

Going on to Maturity

Faith and Obedience ó an Issue of the Heart
WOK Conference 2015

Hebrews 6:1 Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection [Lit., go on to a state of completeness; to maturity] **not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, 2 of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. 3 And this we will do if God permits.**

Going on to maturity is the overall topic in my two messages for our conference this year. In this first message we will look at how *faith* and *obedience* are inseparable when it comes to spiritual maturity, and in the second message we will look at how obedience to the faith through the renewing of the mind brings about the *inward change* to which God desires (and frankly expects) His children to attain. In our maturity, our goal is to become like Christ ó to be conformed to His image, the very image in which man was originally created, that very image which was lost through Adam's sin. I hope by the end of these two messages, each of us will be a step closer to understanding what it takes to get there.

So for now, let's consider our opening passage in Hebrews. The author of Hebrews says: "Let us go on to maturity! And this we will do, *if God permits.*" While God is the One Who does or does not permit an individual to go on to maturity, His allowing or not allowing is quite dependent upon what that individual does with His Word. Shortly we will see that in the text preceding this passage the author reveals that going from spiritual immaturity to maturity takes both faith *and* obedience on the part of a saved individual. These are the concepts that we will be considering in this message, so let's begin by looking at some of the meanings of the words in this passage and then we'll look at the context of this passage.

Essentially, the author states that in order to go on from immaturity to maturity a Christian would have to *leave the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ*. Verses in chapter five leading up to this passage in chapter six, reveal that the Christians to whom the author was addressing had evidently been saved for a long enough period of time that they should have moved on from elementary things. He wrote: **Hebrews 5:12 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; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. 13 For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. 14 But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.** For illustrative purposes, the author uses the physical realm in order to teach a spiritual truth. (This is often done in Scripture.) Here the author compares *milk* to *solid food*; and a *babe* to *those who are of full age*. It is expected to feed milk to babies, and solid food to those who have attained a certain amount of growth. A baby is only able to handle milk and not solid food, until a sufficient amount of time has passed, and physical growth has taken place. Eventually the baby *needs* to go on to food that is more substantive than only milk. Otherwise he will not grow and mature properly. And interestingly, the Greek word translated *babe* in v. 13 is taken from a word that shows these individuals are *not even able to speak* yet.

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The author is addressing individuals who should be able *to teach* the Word of God to others, and yet apparently that they can hardly even speak the Word! They have not gone on to solid food (in the spiritual realm); they have not spiritually grown or matured in the way they should have (or could have), and consequently they still only partake in the milk of the Word. These individuals should not only be able to *speak the Word of Christ*, they should be able *to teach it!* They should be partaking of the solid food of the Word, Scriptural food that would allow them *to discern good and evil* (discern good works from dead works), thereby going from spiritual immaturity to maturity. But instead, they have need to be taught all over again *the first principles* [the elementary things] *of the oracles of God* ó the very elementary things which the author states they would need to move away from if they are to come to full age (to maturity)!

Contextually, the reason that they could not partake of the solid food of God's Word is because they had *become dull of hearing*. In **Hebrews 5:10** the author says Jesus was: **called by God as High Priest "according to the order of Melchizedek," 11 of whom we have much to say, and hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing.** Hearing, understanding and believing óthingsö concerning Jesus having been öcalled by God as a High Priest according to the order of Melchizedekö have to do with things *beyond* the elementary principles about Christ (the milk of the Word); these things have to do with His coming into His kingdom during the Messianic Era, the Coming Age (the solid food of the Word). This is a process of growth which comes about as a result of properly *hearing* God's Word. And the author states that these things *are hard to explain because they had become dull of hearing*. Note that the difficulty in explaining these things lies in their dullness of hearing, and not in the nature of the subject itself! And as we will see in a few moments, the way in which we öhearö the Word of God becomes all important to our being able to go on to maturity. What a rebuke this passage is from God to His people, a rebuke especially applicable to the Church today, here at the end of the dispensation.

At the End of the Dispensation

We live in the time about which Paul wrote to Timothy: **I Timothy 4:1 Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, 2 speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, 3 forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.** In having departed from öthe faithö (notice that this is *articulated* faith ó *the* faith, a specific faith), some in the Church forbid teaching the truths about the picture of marriage ó that of becoming the Bride of Christ, and they don't allow the teaching as to what it takes to become the Bride of Christ ó they command abstinence from the solid food of the Word, which *God created to be received by those who believe and know the truth* about these things ó truths that would allow Christians to progress on to maturity.

