the things which are not originated in the spirit of God; and that brings us back to Repentance from Dead Works.

So this is a living foundation. There's a lot in it, but I want to try and keep it down to something you can apply in your life. So the first thing then is to recognise that this is about setting you up to: live and flow in the life of the spirit; to become connected to God and to people; and to show what God is like. That's what Jesus came to do - to reveal God, reveal His love, reveal His nature, reveal His power. So it's about walking in a new identity.

If you don't get established in who you are in Jesus Christ, what you'll do is you'll just try hard to be a good Christian, and you'll find it's incredibly frustrating because the power isn't there, so this is foundational. Before we move on, I want you to have a look just at the fall of man, Genesis 3, and see why Repentance from Dead Works is so necessary.

Genesis 3 – “Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field the Lord God had made.” Serpent is an embodiment, a physical embodiment of Satan. “And he said to the woman: Has God said you shall not eat every tree of the garden? And the woman said to the serpent: we can eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden; but not the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden, which God said: you shall not eat it, you shall not touch it, lest you die. Then the serpent said to the woman: you shall not surely die. God knows in the day you eat it, your eyes will be opened. You'll be like God. You'll know good and evil.”

Notice – “You will be like God”. He didn't tell them that there was a down side to all of that. “so when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, it was pleasing to the eyes, desirable to make one wise, she took the fruit and ate, and gave it to her husband with her; then the eyes of them were opened, and they knew they were naked. They sewed fig leaves together, made coverings, and when they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, they hid from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.”

God said to Adam and Eve, He called them and said: “where are you?” “I heard your voice in the garden. I was afraid because I was naked, and I hid myself.” Now before Adam and Eve fell, you have to understand this: they walked in love and in unity with God, and in love and in unity with one another. That's how it all started - it started with love and connection - God was joined to them. The spirit of God was joined to them, they were clothed in the glory of God. Whatever they did, they enjoyed absolute peace and security, unbroken fellowship with God. What they chose to do was this: they rejected their Father's love. They rejected the love God has; because if we love Him, we'll do what He says.

They rejected God's love; they rejected Him. They sinned against love, and against relationship.

Here's something people don't think. We think of sin: you do something bad. Actually when we sin, we sin against love, we sin against relationship. Someone is always affected by our sin - and so they rejected the Father's love. Now what happened as a consequence of this, they lost a number of things - the Bible says they “fell”. What does that mean, they fell? Here's what they lost: they lost something they walked in.

The first thing is, they lost their relationship with their Father. In other words, they had no relationship with the Father. That left them disconnected from a Father, without identity; without a Father to father them, they had to father themselves - they became spiritual orphans in the world. That's the first thing that happened - they were cut off from

the love of God. Now if you're cut off from the love of God, guess what? You've got to find it somewhere else, because you're designed for love. People will always find love, and value, and identity somewhere.

Second thing is, they lost their identity. They're no longer a child of God - He is not owning-up to them, He's no longer their Father. They're separated from their Father. Now they have no identity, and when a person's got no identity, you know what happens? They feel insecure; they feel threatened; they feel defensive; they feel afraid; they feel ashamed.

You know what the question is: who am I? The question people ask everywhere - Who am I? People don't know who they are, because they define their identity out of what's around them, and who they're connected to, rather than what God says we are.

So he lost his identity; and the next thing they lost was the supernatural life of God that kept them alive. So eventually they were going to get sick, they're going to grow old and die. What a tremendous loss - embracing the knowledge of good and evil, but letting go their Father, their relationship with God as Father. Their lives were dramatically transformed; so what happened inside them? A number of things happened...

The first thing you notice is: emotional turmoil - fear, grief, guilt, shame, pain. You notice they were so emotionally-numbed that God actually had to push them out of the garden.

What happened then? What came into the heart of man is: I need to be someone; and if I need to be someone, I'm going to have to do something, to be someone. I want to be someone - you know what - I'll get a lot of money, then I'll be someone. No matter how much money you get, you're still not someone, because you're separated from your source, where you came from.

I know what I'll do, I'll get a lot of possessions, and I'll get cars and boats and houses - and I'll get all these things - so there's an ambition to get more and more things, but people still aren't happy. Why? They still don't know who they are, because you're not defined by your money, and you're not defined by your possessions.

Ok, I need to get a position. I'll work hard, and I'll get to the top of this or the top of that or top of the school, top of the community, top of the government or I'll get to the top of the church. But all the same, right inside, there's still a desire that can't be quenched, because even if you get all those things, it still doesn't give you the answer.

Well then, I'll try hard to be accepted in love. I'll really work on my relationships. I'll do all I can - well it's still not going to solve the problem, the problem's far deeper than that.

Well I know what - I'll work out what's good for me - and so hence man began to live this way. This is how we define life: if it's good for me, it's good. If it's not good for me, it's not good. That's how far we've fallen. That's how self-centred we are; and so we come to church: if it's good for me, I like it. If it's not good for me, and I don't like it, then I won't accept it. We're living from a totally wrong centre.

Man became his own centre, not God; so this issue of Turning from Dead Works is an issue of shifting your centre.

So what happens if you become a Christian? Well, you give your life to Jesus Christ; and the spirit of God comes into you. Now the dilemma is this: you have to leave the old centre. You have to leave the old self-centred life. Why do you have to leave that? Because it doesn't work! The spirit of God, and the life of God, does not flow through a life that is self-centred; it flows through a life that's yielded and open and in love with God as a father.

A classic example of this is the Prodigal Son. Remember the Prodigal Son left the home, and he abandoned the Father's love, and went out and he got broken, he got attached to all kinds of things; but here's the thing: he repented of his lifestyle, came back, and received a gift! He didn't have to do anything - just he turned, he repented; and the Father just shouts, he embraced him and hugged him, restored him, gave him what he never deserved. That's grace operating! This is the life of God.

How did he get it? He just repented; and he could hardly even believe all the things that God had for him, when he let go the substitutes, and attached back to his father.

