

SPIRITUAL GROWTH

“The righteous man will flourish like the palm tree; he will grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Planted in the house of the LORD, they will flourish in the courts of our God. They will still yield fruit in old age” (Psalm 92:12-14). Growth is essential in life and in the spiritual lives of Christians. Man stops growing in physical stature at a particular age, but sons of God never reach the limit of their potential in regard to spiritual growth. Some brethren may feel that they have reached their limit, but they haven't. Often when a Christian stops growing altogether he becomes stagnant or lukewarm and begins slipping backwards. In Peter's second epistle, we learn that proper growth is essential in making sure of an entrance into the eternal heavenly kingdom.

A Christian's life may be compared to a man climbing a mountain. The goal is the peak of glory at the end. As a new Christian begins his spiritual climb, the first few steps may come easier, and the ground gained may be by leaps and bounds because life changes may be major changes. The further he progresses the more difficult the climb becomes because the slope is getting steeper. The steps being taken now are much more carefully placed and thought out since the refining of faith and love are becoming more minute. The peak is drawing closer, but he has not attained it yet. So, he must keep pressing forward and hanging on lest he lose ground, or even not make it to the top. He must endeavor not to grow weary doing good, although the climb does take a toll on him. All Christians must work at growing, growing with a growth from God, a growth to glory – building upon the steps that have already been taken. Do not stop now, lest you start sliding back down the hill!

At the time of conversion, Christians are newborn babes. Babies are not expected to become full grown adults immediately. Thus do not become discouraged if you do not understand every topic found in the inspired Scriptures or if you are still tempted by former sinful habits and deeds. Use such moments and opportunities as motivators to study harder to learn more about God and His will or to buffet your body so that sin does not master you. Scripture teaches us that we are supposed to long for or earnestly desire the spiritual milk so that we may grow unto salvation (cf. 1 Peter 2:1-5). Christians are living stones in God's house, precious in the sight of the heavenly Father, and in one sense that house is still being built – a work in progress of which each member is a part. The emphasis is on growing. With determination we must make sure we do not remain as newborn babes all of our lives, but drink the milk till we are mature enough to eat solid food. The writer to the Hebrew saints rebuked them for neglecting to grow, which resulted in them being unable to teach others (Hebrews 5:12-14).

In accord with grace and truth Christians have escaped the corruption of this world and have been granted exceedingly great promises. For this reason we are told to add to our faith. [Read 2 Peter 1:1-11]. The word “adding” (or applying) means *to bring in besides*. Therefore, all Christians are supposed to be increasing, growing, building. The command does not give us liberty to do nothing, to bury responsibilities and opportunities, to fall backwards. Through the continual supplying of our faith with virtue, knowledge, self-control, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness and love, we become fruitful and useful servants of righteousness – even in our old age. Through proper spiritual growth we will not stumble, and we will be richly supplied with an entrance into the eternal kingdom.

There is no age limit to spiritual growth – just the rest of our days, a lifetime. Paul wrote, “We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brethren, as is fitting, because your faith is greatly enlarged, and the love of each one of you toward one another grows greater” (2 Thessalonians 1:3). Can your brethren give thanks to God for your spiritual growth?