

Hope, An Anchor to our Soul

By Paris Reidhead*

Will you turn, please, to Hebrews, Chapter 6. The message of this song, in mind and heart preparing us for God's Word. ... Now Hebrews, Chapter 6, and I shall read the first eleven verses:

"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. For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame. For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned. But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak. For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister. And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end: That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises."

Now I said verse 11, but we closed with verse 12 to complete the thought.

Back again to the first two verses of this Chapter which shall engage us. The preface to these verses is in the three verses of the preceding Chapter: "When in time you ought to be teachers, you need one to teach you again, you need to be established in the first principles of the oracles of God, you need milk and not strong meat," and this the writer is leveling at the readers as an inditement for their not used to the full the privileges that have come to them (Heb. 5:12).

We are closing a year. I cannot help but feel, as we approach middle age... And I am willing to admit it now. I have been reluctant in the past, but I am prepared tonight to admit that I am middle aged. Someone says, You are? Well, if you would establish for yourself whether you are middle aged or not, just double what you now are, and you will, know whether you have reached the middle of the proper, normal expectancy. Well I have. And so as I look back upon the years that have gone, I am aware of the fact that we ought to make full use of the time. We ought to be exceedingly careful about the passing days. We ought to recognize that great privileges have been ours. Some time we are going to be called to account for them. We have had spiritual instruction. If all the truth which has been preached over this desk, or one related to it in these past 80 years could have been given to any given generation, it would have been probably enough to have saved a hundred worlds like those that have been distributed. There has come to your ears a full, faithful preachment of the truth in the days of your Christian life for the most part. And what have we done with it? This is the question the writer asks.

What have you done with what has been set before you? What have you done with the truth that has been offered to you?

We were discussing this at noon, my son and I, and we were talking about the fact that in a year there are one thousand and ninety five meals. This next February will be our 20th wedding anniversary, and I shall have to go to my wife and say, These 21,900 meals. This is a very sad way to measure a marriage, isn't it? But wouldn't it be something if you would go to a young lady and say, Would you like to spend the next 40 years and the next 42,800 meals with me, do cooking and doing the dishes? It is a rather strange way to approach the subject, wouldn't you say. Well what have you done with the truth that has been set before you in the past? What have you done with the word that has come to you? Have you profited from that which has been provided?

It is rather obvious that some of us have profited from the cooking of our good and faithful wives, more than others. I get a little weary, you know. Some of us are so adjusted, that... Well if I just look through certain magazines, I gain two pounds before I get through the table of contents. But others do not worry about that. But, have we been as valued users of spiritual truth as we have the fine groceries that are available in such commodious supply here in this country.

If we were as spiritually healthy as we are physically healthy would there not be greater return from the Lord's investment in us that He has received. This is in substance what the writer is asking. What have you done with what you have heard? What have you done with what you have received? Has it profited you? or is it simply that you have taken it day after day, and week after week, month after month, year after year and still find that you need be taught the first principles again, that you need more instructed with the elements, the first elements, that you need milk and not meat.

Some years ago a pastor friend of mine was asked by some of the church to consider ministering there as preacher, and when the congregation heard him there was a response, Oh, he is too deep for us. What we need is milk. And the strange part of it was that the ones who said this had been on a milk diet for at least 30 years. This was according to their own testimony when they were asked how long they had been in the Christian life and still needing milk.

Have you come to the place in your own experience where the foundation truths of the faith are so well known by you that you can build upon them? This is what the writer was seeking to press home to the hearts of his hearers.

Notice now as he continues. This has been his challenge. He is not inditing his hearers. He is challenging them, saying, Some of you, some of you indeed need that one teach you again the first principles. But, by virtue of his next statement in the sixth chapter and the first verse, "Therefore, leaving the principles of the teachings of Christ, let us go on." They were sufficiently clear that he did not find it necessary to build them again. What of you? Are these principles so clear in your mind, have you established for yourself some comprehension of theology? Do you have a grasp of the structure of truth to which you can fit what you hear from the sermons that you hear and the messages that you read. How have you approached your own personal, Christian life?