The older son is representative of religious people - people who become religious. What do we mean by religion? Religion is your efforts to get yourself right with God, your efforts to become righteous, and better than others. So what was going on in the elder son's life was something like this: he was a hard worker. He tried to live a perfect life, but you know what? You can't be perfect trying to live a perfect life, because you always blow it somewhere! So he tried so hard, trying so hard to please his father, trying so hard to get approval, so hard to get acceptance - but it's all about him working.

The father said to him: this was always available as a gift to you - you didn't have to do all the work; but he just got working so hard, trying to be good; and the result was this happened inside him: he then looked down on the brother and judged him. He despised someone who was less than him. He worked to be superior, he tried to be better than the other, he tried to present himself as being good; but actually it was all his own works, his own rights, his own struggling and driving. He was a driven man. He was striving to get acceptance and love - and it never came to him. Then, when he saw what grace looks like, instead of saying: I want some of that; he refused to repent. Now you've got to remember this: this is a reference to the Pharisees of Jesus day, who: tithed, went to church, did well, kept laws, looked scrupulous on the outside - but it didn't change the heart.

They were watching Jesus. You know what they did? They were the ones who complained when they saw grace. Why did they complain when they saw grace? They did not have the foundations of Christ in them. They were religious. It is very easy to become an elder brother, very easy to become religious; and so what they did, they needed to be seen. Why? Because it's no good doing something like praying, unless you're seen. They used to give - they'd be seen. Why? There's no use giving, unless someone sees you; because I mean, that's what it's all about. They fast - well we've got to let people know we're fasting - and so the whole lifestyle was: what will people think of me? It was governed by the fear of man, and pride, which is at its root.

This is what religion looks like. Religion can't help people. It doesn't matter how strict the religious life is, it's a life of bondage. Why? Because this is not how the supernatural life comes. That is what you've got to repent of. That is what needs to be removed out of life.

What did he end up like? He ended up resentful, judgemental, rejected, critical of his father, critical of his brother, refusing to enter in, and actually quite angry at his father's graciousness.

The life of a religious person is in conflict and contention with the life of Christ. Wherever people flow in the life of Christ, there will be contention, and arguments, and opposition from people who do not have the life of Christ, who are in a place of religion, and separated from the revelation of God's love.

So we see here in that story of the Prodigal Son, the elder brother was totally opposed to the spirit of grace. I tell you what shows up in your heart. What's shown in our heart is when God shows goodness to someone else - someone else gets the promotion, someone else gets blessed, someone else gets something happen good to them - what's in our heart flushes up to the surface. Churches are so struggling with people like the elder brother, thinking: if I'm just good enough, or I just get this next key, I'll get my breakthrough. If I just fast enough, God will be impressed, and He'll move on my behalf; and so we get into a do, do, do, work, strive, struggle - no rest, no peace, and no flow of life.

Now this is not what Jesus came to give us. You see, this is the consequence of being out of connection, out of relationship - so what has Jesus done for us? Let me just give it quickly, and then you'll see what you've got to break free of. This is what Jesus did. It tells us very clearly in Colossians, Chapter 2, it says: He took away every failure, every fault, the list of everything tipped against us, everything that we failed, and everything we could fail, and He removed it, took it to the cross, declared it cancelled, and broke the power of the devil. Every curse you could be under, He took it to the cross. Galatians 3:13, He broke the power of cursings. Why? So you could be blessed. How do you get blessed? Definitely not by working hard; definitely not by trying to do something else.

In Ephesians, Chapter 2, it says: "Now we are seated with Him, already in a spirit dimension, already in the place of blessing." I hear people pray: "God bless me." No, He has already blessed you - it says in Ephesians 1. God has blessed us already, with all the blessings. How did you get blessed, and where are the blessings, and how can I get them? "You are blessed with every blessing in heavenly places that's in the realm of the spirit, in union with Christ."

The key is this: that when you came and repented of struggling, striving, pain, all kinds of issues, when you turn to the Lord Jesus Christ and trust Him, His spirit comes into you.

Now this is what happens: you become a new person. You are not someone who has to try to be better - you are already better. You don't have to try to find God as your Father, He already now is your Father. You don't have to try to be blessed, you are blessed, because of your position and your union. So what Jesus came for, was to offer us His spirit in us, united with Him. We are already in the place of blessing - it's just a matter of flowing in that life, so it is released.

So now why do I pray? Why? Because I'm already blessed, and I want fellowship with my Father, to birth His things into the earth.

Why do I fast? Why? Not to get something from God, but because I want to be sensitive to my Father, so His life can flow unhindered, and I can hear clearly from Him.

Why do I enter into spiritual warfare? Because my Father has obtained freedom for me now, and I will stand in that place of victory, not fighting the devil for the victory, but standing decreeing where I am in Christ, who I am in Christ, what I have in Christ. I will step into that position with faith in my heart!

What an amazing thing. We already have acceptance, we have forgiveness, we have redemption - we have all these things. How do we have them? Here's how we have them: they're all in Christ. They're all in Jesus, the anointed one - I must abandon trying to work hard to get it. This is the problem before I become a Christian. Now when I become a Christian, this is what happens: the spirit of God comes into me, and I am - 2 Corinthians it tells us - one spirit with the Lord. Wherever I go, the spirit of the Lord is there. Now I don't have to bring anything down from heaven - I'm already in heaven. I don't have to try to make God bless me, I am already blessed.

How am I blessed? Well, the blessings come here with Him, with Christ, the anointed one. The anointing of Christ within me, the presence of Christ within me, His spirit within me, is what brings me into a life of blessing. What I need is not to try and now behave, and perform, and do more; try to look good for your sake - not at all.

I need to remain connected here, because if I separate, and I try now to work hard, I come under the law. If I'm under the law, the grace and anointing doesn't work for me anymore. If you're under law, you have fallen from grace. Grace no longer works and empowers your life. Now you are under guilt, self-centredness, and struggle. You've got to cover-up; you've got to pretend you're something you're not; you've got to try hard - and that's where many people end up; but if I stay in Christ, and the key to my life on the earth is being in Him, now everywhere I go, Christ is with me.