And so we have a world filled with Christians who give heed to deception and false teachings; we see churches filled with Christians even further described by Paul in his second letter to Timothy: **II Timothy 3:1 But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: 2 For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, 3 unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control,**

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brutal, despisers of good, 4 traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, 5 having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away! 6 For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts, 7 always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. 8 Now as Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith; [that phrase again ó articulated faith] 9 but they will progress no further, for their folly will be manifest to all, as theirs also was [referring back to Jannes and Jambres].

Paul names two individuals here (traditionally Egyptian names) during Moses' day, using them as illustrations of *worldly* Christians within the Church who ðalways learn and are never able to come to the knowledge of the truth' in respect to 'the faith.' While this is the only place in all of Scripture where these two names are mentioned, we can know from this text that they had something to do with *resisting Moses* during his time in Egypt just prior to the exodus. Traditional Jewish writings have these two individuals as the chief magicians in Pharaoh's court who mimicked the supernatural power given to Moses in some of the ten plagues. Some ancient Jewish commentary within the Talmud (study material for the Rabbis) has these two men even leaving Egypt with the Israelites on the night of Passover, and continuing to exert wicked influence over Israel during their trek in the wilderness, their journey from Egypt to the Promised Land. While we cannot prove this from the OT Scriptures, Paul's mention of these two individuals ó at the very least ó are examples for us of *worldly* Christians (Egypt is a picture of the world) within the Church at the end of the dispensation, men who will resist the truth through mimicking truth; men who are always learning but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth ó individuals disapproved concerning *the faith* ó disapproved concerning things having to do with Jesus as having been called by God a High Priest after the order of Melchizedek, or things having to do with our becoming the Bride of Christ, things which constitute the solid food of the Word, things which allows Christians to go on to spiritual maturity. And so it is here at the end of the dispensation.

Paul goes on to contrast this type of individuals to Timothy: **II Timothy 3:10 But you have carefully followed my doctrine [Lit., teaching], manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, 11 persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra--what persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me. 12 Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. 13 But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived [contextually referring back to Jannes and Jambres ó the imposter magicians, who sought to derail the faith of Israel, likening these two to people in the Church today who would seek to derail *the faith* of Christians who are wanting to go on to maturity]. Paul then encourages Timothy: 14 But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, 15 and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. 16 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine [teaching], for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.**

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We can see here that this man of God (Timothy, who followed Paul's teaching, and who learned to *grow up from childhood* through knowing the Scriptures ó the solid food ó that would make him wise for salvation through *the faith*), is now *thoroughly equipped for every good work*. And we can know that the salvation spoken of here is *the salvation of the soul* because works are specifically mentioned in the text, which would of course be works of obedience. It is this kind of faith ó obedience to the faith ó that allows an individual to do good works that will stand the fires at the JSOC. Herein we see how faith and obedience inseparably work together! Herein we see how the Holy Scriptures make us wise to salvation (the salvation of the soul) through *the faith* which is profitable and equips us for every good work.

Let's go back to the Book of Hebrews for a moment. Just prior to the author reprimanding Christians concerning their lack of spiritual growth he wrote this of Jesus: **Hebrews 5:8 though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. 9 And having been perfected** [i.e., that is He reached His goal through obedience], **He became the author of eternal** [Lit., age-lasting] **salvation to all who obey Him...** Jesus is not only the way and means of the free gift of salvation through faith apart from works ó according to the Gospel of the Grace of God, He is also the way and means of the salvation of the soul with respect to the Age to come. But *this* salvation is for those who learn the obedience of Jesus, as He becomes our example of being obedient through suffering. Comparing Scripture with Scripture, we would see that this type of obedience as always coming through suffering, which has to do with dying to the flesh (*c.f.*, I Pet. 1:10, 11). Herein, Jesus is the author ó the source ó of *salvation for the age to come* for all who obey Him! The way we would know that the salvation referred to here is salvation of the soul is because obedience is required for the salvation mentioned here. Salvation for the Coming Age comes through faith *and* obedience; through works of obedience emanating out of *the faith* ó faith specific to the solid food of the Word. Here is where faith and obedience cannot be separated.

FAITH AND OBEDIENCE

With respect to the salvation of the soul, initially, these two words ó *faith* and *obedience* ó may conjure up *differing* concepts in our minds. Initially, we might see *faith* as being a choice to believe something to be true (even regardless if it is in fact true or not); and then we might see *obedience* as being a separate choice to make *after* we believe. But is that the way we should see these two words with respect to the salvation of the soul?