I would like to think that as I speak to you that, whether you have done it formally or not, you have done it actually. Perhaps you would be greatly benefited if you would get a simple, book such as that by R. A. Torrey, What the Bible Teaches, or Evans, Great Doctrines of the Bible, and would read this and meditate upon it, until you see that there is form and structure to truth, and that the elements of our faith fit together like pre-cut timbers, that they are necessary, and that they are to be held by us.

But, notice, Paul having assumed them, or at least proceeded from that point of view, says, Leaving these first principles, let us go on. There is something beyond. There is something other. There is something more. But the foundation deserves more than I have said about it, and so notice the various elements, the dimensions of this foundation of truth. First, there is repentance. Do you see this? Is this sufficiently clear? Built from the footing, right on up, so there can be a structure built upon it. I am thinking now of a building that I have watched in some intermittent observation on New Jersey 3 at Clifton, just before you get to Montclair.

Just before the Fall weather came, they made an excavation, and it was a very strange foundation, walls this way and that. It looks more or less like a puzzle, and I was frank to say that I was sure that somebody had not quite known what he was doing. As they did the digging, they would dig a little hole here, and another there. It just did not seem to make sense. I was confident that they had gotten the plans in a big wind, and they had put the pages together wrong. This was the only thing I could think about. But I went back the other day, and it has come out right, strangely enough. It has fit together, and based upon this weird excavation, now rises what will probably be another 16 or 18 story apartment building right out in the field there. It is a wonderful thing that they did know what they were doing.

And so when Paul says that part of the foundation is repentance from dead works, he is not minimizing it. It is basic. It is absolutely essential. If you are ever to become the mature Christian you ought to be, repentance must be comprehended by you, it must be experienced by you, you must realize what it is, and why it is, and where it is in the Christian life.

What do we mean by it? Well, many of you will draw upon messages, many messages, in the past when we were seeking to establish this. Repentance is a change of mind, not an emotional response, but a volitional response. Not just feelings, but determination. He only repents who changes his mind and will from something to something, not just feeling sad about it, not sorrow, but it is a definite change of direction, a change of attitude, a change of intention and purpose. To repent is to change from something to something, from pleasing self to pleasing God, from living with one's own pleasures as the end of being to

making God's glory and God's will and purpose the end of being. Repentance. In it is the seed of all holiness, because at that point of repentance a person says, My purpose up until today has been to please me, but from today it is to please God. I have lived all this time to do what I wanted to do. From now on I am going to live to do what He wants me to do. And you can see that this is essential to all Christianity, and all holiness, and all righteousness, and you can see why this is part of the foundation. Repentance.

It is repent and believe, in that order. Oh, we understand there has to be a crediting of the Scripture to be true, there has to be an assent to what it says, an acceptance of the basic premises, this is certain. But also it is imperative that that person that is to savingly know Christ, and to be built upon the foundation of Christ must have received Jesus Christ as He is presented as a Prince and a Savior, as Lord and Christ, and this is implicit in repentance. It is what we find in the Word, If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus to be Lord, and believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead.... And so we find that it is essential.

And it is to be permanent. It is to be entire. It is to be hearty. And it is to be the first step in our pilgrimage with Christ. Repent. Except you repent you will perish; and so we understand why Paul included this as part of the foundation.

And then he said, Of faith toward God. Repentance again precedes faith, even in this. Hardly elaborated, but certainly in sequence, just as when Paul left the Ephesian elders, he said, "I was with you night and day, from house to house, teaching repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Act. 20:20-21). So here it is, repentance from dead works and of faith toward God.

