

Bible Study # 107
May 18, 1993
Mr. John Ogwyn

Hebrews 6 Series—Doctrine # 7: Going on to Perfection

Brethren, this evening we **are drawing to the conclusion of this Bible study series taken from the book of Hebrews.** To me, it seems like we've run through it awfully quickly, but this **is the seventh part in the series, going on to perfection.**

In Hebrews 6—well, let's go back and pick it up in Hebrews 5:12. Paul is writing to old-time Christians—people who had been in the Church for many years.

Hebrews 5:12, he tells us, "For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God [the very beginning, the very elemental principles of God's Word]; and you have come to need milk and not solid food." He's sort of correcting them. They had been in the Church long enough that by this time, they should have been in a position to be of help to others and able to teach others, but now they needed to actually have somebody take them back through the basics so they could really understand them. The basics were things they should have been grounded in back in the beginning.

He said they had "come to need milk and not solid food." The analogy is to the digestive system. A little child or someone, in that sense, who is immature (compared here in a spiritual sense) is not able to digest the really strong bodybuilding material. They are not able to digest meat and have need of milk. Paul is comparing, saying their spiritual digestion is very underdeveloped. That's what he's telling them.

Verse 13, "For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe." He is saying that if they are still using milk, it's because they don't have experience in really using God's Word. You see, God's Word was given to us as a means of being able to distinguish between what's appropriate and inappropriate conduct, of being able to regulate our lives in all these areas. He's bringing out that those who still need milk have not developed skills in using God's Word to regulate their lives and be able to really see things as they are.

Verse 14, "But solid food belongs to those who are of full age [those who are mature]," The word "full age/mature" is a word that we are going to notice for the doctrine that we are going through this evening. The word in the Greek language is "*telos*." In many areas, it's translated "perfect." It is a word that is used in verse 1 of Hebrews 6 when we are told about going on to perfection.

Verse 14, continuing, "...those who are of full age [those who are mature and developed spiritually] that is, those...." Now, who are "those"? Who are those that are mature and spiritually developed? —Because the doctrine we are going to focus on this evening is "going on to [advancing to that state of] spiritual maturity" or "go unto perfection," as it is in the King James Bible.

Verse 14, continuing, "...those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." So, here are people who have utilized their senses, their abilities. God has given us a mind, and they have exercised that mind to understand the truth.

Hold your place here because I want to take you to a warning that the Apostle John gave a few years later. We understand a little bit of the problem that Paul was addressing. Just hold your place here in Hebrews and let's turn back to 1 John 2

1 John 2:24-25, "Therefore let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father. And this is the promise that He has promised us—eternal life." This is why we continue.

Verse 26, "These things I have written to you concerning those who try to deceive you." So, there were those in the first century who were attempting to deceive the early Church. In fact, in 3 John, John talks about an individual who actually gained control in a local Church area and was putting out true Christians—a man by the name of Diotrephes who is mentioned in 3 John 9.

In 1 John 2:26, he is talking about those who deceive you.

Verse 27, "But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him [It]." Now, what is he talking about? This anointing or "unction," as it is sometimes translated, is a reference to the receiving of the Holy Spirit. It is a comparison of

being anointed with oil because the Spirit is compared to something that can be poured out. One verse says we have an unction of the Spirit or an anointing of the Spirit.

Notice 1 John 2.

1 John 2:20-21, “But you have an anointing [KJV, “unction”] from the Holy One, and you know all things. I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and that no lie is of the truth.” Now, when he said, “you have an unction from the Holy One, and you know all things,” he says you have an anointing; you have the indwelling of the Spirit of God, and the Spirit of God opens your mind to understand the truth.

Now understand, the problem that was creeping into the early New Testament Church is what is described as the mystery of lawlessness (KJV, “iniquity”) (2 Thessalonians 2:7). It was the mystery religion. It was based on the belief that you couldn’t understand—that the average person couldn’t expect to understand—the Scriptures and understand the truth. They said you had to have it interpreted for you. You had to have the mystery interpreted. This was the concept.

Many of you grew up in a Catholic background. Those of you who are a little older know that you were told there was no need to study the Bible. They used to stress it in the Catholic Church. ‘Look, you don’t need to bother yourselves studying the Bible. You can’t understand the Bible. The priest will tell you what you need to know.’ Those of you who came out of Catholic backgrounds—particularly some of you who are a little older—know what they have traditionally said. The only reason they don’t say it quite as emphatically today is because they have all the bright lights shining in on them. They still think that, but they don’t emphasize it quite as strongly. They used to discourage people from reading the Bible. A lot of devout Catholic families didn’t have a Bible in the house. They discouraged you from reading the Bible. Again, many of you are aware of that. This was the beginning of that sort of attitude. They said, ‘You don’t need to read the Bible; we will tell you what you need to know. You don’t need to study it; you can’t understand it anyway.’ Now, that’s not the biblical approach. That is not truth.

