

Leaving The First Principles Of Christ #1

"Wherefore leaving the doctrines of the first principles of Christ, let us press on unto perfection; not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of the teaching of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of the resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this will we do, if God permit" (Heb. 6:1-3).

The writer has just concluded a reprimand of his hearers, reminding them that while he had many things to yet say about Christ, His priesthood of Melchizdek and obviously other matters; his readers would find such hard of interpretation because they had become dull of hearing. They ought to have been teachers of others, yet they still needed someone to teach them, even the basic rudiments of the doctrine of Christ. Thus the urging of his appeal: *"Wherefore leaving the first principles of the doctrine of Christ ..."* There are six things these brethren were to lay aside as they sought perfection or full growth: 1) repentance from dead works; 2) faith toward God; 3) teaching of baptisms; 4) laying on of hands; 5) resurrection of the dead; and 6) eternal judgment.

Understand that when the Hebrews were urged to *"leave the doctrine of the first principles"* the writer meant that they were neither to forget nor deny them. Their knowledge needed to include more than the first principles which he herein spells out. As the writer continued his appeal to them, the subjects he wrote about were things they obviously needed understanding in. They were as follows:

"Not to lay again a foundation of repentance from dead works." This phrase has lent no little problem to Bible students. It is generally agreed the expression *"dead works"* should literally be *"works that make dead."* With such an understanding, some questions still remain, but not as many. What are these *"works that make dead"*? Two logical thoughts emerge. It is possible that *"works that make dead"* could be reference to the works of the law. We do know in that 2 Corinthians Paul spoke of the law when he said *"the letter killeth but the spirit giveth life"* (3:6.) It is likewise remembered than in the Roman letter Paul speaks of himself in his innocence when he wrote, *"... I was alive apart from the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died; and the commandment which was unto life, this I found to be unto death"* (Rom. 7:8f). Nevertheless, it could hardly be said necessary that man repent of the works of the law for in the apostle's words *"... the law is holy, and the commandment holy and righteous and good"* (Rom. 7:12).

It seem most logical that the *"works which make dead"* of which the Hebrews had repented were the sinful works in which they formerly walked. True, the letter was directly primarily to a Jewish audience but it is universally true that man's works of disobedience brings death to him, and of those works all need to repent. Paul wrote the Ephesians, *"and ye did he make alive when ye were dead through your trespasses and sins ... among whom we also once lived in the desires of the flesh and of the mind"* (Eph. 2:1-3).

Nor were the Hebrews to lay again a foundation of faith toward God. Certainly faith was not to be discarded. The writer has urged them to have faith to enter the rest God has prepared and later he dwelt extensively on the necessity of faith in chapter 11. Faith is the foundation of all good things and without it man cannot please God. But faith in God not only demands faith in God's existence, but full confidence in all the things He has revealed about His Son, Jesus Christ.

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