Unfortunately we have the feeling that a believer is someone who, in a moment of pressure, believes. He doffs his hat, and gives up for the moment the hat is in the air the skepticism that has made him doubt and reject the Word of God; and in this moment however it be induced, he believes. And he may put the hat of unbelief right back down; but because for that moment he nodded yes toward God, and said, I agree that what you are saying is so, he is thereafter always called a believer. No. This is not true. He is one who has to take the hat of unbelief off and skim it away into the wind and forget about it, and go bareheaded in the presence of God the rest of his life, counting what God says to be so. A believer is not someone who just believes for a moment, and then can lapse back into his former skepticism; a believer is someone who at a moment begins to believe, and he keeps on believing. He becomes a believinger, not just a believer in the sense of a moment, but someone who continues to believe. If you have savingly believed on Christ in the past, you savingly believe on Him tonight. It is not that you have believed back there and then promptly chucked the matter into some closet of your memory, and every time someone forces the issue you can swing open the closet door and say, Oh yes, see hanging on the peg there is my decision for Christ. I believe. No. This is not it. It is back there that you put yourself in the place where you took God at His Word, and you began to believe God. Now you did not believe to the full degree that you do now.

Undoubtedly, if your growth has been a normal growth, you are stronger in the faith than you were. You understand it better, and your confidence in God is an accumulated confidence, because everything in the past has prepared you to trust Him for the present. But faith toward God is again part of the foundation of the mature Christian life. Now if repentance is incomplete, and faith is temporary and passing, you can understand that the possibility of going on to perfection or maturity is rather a dim prospect. And thus Paul calls it foundation. The building must be built upon something that will hold it, and so two walls are now up.

Then notice what He says, The doctrine of baptisms. Have you ever noticed that it is plural, the doctrine of baptisms. I do not want to build, put a whole house on one brick. This I would not choose to do at all. But I think it is important that you notice that there is baptisms. It is plural. And you say, To what could this refer? Well obviously, to us at least, it refers to our relationship to Christ. We had, before renovating, a sign over the baptistery, we are buried with Him by baptism into death, and this is our testimony. We believe that water baptism is an outward picture: First, of our repentance and faith toward Christ, and of our identification with Christ.

But just as we believe that it is pictured best by being submerged in water, we also believe that there are baptisms, and it would be equated in my mind with Ephesians 5:18, wherein we read, "Be filled with the Spirit." This is the King James Version, King James translation. Others give it more accurately, "Be ye being filled with the Spirit."

Now I do not believe that this has reference to a lifetime process of being filled, and never coming to fullness. But the word, Baptism, simply means immersed, covered, or submerged. And if Paul could use the word, Be filled, or be being filled with the Spirit, then I would see no reason why we should not have here a plural form of this word baptisms. If you were to inquire of the baptistery here after a service such as we plan to have in February, on the 17th of February for those of you that might be prepared to follow the Lord in baptism, and you would send some reported to inquire of the baptistery, What happened to you? And the baptistery, for my illustration would reply, Oh, I was filled with water. Very good. Then we would speak to the person that had just been there, had been the candidate for baptism, and What happened to you? Well, I was submerged in water. Well which is right? Both are right, depending upon your point of view. The vessel was filled, and the person was submerged. And I think this is the reason for the use of the two words, baptism with the Holy Spirit, and the fullness of the Holy Spirit. You were speaking of yourself as a total being, body, soul and spirit. "Be filled with the Spirit." But then, if you would reduce down to a narrower and finer point, it would be that you are a spirit, living in a body, and therefore when you as a total being, body, soul, and spirit, are filled with the Spirit, you in your spiritual essence, are submerged in Him. And therefore I firmly believe that the experience of a Christian is not only to be baptized in water, but it is to be filled with the Spirit, and to live immersed in the presence of God. This is to be the constant portion. And so it would be quite appropriate to have it baptisms, have it in this form. Quite in order. And this would be foundational.

Now we talk about the fullness of the Holy Spirit as being the deeper life, for the Christian life. But I hardly think this is correct; because, if you will understand the experience of Paul, the 3rd day after he was a child of God through faith in Christ, Ananias came to him and said the Lord had sent him, said God has sent me to you to lay my hands on you and to pray for you, that you might receive your sight and "be filled with the Spirit," and Paul was. And this was the 3rd day of his Christian life. No great prolonged period. Just this was the manner in which it was. So in a sense, it could be that Paul had been baptized in water, testifying to his faith in Christ, baptized with the fullness of God, with the presence of God, initially and then subsequently. And this is foundational. It has been stated by me repeatedly that everything the Bible has to say about participation in church life, that is in fellowship in a body of believers, the company of believers, presupposes that they have been filled with the Spirit. This is the basic minimum.

