

Introduction: *What happens when a person doesn't grow normally?* Need for continual care, often limited joy, cannot serve others, etc.

What happens when a Christian doesn't grow?

- 1.) Needs continual care
- 2.) Cannot serve others
- 3.) Limited joy due to guilt and depression
- 4.) Doesn't believe can change
- 5.) Can become hostile/divisive in relationships (to the detriment of the church)
- 6.) Brings shame to the Name of Christ

To not grow is to be perpetually immature.

- What is meant by spiritual growth is *sanctification*. The ongoing process of the Christian life.

I. THE BIBLICAL GOAL OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH - Romans 8:29

- *The ultimate goal of our Christian life is to be conformed to the image of Christ.*
- Ultimately and primarily for the glory of God in restoring us into the image of Christ.
- Reflecting the supremacy of God in all things, and our satisfaction in Him.
- Not to just satisfying someone else, meet traditions and standards of a church or family.

II. THE BIBLICAL EXPECTATION FOR SPIRITUAL GROWTH - 2 Peter 3:18

- *God expects, and commands, for us to be growing as Christian.*
- New birth/conversion is the beginning of the Christian life. It is an important event. However, some talk as if it is the only thing that matters, and speak of their Christian life only in reference to "that day."
- As with our physical lives, birth is the great starting point, but it is just the start. What matters now is living.
- Likewise, that we have been born again is important, but it is not the end. Having been born, *now we live!*
- **Grow** (Gk. *auxano*) - Imperative/command. One meaning is to develop toward maturity in gradual degrees. Used of vegetation (Matthew 6:28) and people (Luke 1:80). Also to increase or expand in amount or size.
- Putting the two definitions together bears out that we are to increase and expand toward maturity. How is this done?
- In the grace and knowledge – meaning both what and how one grows. It is increasing in the understanding of God's grace and who Christ is, but also by these things.
- Without growth there is immaturity - Hebrews 5:12-14.
- This is the will of God, therefore not an option. – 1Thessalonians 4:3.
- One should not hope to reach the goal in the end if they are not striving to reach it now. – 1John 3:2-3.

III. THE BIBLICAL METHOD OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH

- *We grow by a dependent and self-disciplined obedience to His Word*
- Not just anything we choose or invent, but those specific ways as revealed in His Word.
- Primary place of the Scriptures in helping us to understand meaning and receiving direction – John 17:17
- Primary means of the Word of God – 1Peter 2:2.
- It is these things which effect our minds, and thus our behavior.

A. A Dependent Obedience

- This is most clearly seen in the place of prayer. Asking God Himself to enable and help to do those things well pleasing to Him. To admit our utter dependence, and that apart from Him we can do nothing (John 15:5). It is to ask for the filling of the Holy Spirit so that we can do.
- The ongoing commitment to fostering a personal relationship with Him as the personal God before whom we live.

B. A Self-Disciplined Obedience

- To work out our salvation Philippians 2:12-13
- A call to discipline toward godliness – 2 Timothy 4:7
- Abiding in Jesus Word - John 15:5
- To cleanse ourselves - 2Corinthians 7:1
- Walk worthy - Ephesians 4:1, 17
- I worked harder than them all – 1Corinthians 15:10
- This is living by faith, doing those things with believing obedience.
- We are often on the pursuit of quick fixes and shortcuts. This is part of our materialistic worldview that views things mechanically. Just do this...this...this...and things will work.
- Also a part of our "instant" culture, just add water. Good things in life shouldn't be hard, but easily accessible.
God does not work for us or without us, but in us and with us. – Pastor Al Martin
God works in our working. – Pastor Alan Dunn

This contrasted to false views

- 1.) Self-help-ism – Dependence on one's own discipline. God is disconnected, and it is up to us. Undermines need for God's help.
- 2.) Quietism/Pietism – Passivity, stop trying and let God do it through us. Undermines personal responsibility.
- 3.) Mysticism – Bypassing of heart/mind and speaks directly to the heart. Undermines the role of Scripture.
- 4.) Hyper-Charismatic – demons, deliverance, and generational curse. Undermines personal responsibility.
- 5.) Perfectionism – 2nd blessing to raise to a new height and point of perfection. Sin nature is eradicated at this crisis experience. Undermines the reality of imperfection in this life, and the climactic event of glorification.
- 6.) Anti-Nomianism – There is no sin for the believer. Undermines the reality of sin and God's law.
- 7.) Hyper-Calvinism – Overemphasis on the sovereignty of God's work in sanctification, waiting for God to work first. Undermines personal responsibility.
- 8.) Experience-ism – Series of special "recharging" experiences in conferences, event, worship, workshops, revivals, camps. Heightened experience, followed by assumed decrees. Undermines the reality of our ordinary relationship with God.