Let's consider this as an example: A Christian may believe that our spiritual birth is all it takes to become part of the Bride of Christ. But is that true? Is that what the Scriptures teach? Some might think that believing this to be true is enough to become part of the Bride. But is *that* true? And because they either don't understand the way God gave His Word (using types and antitypes, for example), and/or they do not take the time to search God's Word to find out what is true about that particular matter (they don't take the time to partake of the solid food, which allows them to discern good from evil), they miss the correct teaching entirely, thereby missing the obedience required in it. And in this they don't move on from immaturity to maturity through obedience. Paul warned Timothy to be careful when it comes to his understanding of Scripture: **II Timothy**

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2:15 Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

The thing about *faith* is that we really need to be careful about what we believe! When it comes to the things of God, we would want to make sure that we are *rightly dividing* the Word of God, so that we will not be ashamed at the JSOC, as we see evidenced from this passage that there is a possibility that we could be ashamed. And the differential in being ashamed or not is whether we have *rightly divided* God's Word! It is an interesting use of wording here ó *rightly dividing*. Paul uses a compound word means *to make a straight cut*. And isn't this just what we are doing here? We are *dividing* the elementary things of God's Word from things beyond the elementary. We are dividing eternal salvation (our spiritual birth) having to do with faith alone from Age-lasting salvation (the salvation of the soul) having to do with faith and obedience. We are *rightly dividing* the soul from the spirit, as stated in **Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.** It is the Word of God that makes these divisions; we are simply studying things along this line of division ó a division of the soul and spirit.

And so, before we go any further here, let's be clear as to what is being said, and what is not being said. The free gift of eternal life ó the Gospel of Grace ó comes on the basis of faith *apart from any work or act of obedience* on our part. Faith stands alone here. But when striving to go from immaturity to maturity, we are not dealing with the Gospel of Grace! We would have to leave the elementary things concerning Christ; we would have to go from the milk of the Word to the solid food of the Word. We are dealing with things beyond His death on the cross to things concerning His coming as the King/Priest after the order of Melchizedek, things pertaining to the Coming Age, a time when His Bride will become His Wife, and together They will rule over the earth for 1,000 years.

So, please grasp the fact that in dealing with things beyond the free gift, faith and obedience must go hand in hand. The Scriptures refers to this as *obedience to the faith*. This phrase that can be found at least three times in the New Testament:

1. **Acts 6:7 Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.**

Then Paul opens the Book of Romans with the same idea:

2. **Romans 1:5 Through Him we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith...**

And Paul closes the same epistle in this way:

3. **Romans 16:25 Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began 26 but now has been made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures has been made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the**

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everlasting God, for obedience to the faith-- 27 to God, alone wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen.

Specifically, the Scriptural phrase ðthe faithö is used in respect of things connected to our becoming part of the Bride of Christ, and all that is attendant to that. Basically the phrase is used of things connected to the solid food of God's Word, to that which is necessary to become spiritually mature. Again, it is *articulated* faith, ðfaithö preceded by the article ðtheö, showing that this is speaking of *faith with respect to something specific*. Sadly though very many of passages that are supposed to have the word *faith* articulated, the translators have dropped the word ðtheö, making it difficult in a cursory reading of Scripture to see the exact intent of the Holy Spirit in those passages. For example I ran a computer check to see the number of uses of the phrase in the various translations. Here is what I found. In the

- KJV, the exact phrase ðthe faithö is found 45 times;
- NKJV, the phrase is found 39 times;
- NASB, 38 times; but interestingly,
- YLT (Young's Literal Translation), the phrase is found 77 times! Some translations will have a footnote as to when the translators dropped the word ðtheö from the original transcripts, but not every instance is a footnote made, and certainly all translations don't even have this.

But setting this aside, let's take a closer look at the two words: faith and obedience, and see how they are used in an inseparable sense in Scripture. The English word *faith* is translated from the Greek noun *pistis*, which is from the root word *peitho*. The Greek word **peitho** means *to give assent to, to agree with, to have confidence in*. Implicit in the meaning is that there is a speaker and a hearer. In order for one to give assent to something, or to agree with something, or to have confidence in something, *something* would have to have been spoken! Right?

Then the English word *believe* is translated from the Greek verb *pisteuo*, which is also taken from that same root word *peitho*. Since both words are taken from the same root word in the Greek, both would refer to exactly the same thing. When either a noun or a verb is taken from the same root, there can be no change in its underlying meaning, the only difference is in the grammatical use of the word. Below are two passages that exemplify the way this root word is used in grammar of an English translation:

1. **Romans 10:17 So faith [pistis ó the noun form] comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.** This passage reveals from where faith comes. Notice the relationship faith has with *hearing*.
2. **Acts 16:30 and after he brought them out, he said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" 31 And they said, "Believe [pistueo ó the verb form] in the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved, you and your household." 32 Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house.** While this passage reveals the initial action that must be taken with regards to salvation by grace (i.e., that is the free gift received apart from

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works of obedience), it does reveal that in order to *believe*, the word of the Lord needs to *be spoken*. Again, notice the relationship *believing* has with *hearing*.

