

Study 7 - FROM FOUNDATIONAL DOCTRINE TO REVELATION

“For in [the gospel of Christ] the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith.” (Romans 1:17)

Introduction

How can we move from merely knowing doctrine about God to living in God’s “now” revelation, through which His presence and glory manifest? After we have learned foundational Christian doctrine, we must believe and act on it. The Pharisees were a prominent Jewish group in the days of Jesus who were knowledgeable in theology and theory and kept their own practices very strictly. They interpreted the law of Moses but had a major problem: they did not often practice what they preached about that law. Consequently, they became “religious” people. They had an appearance of piety—frequently praying, fasting, and paying tithes—but they lacked moral authority. Jesus rebuked them and called their actions hypocritical. (See, for example, Matthew 23.) Since such behaviour can easily spread to others, defiling them spiritually, Jesus told His disciples, “Beware of the leaven [“yeast” KJV] of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy” (Luke 12:1).

If we take a close look at ourselves, as the church, we will find that things have not changed much since those days. Many people claim to believe in the supernatural; they say they want to see miracles, witness the power and the glory, and experience revival, but they hardly ever go beyond theory because they refuse to accept and live in the true power of God. This makes their conduct very similar to that of the Pharisees in not practicing what they preach. Therefore, in this study, we will explore how to move from foundational doctrine to “now” revelation and how to avoid the “yeast” of spiritual hypocrisy.

Study Questions

Part I: Build a Foundation of Basic Doctrine

1.(a) What is essential for us to know, which was known from childhood by Paul’s son in the Lord, Timothy? Complete the following:

2 Timothy 3:15a: “... you have known _____...”

(b) What are the Scriptures able to make us wise for? (Verse 15b)

2.(a) In what ways is Scripture profitable for us? (2 Timothy 3:16b)

(b) What does it enable us to be thoroughly equipped for? (Verse 17)

3. What should new Christians, as well as those who have not yet matured in their faith, desire, and why should they desire it? (1 Peter 2:2)

Doctrine is the foundation we lay down to build a new believer; this prepares him to receive revelation.

4.(a) Even though drinking the “milk” (Hebrews 5:12, 13) of God’s Word is essential for coming to salvation and being established in our faith, what will happen if we continue to partake of only the milk of the Word and neglect to move on to “solid food” (verses 12, 14)? (Verse 13)

(b) To whom does “solid food” belong? (Hebrews 5:14)

5. After we have been established with a foundation of doctrine, what should we leave, and what should we go on to? (Hebrews 6:1a)

Part II: Live What You Know

6. If we believe we can just hear the Word of God and not put it into practice, what are we doing? (James 1:22) Choose one of the following by circling the letter:

- (a) We are building up our faith.
- (b) We are deceiving ourselves.
- (c) We are deceiving God.
- (d) We are laying up treasures in heaven.

7.(a) To what did Jesus compare those who hear His teaching and put it into practice? (Matthew 7:24b)

(b) What types of severe weather and their consequences did Jesus' use as a metaphor for the storms of life that assail us? (Verse 25a)

(c) Why did one house remain standing after all it had experienced? Complete the following:
Verse 25b: "... for it was _____ on the rock."

Having intellectual knowledge of any biblical truth does not imply that we have experienced it.

8. (a) In Jesus' explanation of the parable of the Sower, He described people who receive God's Word with joy, although the inflexible, "rocky" state of their hearts makes it difficult for them to cultivate spiritual seed. For what reason do these people believe for a while but eventually fall away from the faith through temptation? (Luke 8:13b)

(b) What occurs in the lives of people who are like "thorns," who have heard God's Word but allow their faith to be "choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life"? (Verse 14b)

(c) What did Jesus emphasize about those whose lives are like "good ground," who have "heard the word with a noble and good heart"? (Verse 15b)

9. List the various "fruit of the Spirit" we must continue to develop in our lives if we are to "walk in the Spirit... and not fulfil the lust of the flesh" (Galatians 5:16). (Verses 22–23a)

You cannot create a doctrine based on experience, but all doctrine that comes from God will lead you to have an experience with Him.