You know, for instance, before they would leave a church on its own in Antioch, it was necessary for Peter and John to come down to instruct them and pray for them. Now we know they were born of the Spirit. There is no question of the challenge at all, but they were not born full of the Spirit. They were born of the Spirit.

Oh, the argument might be raised, You cannot receive the Spirit in parts. He is a Person. If He comes to bring life, then He comes in all that He is. You have received all there is of God. It is just for God to receive more of you. But remember you are a person, and if He cannot come in parts, then you cannot give in parts. Just reverse it, you see. All, but remember, the Spirit of God was in Christ for 30 years before He had come upon Christ with an anointing for service. And I believe that, in addition to our being subsequent to regeneration brought to that relationship of union with Christ, and death, and the fullness of the Spirit, there are many anointings, and many inundations of His Presence, and that we ought to live constantly in the ocean of God. I think we ought to go back to Ezekiel's vision and see ourselves in relation to it, where it was said: There was water to the ankle, and water to the knee, and water to the thighs, and then water to the shoulders, and then there was water to swim in. And I believe that God is drawing us all on out, deeper into His will and purpose, and His Presence as well.

So Paul calls this baptisms, and I think it has reference to the entire matter of one's relationship to the Holy Spirit.

Notice now something else that is foundational. You say, By this time, well if this is the foundation, you begin to feel that way? If this is the foundation, and he is going to leave this, what must there be on ahead?

Notice next. He says he is leaving the doctrine of the laying on of hands. Leaving this. What was the laying on of hands? Well, what does the Scripture say about it. First, it tells us the first instance of the laying on of hands was when Peter and John came

down to Antioch to which reference has been made and instructed these converts of Philips, and laid hands on them, and prayed for them that they might “be filled with the Holy Spirit.”

You recall that next it was that Ananias came to Saul and laid hands on him. Why? Well I believe it was identification. It was Peter and John entering into the desire of these individuals toward God, and the desire of God toward the individual. We find it when Paul went down to Ephesus. So apparently it had something to do with the church responsibility to the individual members in coming into this relationship of the fullness of Christ.

But then there was something else. We find that when Paul wrote to Timothy. He said that he was to stir up the gift of God which was on him with the laying on of my hands. I believe this could be two things: First, it would have been in such prayer session with the church meeting in its responsible fellowship that concern was expressed by Timothy that he should have certain gifts from the Lord, or should perhaps know what his gift and ministry from the Lord would be. And I can see when Paul was there in this town where Timothy resided that they were talking with him, conversing in fellowship, and the question would be asked, But what part have I in this? What gift have I? And I can see Paul saying, Well let’s ask the Lord. And coming where the young man would sit, would simply identify himself with him. And to them would be given by prophetic utterance some word concerning the future, some word concerning the ministry some word concerning the particular gift that he would have from the Spirit for the welfare and benefit of the whole body of Christ. I believe that we have this carried ever to the present. For instance, when missionaries leave from our Society, they will gather here in Wilson Chapel, and will, come -the officials that are present at the time- and we will gather around and pray for them. And there will be a laying on of our hands, each of us identifying ourselves with the missionary going out, yearning for God’s blessing, for God’s anointing, for God’s gift.

