

“IF GOD PERMIT”

GOING ON UNTO MATURITY IN “THE FAITH”

By Arlen L. Chirwood

“And this will we do, if God permit”
(Heb. 6:3).

Hebrews 6:3 should be taken at face value. That is, “We will go on unto maturity [vv. 1, 2], if God permits us to go on.” And one is then left with the thought that God may not permit some Christians to go on unto maturity.

Leading into Heb. 6:1-3, the writer had previously reprimanded a group of Christians for their lack of spiritual maturity (5:10-14). They had been saved for a sufficient length of time that all of them should have been well enough grounded in the Word that they could do two things:

- 1) Be able to understand teachings pertaining to the coming Melchizedek priesthood of Christ.
- 2) Be able to teach these things to others as well.

Then, following the reprimand, the writer exhorted these same Christians to leave “the first principles [the rudimentary things of the Christian faith]” and “go on unto perfection [maturity in ‘the faith’]” (5:12; 6:1, 2).

Then, after this comes the statement that going on unto maturity is *conditional*. It is conditioned on God allowing the person to go on.

But bear in mind that this is not maturity in what might be considered a general sense; rather, the reference is to maturity in a *specific sense*. This is maturity in that which Scripture calls “the faith” or “the word of the kingdom” (cf. Matt. 13:19; I Tim. 6:12; Jude 3) — maturity in things pertaining to Christ’s coming reign over the earth “after the order of Melchizedek” (Heb. 5:10ff).

Thus, the writer is dealing with a *specific realm* of Biblical teaching which is little understood in Christendom today. And this would provide a basic explanation (in conjunction with the working of the leaven in Matt. 13:33) for the existing situation. Not only is there a present lack of knowledge (much less an understanding) concerning this whole overall message in Christendom but something even beyond this exists. Along with the lack of knowledge (and understanding), an overt aversion — more often than not — is exhibited toward any teaching on the subject.

This is the one message which Satan does not want taught today, for it deals with his overthrow. He has ruled the earth since time immemorial, *but this is about to change*. The One Whom Melchizedek foreshadowed will shortly appear, at which time the government of the earth will change hands. And Satan does not want this proclaimed.

As a consequence, this is the message Christ will not find being taught to Christians in the Churches at the time of His return. Though this is *the central message* which Christians are supposed to hear once they have been grounded in the rudi-

mentary things of the Word, Christ stated that by the end of the dispensation, at the time of His return, conditions will have become so completely contrary to the way they should exist that He will not find “faith [*lit.*, ‘the faith’] on the earth” (Luke 18:8).

The reason why God will not allow certain Christians to go on into an understanding of these truths is given in the verses which immediately follow (vv. 4-6), which comprise the heart of the warning itself. Verse three forms a connection between that which has preceded and that which follows; and this verse must, accordingly, be understood in the light of the complete context — verses both preceding and following.

Very briefly, note the verses leading into Heb. 6:3 before going on to the explanation. These verses explain the matter from the standpoint of one type, and then the explanation explains it from the standpoint of another type.

Hebrews chapter five draws its spiritual lessons from Genesis chapter fourteen (and Ps. 110, which also draws from Gen. 14). The subject has to do with Abraham meeting Melchizedek following the battle of the kings.

Melchizedek, at this time, brought forth “bread and wine” and blessed Abraham, “of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth” (Gen. 14:17-19). This, of course, points to that day in the antitype, following the battle of the kings (Rev. 19:17-21), when Christ comes forth with “bread and wine” — as *King-Priest*, “after the order of Melchizedek” — to bless Abraham and his descendants, *both heavenly and earthly* (Matt. 26:29).

Now note something about the type, which must carry over into the antitype. Abraham, after

meeting Melchizedek, no longer manifested any interest in *the things of this world*. The king of Sodom offered him goods, but his response was completely negative. Abraham said to the king of Sodom:

“I have lift up mine hand unto the Lord, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth, That I will not take from a thread even to a shoelatchet, and that I will not take any thing that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, ‘I have made Abraham rich’:

Save only that which the young men have eaten...” (Gen. 14:22-24).

Having met Melchizedek, Abraham manifested total disinterest in that which the king of Sodom had to offer. He had found something *so far greater* than the things this world could offer that he refused to take anything (other than food) from the king of Sodom. Rather, his interest was focused on the things pertaining to Melchizedek (cf. Heb. 12:2, “Looking unto Jesus... [*lit.*, ‘Looking from (the surrounding things of the world), unto Jesus...’]”).

Abraham, through this experience, could only have gained a whole new perspective on the present in relation to the future, and vice versa. Thus, Abraham, relative to the magnanimous offer of the king of Sodom, in a word, told the king, *No!* “I have lift up mine hand unto the Lord, the most high God, *the possessor of heaven and earth...*”

And that is where Christ comes into the picture in prophecy as the great *King-Priest*, “after the order of Melchizedek.” The Father — “*the possessor of heaven and earth*” (Gen. 14:22) — has given all that He possesses unto the Son (cf. Gen. 24:36; 25:5; John 16:13-15); and in that coming day, with the Son

occupying both *His Own throne in the heavens* and *David’s throne on the earth*, blessings will flow out to the Gentile nations *through the seed of Abraham* (“*possessor of heaven and earth [through inheritance]”*) *from both heavenly and earthly spheres*.

And when a Christian sees Christ, within this framework, as *King-Priest*, “after the order of Melchizedek,” this *should* drive him to manifest the same attitude toward the things of this world as Abraham manifested toward the things of the world after he met Melchizedek.

In the words of the song, “the things of this world” *should* “grow strangely dim.” The Christian *should* possess an entirely new perspective on the present in relation to the future, and vice versa.

But, how often is the preceding *really* the case in the lives of Christians? How many *really* understand these things? Or, how many *really* view matters within the framework of “the light of His glory and grace”?

And therein lies the secret to questions pertaining to Heb. 6:3. We are dealing with the *very choicest* of God’s choice things which He has set aside for Christians, and God has placed certain *conditions* around allowing Christians to move into a knowledge of the Son in this realm (cf. Phil. 3:10-14). God knows what is in man; and He also knows what man coming into a knowledge and understanding of these things will, too often, do.

God knows that numerous Christians, after coming into a knowledge and understanding of Christ as *King-Priest*, “after the order of Melchizedek,” would not manifest the same attitude at all toward the world as Abraham manifested after he met Melchizedek. They would, instead, either

continue in or one day return to their worldly interest and involvement (cf. I John 2:15-17), which is within a world presently ruled by Satan and his angels. And by so doing, such Christians could only bring *shame* and *reproach* upon Christ’s name.

The matter pertaining to God allowing or not allowing a Christian to go on unto maturity though should be viewed more within the framework of man’s attitude toward these things than it should within the framework of God’s omniscience per se. Scripture clearly states, “If any man will do [‘is willing to do’] his will, he shall know of the doctrine...” (John 7:17).

That is, Do you *really* want to know Christ as “author [‘source’] of eternal salvation [salvation for the age (the Messianic Era)]”? (Heb. 5:9). Are you *serious* about the present warfare and one day coming into a realization of the proffered inheritance? If so, there should be no reason why God would not allow you to go on into a knowledge and understanding of the various things pertaining to His Son’s coming reign over the earth.

But, if on the other hand, *an interest* in and a *seriousness* about the matter are not present, there is no Biblical reason why God should allow such a person to go on into a knowledge and understanding of these things. In fact, from a Biblical perspective, the opposite would exist instead. God may not allow such a person to go on unto maturity in the things pertaining to the Word of the Kingdom, for a revealed reason (cf. Heb. 6:4ff).

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