

August 2014

## Going on to Perfection

Greetings Brethren:

In this *Monthly Letter*, I would like to address something that many misunderstand: Going on to Perfection.

Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment (Hebrews 6:1–2).

The admonition of the apostle to "go on unto perfection," like many other passages in the Bible, has been greatly misunderstood and sometimes misused. Such misinterpretation is due largely to the very same thing that leads many people or church groups to misconstrue other passages; namely, a failure to take into consideration the context.

The great doctrinal and practical truths of the Bible usually are set forth in a narrative of logical order or sequence, rather than appearing as a collection of unrelated verses. When we truly discern what the apostle is talking about in this passage, we find that he is emphasizing the importance of being established in the faith, rather than our restlessly seeking after new theories, or inventing new methods of interpretation for ourselves.

Additionally, the "perfection" to which he refers is that desirable quality of the Christian character which enables us to resist the influences of the Devil, the world, and even our own flesh, which have the tendency to unsettle our minds and put us in an attitude by which we are easily carried away from the revealed standard.

That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to *deceive* (Ephesians 4:14) [emphasis mine].

This is what has been going on in many splinter groups. Each and every minute a new doctrine emerges and further splits occur.

Apparently, most of the church members for some reason were showing a tendency to be unstable, to vacillate between being faithful to God and His Truth and yielding to the influences of the world. Early in the epistle the apostle urges:

Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard [not what we are hearing now—*newfound* faith], lest at any time we should let them slip (Hebrews 2:1).

Surely God's servant would not urge us to give heed to the glorious doctrines of Christ and then later in the same epistle admonish us to stop talking about those doctrines and "go on to perfection" by some other route (as some seem to think he did).

But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end (Hebrews 3:13–14).

We must hold the beginning of our confidence. Surely the apostle would not emphasize the importance of that first confidence or enthusiasm which we had for the Truth originally—setting it forth as the actual basis upon which we are made partakers of Christ—and then three chapters further on imply that we should abandon that confidence and go on to some unknown, visionary, or mystical state of heart and mind.

Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) (Hebrews 10:23–24).

Here also we have an admonition to *hold fast* and to be *steadfast*, not to waver, not to be discontent and dissatisfied because we are not continually finding thrilling "new light."

### **A Call to Remember the Former Days**

Church members should stop and remember how the church was in former days, how God blessed it, how much love among brethren there was, and how the church experienced the power of God.

But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions (Hebrews 10:32).

In Jeremiah 6:16, the prophet exhorted Israel to stand in the right way and ask for the old paths. Follow them and you will have peace. Many do not want to hear what Jeremiah had to say, and that is why there continue to be more splits every year in the church of God.

From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? (James 4:1).

God gave His church true doctrine because it is *His Church*. Many lust for *new* theories from scholars not inspired of God. Like a good Father, He will not lie to His children. God did not mislead the church. When God revealed to the church the Sabbath day, when to keep Pentecost, and the difference between clean and unclean food, He revealed to the church the truth and nothing but the truth.

If we can say that He misled the church in keeping Monday Pentecost, then also He misled the church in revealing the Saturday Sabbath. He cannot give one truth and at the same time reveal wrong doctrines to His church.

The church had been enthusiastic in the beginning, but for some reason the church became slack. If they could get back to the "first love" of Christ—continuing steadfastly in the original revealed doctrine as the apostle was advocating—that would be the ideal thing. That would be the "perfection" he was speaking of. That is why the apostle urges the church to call to remembrance the former days. This was a very practical way of impressing upon them the importance of the *first love* in their lives.

Jesus, the crowning example of faith, is lifted up before us. This is done, not to encourage us to pursue any illusive bubbles of speculative human philosophy—a chase which leads nowhere and which always leaves one in a labyrinth of confusion and doubt—but to help us see the importance of taking greater heed to the things which we have heard and to encourage us to greater faithfulness.

In a letter to Timothy, the Apostle Paul said:

But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them (2 Timothy 3:14).

Many people in our parent organization do not want to continue in what they learned; they find ways of their own.

Hear, O earth: behold, I will bring evil upon this people, even the fruit of *their thoughts*, because they have not hearkened unto my words, nor to my law, but rejected it (Jeremiah 6:19) [emphasis mine].

Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices (Proverbs 1:31).

Why do many think that God lied to His church by giving these original doctrines? Why now does each and every group come up with new doctrine?

The Apostle Paul delivered to the church what he received from the Lord:

For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you (1 Corinthians 11:23).

He did not come up with his own idea; all of these were not "his" doctrines.

But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ (Galatians 1:11–12).

When God calls us (begins that work), He reveals His *Truth* so that we know that in the past we were following wrong doctrine. We now have come to the knowledge of the Truth and Truth stands still—the same as our God has no variableness nor shadow of turning:

Every good gift [truth] and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning (James 1:17).

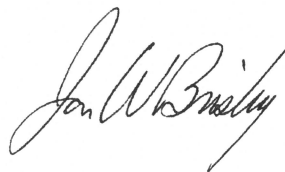
Lastly, brethren, look to yourselves that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward. Whoever transgresses and abides not in the doctrine of Christ hath not God (2 John 8–9).

May the God of love and peace keep all in the faith.

Your fellow laborer in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Isaya Owak', with a large, sweeping loop at the top.

Isaya Owak

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jon W. Brisby', with a large, sweeping loop at the top.

Jon W. Brisby