Well I have only touched on what the Word says about it, but the point is this was part of the foundation. That is what I want you to see. This was part of the foundation, this was in the church. I have related in the past many times what we find in the Philadelphia Confession of Faith, Article 32, entitled, The Laying On Of Hands, for the Baptist at the time of Benjamin Franklin, in Philadelphia and surrounding area, had an entire article in the revised London Confession, revised largely with this article inserted, with the matter of the laying on of hands, that when one had been baptized, the Baptist eldership would gather round, praying not for extraordinary gifts, but for that anointing of the Spirit, whereby this new one might be able to live consistently and effectively, fruitfully, for Christ. It is part of the foundation. Well, perhaps it is missing in current foundations. Perhaps there it is something we need to study, we need to give attention to it, as part of the foundation. We are prepared to leave it, but leave it out. They did not leave it out. It was there. They went on it, and about it. I wonder if it is not imperative that we should find out by careful study, perhaps the eldership, the deacons, all of us as members of His body, what this means, what its place is. We are not getting on so well, dear friends, that we can neglect any part of the foundation. It just seems to me that whatever is for us ought to be carefully husbanded by us.

Then notice, the resurrection of the dead. This is an important part of the foundation. Not only that Christ was raised from the dead, but that you are to be raised from the dead, and that you are going to stand before God in your flesh. Now someone might ask, Will it be the corpuscles that now compose my body. Well, I do not know about that, because if you get your hair cut tomorrow you are not going to be the same person you were tonight, and so we are not worried about the corpuscles. We are worried only about the fact that the Bible teaches that the moment that you die, you as a spirit are present with the Lord, and that one day you are going to have a body like unto His Own body of glory. And we believe in the resurrection of the dead. And they did, and this is part of the foundation of the faith, and it has to do with our total responsibility to the Lord. The fact that we shall in that day stand before Him at the bema and give an account of the deeds that we have done in the body. You are going to tell what you have done, how you have spoken, where you have gone. Can you not see how this is going to govern and control your conduct? and mine? that we are going to face at the Bema, we are going to face there our lives. This is part of the foundation. This is why again we find that the prospect of His coming and our seeing Him and standing there filled with such awe that the writer Paul says that it is with great fear and great concern that he tells his readers in the book of Corinthians that they must appear before the judgment seat of Christ that they may give an account of the things they have done in the body whether they be bad or good. This is related, foundational to the resurrection of the dead. An eternal judgment, this too is part of it, that the lost shall spend eternity in hell, and that the saved shall be eternally in the presence of God.

Our Brother Finney¹ has spoken to us of meeting the sinners on the street. You know how difficult, how almost impossible it is to get the unsaved into church. And you know that God never commanded sinners to come to the church. These pews essentially may have, in some other period of our history, been instrumental in being a place where sinners should sit to hear. I heard someone say, Every seat in this church has had someone come to know Christ. Yes, perhaps on other days in an America before it had become to such large degree apostatized sinners did come to church, but now with all the competition that there is, you will find that it is almost impossible to get sinners to church. And if evangelism in America is to be restricted to our getting sinners inside of a sacred house such as this, then a generation of sinners are doomed because there are so many prejudices built up in their minds.

Our Jewish neighbors consider it national treason to come here. Our Catholic neighbors find it a mortal sin, and our pagan Protestant neighbors find it a boring beyond words. And so the consequence? We are just finding it almost impossible to get the unsaved into church. If they do come, they seldom come Sunday night, because they realize that across America this is the evangelistic hour, and that they are made uncomfortable. They would much rather go Sunday morning when the preachers are talking to the saints, and they can go feeling saintly, though they are lost in their sins. I believe that we have got to recognize that the time is past for the sinning people in our land to find Christ through the doors of a church. It is going to necessary for us to go where they are, and I want you to welcome with open arms and hearts, in prayer the coming of the open air campaigners to New York.

But, if you think for so much as one minute that this is going to relieve you of your personal witness and responsibility, it is going to put you under a greater sense of burden. It is going to put you under a greater sense of responsibility. Do you believe in eternal judgment? Do you believe that the people that live in the apartment next to you, if they die as they are, will be forever in hell. This is part of the foundation of our faith.