Obviously, that’s not what he’s talking about when he said, “you don’t need that anyone teach you.” He was, of course, doing some teaching right here. What he was talking about is the fact that when your mind is open and God is working

with your mind, you have the ability to recognize and understand the truth. If God’s Spirit is working with you, the truth makes sense. It just does, and the truth isn’t something that you can’t understand or that you can’t come up with. So, he stressed the anointing because this was already beginning to be promulgated.

You have to realize that by the time John died—less than 20 years from the time of John’s death or within about 20 years of John’s death—the Church was already gravitating toward Sunday keeping. Within 35 years of John’s death, the Sabbath observance was quickly being stamped out in the main areas that call themselves “Christians.” That’s how quickly some of those things happened. Those forces were already at work.

Verse 27, John was warning them about that and the fact that you have, “...the anointing [the receiving of the Holy Spirit] which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true,” It’s truth. The Holy Spirit is what opens your mind to understand the truth. You can understand the truth.

Now with that as the background, we come back to Hebrews 5

Hebrews 5:14, “But solid food belongs to those who are of full age [those who are mature and complete; coming to spiritual maturity and completion], that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.” In other words, they have been using their mind. God gave them a mind. They have been utilizing that mind empowered by the Holy Spirit to evaluate what they were seeing and hearing and compare it with the Scriptures.

Years ago, Mr. Herbert Armstrong ran an article on education, and he had a little cartoon drawn to illustrate the article. This cartoon emphasized and really illustrated—a picture is worth a thousand words and a good cartoonist can capture an entire article or essay in one picture—students in a classroom sitting in their desks. They all had a little hole on the top of their heads, and the teacher was coming around with a funnel, sticking the funnel on the top of their heads and pouring knowledge in. —Just sort of pouring it in, just funneling it into their heads. They were just sitting there, little automatons, and everything was being poured in.

That illustrates, of course, a lot of their approach, but that’s not the approach God wants if we are ever going to come to spiritual maturity. Rather, we have those who are of full age. Those who

come to spiritual maturity are “those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.” They’ve made a habit of exercising their senses—exercising their mind—guided by the Spirit of God to discern good and evil. They compare what they hear, what they see and life’s situations and circumstances with which they deal, and things that they encounter. They compare those things to the Scriptures and are able, then, to develop a spiritual maturity—a spiritual mind.

A carnal mind looks for loopholes. ‘What can I get out of doing this? What is it that I don’t have to do? What kind of trouble will I get into if I don’t do this? What kind of trouble will I get into if I do this? I wonder, what they’ll do about it if they find out?’ That’s a carnal approach. It’s not a spiritually-minded approach.

A spiritually-minded approach is a matter of searching the Scriptures and trying to understand and discern what the will of God is. What would God have us do? God doesn’t spell out everything—‘Thou shall and thou shall not.’ He spells out a number of basic things, but many things God illustrates by examples. You can go through, read examples and find certain actions and approaches that pleased God, and God praised them. And you can find other actions and approaches that didn’t please God and brought evil consequences. We are given insight into the mind of God.

As we go through life, we combine education and experience. That is what the Christian life is. You could compare it to somebody just coming out of college that got an education. Maybe they have been studying engineering. Well, that’s great, but they have never engineered anything. Maybe they have been studying civil engineering, but they have never built anything. Maybe they’ve never had any practical hands-on experience. All the knowledge and information that they’ve gained in college is great, but if they combine it with practical work in the field over a period of years, the combination of utilizing that knowledge in a practical way deepens it, and they’re able to apply it in practical situations. They grow in their ability, and they get to a point where they’re not only capable of carrying things out without a lot of supervision, but they are in a position to explain to others and offer advice because they have the combination of knowledge plus practical experience.

That’s what mature Christianity ought to be. We gain basic knowledge as we read the Scriptures and as we live and apply them to our day-to-day life circumstances—in our marriage, in our

family, on our job, in our relationship with our neighbors, in our day-to-day life and in all the things that come up, issues that arise. We search the Scriptures and are able to apply Scriptural principles. Over a period of years, we ought to develop that mature experience that God is talking about right here.