In both of these examples, faith came about by way of the *spoken* word. Therefore, to have *Scriptural* faith, one simply needs to accept what God has *said* about something. (The truth of the last sentence cannot be over stressed!) Additionally, if we are to have *Scriptural* faith, then not only must we *believe* what the written Word says, but implicit within this is also the need to *know* what the written Word says. In one sense, it really is as simple as that.

Now we all know that receiving the free gift of eternal life is not the end of God's plan for us spiritually; but in reality it is just the beginning. We can easily see this in **Romans 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. 17 For in it [in the gospel] the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "BUT THE RIGHTEOUS [man] SHALL LIVE BY FAITH [NASB]."** In v.17 we see that *the righteous man must live by faith* – the righteous man must go *from faith to faith*. This shows that faith (our giving assent to that which is spoken) must be an active, ongoing process. And while our initiation into Scriptural faith is believing things concerning the death of Jesus, our *ongoing* faith is shown to be concerned with things beyond His death, as it is always from faith to more faith to more faith. Once a person takes their initial step of faith in Jesus's death, only then can he begin to move within the spiritual realm of faith. Only past the point of being saved a person can move from faith to faith. And we know that *faith comes by hearing!* But in ongoing faith, obedience *must* come into the picture. So let's look at the word *obedience* and see how obedience and faith must work together here.

The Webster Dictionary gives this definition for the word: *obey* – *to give ear to; to execute the commands of; to yield submission to; to comply with the orders of*. Again, just as was true with the concept of *faith*, implicit in the meaning of the word *obey* there is a speaker and a hearer. In order to give ear to, or to execute the commands of, or yield submission to, or to comply with the orders of, *something* would have to have been spoken! Right? So, on the one side there would be someone giving the commands, and on the other side there would be someone who would hear *with the intent of doing* the commands or orders.

For example, if a child is expected to obey his father, what would the father need to do first? Of course, the father would need to first *verbalize* his expectations to his child. And a good and loving father would not only systematically verbalize his expectations, but in his love for the child he would also give his child everything he needs to carry out those expectations. It then becomes a choice the child needs to make. Then, in addition to all of this, a father would systematically encourage his child toward obedience through the means of telling his child two more things. The father would express:

1. the benefits in obeying his expectations, as well as
2. the outcome in not obeying his expectations.

Here is yet another area in Scripture wherein our loving heavenly Father uses a physical picture to teach a spiritual lesson. It is in our child-training as a child of God. Through our spiritual birth

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we became God's children; He became our Father. So as a Father, what would He *say* to His children? Again, we will look to the Book of Hebrews. **Hebrews 12:9 Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live?** Obviously, the writer is addressing people who have spiritual life through initial faith. So what is this he is saying: *Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live?* If the people being addressed here already have spiritual life, then what kind of *life* is he dealing with here? Of course the answer is found in *rightly dividing* the text and context. If we took the time to read the whole of chapter 12, we would see that the author is dealing with life in the Coming Age, the Coming Kingdom of Jesus Christ. **Hebrews 12:28 Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.** So our obedience to God as our Father becomes necessary in order to receive life in the Coming Age. Do you see the division here? The division between life with respect to eternity, and life in the Coming Age?

The first part of Webster's definition for the word *obey* is "to give ear to." The same is true for the Scriptural definitions in both Old and New Testaments, as the word *obey* in both Testaments has to do with *hearing*. In the OT the Hebrew word is *shama*, which literally means to *hear intelligently; to hear with the implication of attention, of obedience*. This implies that an individual would *listen carefully*, with the intent of *acting in agreement* to what they hear. Here is an example: **Deuteronomy 27:10 "You shall therefore obey [Heb: shama] the LORD your God, and do His commandments and His statutes which I command you today."** In speaking to the Children of Israel here, God expects them to *hear intelligently* with the expectation that *they would obey*. This idea can be seen more than a thousand times throughout the OT (actually 1072 times the word is used).