You recall my telling in times past of that notorious criminal in England that absolutely refused to see a Chaplain even though he was sentenced to be hung for his crime of murder. And thus the whole country became aware of this one who would have nothing to do with God or His representatives. Finally, one preacher was determined to see him, and had the permission of the prison, so he went and sat in the hall. This man cursed him until he was too hoarse to speak any further, and finally unable to scream his rejections, the preacher moved up closer to the door and began to speak quietly of Christ, just as though he were addressing some unseen person. The sentenced criminal listened. Soon he whispered over his hoarse voice, that is the sweetest story I have ever heard. Why haven't I heard it before? And the preacher said, I do not know why you have not heard it before. It is why we are here. It is what God wanted you to hear. He said, Well I have never heard anything like it. He said, I grew up in London under the shadow of the church. The shadow of the cross from the cathedral at certain times of the year would be silhouetted against our room, in our dirty, little, dingy tenement flat. But, he said, no one ever told me that this was the story. But it isn't true. There is no truth to it. Oh, it is true, said the preacher. It is absolutely true. O no. There is no truth to it. He said, I used to get a cuff from the clergymen if I didn't hold their horses the way they wanted it, and didn't do as they told me to. He said, No one ever told me this. It isn't true. If it had been true, they would have told me. They wouldn't have waited till now. He said, I am sorry that it happened to you like this, but it is true, and the man looked through the bars at the preacher. He said, My friend, I don't believe it. I'm awful glad to hear it. But, he said, you know if I believed that what you are saying is true, that there is a Heaven for the saved, and a hell for the lost, and Jesus Christ died to save people from such a hell, why I would be willing to crawl on my hands and knees across every cinder path in Britain to tell people about such a Savior, warn them to flee from such a doom, and to receive such love. And, he said, you don't believe it.

Do you believe it? Is this part of the foundation of your faith? Is it here? Have you understood that this is part of the foundation? Well, you say, What is the mature Christian life. This is some foundation. I am not sure. It is not quite all there. If it all has to be there, it is more than a four sided room. There are several things here. Yes, but they are all essential, all important. And this is the foundation. Paul said, We are not going to build this again. Has it been built in your life? Until this is built into your life, how can there be the superstructure? Until this has become solid, how can there be anything beyond it and

¹ Charles Grandison Finney (1792-1875) An American Presbyterian minister and leader in the Second Great Awakening in the United States.

above it? Until we understand this, then we fail to understand how much more there is. Perhaps with all of us God has had to condescend to take us on as we became interested and were responsive. Maybe it is necessary for all of us to go back and to repair some part of the foundation. I would not be surprised but what that is the case. But remember we are not just to spend all our life in the basement. We are to go on. Let us go on unto perfection.

What is this word, perfection. I hope you are not afraid of it. Some people are so frightened of perfection. Well all it means is to grow up. That should not be frightening. Children want to do it. You do not find any children any more, you know, young people. Everybody, as soon as they leave their braids, they immediately tease their hair. Well they don't tease their hair. It looks like they drive it crazy, as far as I can see. But this is what they do. Little children coming out of the grade school, you know, from the 5th grade may look as, ... well, unbelievable. And it is frightening because they cannot wait to grow up; by the time they are 15 their life is lived, jaded, and haggard and old. They have just gone so fast. They have just sped right through life, as a general thing in the world.

I read an article about a little girl who said, O mother, don't rob me of my childhood. Being forced by her parents to act like an adult at 9, 10, and 11 years old, instead of being allowed the joyous years of childhood. Yes, it is true that we are pressed, and forced, in many ways except when it comes to the matter of Christ. How prepared we are to feel that we can go on hearing the same thing year after year and have no responsibility to build, and no responsibility to put the foundation in, and no responsibility to go on, or very little. Oh, may God get a hold of your heart tonight, may He take hold of you and grip you to the very place where you say, This may have been the case for me, but it is not going to be any longer. I am going to see to it that the foundation is in, that the structure is there to ground level, and I am prepared to go on to maturity, to go on to what God has for me. I am not going to have to remain the balance of my days in the elements. I want to go on.