Hebrews 6:1-2, Paul then goes on to say, “Therefore, leaving [or, “going on from”] the discussion [the first words] of the elementary principles of Christ [KJV, “the doctrine of Christ”], let us go on to perfection [let us go on to maturity and completion as a Christian], not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works [If you don’t know what sin is, what the law is and the role of sin and the law, you have to go back to the beginning.] and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.”

These things provide a basis. Then we need to go on to perfection. We need to go on to perfection! As I mentioned, this term “perfection” used here comes from the Greek word “*telos*” which has to do with “the end,” in the sense of “an end result, of working toward an end, working toward a goal, a completion with a specific end in view.” That’s sort of the concept. The “*telos*” is the concept of “end,” not in the sense that it’s over with or that it’s finished, so much as it is that a specific goal or a specific thing has been accomplished.

We’ll notice some places that the word is used and the context. Let’s notice in Colossians 3.

Colossians 3:13-14, “bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection.” What is the thing that binds together spiritual maturity and completion? —Love. So, if we are going on to perfection, that is certainly going to involve the matter of love.

Let’s go on. We have a lot to cover if we are going to get this concept in full perspective.

John 4:34, “Jesus said to them, ‘My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work.’” —To bring to the desired end and completion. Not just get it over with, but to bring it to the desired end and completion. “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work.” If we are really following Christ, our desire is to finish the work of God. We are not to be indifferent toward really carrying out the commission that God has laid out. Jesus Christ said, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent

Me, and to finish [to bring to the desired completed result] His work.”

John 17:4, “I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do.” The specific work that Jesus Christ was to accomplish as a human being, He brought to the desired result. He didn’t just come to quitting time and punch out.

That’s the concept a lot of people have with being finished. The whistle blows; they think it’s quitting time. ‘I’m ready to punch out.’ They may not have gotten the job done, but that doesn’t matter. It’s quitting time. That’s not the perspective that we’re to have in terms of finishing the Work. That’s not the “finish” that Christ had in mind. It’s not a matter of just getting to quitting time; it’s a matter of bringing to the desired result.

Christ brought through what was given to Him to do as a human being. Now He has been working through His people down through the centuries. God has a Work that is to be completed, and it will be completed—no question. The only question that ever arises is: What will be our role as individuals? Will we be a part of what God finishes?

Romans 9:28, he says, “For He will finish the work and cut it short in righteousness, because the Lord will make a short work upon the earth.” God’s going to make a short work. He’s going to cut it short in righteousness and it’s going to be finished.

It’s what you read of in Matthew 24.

Matthew 24:14, He clearly prophesied, “And this gospel of the kingdom [the same gospel Jesus Christ brought] will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.” It’s not a matter of, ‘Well, maybe that will happen; maybe it won’t.’ No, it’s going to happen. It’s clearly prophesied and directed that it will happen. The only thing that’s ever at issue is our role as individuals, and part of that centers around our desire and our fervency to bring to completion what God has called us to do.

Notice Paul’s approach. Some think they already have it made. I grew up in the Baptist Church and remember, years ago, one of the things that was a defining doctrine of the Baptist Church was “once saved, always saved.” Some of you who were Baptist are aware of that. Well, Paul didn’t believe that doctrine. If you really understand *when* you are saved, then that is true.

Verse 13, “But he who endures to the end shall be saved.” So, once you’ve endured to the end

and have been changed to spirit at the resurrection, you will always be saved once you’ve been saved in the full and complete sense.

Philippians 3:12, Paul says, in terms of our present circumstance, “Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected [Paul says, ‘I am not complete; God’s not through with me yet, and I know that I have not already attained.’]; but I press on [I am pursuing something.], that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.” He says, ‘I am pursuing an end. There is a goal in mind that I am pursuing, and I desire to apprehend that.

Verses 13-15, “Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended [Paul says, ‘I don’t kid myself that I’ve already made it.’]; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Therefore let us, as many as are mature [KJV, “perfect”] [coming to maturity and completion], have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you.” The emphasis here, as we find, is a direction, a course of conduct.

Now, let’s look at what this end involves and what it is we are to be attaining.

Hebrews 2:9-11, “But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower [or, temporarily lower] than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone. For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the author of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren...”

God is using Him to bring many sons to glory. That’s our destiny, as sons of God, to inherit in the Family of God, to inherit God’s glory. We’re not going to be angels or some super-duper angels. We’re going to be part of the very Family of God, “bringing many sons to glory, to make the author of their salvation perfect [complete, brought to maturity] through sufferings.”