10. (a) What are we to add to our faith? (2 Peter 1:5a)

(b) What other attributes are we to add to our lives? (2 Peter 1:5b–7)

(c) If we "abound" in all these things, what will we avoid? (2 Peter 1:8b)

Reflections on Spiritual Stagnation

People who are stuck in the basics of the Bible are not very open to receive revelation or revealed knowledge from God. Many of these people believe there is nothing else to know or experience. Others do not support the idea of learning more; they lack sufficient humility to receive anything new. Because they stay on the foundation of the faith instead of building on it, they remain spiritual “infants.” These believers are usually the ones who criticize the movements and revivals of God and those who ignite them. Only when it is too late—after they have rejected, persecuted, and even betrayed those who have been anointed by God—do they sometimes realize that these were authentic movements.

There is a difference between (1) wanting to correct false/inaccurate theology or disorderliness due to unscriptural conduct and excesses, and (2) stifling a genuine move of God because of presuppositions and entrenched ways of thinking and acting. We must learn to discern between these different situations if we are to keep pace with what God is doing among His people today. If we don't, we may hinder not only our own spiritual health and growth but also those of others.

Part III: Go “from Faith to Faith”

As we mature in our faith, we can move more confidently from foundational doctrine to the “now” revelation of God, or His revelation for us today. Only when we can discern good from evil, and what is genuine from what is false, can we truly participate in the present moves of God. Revelation occurs in conjunction with manifestation, and it also leads to further manifestation. When God is revealed, some aspect of His nature or power will manifest.

11. How is the righteousness of God revealed? Complete the following:

Romans 1:17a: “For in [the gospel of Christ] the righteousness of God is revealed _____.”

12. Faith always leads to some action—repentance, confession, worship, physical ministry to those who are suffering, healings, and so forth. What statement did James make to sum up the idea that belief in God's Word cannot remain theory but must be acted on? (James 2:26)

It is easy to preach or teach something we do not have to demonstrate or prove.

13. When God entrusts His Word and His will to us, we become responsible for it as “faithful and wise steward[s]” (Luke 12:42). In relation to this, what must we keep in mind? Complete the following:

Luke 12:48b: “For everyone to whom much is given, from him _____; and to whom much has been committed, _____.”

14. The kingdom of God is demonstrated not by words but in what? (1 Corinthians 4:20)

15. In what way did the Lord Jesus confirm the disciples' preaching after He ascended to heaven and sat down at the right hand of God? (Mark 16:20b)

Miracles predispose the hearts of people to believe that God exists.

16. What did the apostles perform among the people as they ministered the gospel to them? (Acts 5:12a)

17. What manifestations occurred when Philip preached Christ to the Samaritans? (Acts 8:7)

Reflections on Supernatural Manifestations

When God is revealed, some invisible aspect of Him will manifest or make itself known to the human senses, causing great impact and transformation. Manifestations are signs; they are not doctrines. When evaluating a manifestation, we need to determine if God is taking the initiative and doing the work. We will know this is the case if the work is consistent with His nature and character and if it produces the same in the people involved. We need to ask questions such as these: “Does the manifestation go against the Scriptures?” “Did the experience promote a love for God in the person who experienced it?” “Do I have peace about this situation?” “Do I sense the confirmation of the Holy Spirit?” God wants to lead us into newer, deeper, and more extensive territories in Him, and only if we have a solid base from which to expand can we ensure the continued stability of our faith.

18. What reason did Paul give the Corinthians for why his speech and preaching to them “were not done with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power” (1 Corinthians 2:4)? (Verse 5)

19. In the previous study, we focused on four of the nine gifts of the Spirit that are specifically related to revelation—the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, prophecy, and the interpretation of tongues. What are the remaining five gifts, which God gives to the church to enable its members to receive and minister various aspects of His power? (1 Corinthians 12:9–10)

Where genuine revelation from God exists, there must be visible manifestations that confirm its divine origin.

... TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK.

Prayer of Activation

Father of glory, thank You for the gifts of the Spirit and the ministry gifts You have imparted to the church. We ask You to activate them in us as we “fan them into flame” in anticipation of the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. We make ourselves available to receive Your revelation and power for this generation. In Jesus’ name, amen.