

The Basic Doctrines of Christianity

Repentance

The six basic doctrines stated in Hebrews are often referred to as foundational doctrines.

Why is this?

Ephesians 2:19-22 [NIV] *“Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow-citizens with God’s people and members of **God’s household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.** In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.”*

Jesus Christ is the cornerstone that holds together the whole foundation.

1 Corinthians 3:10-11 [NIV] *“By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should be careful how he builds. **For no-one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.**”*

Jesus Christ is the only foundation on which we can build a Christian life.

Luke 6:46-48 [NIV] *“Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say? I will show you what he is like **who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice.** He is like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When the flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built.”*

Jesus Christ is that rock we are to build on.

Matthew 16:13-18 [NIV] *“When **Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, ‘Who do people say the Son of Man is?’** They replied, ‘Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.’” “But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?” **Simon Peter answered, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’** Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. **And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.**”*

The rock on which the Christian church is built is the understanding that Jesus is the Christ [Messiah – our Saviour] that was given to Peter by God, not Peter himself, coming to a logical conclusion.

“Peter” – Greek “*pētrōs*” – a piece of rock – a pebble.

“Rock” – on which church is built – Greek “*pētra*” – a massive rock.

Romans 9:33 [NIV] *“As it is written: “See, I lay in Zion a stone that causes men to stumble and **a rock that makes them fall, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame.**”*

Referring to Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 2:4-8 [NIV] *“As you come to him, the living Stone, rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him, you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For in Scripture it says: “See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame.” Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, **“The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone,”** and, “A stone that causes men to stumble and a rock*

that makes them fall.” They stumble because they disobey the message — which is also what they were destined for.”

We are to build individually and as a church on this rock “*pětra*” which is Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ is directly involved in each of these foundational doctrines and is central to all we are to believe.

2 Peter 3:18 [NIV] *“But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever! Amen.”*

Growth is not an option.

The Christian Bible teaches that there are serious consequences for **not** growing spiritually.

Hebrews 5:13-14 [NIV] *“Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.”*

These are Christians who have been converted to Christianity for up to 30 years.

By now they really did need to be teachers of others, but the pity is that they still need to hear and study the “*ABC’s*” of Christianity.

1 Corinthians 3:1-9 [NIV] *“Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual 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 quarrelling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere men? For when one says, “I follow Paul,” and another, “I follow Apollos,” are you not mere men? What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe, as the Lord has assigned to each his task. I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to his own labour. For we are God’s fellow-workers; you are God’s field, God’s building.”*

Paul had the same problem with some converted Christians in Corinth. As “God’s fellow workers” they should have been planting and watering the “seeds” of the gospel message in the minds of others so God could give growth to His Kingdom.

1 Corinthians 3:10-15 [NIV] *“By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should be careful how he builds. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man’s work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames.”*

What is the quality of the testimony that our lives show, that others may be attracted to it and enquire what makes us different? What is the hope in our lives that gives us the inner joy, even in times of trial?

“The day” refers to the judgement day when we will all stand before Jesus Christ and He will ask:

“What did you accomplish in your life to increase My Kingdom, by allowing the Holy Spirit to work in and through you to others, to bring them to repentance?”

Will our life works, our testimony withstand the “fire” of such a burning question?

The solid food that all Christians should be imbibing is only available to them by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

John 16:13 [NIV] *“But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.”*

It is the Holy Spirit who leads us into all truth, including the “meaty” truths that we need to mature.

1 Corinthians 2:9-14 [NIV] *“However, as it is written: “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him”, but **God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God.** For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man’s spirit within him? In the same way no-one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words. **The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.**”*

Only with the Holy Spirit in us will we be able to understand and explain spiritual concepts.

Luke 12:11-12 [NIV] *“When you are brought before synagogues, rulers and authorities, do not worry about how you will defend yourselves or what you will say, for the **Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say.**”*

The Holy Spirit will put the words of our testimony into our mind.

Revelation 12:11 [NIV] *“They [Christians] overcame [the blinding influence] of him [Satan – see v9] by the blood of the Lamb [Jesus Christ] **by the word of their testimony.**”*

By expressing the hope we have in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and the change accepting the promises of God has made in our lives will draw others to follow Jesus Christ, become His disciples. Thus fulfilling our commission.

How do we come to this position of maturity?

Learn and act on these foundational doctrines of Christianity then move on to maturity as the Holy Spirit leads and empowers us.