Jesus Christ learned in the things that He went through. He developed in that way as experiencing what’s humanity. He was in the beginning with the Father.

John 1:1-3, we are told, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with

God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.” He was the instrument of creation—the One by whom all things were made.

Philippians 2:7, He tells us, “but made [emptied] Himself...” He took upon Himself the nature of the seed of Abraham (KJV, Hebrews 2:16). He became a human being and went through life as a human being.

Hebrews 5:8-10, “though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected [being made spiritually complete and mature], He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him, called by God as High Priest ‘according to the order of Melchizedek...’”

Now, this brings us right into the very section that we are looking at. Why does God allow us as Christians to go through trials, tests and difficulties? Why hasn’t the history of the Church of God been smooth sailing all the way along—calm waters, smooth sailing? Why haven’t the lives of individual Christians just been smooth sailing? You come into the Church and, boy, everything is great because after all, you’re trying to obey God now. So, everything is smooth; you never have problems, difficulties, traumas or tragedies. No!

As God’s people, we certainly can look to God for help, strength and blessings, but we’re not insulated from the fact that we still live in Satan’s world. We are brought to spiritual completion and maturity through things that we suffer—adversities, difficulties, ups and downs that we go through and choices we have to make. “He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected [brought to completion as a human being], ...”

Now, He was perfect as God before He ever became a human being, but He elected to become human and go through life as a human being and set us an example that we should follow in His steps, showing us that it is possible. It is possible! None of us are totally, completely and perfectly yielded as Christ was. None of us have the fullness of God’s Spirit that He was given—the Spirit without measure. But He set us an example, and to the extent that we really seek to utilize God’s Spirit and following after that example, we can reap the benefits. He went through these things.

Come on down in Hebrews 7.

Hebrews 7:19, “for the law made nothing perfect; on the other hand, there is the bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God.” The law couldn’t bring us to spiritual

completion. The law, the commandments, reveals the standard. You wouldn’t know what sin was if it weren’t for the law. The law tells you what’s right and what’s wrong. Then the ceremonial law pointed us to the fact that we are sinners in need of a Savior. But that could not make us spiritually complete. But, of course, “the bringing in of a better hope,” which is what Jesus Christ did, is the means by which we can come to that completion.

Come on a little further in Hebrews 9.

Hebrews 9:8-9, speaking of the tabernacle and the ceremonial system, “the Holy Spirit indicating this, that the way into the Holiest of All [the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle and later in the temple] was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was still standing. It was symbolic for the present time in which both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make him who performed the service perfect [complete, finish] in regard to the conscience...” Those things only made a reminder.

If you want to know what part of the law was done away, it’s given in the next verse.

Verse 10, “concerned only with foods and drinks [the meat offerings; the drink offerings], various washings, and fleshly ordinances [the physical rituals] imposed until the time of reformation.” So, the only part of the law that was temporarily added was the food (KJV, “meat”) offerings, the drink offerings, the various washing and the physical rituals. Those were the parts of the law that were added until the time of reformation. All the rest of the law was still enforced and in effect. It is simply the ceremonial aspects of the law—the physical rituals, the food offerings, the drink offerings and the various ceremonial washings—those all had to do with impressing a spiritual lesson.

The food (meat) offerings and the drink offerings pointed out the fact that there was need for a Savior, that without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin (Hebrews 9:22), that the blood has to be poured out, that a life has to be slain because the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23). The various washings pointed out the fact that we are unclean and have to be washed. We are washed by “the washing of the water by the Word” (Ephesians 5:26), in a spiritual sense.

The physical rituals impressed upon us the fact that God wants things done a specific way. You can’t just do it any old way and figure God will be pleased with it. He won’t. He tells us the way He wants to be worshipped. He wants us to worship in spirit and in truth. It’s not enough just to worship God in a good attitude. Now, you

ought to worship Him in a good attitude. That's the only kind of worship that will be acceptable to God, but that's not enough. You also have to worship Him in truth—in spirit and in truth; the two go hand in hand together. The physical rituals served to emphasize the point that God wanted things done in a specific way.

Hebrews 10:1-2, “For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered?”

If those sacrifices could have brought about spiritual perfection and completion, they would have been finished. They were offered as a reminder. It was only the shed blood of Jesus Christ—the very member of the God Family that had knelt down, created the first man out of the dust of the ground, took a rib out of Him and from that fashioned the first woman, the One who breathed into Adam the breath of life and he became a living being, and the One who was the actual giver of life—whose life was worth more than the sum total of all human lives added together. So, the law was a shadow. The ceremonial law, the sacrificial law, was a shadow. It foreshadowed the things that were to come but couldn't bring about completion. They couldn't bring things to the finish.