Well what is the structure for? What is this foundation for? I think we find it in the word of John in his little first letter in the first chapter, when John tells us that there are three classes of people. Excuse me, in the 2nd chapter, when he says, "I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known Him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you fathers because ye have known Him that is from the beginning." This is that which characterizes the mature Christian, the grown Christian, you and me as we have the foundation beneath us, solidly fixed, and we move on. What is it? It is constant, conscious fellowship and communion with God on the structure of truth, on the structure of a proper relationship to the Lord, a proper relationship to the world, a proper relationship to fellow believers. Here on this foundation is built a relationship with God. An end in itself, not a means, but out of this is the overflow of blessing that comes through us to others.

Oh, that we might somehow see and realize that this perfection to which he refers, and this maturity to which he calls us, is a maturity of relationship, a relationship with God. It is personal, it is vital, it is experiential. It is inward, it is real, it is you living in, and with, and for, and unto God. And God the Father, Son, and Spirit living in you, and through you, until it is a relationship that is so wonderfully real, so transformingly real to you and to Him, that you have come to the place that that which He has envisioned, and that which He has purposed He has realized in your experience. This is the ultimate intention as far as your earthly pilgrimage is concerned. "I will dwell in them, I will walk in them, and I will be a Father unto them." And out of this love relationship, in the home of your heart, where God reveals Himself to you, will come the overflow and witness, the overflow and fruit, and Christ like character, and intercessory prayer, the foundation secure beneath you, the relationship with Him, warm and vital, and personal and satisfying to God and to you, and then all of Christian life and service is the overflow of a relationship with a Person.

And it is this, I believe, that we will have to recognize is the mature Christian life. How easy it is to get degrees. How easy it is to earn the various diplomas. Oh, it requires effort and diligence, and attention and work, of course. But this is no substitute at all for a relationship with Him. And someone who has been denied all of these privileges, but on the foundation of the truth as it is in Christ has built a relationship with the Lord, has become the instrument of blessing to His generation. Again my mind goes back to Julian of Norwich². This dear little unlettered, untaught, unschooled frau, woman of England, who found welcome in Norwich, that city where she was given a little room, built at the side of the local, rural church, right in the forest. And there

² Julian of Norwich (1342-1416)

this became a place to which people made pilgrimage from all over England. Why? Because you see she had met the Lord. She knew Him. She had walked with Him. She had talked with Him. And she gave in these little messages, these visions, and this testimony of her relationship with the Lord, such warmth, such fruit, and when you read it, you say, Ah, that is what I want, or that is what the Lord has done, because here is someone whose name you have forgotten unless you are a scholar who the king was at the time, you have forgotten who reigned and ruled in France and England, and all the important people. But to us Julianne continues, because she saw Him, and as one mature in the Lord she wrote of what she saw. And we may pilgrimage by way of the page back to sit at her feet. She knew the Lord.

And you will serve well your generation. You will serve the people that live near you, and next to you, and beside you, if you heed this and go on to maturity, go on to the goal, go on to the end, which is your own personal love relationship with the living God. Oh, you may not get your name down in the annals of religious history, as Julian has done. I make no such promise as that. But the people that live next to you, and the people that walk with you, and the people that know you, and the people who God uses you to touch, and sends to you to be touched by you, are going to say, Oh, there is something there of Heaven. I sense the Lord's presence.

This can be your ministry. This can be your life. This is open to you on the foundation of the truth, the foundation of what God has set forth before us, to go on to know Him, who is from the beginning, in that personal relationship that He has designed for you. He may not give you the visions He gave Julianna. He may not do for you many things He has done for others. But He is going to do for you just what you need, for your life, and to be the blessing He wants you to be.