I need to meditate, dwell in, and live out of who I am in Him. I am a blessed person. I'm a loved person. I'm an accepted person. I'm a redeemed person. I'm a forgiven person in Him, connected to Him.

Now here's where the Dead Works issue comes up. Dead works are works which flow out of my own efforts, and my own struggles, to be: loved, needed, valued, feel good. Whenever I feel a bit ashamed, or blamed, any kind of thing like that, and I start to try and cover up, and do good works, and try harder, then I remove myself from the life of grace. So how do I abide in Christ? How can I get His life to flow through me? How can I live in the flow of blessing? How can I live in the flow of the anointing? I'm glad you asked!

Here's the first thing you need to do: you need to repent of dead works. That word 'dead' is the word 'necron' - a lifeless corpse, something that's got absolutely no life in it. Dead works means doing things out of guilt, obligation, duty, fear, shame, all kinds of stuff; trying desperately to be loved. You notice when you do that, you have moved yourself from Christ, and you're now self-centred, trying hard. What you need to do is repent, which means turn your - switch it off! Turn away from it; I'm not going to try to make myself any better.

Now if I will abandon trying to do all that stuff, trying to be noticed, trying to be important, trying to get people to love me, trying to get position in the church, trying to get some kind of title, role, rank, some kind of anointing, some kind of special deal - if I would just stop all that nonsense called Dead Works, and just rest, that everything I need in my life right now, where I'm at is in Christ, I can relax and start to enjoy my life, and enter the Rest of Faith, where I can live my life at peace, instead of being anxious, worried, stressed.

Worried about what will they think? It doesn't matter what they think - it's what He thinks. It's what Christ thinks. It's about being connected to Him; so Repentance from Dead Works is the first step in separating from that old self-centred life - where it's all up to you, and you've got to try harder.

When people come into a church, this is what happens: they learn keys and principles. If you'll do 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 - you'll be blessed! I know what I need to do, but I'm stuck on #1, so couldn't remember the other four - I wasn't quick enough, didn't get them down. So what happens is: if we don't watch, we move from grace - the undeserved flow of God's life - and end up under the law.

Now how does this really show up? It shows up in how you relate to other people! It shows up in how, particularly, you relate to the body of Christ. If you realise that all your life is in Him, in Christ, then you begin to catch His heart, and you realise He's in others as well. If I'm going to walk with Jesus, the anointed one, and let His life flow in me, I've got to respect and honour and value those in His body who also carry the same anointing - I've got to learn how to love people. I've got to learn how to value people. I've got to learn how to let His life flow through me; and the first step is just repenting, turning from your dead works, so then you can get into a place of faith. Now I'll talk about faith in the next session.

For most, faith means: also trying hard, trying hard to believe. What they're really saying is: I'm still stuck here in my dead works, trying hard to be a better person, hoping God will do something. Unfortunately, He doesn't do it for me - He does it for Ian, or someone else like that. Do you understand?

It's actually about a divine life flow, a divine life flow. Repentance from dead works has to be established as a way of life. It is the first foundational keys to making it possible for you to engage the life of Christ.

Ask the Holy Spirit to show you where you're living out of duty, obligation, legalism; where you do things out of a wrong motive, a wrong attitude, resentful, guilty, shame-based, fear-based, all that kind of stuff. Ask God to show you where that is; and why don't you say: God, at the centre of that activity, it's all about me, and what I get out of it. Lord, I open my heart to the cross, to change - it's the cross, and what Jesus did.

[Closing Prayer]

Father, we just thank you for the wonderful grace that is extended to us in Jesus Christ. How amazing is that grace - that accepts us, that loves us, that redeems us. Oh Father, what a great heart of love. It is hard for us, who work so hard, to comprehend how much you love us; but we see in the Prodigal Son who deserved nothing, but when he came with a repentant heart to be reconnected with his father, he didn't have to do any great thing. You just reached your arms around him, and loved him and welcomed him, celebrated him, wept over him, dressed him in fine clothes, restored him to sonship and authority - and he didn't deserve it.

Oh my, we don't deserve grace, but You're empowerment to live is what enables us to change. Father, right now in these next few moments, speak into our hearts. Is there any area where we're walking in dead works - self-centred, worried about what people think, looking after ourselves, covering up who we really are, concealing the reality of an inner life that isn't going so well; desperately trying to look good, struggling with guilt and shame - all these things. Lord, today show us, so we can repent and turn from them. Father, Father, thank you for your love.

Is there any person here who's never made the first step of a changed life, which is to receive Jesus Christ? You can feel the love of God just touching you, you can feel the spirit of God moving around your heart. God is reaching out to you, to bring you back to Himself. You're a child without Father, and He wants to bring you back into His family. The answer to that is found very simply, and Jesus said: "whoever received Him, whoever believed on Him, whoever opened their life to make Him welcome, He gave the right and privilege to become a child of God."

It's something happens in a moment - when you receive Christ, the Spirit of God enters your heart. I'd love you to pray with me right now this simple prayer, a prayer to change your heart and change your life. I'd like you to follow me this prayer...

Father in heaven, I come to you in Jesus' name. Thank you for loving me. Thank you for sending Jesus to die on the cross for my sins. Today I turn away from sin and dead works, struggling to be good enough. I turn to you the living God. Jesus, I receive you into my heart and life. I ask you to forgive me. I ask you to be my saviour. By faith today I receive you as my saviour. I give my life to you, and I thank you for your spirit coming into my heart right now, making me clean, making me different. Today Lord Jesus Christ I belong to You. Amen.

Summary Notes

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1. Introduction

Heb. 5:12 – 6:3 “Let us go on to perfection” to maturity, to the fullness of God’s purpose.

Context of this passage = going on to perfection, following the example of Jesus Christ.