In Hebrews 11, we go through all the men and women of faith.

Hebrews 11:39-40, it says, “And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.” – Should not be brought to completion. They obtained a good report through faith, but they've not yet received the promises. They are asleep in the grave awaiting the resurrection. “God having provided something better for us [or, foreseen some better thing for us] [the giving of His Holy Spirit] that they should not be made perfect apart from us [or, prior to us].” They would not be brought to completion because the ultimate perfection (“telos”), if you will, is in the resurrection.

That's why we read of that as we come to Hebrews 12.

Hebrews 12:22-23, it says, “But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in

heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect...”

That's what's made perfect; what's brought to completion is the spirit. We will never become completely perfect in the flesh, but our attitude can become surrendered to God. It is a process of developing an attitude of unconditional surrender to God. The spirit in man, the character that is developed—an attitude and a character of surrender to God—that is what will be brought to perfection. When we are given a spirit body at the resurrection, the temptations of the flesh are no longer there. The temptations of a corrupt society, the influence of Satan the devil, those things are no longer there. There is an attitude, a spirit that has repented and has yielded to God, has developed spiritual character, and has had the very character of God imprinted, “to the spirits of just men made perfect.”

Come on over to the book of James.

James 2:21-22, “Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect?” It was brought to completion. Faith is evidenced by action. If we believe it, we act on it. If we won't act on it, we obviously don't believe it very much. We're told here that, “by works was faith made perfect [brought through to the end; to the desired result].”

1 John 2:5, “But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected [brought through to the desired result] in him. By this we know that we are in Him.” If you keep the Word of God, then the love of God is brought to completion—to perfection. It is brought to the desired result in your life.

There are those that think, ‘Well, love is one thing and law is something else.’ And, of course, the world is filled with that approach because they don't really understand the relationship of love and law. Love is not just a feeling or an emotion. If you keep the Word of God, then God's love is brought to the desired end in your life. The Word of God and the law of God provide the channel—the directed channel—through which love can flow.

It's sort of like taming a river, if you want to look at it that way. When levees are built and channels are cleaned so the river is useable and flows in a useable way, it doesn't spread out and flood all the farmland. It's not rushing through rapids and everything in ways that just make it unusable for navigation. It flows through a channel, and the love of God flows through the

channel as the channel is given shape and definition by God's law.

Let's go on. Let's look at 1 Corinthians 14.

1 Corinthians 14:20, where Paul says, "Brethren, do not be children in understanding; however, in malice be babes, but in understanding be mature [KJV, "men"] [be perfect]." It's the same word that we've been looking at. It's rendered "men" in King James but only in the sense of being compared to children. 'Be those who are mature.' We are to have a child-like attitude in terms of guile, malice and evil motives, but in terms of understanding, in terms of comprehending, we are to be mature. God wants us to deepen and develop our level of understanding. That's what we build and develop by practicing God's Word, by applying God's Word in our lives, and by exercising our senses to discern what is appropriate and inappropriate.

Let's go to Ephesians 4.

Ephesians 4:11-15, where it says, "And He Himself gave some [talking of gifts Christ gave to the Church, to His people] to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man [to a complete spiritually developed man], to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness by which they lie in wait to deceive, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ..."

Our object in developing spiritually is to become just like Jesus Christ. He is our pattern. He's our example. And the whole reason why God instituted a ministry....

[Tape ends on side 1 and continues on side 2.]

Let's notice.

Colossians 1:26-27, "the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed [What is revealed?] to His saints. To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery [The magnitude of what this is is just incredible.] among the Gentiles [Paul was making it manifest among the Gentiles.]: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory."

We will share God's glory. We'll be filled with all the fullness of God. God is reproducing

Himself, in that sense. It's Christ *in us*! As we surrender unconditionally to God, then we are saying we want Jesus Christ to live His life in us through the power of the Holy Spirit, and we are seeking to apply the principles of God's Word. *The Bible is God's Word in print. Jesus Christ was the Word of God in the flesh—He personified the Bible.* As we yield to Him, He will live His life in us and, "Christ in us is our hope of glory" because we are developing the character and the nature that God will perpetuate forever and upon which He will pour out His glory. We will share in the glory of God. Obviously, we'll never have the wisdom, the experience or the full power that God Himself has. God the Father will always be God the Father and Jesus Christ will always be our elder Brother and our Savior. But the mystery is, "Christ in you the hope of glory."