And it is no different in the NT. In the New, the English word *obey* is translated from one of two different Greek words. (This is where it really gets interesting!) One of the Greek words for *obey* is found in **Romans 6:16 Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness?** This verse shows that as a child of God we have a choice to make as to obedience, and that our choice has consequences. Here the word *obey* is translated from the compound Greek word *hupakouo*, which means *to hear under (as a subordinate), i.e. to listen attentively; to heed or conform to a command or authority: to hearken, be obedient to*. Again notice here what is implied through this compound word ó there is one *subordinate* to another, and the subordinate one is to *hear* the one he is under; there is an expectation of *conforming to that which is heard*. Hence, we have the same understanding from this Greek word as what we saw in the OT Hebrew word, and also the same as what we saw from Webster's definition for the English word!

The other Greek word that is translated *obey* should be familiar to us from what we have just seen in the root word for *faith*. It is used here: **Galatians 3:1a O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth...?** The word *obey* in this verse is the Greek

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word *peitho*, which as we have just seen is the root word from which we get our English words *faith* and *believe*!

The thing that is so interesting about seeing the English word *obey* translated from either of these two Greek words is that both of these Greek words bring together the very thing that we learned just about *faith* and *hearing*. *Hupakouo*, has to do with putting oneself *under the hearing of another*! And *peitho*, has to do with *being persuaded to believe something that has been spoken by another*. So now we can understand more fully how **faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ** (Rom. 10:17), and now we see that in hearing the Word of Christ, there is an *expectation of obedience*. And hence ó the use of the phrase *the obedience of the faith*.

So now, let's consider a few questions:

- In dealing with things beyond initial faith, according to what we have seen here, can a person truly obey God if he does not know God's Word?
- And then if *hearing* and *believing* are necessary for *obeying*, can obedience come about apart from faith?

Then let's reverse that question:

- Can faith come about apart from having a heart to obey what is heard?

And so we can see then in dealing with things beyond initial faith, that these concepts ó faith and obedience ó cannot be separated. In order to *obey*, you must *believe*; and in order to believe, you must *hear*. And the one hearing must have a heart to obey! It really is as simple as that! Herein faith and obedience become a *singular issue of the heart*, as they really are one in the same.

And another question:

- Would obedience be expected of someone who had not yet believed in the death and shed blood of Jesus on the cross?

No! It is only *after* a person has exercised faith apart from works that he would then be expected to operate within the framework of ongoing obedience to the faith. It is only *after* this point that a child of God would be expected to believe and obey his/her Father! And so we can come to this passage with more understanding: **Hebrews 11:6 But without faith [a noun] it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe [a verb] that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.** Here we would understand that the faith seen in this passage (in both the noun and the verb forms) would be referring to *faith* which has an expectation of *obedience*, as obedience would be implicit within the very idea of pleasing Him. And tied up with all of this is the *reward* that we know God will grant to those of His children who will have operated within the framework of *obedience to the faith*. In fact the whole of chapter eleven is replete with OT examples of people who were obedient to the faith, who pleased God, and who will be rewarded yet future for their *faithful obedience*. **Hebrews 11:39 And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, 40 God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect [Lit., should not be brought to the end goal (with respect to the reward of the promises)] apart from us.**

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Then in bringing all of this together, it is in the very next chapter (Hebrews 12) that we get the picture of God our Father child-training us for the purpose of life in the Coming Age (Heb. 12:9, 28).

And so we understand that *the righteous man must live by faith. It is from faith to faith.* But our willingness to do what God says is only one side of a two-sided picture. If God expects obedience from his children (and He does), then of necessity, God would systematically reveal to His expectations to His Children (and He has!). **Psalms 18:28 For You will light my lamp; The LORD my God will enlighten my darkness.** And, **Psalms 119:105 Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path.** God has been quite generous in lighting our path. We know what we are to believe and do! He has laid it all out in His Word. Now it is upon us to continue to take hold of His Word through diligent study, through *rightly dividing* His Word so that we can be found faithfully obedient to what He says, and not ashamed at the judgment seat.

And not only has our Father given us His Word, but He has also given us everything necessary to be successful in obedience. **II Peter 1:2 Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, 3 as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, 4 by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.**

And so we have seen that God has given us His Word with the singular expectation that we *believe* it and *obey* it. And in our growing knowledge of His Word He has given us all we need for life (in the Coming Age) and godliness (in the present age) which are in accord with the exceedingly great and precious promises, which He has laid out for His children to take hold of ó promises that have to do with a time yet future. So in all of this, we see that faith and obedience really is a singular issue of the heart. And if we get this right ó if we leave the elementary principles of God's Word ó pleasing God through ongoing obedience to the faith, then He will permit us to go on to maturity. Then, in the end, we would be able to say with Paul: **II Timothy 4:7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.** **8 Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.**