First principles = foundation of “Christ” – The Anointed One.

Many things that are basic to Christian life not mentioned here e.g. prayer, fasting and giving.

List of 6x principles – these are a foundation for building not just set of teachings.

- not just a set of steps to take – six living foundations.

Called 1st Principles of Christ because they establish and form Life of Christ within us.

They are foundational to the new way of being and living.

Foundation = NT 2310 = substructure that supports a building.

First = NT 746 = Arche = 1st in a series, principal.

Principles = NT 4747 The first thing from which others in a series arise;

e.g. military rank.

= The fundamentals, the ABC’s, the “Times Tables”.

Without the Foundations – consequence is spiritual immaturity

Vs 12 “... you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the doctrine of God”

Babe = NT 3516 = Nepios = babe without the power of speech – one needing milk.

Full age = NT 5046 = Teleios = full grown son, lacking nothing for completion.

Maturity = have constantly exercised their spiritual senses and growing.

Discern good and evil = able to see through to the root (love)

= identify what flows from Spirit of God and what flows from law.

= Identify what is Holy Spirit directed and what is self centred.

2. Overview of First Principles

Heb 6:1 – 3 “... Not laying again the foundation”

(i) Repentance from Dead Works - Turning from self centred life, efforts to be righteous.

(ii) Faith towards God – Turning to God, receive His love and righteousness, and identity.

(iii) Doctrine of Baptisms – separation from sin and immersion to Life in the Spirit

(iv) Laying on of hands – impartation of grace, gifts, callings to fulfil destiny.

(v) Resurrection of the dead – flowing in the life of the Spirit.

(vi) Eternal Judgement – judging all that is not of the Life of the Spirit.

This is about receiving and flowing in the love and life of the Holy Spirit.

It is about the exchange of our life for His supernatural life.

It is about walking in our new identity and position as a child of God.

It is foundational – it under girds and supports the Kingdom Life of the Holy Spirit.

It is a way of life not a series of steps.

3. The Fall of Man

Gen 3:1-10 “You shall be as God” – knowing good and evil.

Adam and Even walked in love and unity with God and with one another.

They rejected the Father’s Love – sinned against love and relationship.

What was Lost in the Fall

They fell from a relationship and life where God was the Centre.

(i) They lost their love relationship with God as their Father and with one another. Eph. 4:18.

- Cut off from the life and love of God – man was now orphaned, self centred.

(ii) They lost their identity as a child of God who clothed and gave identity.

- Adam was naked, ashamed, self conscious, self centred, insecure.

- Lost! Who am I?

(iii) They lost the supernatural life of God that sustained them, Life of the Spirit.

What they experienced as a result of the Fall

Emotional turmoil – guilt, shame, fear.

Ambition to be someone by doing, to clothe nakedness.

Constant identity crisis – concealing true identity (fig leaves).

Trying to be accepted, loved, and approved of by doing.

Struggling to control their personal life and circumstances.

Defining good and evil from self centre – what is good for me, not good for me.

Under law - trying hard to be good enough, be righteous.

Religious – doing good works to try and establish own righteousness.

4. Example of Older Brother

Lk.15:25 – 3 “He was angry and would not go in”

Seeing the younger brother experience grace exposed his fallen condition.

Elder brother: Loyal, faithful, hardworking, good – profess to love his father.

Hidden Motivation

Serve to find identity in works.

Need to be seen and recognised.

Bitterly disappointed and striving.

Looking for love, identity in works.

Hidden Sins of his heart
Striving Resentment/Anger
Pride Striving for superiority
Jealousy Cold and unloving
Self rights Rather be right than have relationships
Judgemental Opposed to Christ to spirit of grace
He needed to repent of Dead Works.

5. What Christ Has Done for Us

(i) Removed the list of failures and disempowered evil spirits. (Col. 2:14-15)
(ii) Broke the power of cursing to release blessing of Holy Spirit. (Gal 3:13-14)
(iii) Raised us up to be united with Him in Heaven. (Eph.2:5-6)
(iv) Blessed us, made us without blame, accepted, redeemed, forever. (Eph.1:3-5)
All of this is a free gift – cannot be earned – by grace through faith.
Gal 5:4 If we do not rely on grace – its power is made to vanish.
Repent of Dead Works before faith can become effective.
Repent = total change of mind and heart.
Dead = 3498 = Nekros = a corpse, lacking in vitality, life, power.
Activities which are not moved with love and power of the Holy Spirit.
Activities filled with self centred agenda.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What are the “first” or “elementary” principles of Christ in Hebrews 6: 1-3?

Why is an understanding of these essential? Hebrews 5: 12-13

(They are foundational to a new way of being and living and they establish and form the Life of Christ within us)

Maturity = full grown son; lacking nothing for completion.
= have constantly exercised their spiritual senses and growing.
= discerns good and evil. i.e
1. able to see through to the root.
2. able to identify what flows from the Spirit of God and what flows from law.
3. able to identify what is Holy Spirit directed and what is self directed.

How can we discern what flows from the Spirit of God and what flows from law?
e.g. in our thought life, attitudes, beliefs, impressions, feelings, inner reactions or responses, behaviours.

How can we identify what is Holy Spirit directed and what is self directed?
What would be the fruit or effect that each would produce in our lives and the lives of those we influence?

Can you share from your own experience a time where you were able to discern that you were Holy Spirit directed and a time where you were directed by law or self?

What did you experience internally? (Law/self = condemnation, shame, insecurity, fear, striving, dryness, depression, jealousy, judgemental/critical attitude, anger, resentment, cold and unloving, control, focused on your rights, feeling that you've got to meet certain standards to be right with God and to attain His blessings and provision.)

(Holy Spirit = flow of love, peace, joy, energy and life, enthusiasm, inner security and strength, rest, assurance, confidence (it's going to be ok) trust, sense of intimacy with the Lord, vitality and power.)

What was the outcome?
What was the impact on those around you?