Verses 28-29, "Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect [brought to completion; brought to the desired end] in Christ Jesus. To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily."

Paul says it takes work on our part. "To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily." You see, Christ living in us works in us in a mighty way, but we also have to labor and strive according to His working. We're "striving according to His working." It's His working *and* our working.

Now, how does that fit? Well, I dare say, everyone here has used a power tool. Whether it has been a vacuum cleaner or a power saw or whatever. You know there are two components on using a power tool. One, you have to plug it in and turn it on. If you don't do that, you're not going to get much use out of it. But if you plug it in and turn it on and just sit there and watch it, it's just going to be there. You ladies, wouldn't it be nice to turn on your vacuum cleaner and just sort of sit down in your chair and just watch it clean the house? It doesn't work that way. You have to work. You're putting forth effort, but what would all your effort accomplish if you didn't plug it in, if you didn't have power or if the power went out? Boy, you could work all day. You could work two days, a week, a month and wouldn't accomplish anything because it takes power. And it takes the power of God working in us, together with our effort in utilizing that power. You have to have the two working together.

Paul says, "To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me

mightily.” We’re putting forth our effort and it *does* take effort. You don’t build and develop holy righteous character—the very character of God—by just sort of sitting there, watching television and waiting for God to funnel it in. But you can work and put forth all the effort in the world, and if the Holy Spirit of God isn’t working in you, you’ll never do it. You’ll just beat your head against the wall because you can never do it.

So, “Christ in you is the hope of glory!” What we’re learning is to be like Him. God isn’t going to perpetuate something that is this rotten, carnal type of an attitude forever. If God perpetuated that kind of an attitude, Tomorrow’s World would be just like the world today—people trying to steal and take what their neighbor has and be violent. It would be a miserable place.

The thing that God does not instantly create is character. God is developing His nature in us—“Christ in us.”

“That we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.”—Every man brought to the desired end result of developing the character and nature of God.

Let’s look a little bit at God’s character and nature since we have seen that developing His character and nature is what God is doing. What is God’s character and nature?

Let’s go back to Matthew 5:48. God is putting His nature within us. We have to strive mightily according to His working. It takes our effort, plus God who is doing it. God makes it possible, but our effort has to be put forth as well.

Matthew 5:48 says, “Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.” We are to become like God, having His character and His nature. We are to come to the end result of having the very nature and character of God. We are to become like Him.

Now, let’s see a little bit about what that means. We are to become like God; we are to have His character, His nature. How do we do that?

Let’s notice in 1 John.

1 John 4:8, “He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.” God is love. That is the statement of the very essence, of the very nature, of God because God is love.

Go down to 1 John 5.

1 John 5:2-3, “By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.” *Love is channeled through and by the law of God.* “We know that we love the children of God

when we love God and when we keep His commandments.’ The starting point to love your neighbor is to love God because if you love God, truly you will love your neighbor who is made in the image of God. The basis of respect for the sanctity of human life is the realization that human beings are made in the image of God. So, we love God and keep His commandments. “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.” If we are going to become like our Father in heaven, having His nature inscribed in us, then the very essence of God’s nature is love, and that love is expressed through God’s law.

Romans 13:8-10, “Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, ‘You shall not commit adultery,’ ‘You shall not murder,’ ‘You shall not steal,’ ‘You shall not bear false witness,’ ‘You shall not covet,’ and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.”

What is Paul quoting from in verse 9? He is quoting from the Ten Commandments.

Matthew 22:36-40, Christ said when He was asked, “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?” Jesus said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.” This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”

Here we have them summarized. The last part of the commandments, we are told, are summarized by the statement, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” So, when Christ summarized God’s law as love to God and love to neighbor, that was a summary of the Ten Commandments. The Ten Commandments tell you how to love God and how to love your neighbor. Love is the fulfilling of the Law. Real love carries out that Law.

It’s not real love to run off with your neighbor’s wife. ‘Oh, but you know, we were in love.’ No, you may have been in *lust*. You used to see some of the old “hippy” bumper stickers, “Make love, not war.” Well, of course, what were they talking about? They were talking about fornication. That’s what they were equating with love. That’s not love. Love is fulfilling of the law. They said, ‘Oh, we are making love, not making war.’ No,

they were making illegitimacy; they were making venereal diseases, and now they are making AIDS. They are making all sorts of heartaches and headaches. They are making tragedy and pain. Oh, it may be “the pleasures of sin for a season” (KJV, Hebrews 11:25), but the consequences as you go on through life is a lot of heartaches and headaches.