Oh, hear again his word: Therefore, on the basis of the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection, not laying again, over and over again, the foundation, but on the foundation to build this relationship with Him. Do you know Him? Did you meet Him when you came into the Christian life? Did He tell you? Do you have the witness of the Spirit that you have been born of God? Have you ever heard His voice? Have you ever felt His touch? Have you ever seen His face? He is drawing you on, you know. On the foundation of truth that has been revealed, on this, right on into a living, vital, warm union with Himself. May God give you this as the goal of your heart, the passion of your Spirit. And whatever God has done for any of us in 1962, do not become blaze and sophisticated, and say, Well He has done it for me. What about the rest of these poor folk? There is something God has for me and for you, for all of us, so much more wonderful than anything we have known in the past, that with childlike eagerness we can press into today and tomorrow for it is going to take an eternity to explore all of what God is. It should engage us heartily in time. I want to know Him better on the foundation. I am very troubled when I find people seeking the Lord apart from the foundation of the truth. But on that foundation to know Him.

Let us pray. What of you? repentance; the evidence of repentance is not just that you repented, but tonight when you see attitude or action that is contrary to His will, you deal with that the way you did with the heinous sins you brought to the cross. What of faith. Not that you just believed at some point in the past. But you are believing tonight. What of the doctrine of baptisms? Have you followed Him in believer's baptism? Have you known the fullness of His Spirit, the crisis of the Spirit filled life? What of a ministry recognized by the body of Christ as we find it here in the laying on of hands? What about the fact that your life is lived under the constant discipline of the bema? Do you really believe that people without Christ are lost, that they are dying, that they are on their way to a Christ less eternity, and that it is your responsibility to so know the Lord and so live in fellowship and union with Him, that He can use you in any way He wishes, to tell them and warn them, and bring them to a saving knowledge of Christ, and that the overflow of His presence in this life of warm fellowship in union with Him is going to be a witness for Him. Are you a mature Christian? How old are you in Christ tonight? Are you a young man? Your sins are forgiven? A babe? Are you a young man because you have overcome the wicked one? Are you a father because you have gone on to know Him who is from the beginning, in personal face to face fellowship and communion, joyous union? Isn't it wonderful that this is for all of us? He has no step children. He does not love me more than He does you, or you more than He does me. He hasn't given me a privilege he hasn't given you, or you one that He has denied me. We are His children. We have been born into His family, and He is calling us all on, and on the basis of this foundation, into a fellowship of wonderful union with Himself, living in us, filling us with His fullness, revealing Himself to us. Oh, how our hearts ought to hunger for God, and out of the overflow of His presence will become the fruitfulness of our lives, and of our witness. Leaving again the foundations, let us go on to maturity, to perfection.

Our Heavenly Father, here are a company of men and women, gathered together in this house, this closing Lord's Day evening of 1962, to face again Thy Word, and the wonderful privileges Thou dost afford us, the glorious opportunities that are ours to live for eternity, this wonderful, joyous privilege that is ours to know Thee in time whom we are going to find make Heaven heavenly throughout eternity. And Thou wilt condescend not only to take us where Thou art, but come and live where we are; and that we can now know Thee in Thy fullness. We ask Thee, Father, that we may grow up into Christ, until we all come to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, "and be no more children, tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine and sleight of hand where in cunningness they lie in wait to deceive" (Eph. 4:14). Give to us tonight the pressure of this text on the basis of the foundation, understood by us to go on to maturity. May this become the goal of the New Year, may it become for all of us the deepening desire of our hearts to be to the Lord Jesus everything that He wants us to be. We thank Thee that we are not where we were a year ago tonight. We have grown in Him, we have gone on in Him, and we thank Thee Lord that we are not what we are going to be a year from tonight. We thank Thee that Thou hast much for us tomorrow, and in the days that lie ahead. So put into our hearts this heavenly expectancy, and give to us a passionate desire to meet Thee on every issue Thou dost raise, that we may be unto Thee all that Thou dost wish. May we go on as a people unto perfection, unto maturity, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Let us stand for the Benediction. If you are here and have spiritual need and longing, we invite you to stay. Now may the God of peace that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the Blood of the everlasting covenant make us perfect in every good work to do His will, working in us that which is well pleasing in His sight. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom be the glory, now and forever. Amen.

* Reference such as: Delivered at The Gospel Tabernacle Church, New York City on Sunday Evening, December 30, 1962 by Paris W. Reidhead, Pastor.

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