Repentance

Hebrews 6:1 [NIV] *“... repentance **from** acts that lead to death ...”*

The Greek word translated “repentance” is “mētanoia” which means to think differently, a change of mind, to begin to think like God thinks and not as the world, society, thinks.

Romans 12:2 [NIV] *“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but **be transformed by the renewing of your mind.** Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is, his good, pleasing and perfect will.”*

Transformation or making new our thought patterns.

Philippians 3:3-8 [NIV] *“For it is we who are the circumcision, **we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh,** though I myself have reasons for such confidence. If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness,*

faultless. But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ”

The problem these Hebrew Christians had was they were still looking to “works” and not to Jesus Christ for salvation from sin and acceptance by God.

Paul having lived the life of a Pharisee, was faultless in legalistic righteousness.

Yet he considered all these fruits of his previous life as rubbish compared to knowing Jesus Christ and depending on what He has done for us, through His birth, life, death and resurrection.

Paul looked on all his previous life as rubbish.

What could be “confidence in the flesh”?

We do have equivalents.

A person could be baptised as a baby or as an adult, confirmed in the Church of England and joined a church fellowship, and consider that all of this is going to give them favour in God’s eyes.

This could mean any work we may do in our local church which we think will endear us to God.

Another interesting aspect of repentance is it refers to repentance “from” **not** repentance “to” some other form of works.

There is no inference of having to do certain things before we can be saved.

The first thing needed to be saved, and it is sufficient in itself, is that we come to a realisation that we are **not** worthy.

We can offer nothing to God, **we have no bargaining power with God.**

That is repentance.

Repentance is a renunciation of all that we thought would save us.

We have to believe we are saved by the death of Jesus Christ alone.

It being a substitute for our own deserved death, because of our rebellious and sinful life.

Not many people really believe this, they may say they do, then insist that we need to have “works” to show it.

Romans 2:4 [NIV] “Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realising that God’s kindness leads you towards repentance?”

It is God’s kindness that leads us to this true repentance, change of mind.

John 16:8 [NIV] “When He [the Holy Spirit] comes He will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin...”

The Holy Spirit in this way leads us to true repentance.

2 Corinthians 7:10 [NIV] “Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death.”

Sorrow that is focussed on the pain that our sins have caused God will lead to salvation.

King David knew this type of sorrow.

Psalms 51:4 [NIV] *“Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are proved right when you speak and justified when you judge.”*

All sin is against God.

The sins that David had committed were with Bathsheba, by committing adultery and with Uriah her husband by indirectly murdering him.

But David realised both sins were against God, a rebellion against God’s way of love.

Hebrews 6:4-6 [NIV] *“It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age, if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance, because to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace.”*

The word “once” – Greek “hapax” suggests a certain absoluteness and finality, incapable of repetition.

“Enlightened” – Greek “phōtizō” made to see. This is referring to an understanding of true repentance.

If they, apostasy, reject and disown Jesus Christ as our only path to salvation, never again can they be brought back to true repentance.

Jesus Christ died once for all He will **not** be crucified again.

Romans 6:9-10 [NIV] *“For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.”*

Jesus Christ as the Word, the Creator and Sustainer of all things and the giver of all life, only needed to make this one sacrifice that is of greater value than anything that will ever exist.

Repentance as we have just seen is the foundation on which we are to build a new life.

This is the starting point of our new life.

Any foundation is laid with the idea of building something on it.

How do we go about this building of our new life?

Hebrews 3:1, 6-15 [NIV] *“Therefore, holy brothers, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess.” ... “But Christ is faithful as a son over God’s house. And we are his house, if we hold on to our courage and the hope of which we boast. So, as the Holy Spirit says: “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion, during the time of testing in the desert, where your fathers tested and tried me and for forty years saw what I did. That is why I was angry with that generation, and I said, ‘Their hearts are always going astray, and they have not known my ways.’ So I declared on oath in my anger, ‘They shall never enter my rest.’” See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness. We have come to share in Christ if we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first. As has just been said: “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion.”*

The only way we can build on the foundation of repentance that God has given us is to continue to hear and obey the voice of God.

When God grants a person repentance, He will in that moment give them faith.

The work of the Holy Spirit never ends with bringing us to repentance.

So whenever there is repentance, there is faith.

Where there is saving faith, there is repentance.

Repentance is both a one-off experience but also an ongoing attitude of mind.