Love is the fulfilling of the law. Real love follows through on the principles of God’s law and this brings us to the complete reflection of the very nature of God.

“Going on to perfection” means “being brought to the end result that God has in mind for us.” It means God is making us to be like Him so He can share life with us in His Family forever.

When you go to Genesis 1, you read how God made the fish after the fish kind, the birds after the bird kind and the cattle after the cattle kind. When it comes to man, He didn’t say, ‘Let’s make man after the monkey kind.’

Genesis 1:26, “Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness, ...’” Man was made in the outward similitude of God. God has a spiritual body; we have a natural body, a physical body as brought out in 1 Corinthians 15.

The “image” and the “likeness”—if you go back and look up it up in the Hebrew, you will find that they are two separate words. One has to do with “the outward” and the other with “the inward.” In other words, we are not merely made in the outward similitude of God (which we are); we are also made with a capacity that is God-like, in the sense of being able to reason and have a concept of spiritual things.

God has put a spirit in man that sets apart the human mind from merely the animal brain. There is a capacity for communion with God, a relationship with God and the development of righteous character. God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness.” Man was made after the God kind—not made of spirit, but of matter, made of the ground, made where he is mortal and temporary.

Man is made with free moral agency where he can choose because the essence of building holy righteous character is having the ability to choose. God didn’t make robots and automatons that were simply programmed and had to react and respond a certain way. God has given us a capacity to make choices. That’s why we have to voluntarily surrender to God. God will work through circumstances to bring us to that point, but we ultimately have to exercise choice.

Let’s go back to the book of Hebrews, once again, as we understand that we are to become like God, which is what going on to perfection involves.

Hebrews 1:1-3, “God, who at various times and in different ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person [His character], and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high...” He was made “the express image of His person.”

Let’s go back to Matthew 22, and I want to show you what the word “image” means. The word is “*eikon*” in the Greek language, “e-i-k-o-n.” In Matthew 22, we find another place the word is used. In Matthew 22:17, the Pharisees showed Him the money, wanting to know if it was lawful to pay taxes to Caesar.

Matthew 22:19-21, He told them, “‘Show Me the tax money.’ So they brought Him a denarius. And He said to them, ‘Whose image and inscription is this?’ They said to Him, ‘Caesar’s.’” It was Caesar’s image on there. That’s what this word meant.

Hebrews 1:3, “who being the brightness of His glory and the express image [the stamp impress of the very character of God] of His person [the very stamp, the express image, the stamp impress of God’s very character, of His nature], ...” *So Jesus Christ perfectly reflected the essential character and nature of God.* He was the stamp impress of that nature.

Romans 8:29, we’re told, “For whom He foreknew [that’s us], He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.” God predestined that Jesus Christ would be the firstborn among many brethren.

Colossians 1:18, we are told He is, “...the firstborn from the dead...” He was destined to be the firstborn among many brethren because there are going to be *many* who will come up. I Corinthians 15 and other places shows us this.

What does it say here?

Romans 8:29, “For whom He foreknew [He determined ahead of time—God knew ahead of time that He would call out a people and He foreknew us collectively in the sense that He would call out a people.], He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son [His whole purpose for calling out a people was to

conform them to the image of His Son.], that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.”

He was bringing many sons into glory (Hebrews 2:10). Jesus Christ came as the author (KJV, “captain”) of our salvation (Hebrews 2:10)—the One who set the pace. He bore the stamp impress of the very character and nature of God and what God is doing in us. His purpose is that we “conform to the image of His Son,” that we be molded and fitted and fashioned to being just like Jesus Christ who was the stamp impress of the very character of God. So, we are to be developing—going on to perfection is developing holy, righteous character, developing the very character of the very nature of God—God’s character in us.

1 Corinthians 15:49, “And as we have borne the image [or, iconic] of the man of dust [speaking of Adam], we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man.” In the resurrection, we are going to be changed into spirit.

Verse 44, “It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.” We are going to be raised a spiritual body. God can create a spiritual body “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye” (v. 52). We don’t understand how that occurs, but through the power of His Holy Spirit, this mortal flesh is energized and transformed into the most elemental constituent of the whole universe—a spirit—which is the essence from which energy originates. Spirit comes from God. God can create a spiritual body from a natural body “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.” That’s what we are told in 1 Corinthians 15 and in 1 Thessalonians 4.