Do your motivations and actions flow more often out of a fear - base or a faith / love - base?

Review in the notes “What Christ Has Done For Us.”

THE FINISHED WORK OF JESUS CHRIST AT CALVARY IS THE BASIS UPON WHICH YOU RECEIVE FROM GOD NOT YOUR PERFORMANCE OR HOW GOOD YOU ARE!

What has the Holy Spirit been speaking to about in this session?
Has He helped you identify dead works within your life?
Where do you need to repent (change your way of thinking) in order to believe God?

Faith towards God (2 of 7)

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What is Faith? How would I know if I had it? How do I get it? Can it be grown and developed? How can I grow and develop it? Turn towards God to receive his love, receive identity in Him, receive positioning in Him, so you can bring forth good works, living works.

[Review: Dead Works]

We're going to just open up our Bible at Hebrews 6. We looked at this whole area of the foundational principles, and we saw that for any building, you have to have a foundation. If the foundation is weak, the building will not be strong.

Hebrews 6:1 "Now leaving the discussion of the foundational principles of Christ, let us go onto maturity (or to the fullness of God's plan), not laying again the foundation of: repentance from dead works; faith towards God; the doctrine of baptisms; of laying on of hands; of resurrection of the dead; and of eternal judgement - this we will do if God permits"

So Paul (or the author) is talking about us going on in the purpose of God: "let us go on"; but he also says: it's impossible to do it, if you haven't got a strong foundation built in your life. So he said: the result of not going on is - people remain immature. They remain babies, when God wants us actually to grow. So as we start this, I want to first of all just give the big picture of what this about.

The Bible tells us Jesus came with a particular mission: He came to reveal what God is like; He came to reveal the Father, and the heart of God as a Father. Throughout history, people have never known God as a Father. They had various ideas about God, revelations of God, but this was the first time anyone had brought a message that God is a Father, and we can be born again into His family. We can be joined into Him, and have His life come into us. We can have a relationship with God as a loving Father. So the Bible says: Jesus was the express image of the invisible God.

He said to His disciples: "If you've seen Me, you have seen the Father". So if we want to see what God is like, as a Father, it's all wrapped up in Jesus Christ, and how He connected with people, how He loved people, and in His day He totally upturned the religious works of the day. So Jesus came to invite you and me into a similar relationship.

In one part He said that where I am, the relationship that I have with my Father, I want you to be there also. Now just think about that for a moment. Right through Jesus' ministry He said: I do the things that the Father has shown me to do; I do the things I see the Father doing. He said: the words I speak are what the Father has given me. When everyone was about to leave Him, He said: I'm not alone - the Father is with me.

Jesus lived His life out of an intimate love relationship with God, His Father; and He said in John 14:1 "Now I go to prepare a place for you". So just before Jesus left the earth, He said: I'm going to prepare for you a place of relationship, identical to mine; that where I am, the relationship I have, you can have that also. Now people know the words of that, but seldom experience the reality of what it is to walk day by day feeling, sensing the love of God as your Father, embracing you, encouraging you, valuing you, guiding you, revealing His love to you. It's out of this source that we can have a secure life.

We saw last session that if we don't find our centre in God, we'll find something else as a substitute. We'll find money, but money will never satisfy. We'll look for properties and possessions, but they never satisfy. We look for position and power, but they never satisfy; and people who seek those things are really seeking something that cannot be found there. Sometimes people seek to find fulfilment of these needs in their life through religion. Religion is just trying hard to gain acceptance with God, and acceptance by people. It cannot change a person, in fact it's just a heavy burden.

So Jesus made it very clear: He's called us to come into relationship - not into doing lots of things, but into experiencing a love relationship with God, out of which our life is transformed. That's what He offers, so these foundations are the foundations of that relationship.

Notice it doesn't talk about prayer, doesn't talk about fasting, doesn't talk about Bible reading. It's talking about foundations in your belief system. The Bible says that what you believe in your heart, that's the way your life will go. So out of the abundance of your heart, that's where your life flows. Your life flows out of what you really believe; so if you come to church, but in your heart you still believe there's something desperately wrong with you, you will never enjoy intimacy with God; because as soon as you try to become intimate with God, the message of your heart, there

is something wrong with me, something not acceptable about me, will come up. The shame of your past activities will come up, and there will be a wall between you, and being intimate with God.

So the tendency for church people is to try to work harder, to be good enough to experience the love of God. We cover over, that we have no real relationship with God, by just trying to do the right things - this is what Jesus did not call us to. Notice this: we're called not only to experience that; we're also called to grow.

Now, in the Bible it talks about this. It says in 1 John, it talks about children, while God has forgiven your sins. Then it talks about spiritual young men, you're strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you've overcome the devil. That means they're in a place now they've grown, matured. They're not having struggles with temptations. They've grown - and then He says: Fathers, you know Him, who's from the beginning.

So the Bible lays out stages or phases of growth. We could be a spiritual child, and it doesn't matter how long you've been a Christian. You could be a spiritual child, childish, continually wrestling with failures, wrestling with shame, wrestling with guilt, wrestling with unforgiveness, wrestling with tormenting thoughts. That is child stuff.

If you're a young man, then you've learned how to confront those with the word of God. You become established in who you are in God, you become strong in the word of God, strong in spirit. Now the devil's not a problem for you. You're not worried about attacks from the devil. You've actually learned how to recognise them and subdue them.

Then you're called to grow from there to become a father. A father is one who knows what God is like, as a Father, and is able to reveal that love to people in such a way their lives are attracted, and they are blessed, and benefit from it. Jesus was a spiritual father to the disciples. Why was He like that? Because He could reveal the love of God, and the nature of God to them.

If we're going to grow to maturity, it's not going to be automatic. We have to lay foundations, and the first foundation we saw was Repenting, or turning from lifeless activities driven by guilt, fear, shame, desire to please, desire to impress, desire to be something. All of those kinds of things - and church is full of it. Society's full of people struggling with lifeless activities. When you get into some situations, you'll notice how dead the atmosphere is - there's no life in it. People are being polite and correct, but you don't feel authentic love flowing - you feel there's something missing there.

