

Elementary Doctrines Repentance

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If you've been a member of the church for a very long period of time, at some point you will have found yourself saying, "There has got to be more to it than that." That it appears that there is a ceiling over your understanding of the things of God. So when is there "more" and where does the "more" come from? Paul dealt with the same issue. Listen to this from I Corinthians, chapter 2. Paul said, verse 1, **"When I came to you brothers I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified."** (Inserted – I Corinthians 2:1, 2)

Paul said, "I made a conscious decision that while I was with you—you Corinthians—I wouldn't say anything greater than the elementary, foundational, rudimentary elements of our faith—"Jesus Christ and him crucified." And you will often hear leaders say, "Listen, I don't know anything except Jesus Christ and him crucified." Well listen to what else Paul had to say. He says, "Brothers," this is chapter 3 now, just a little bit over. He says, **"Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual" (that's verse 1 of chapter 3) "but as worldly—mere infants in Christ. I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere men?"** (Inserted – I Corinthians 3:1-3)

Now you will note here that when Paul speaks of being a worldly, or carnal Christian, he is not speaking about being immoral. He is not speaking about being adulterers and fornicators and the like. He is using the term "worldly" or "carnal" in the same way that he would use the word "immature." So a believer is carnal when he is immature. Now if you were to use the term "carnal" to mean adulterous, practitioner of fornication and these sinful conducts, Paul would say that there is a way to deal with it and that is that you are to expel the immoral brother after you have warned him and encouraged him to change. (Inserted – actual verse—**"God will judge those outside. 'Expel the wicked man from among you.'"** – I Corinthians 5:13)

So “worldly” or “carnal” here is a synonym for “immaturity.” Well how do you get from “immaturity” to “maturity”? Because Paul said that whereas he deliberately intended to speak to them no more than of Christ Jesus and him crucified, he did say however that normally he did speak a message of wisdom—but it was a message of wisdom for the mature. Here it is in verse 6 of chapter 2, sandwiched between the two readings. He says, **“We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. No, we speak of God’s secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began.”** (Inserted – I Corinthians 2:6-7)

So Paul is making this declaration, “We have a message of wisdom that we speak normally to the mature. When I was with you however, knowing of your immaturity, I chose to ‘dumb myself down’ to speak no more to you than the elementary things of our faith—Jesus Christ and him crucified.” And then he said, “The reason I chose to do this is that you were—and you still are—“carnal” or immature.” Now what is the condition then in which believers remain immature... remain carnal, unskilled in the word of God? Paul said, “This should not be.”—because enough time had passed. Well let me show you another reading and then we will pull it together. This one is from Hebrews, chapter 6, and here he says... well let’s go back just a verse or two in chapter 5, verse 12. He says, “For when for the time,” I’m reading now from the King James, **“For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern good and evil.”** And then he says this remarkable next verse, **“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.”** (Inserted – Hebrews 5:12-6:3)

Wow, this is amazing! This is how the NIV puts the same thing: **“Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity,”** (Inserted – Hebrews 6:1a) So you see, the reason that some people who, when for the time they ought to be teachers, still have need for foundational things is because so many believers have never been taught the elementary things. Paul says, “Before you can go on to maturity you must at least have grasped the elementary things.” Now the word “elementary” does not mean “simple” or “unnecessary”. You go to elementary school when you are a child because you are to learn the sounds of letters. And then you are to learn how to blend the sounds of letters together to make words. While you are in elementary school you are also exposed to numbers and a familiarity with basic concepts associated with numbers.

When you go on to graduate school, you no longer “sound out” how words should sound. I remember when my son was a very small boy he would be studying his alphabet and he would put the word “c-a-t” for “cat” and then he could see a “c” sound, an “a” sound and a “t” sound. These were individual letters but when they sounded together... and I remember his mother would say—when he had difficulty getting the sounds right—his mother would say, “Sound it out, Nick. Sound it out.” And if he would sound all the letters out he would get the whole word.