But creating a spiritual mind is not something that is done “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.” That’s something that is done throughout the Christian life. It takes our cooperation and effort because it involves the development of spiritual, holy, righteous character.

“And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man.” God is changing and transforming us. He is converting us.

2 Corinthians 3:18 tells us, “But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

Remember in James 1, God compares looking into the perfect law of liberty like looking into a mirror.

James 1:23-25, he says, “For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a

man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.”

It’s like looking into a mirror. You see yourself, immediately forget what you saw and go your way. That’s of no value. We look and what we are seeing is the reflection—our reflection—compared with the reflection of Jesus Christ. When you look into the Bible, it’s like a spiritual mirror. You are seeing your actions, your behavior and your choices compared with the Word of God.

2 Corinthians 3:18, “But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory,” It’s progressive. We grow reflecting to a greater and greater extent the nature and the character of God. We do so, “with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image [We are changed into the same image; we are being made like Him.] from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.” Progressively, we undergo a transformation. That’s what “going on to perfection” is all about.

Let’s conclude in the book of Colossians.

Colossians 3:1, “If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above,” Now, you know that we are risen with Christ, in the sense that when you come up out of the watery grave of baptism, that prefigures your coming out of the literal grave at the resurrection. You are baptized for the hope of the dead—the resurrection. You are baptized, looking beyond this physical life to the resurrection from the dead. So, figuratively, when you come out of the watery grave of baptism, it’s like being risen with Christ.

Verse 1, “If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.” In other words, we ought to have a godly set of priorities.

Verse 2-4, “Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.” We will be transformed.

1 Corinthians 15:49, “And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man.”

Colossians 3:5-10, “Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth [put to death the old ways of living]: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire [rotten desires, dirty thoughts and desires], and covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, in which you also once walked when you lived in them. But now you must also put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him...”

We are being changed through knowledge of learning the will of God, being “renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him.” We are to become like God.

Colossians 1:27, “...Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

In Hebrews 5:12, Paul explains to those whom he was writing the letter that they were at a point where they ought to be teachers. They ought to be able to help others to understand, and, yet, he found himself at that point (about 60-61 A.D.) having to go back and stress basic, elemental things because somehow or another they had not shown the spiritual sturdiness and depth that they should have. He said, ‘I shouldn’t have to go back and spend my time emphasizing the foundation. You ought to be concentrating on going to perfection.’

Going to perfection is built on the foundation. You can’t go on to perfection until you lay the foundation. That’s what the Christian life is all about. The foundation gives you your perspective. Then as you live and put things into practice in your life—day by day, week by week, month by month—you develop godly character. God develops it in us through the Holy Spirit, but it takes our cooperation and our effort. Paul talked about that. He ‘strived mightily according to the working that was working in him’ (Colossians 1:29). God does it, but we have our part to play, too. You can’t have one without the other.

People get into semantics. ‘Do we build character or does God build character in us?’ I guess you could say God builds it in us with our active cooperation. It takes our active cooperation to build it, and it takes God’s power to build it. The purpose of the Christian life is to learn how to handle life in a godly way—putting the Bible into action in our lives, putting away

the old ways. The essence of it is a different set of priorities.

Colossians 3:2, that’s why it says, “Set your mind [KJV, “affection”] on things above, not on things on the earth.” When what is important to us is to fit in with the world, we will never build godly character.

James 4:4, if what’s really important to us is to fit in with the world and be accepted by the world, then, “...Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.” You can’t fit in with the world and fit in with God at the same time because the world is not conformed to the image of God. The world takes its conformity from the god of this world—Satan the devil, which is a different set of priorities and values.

We are to set our affection on things above and then actively follow through, exercise our mind and our senses to take and process things in our lives, compare these things and take God’s Word and apply these principles in our lives. As we do all of those things, we have the basis of Christian growth and development. We have the basis of going on to perfection and completion—God bringing us to the result that He has called us for—the purpose of producing in our lives. We have the anticipation of sharing life with Him and being a part of His Family on into eternity.

You and I can’t even begin to fully grasp and comprehend what all is involved in that. God whets our appetite with it and lays out these principles. These are things we must grab hold of and never turn loose because it is the essence of our calling.

Well, with that, we have completed this series that we have been going through. We will look forward to whatever we will start next time.

I won’t be able to be with you this Sabbath, but, God willing, I’ll be with you the following Sabbath—the Pentecost weekend—both for the Sabbath and for Pentecost. So, I look forward to seeing you then.

Good night.