You go to some families, and they might be polite and everything's nice together, but you feel there's no bonding of love. There's something missing in the middle of it. It is the love of God flowing, it's the life of the spirit of God, so we're called to repent from dead works. In Hebrews 9, Verse 14, it says: "Now the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses you". You need to be clean from dead works. Cleanse your conscience from dead works, to serve the living God.

Notice this: the first thing is, God wants us to be cleaned up from all the dead, lifeless, barren activities, the frustrating things, that never caused us to feel love, or to have an identity; and to instead connect with God, and the overflow is such that now we're serving God, our life is an abundance of activity and vitality.

It's not we just stop doing stuff. There's a change on the inside, in the core motivation of why we're doing it. If we're not secure in who we are, that: I am my Father's child, I'm a child of God, I've come from God and I'm going to God, I have an eternity with Him, I have a destiny on the earth - if we are not secure that we're loved by God, we will then do things to try and meet the insecurity.

We will try to act or do things that cause us to feel good; so some people are very generous people, and they give and they give and they give and they do all kinds of things, all sorts of things. But the Bible says: if you do lots of things, but don't have love, what profit is it all? It's actually driven out of a motivation to feel good about yourself. What God is wanting is to change us on the inside, so we experience love, and love flows naturally.

When people are living in dead works, they tend to relate to people on the basis of: if you can help me get what I want to get, then you can be my friend. I see you're quite a wealthy person - you can help me get what I want - I'll be your friend. But you - well no not you. No, no. You come from Flaxmere - but this is the kind of thinking that goes on - you know that! That's called partiality, where we divide the world up - people that can help us get somewhere; and people that can't help us get anywhere - now that is full of dead works.

What God is looking for is to so change us, so that His love and His nature flows out, and it's natural to love people. That's why one of the first things He does - and you'll see this in the progression of these - is after we become connected to God and experience His love, He wants us to put us in a family, where we can be immersed in a family, and learn how to grow up in love, and learn how to represent Him properly - which is the remainder of the teachings in this.

So God wants us to then serve Him, but it's a serving that's a joy! That's not something that's a burden. It's something joyful - it flows out because you're in love with Him, and you get up and you talk with Him, and you begin to experience His love, and out of that there's an overflow in your life.

So we're called to turn from Dead Works, and turn instead and replace them with something called Faith towards God. We turn away from activities which are dependent on our own effort and energy, which tire you out, get you drained, frustrated; and we become like the older brother, resentful because we're not getting what we think we should get. A lot of people burn out. Burn outs are often because of a lot of dead works, wrong motivations; but if we repent of those, and now we come into Faith in the living God, our life will begin to flourish, and something flows out of it. It's called the life of the Holy Ghost.

[Message on Faith]

Now let's have a look in Hebrews 11. Let's see what faith is, a little bit about faith. Some of this for some of you will be elementary, but for others it might be quite an eye-opener. So faith, Chapter 11 verse 1:

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things unseen, for by it the elders obtained good testimony. By faith we understand the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen, were not made of things which are visible."

So let me just outline a few simple things, so we can understand faith. I need to know: what is faith; how would I know if I had it? How do I get it; and can it be grown and developed? How could I grow and develop it? These are quite important things; so the first thing is: Faith is different to Hope.

Notice: Faith is the substance of something you hope for. Hope has to do with the future, so many people confuse faith and hope. Hope is about the future. Hope is something in my mind. It is thinking about, and optimistic and expectant of, something really good in the future; but faith is now. Faith is something I have now. It's a conviction and assurance I have - so I know now it's present. So hope has to do with the future; faith with now. Many people confuse faith and hope. They say: "I'm believing God for this", but actually what they're doing is: they're hoping God will do something. Faith - you know it, it's a conviction.

So the second thing is: Faith established in the Heart; not the Head. With the heart man believes; so you can know lots of the Bible, and have no faith at all. You can know many scripture verses, and still have no faith, because it's all in the head. Faith is an issue of your heart - with the heart you believe.

Now let me tell you this - all of us believe some things. Every person here believes something. You believe something about yourself, many things. You believe things about God, you believe things about people, you believe things about life. You possibly haven't stopped to evaluate what you really do believe, but your core beliefs are what move you to live the life you live. Coming to church isn't what does it. It's actually what you believe in your heart - so if you believe in your heart, because you had painful experiences when you were younger, that I'm not of any value... Perhaps you grew up in a very strong, controlling family. Your opinion or feelings or desires were never consulted, and you have established in your heart an angry, hurt, firm belief: nothing I do is ever good enough; I'll never get anywhere; or no one really cares about me.

Now those are three distinct beliefs. If those beliefs don't shift, what will happen is, your life will run through those beliefs. It will filter how you run your life. It'll bring into your life: exactly what you believe is what you'll have. So faith has to be established in the heart. I must then reform my belief system to believe what God says is true. Most of the struggles you have as a younger believer is to shift your belief system, and become established in what God says is true about you. God says: you're accepted; but I don't feel accepted - then you've got a struggle in your heart with your belief system. God says: you're forgiven; but I don't feel forgiven - you've got a struggle in your heart with your belief system. God says: you're a child of His, and He's near you all the time; but I don't feel He's near me all the time - well then, you've got a struggle in your belief system.

So we live our life out of the beliefs we have in our heart, so faith is important to get established in our heart. Faith deals with the things which are not seen, so I don't see it, but nevertheless (says faith), the things which are not seen are very real. So for example, the love of God is very real - it's incredibly real; and when you experience the love of God, it just touches your heart. You often begin to weep. You feel God loving you, and you feel His presence; so it is real, but not seen. It comes from the realm of the spirit, into the natural realm, by faith; so everything you and I will receive from God must have faith in it. I must believe what God says about this, for it to manifest in my life. You may have grown up rejected, and believe that you're not acceptable to anyone. Well faith will shift that, and acceptance will be established in your heart; and then no matter what anyone does, you are secure. You're not dependent on what people and circumstance is doing any more. You are secure inside because faith - you have it now!

