

Sometimes we get the impression that we must perfectly understand the complete revelation of God to be saved at all. This is totally untrue. As Alexander Campbell once said, 'God recognizes both the perfect man in Christ and the imperfect man in Christ' (7). The situation can be likened somewhat to the different levels of understanding associated with the simple act of turning on a light. To a small child, the flip of a switch causes the light to come on. As he becomes older, he may understand that electricity is the basic principle involved. A professional electrician may understand that light is emitted from a hot tungsten filament when electrons are driven by the voltage across it. A physicist will realize the quantum nature of those electrons. But how much understanding is actually needed to turn on the light? Only that you have to flip the switch. It works equally well for every level of understanding. Similarly, salvation works for all those who are obedient to God through faith.

The value of more complete understanding becomes clear when a problem occurs. For instance, what happens when the light that has been turned on goes out? Those who understand at different levels can each investigate the problem only to the depth of their understanding. Some will only try changing the bulb. If this does not work, someone with a little more understanding might check the fuse. The wiring might be checked next, and so forth. The more complex the problem is, the higher the level of understanding that is needed to obtain the solution. With spiritual problems, those with a clearer understanding of God's word are better able to deal with them in a way which increases their faith and strength, instead of decreasing it. This is what makes study so important. Though a babe in Christ, problems thrown at us by the devil could cause us to fall from that grace through our weakened faith, if we have not sought to understand in a deeper sense the will and nature of God.

So we see that at different levels of understanding, those who are obedient by faith in Christ are saved eternally. But there is a tremendous need for greater understanding so that we may become stronger in faith. This understanding is not derived from 'religious experiences' or feelings, but from Bible study and meditation.