So in elementary school you are exposed of course to how these letters relate to form words, how numbers relate to form concepts of mathematics and so on. Now my son is about to be in graduate school and he doesn't have to sound his words out anymore. He knows. But if he had never gone to elementary school he could not go on to maturity. I remember how sad it was some time ago when I was in a meeting and I asked this man to read a verse of Scripture and he said things like, “Oh, I forgot my glasses.” And we said, “That's fine.” And we went on to the next person. Well later on he came up to me and he said, “I have to repent to you.” And I said, “Why?” He said, “I really didn't forget my glasses, I left them at home because you see I don't know how to read.” I said, “Well, that's sad.” He said, “When I was a boy we had hard times at home and I had to learn to work early and I didn't have time to go to elementary school so that's why I didn't learn how to read.”

If you have never learned how to sound things out—if you've never been to elementary school—you cannot go on to certain aspects of your maturity. And the same thing is true about being a believer. Exactly the same thing is true about your walk with God and frankly one of the reasons why there are so many people who are carnal—which means, in Scripture, who are immature, they are unskilled, they've been believers long enough to have been teachers, to be able to instruct others but because no one ever schooled them in the elementary things, the elements of the faith, the things that will always be in the foundations of your belief—they have not gone on to maturity. And brethren, the church is filled to overflowing with the carnal believer. Rarely do we meet someone who has any maturity in the things of God and the evidence is that the moment there is conflict and discord, people toss off all of the religious pretences and they go after each other with the same fervor and zeal as they would have almost as if they didn't know Christ.

What is this all about? Paul lists six things... six things that he calls the elementary doctrines and here they are: the first is “repentance from acts that lead to death.” The second is “faith toward God.” The third is “baptisms.” The fourth is “the laying on of hands.” The fifth is “the resurrection of the dead,” and the sixth is “eternal judgment.” Fascinating, because these are the foundations—the elementary things—that you ought to get. What are they again? They are: repentance from acts that lead to death. They are: faith toward God, baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment. Every believer should have a complete mastery of these six things but

the sad truth is that for most of you listening right now, this may have been the very first time that you have even heard that there were these six things. Is it any wonder that the church is filled with people who “when for the time they ought to be teachers still have need for milk,” that they are unskilled in the Word and as a result they are carnal.

You may not have thought of yourself as a carnal Christian because your way of thinking of carnal Christian might be “Christians who live in adultery, Christians who practice fornication...” Well listen, that’s not what the Bible talks about. Christians who live in adultery and practice fornication have serious spiritual troubles and desperately need correction and instruction in righteousness. The majority of Christians are carnal simply because they have never been schooled in the elementary doctrines. So in this series of messages it is my intention to walk you through what the Scriptures have to say about the elementary doctrines and I would like to introduce the first of them today which is: repentance from acts that lead to death. Now, just to define the terms, repentance simply means “to turn from,” “to change direction.” “Dead works” is pretty much what it says in the Scriptures: works that have activities that have no life in them.

Well why should we repent of dead works and what are dead works? The fact is that when you were born again the Scriptures make it very plain that there were works that God had prepared in advance for you to walk in. The book of Ephesians brings this out in Ephesians, chapter 2. In Ephesians, chapter 2, the writer says that there were works that God prepared in advance for you to walk in. (Inserted – actual verse—**“For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” – Ephesians 2:10**)

When you are saved it is the intention of the Lord to bring you through many things and to reconcile you to God’s purposes for you, which God knew before you were born. Dead works have to do with those things that you may do that are religious in nature but have no purpose; it is not what God is inspiring you to do. Now the enemy has a way of entrapping your soul in dead works. Every one of us knows this phenomenon of never feeling like you have done enough, never feeling like you are good enough. The enemy hopes that you will try to find God and walk with God through all that you can do, or think you can do for God, because he knows down that road you can never come to satisfaction on the point of when you have done “enough,” and indeed when you have even done the will of God.

So what the enemy does is that he brings back your failings from the past to match up with your sense of failing in the present. And in this way he keeps you always off balance so that you can never feel that you can rise above the entrapment that “works,” and “working your way to God” will present to you. Moreover, when you feel that you cannot match up to God’s expectations of you, the thoughts that used to plague you from before come back. Anyone who feels that his call or his duty is to please God by his

works will come to the place where he knows that he is not doing what he should. But if you've tried all that you know to do, and that's not enough, and the alternative is that God is angry at you, where do you go from there?