People say: how do you know you're accepted? I know! I know! I know! I know! How do you know your sins are forgiven? Oh, I know! I know! How could you possibly know? What's the evidence? The evidence is in here - I know it, because it's come into my life as I believe what God said; and it brings liberty. It brings tremendous liberty - so faith needs to be established in our heart.

So faith is also expressed through the words we speak. In Romans 4:17, God calls the things to be, not as though they are. So faith comes into our heart. Faith comes, we hold the word of God, because whatever you believe in your heart, you'll speak with your mouth; so when there's faith in our heart, we will confess what God says. We will speak what God says. God said to Abraham - changed his name from 'Abram' to 'Abraham, Father of Nations'. So for years, Abraham was saying, when they asked him "who are you?" - "I am Father of Nations". Excuse me, you don't have any kids? I am Father of Nations. I don't like to put this out, but you're wife is nearly 100 years old. I am Father of Nations - and you're not looking too good yourself. I am Father of Nations.

He chose to believe God, and he professed his faith. He did not stagger, though his body and her body were old, and the result of holding in faith was: a miracle took place; and guess who the Father of Nations is? Abraham - but there was a walk of faith to establish it. The Bible says: we walk not by sight, but we walk by faith. We don't walk by the things we see. We walk because we, by faith, can see what God has said is true - and we hold onto it. We've got to see the healing in prayer before you'll experience the healing. You have to see what God has planned for you, before you'll hear it, and see it in life.

So faith always reaches to what God says in the invisible realm, and causes it to manifest now. Sometimes there's a delay between my knowing I have it, and seeing it happen in life - so that's faith. So let's just talk about faith in relationship with God. Have a look in Verse 6. Now without faith, it's impossible to please Him - impossible! If something is that important, I should make it my life's study to know about Faith. Why should I? Because without it - I can't please Him.

Now just coming to church doesn't mean you're in a place of faith. It means you came to church. It could mean you're in a place of faith. It could mean, like me, you just come to church. When I was a Catholic, I used to come to church - it's what you did Sundays. It wasn't a matter of faith, it was a matter of fear - I'd go to hell if I didn't. I had to come to church. Even when Joy took me to her church, I'd still go to my church. I had this belief: I'll go to hell if I don't go to church! I'd go to church; but you understand there's no life in that. It's kind of: God, a whole hour, you know? You understand? I'm not going to meet God. It's just doing a religious activity - there's no faith in that. Faith comes when I'm here because I want to be - I want to be in the presence of God. I want the atmosphere of God! I want God to speak to me! I'm here because I want to be - the presence of God.

So notice, it says: without faith, it's impossible, impossible, to please Him - impossible. So notice it says: "he that comes to God must believe He exists, and also that He rewards those who diligently seek Him". So 1) He exists; 2) He's a rewarder; and the key ingredient is my faith - that shows up by diligently persisting in seeking Him.

So He's a rewarder - God blesses us. Sometimes we look around and we say: how come they're blessed, and I'm not so blessed? Well maybe there's a reason. Maybe they diligently sought God, and changed their beliefs. So you notice then, faith is foundational to the relationship with God. Let me just put it to you this way: without faith or a trust in God, you can't walk with Him. You can't build any relationship without trust. You can't build a marriage without trust. You can't build a business relationship without trust - so without faith, without trust in God's character and words, I can't walk with Him at all.

If I'm going to argue with Him; and doubt what He says; and reason what He says; and continually take what He says, and put it through my mind, and filter; and I've got my own opinions about what works - if I'm going to walk like that, I

can't walk with God. It's as simple as that. Walking with God means I develop a relationship of trusting Him, because I continually am experiencing being loved.

Now this is the stumbling point for so many people, they have unresolved issues of the heart, and they stop trusting, or won't trust God. When you won't trust God, this is what you've got to do: you have to take control of your own world and life, and be God yourself. So we're made to bond to God who is a Father, a loving Father and spirit being. We're created to bond to Him, to trust Him, to have a relationship with Him, and faith is what makes the connection, so by faith we enter relationship with God. By faith we maintain it.

Now let's just talk about entering relationship with God. How do you enter into a relationship with God? What is the key thing?

In Ephesians 2:8, the entrance into relationship with God has got nothing to do with where you've come from, what education you have; it's got nothing to do with your family background, got nothing to do with anything natural at all. It's actually like this - verse 4 - God, who is rich in his mercy, rich, rich in mercy... Most people, when they think of God, think He's angry and judging them - ooh oh, got a big stick, gonna catch you out! But the Bible says: He's rich, wealthy, abundant in mercy and - look at this! - and His great love - great, abundant, extravagant love! He absolutely loves you! So it says: "When we were dead in sin, He made us alive together in Christ; by grace you're saved, and raised us up together, made us to sit together in heavenly places in Christ, in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness, kindness towards us."

Notice these words: grace, mercy, kindness, love - that's what God is. So how do I enter relationship with God? Very simply: by grace. By grace are you saved through faith, and even that's not of your own - not of works, lest you boast. Now you know the verse, but the tendency is to forget what it really means. Grace is an empowerment by God that changes our lives. It's something we don't work for, or we don't earn. If you work for it, it isn't grace, it's your reward. If you didn't work for it, and it's a gift, then it's grace; and grace is the power of God to shift you on the inside.

You can't work for it, you can just receive it; so either you get given grace to change, or you're working hard to change - there can't be any in-between. I either get God's power to help me change, and so I do change, and it's real change, and its change on the inside; or I got none of that, I'm just working hard trying to be a good person, to overcome that temper. You'll notice when you do that, you're under law; so by grace you're saved through faith, not of works. So it's a gift.