The answer is that many people turn back to the things that they have found to be convenient for the distraction or the diversions that got them through another day or got them through another night. And when you go back to that you open once again to the enemy the opportunity to "beat you up." For example, if—before you were a believer—you dealt with problems of inadequacy and unworthiness through sexual activity, and when you were an unbeliever you were trapped in a cycle of pornography, what the enemy would do is that he would remind you of that when you now again feel inadequate and if you are open to it he will reintroduce that spirit to you.

Repentance from acts that lead to death is a way of canceling your association with the former life, with the way you used to be, so that, if the enemy in fact is resident within you—if an evil spirit has gained a foothold in you—by repenting from acts that lead to death you have now the freedom to expel that spirit and to continue to pursue your place in God. If you had learned this elementary doctrine, you wouldn't have to defend the fact that believers may have demonic spirits living in them that are controlling their emotions in certain areas.

Frankly the evangelical church doesn't deal with that. They say, "Well, the Holy Spirit cannot dwell in the same place where an evil spirit dwells and because, when you are a believer you have the Holy Spirit, you as a believer cannot also have a demonic spirit." They are only partially right, but the part in which they are wrong is hugely important. It is true that the Holy Spirit lives in you when you are saved and it is true that the Holy Spirit and an evil spirit will not dwell in the same place. Both things are true but what is also true is that the demonic spirit does not live in you in the same place where the evil spirit lives, because you have a spirit, you have a soul and you have a body. So says **I Thessalonians, chapter 5, verse 23. (Inserted – actual verse—"May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.")**

So the evil spirit does not live in your spirit, that's the residence of the Holy Spirit. By contrast the evil spirit lives in the soul. When you discover that an evil spirit has taken control of your emotions there really is only one way to deal with it and that is: to repent... to repent. When you repent, that spirit no longer has the right to dwell in you so when you repent, you then expel that spirit and you retake that emotion. But if you never learned that God has a particular purpose for you and He lives in you by His Spirit to accomplish that purpose—if you never learn that—then your whole life will be consumed with trying to please God, trying to "do enough," trying to do the "right thing," and you will invariably come to the place again and again where you know you are not doing

enough and where you know that you are not doing the right thing.

And when that's so, your enemy will tempt you with the same things he tempted you with before you were a believer and when he ties the present with your past, he will manage to convince you that you really have not changed and you are not a new creation. When you give in to that temptation he will simply "come back" where previously he used to be and was expelled. When the house is cleaned and swept it must be occupied by the Holy Spirit or the spirits that left will come back and they will bring more than the ones that left to secure that territory with greater permanence. (Inserted – actual verse—**“‘When an evil spirit comes out of a man, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. Then it says, ‘I will return to the house I left.’ When it arrives, it finds the house unoccupied, swept clean and put in order. Then it goes and takes with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that man is worse than the first. That is how it will be with this wicked generation.”** – Matthew 12:43-45)

If you were taught from the beginning that you can and you should repent from acts that lead to death, you would have always known that not only can the Christian have a demon spirit living in their souls, but you would have always known that by repenting of that control, that area of sin in your life, that you could get rid of the demon. And deliverance would not be somebody's special ministry, deliverance would be what people do all the time to themselves and for one another so that the body of Christ would walk in the freedom and the peace of hearing God and operating in the Spirit.

And, you see, it is not a shame to have a demon living in you. "It is only a shame," as someone said, "to have a demon living in you that you won't get rid of." People want you to believe that it is such a huge religious thing. It is an elementary thing; it's a very basic thing. Now what we want to do is to pursue each of these six things with greater detail. We've begun with the first: repentance from acts that lead to death. When you do, you cancel the right of your enemy to operate in your life and when you do, you acknowledge that God has a particular purpose for you and you are here to live out that purpose. I'm Sam Soleyn, join me as we continue to discuss the elementary doctrines of Christ.

Scripture References:

I Corinthians 2:1,
2 I Corinthians 3: 1-3
I Corinthians 5: 13
I Corinthians 2: 6-7
Hebrews 5: 12-6: 3
Ephesians 2: 10

I Thessalonians 5: 23

Matthew 12: 43-45