Anything you do to try and earn your standing with God - so let me show you how it shows up subtly in many people. Well I had a bad day yesterday, didn't pray - I feel distant from God; or I prayed today, I'm real near to God! Now all of this about your nearness to God is dependent on your works. He doesn't change at all. It does not depend on your works - prayed two hours today and 15 minutes tomorrow, doesn't make any difference to your standing with God. Your standing with God, your identity, is given to you as a gift. When you receive Jesus Christ as your saviour here's what happens; you become a new person. He puts His spirit into you. You are now joined to Jesus Christ. You're joined to the spirit of God. You are joined to the spirit of God. He doesn't break that joining. You are joined now to the spirit of God, and so God's life, His own very life is engrafted into you. You're what's called "born again". Now you are not what you used to be - you are a child, a son or daughter of God. Who am I? I'm a son of God! God is my Father!

You see, this is who you are now; but the trouble is, if it's not established strongly in your life, you'll live out of who you used to be - a reject, or fearful, or afraid, or ashamed, or embarrassed, or broke, or whatever. See, this is the new identity, so I don't have to work to get that, I am now, by the grace of God, a child of God. Now I've just got to learn how to live and walk with Him. So faith got me started, and faith is how I continue. It's all going to be grace, not trying hard. The harder you try, the more condemned you'll feel about your condition - that's the terrible thing about it. Have you noticed that? The harder you try, the more difficult it gets, and how you get bogged down and just want to quit and give up. Why? Because when you do that, you move away from grace and come under law.

If I am right with God, in any area of my life, by trying to work at it, then I've shifted and I've come under law. Paul said: don't frustrate the grace of God. Don't cause God's grace - which is freely and generously given, to help you grow and live your life - don't frustrate it and stop it, by then trying to perform to be good to get it.

Don't frustrate the grace of God, by struggling hard and working to be a better person. Learn to believe what God says is true about you.

This is what he said: "This is the work of God: that you believe". The problem is learning to believe. Why? Because immediately, when you try and believe what God says, the strongholds in your mind and heart rise up and argue; they argue against, and they reason against, the life of God. The Christian life is much easier than you think - it's about grace. I can see when I said that, that some of you don't agree; and the reason you're not agreeing is because you're looking at your experience and saying: my experience is hard, and therefore, the Christian life can't be easy.

Jesus said: "My yoke is easy, my burden is light". It's easy; it's light. If it's getting heavy, you've moved out of grace, you moved out of faith, you're trusting in yourself again. The moment it gets heavy, you're out of faith. You're struggling in your own efforts.

Jesus said: there's a Rest of Faith; so when faith is in your heart, you know what happens? There will be two ways you'll tell... One is you'll come to rest. You just actually become at rest inside. You're not struggling, striving, and uptight; you're at rest. You're quite confident and calm. There is a rest of faith. The second thing that happens is: the way you talk. You talk out of that place of rest, out of the position of rest. Our struggle is not to try and do things, or make God do anything. Our struggle is one of struggling to overcome unbelief, doubts, negative thinking; and just believe what God says is true, and come to rest in that, so there's no more struggling. When you're resting in what God says, you're in a place of faith. Faith - it's not your feelings. Your feelings will come into a bit.

So we walk with God by faith. Notice in this last scripture, we'll look at, Galatians 5. Now he's talking to the Galatians Church, which started off believing, and then got into trying doing.

"Stand fast in the liberty with Christ has made free, don't be entangled again in the yoke of bondage".

In other words, don't go back under laws, regulations: you've got to do this, you've got to do that, you must do this, you've got to dress like that, you've got to have this hair cut, and I can't have that hair cut, you've got to behave like this, behave like that, you've got to go here, not there. All of that kind of stuff is a yoke of bondage. God wants us to grow like Him, and get to know Him, and to get to know His nature, where we can love people without having them to be monkeys and perform for us.

So notice what he says. He says here, for in Christ Jesus - Verse 4 - "you become estranged from Christ, if you attempt to make yourselves right with God by the law... (By doing things; if you try that way) ...you have fallen from grace."

How many have had a situation like this, where you had someone that really hurt you, and you found it really difficult to forgive. So now you struggle trying to be nice to that person? Why are you struggling trying to be nice to that person, when actually you want to slap their face? Or worse even! Why are you struggling to be nice? Because behind it all, you're thinking something like this: I'm a Christian, I've got to be nice; and you know deep in your heart, is war and vengeance and murder! And when you're not trying to be nice, you're thinking of how you could pay them back, and what you'd really like to say. What is all of that about? That's not the Rest of Faith! You've come under the law: I need to be nice.

Why not stop coming under the law? When you come under the law, the thing that happens is, there's no power of God to help you; and it's real hard to love some of these people - it's really hard! Christian life is so hard, I've got to love people, but I don't like them; some I even hate them. Some have ripped me off. I know what I'll do: I'll just subtly avoid them; I'll just cut them out. It's all a manifestation of hate. The problem is in the heart. If you're not in the Rest of Faith; you just come under the law. You're struggling now, trying to be a good person.

Actually the reality is this: you already are a loving person. Why not just admit the war in your heart, and come and repent from that Dead Work of trying to love them; trying to manufacture the life of God? Instead just: repent of the dead works; surrender to the Lord, ask Him: Lord, help me to see this person like you see them; help me to love them. Let your love flow through me. As you begin to meditate on the love of God for yourself, and for people, and very soon you start to find it coming naturally rather than forced, add-on. When it's an add-on, it doesn't last. Somehow you'll definitely blow it. You've tried so hard to be nice - nine times you were nice! Oh, I'm nearly there, but the tenth you blew it; and all the nine just didn't count for anything, because the tenth you really blew it! So you're back now to do what you need to do: humble yourself, just repent and change.

Notice it says: "don't get in the yoke of bondage". Learn to live a life out of the new identity: I am a loving person; I love people because that's who I am. It's not because: well they don't deserve it! Oh come on, you got back under the law again. Grace has got nothing to do with whether you deserve. Grace comes, not because you deserve it, but

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