

Spiritual Growth

Is spiritual growth an option?

Peter writes,

“...like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord... you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” (1 Peter 2:2-3, 5).

Two metaphors are used here in relation to spiritual growth:

First a newborn. “Just born” infants are all about growing and eating.

Desire – “intense yearning” of pure milk [of the word]. To grow is to be healthy and normal; just as eating and appetite are essential in the process, so it is that the word of God is food, and essential for spiritual growth.

The phrase, grow in respect to salvation is from what is translated from the Greek text: (lit.) “resulting in your making progress in your salvation.”

A healthy infant is a hungry infant.

A spiritually healthy Christian is a hungry Christian.

If someone has no appetite for the word of God, that one is spiritually unhealthy.

Second, these verses are tied in to the building of a spiritual house. Stone houses are strong, lasting for many generations – they never wear out. Each believer is a stone in a house where Christ is the chief cornerstone. We are the living stones, being built up together– (Gk. *oikodoman* – house building –*to edify*). Each stone of the house represents a believer being built together with other believers into Christ’s house – a place where people become holy and like the temple spiritual sacrifices are made that minister to God. A few verses later Peter adds,

“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light...” (vs. 9).

What is spiritual growth?

1. Personally established in the faith. [assurance]
2. Able to lead others to the saving knowledge of Christ. [evangelism]
3. Established habits and disciplines that keep them in fellowship with God and with other believers. [discipleship]
4. Character development.
5. Fellowship (*koinonia* – common).

What does a healthy Christian look like?

Relationship with God
Fellowship with Saints
Testimony to the world

How are these characteristics built?

Just like a house

“By Wisdom a house is built,
And by understanding it is established;
And by knowledge the rooms are filled
with all precious and pleasant riches.
A wise man is strong,
And a man of knowledge increases power.
For by wise guidance you will wage war,
And in abundance of counselors there is victory” (Pr. 24:3-6).

The first part of the section is on house-building with three aspects:

Building, establishing, and filling.

The second part correlates building a house and building up a man.

Wisdom makes the man strong.

Knowledge increases his strength.

Listening to wise counsel makes the the strong man succeed in war.

The ultimate in spiritual growth has to do with spiritual warfare.

The realization of the spiritual battle that surrounds believers should be as obvious as the sinful natures of men. The subject is mentioned continuously in the Scripture; and should become one of the strongest motivations for each believer to grow spiritually.

Paul wrote to the Ephesians,

“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the full armor of God so that you will be able to resist in the evil day...” (Eph. 6:10-13).

The Lord's prayer concludes with a dual request,

“And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil...”

(Matt. 6:13)

Literally, the word for evil is “the evil one,” (Gk. ponarou) referring to Satan.

Satan is the tempter, who tempts believers according to their lusts. (James 1:14)

Example of Elisha's servant. 2 Kings 6:8-18 (:15-17 emphasis)

From the archives of WWII, we look back and observe their many mistakes as well as mercies from God that took place. Chamberland, the head of parliament for England, along with his party, hesitated to take any action against Hitler as he grew in power and was taking over Europe. In the end this left England in a very bad place as France was overrun leaving the German military at their doorstep. Chamberland was removed from office as Prime Minister, and replaced by Winston Churchill. The problem Churchill faced, due to their lack of foresight and preparation, was whether to sue for peace (negotiate with Mussolini of Italy over terms of surrender) or stand by while the entire British army is about to be slaughtered at Dunkirk. Great Britain would then be defenseless. This was Churchill's darkest hour, when he lacked the support, to lead the nation against her foes. It is at this point that he received counsel and support from the king of England; he encouraged him to listen to the people. His triumphant speech before Parliament was, “Never, Never, Never, Surrender!”

He led his people through many years of war and ultimate victory.

We are in a war for the souls of men. As the time approaches for the end of the age before the return of Christ the opportunity of decision presents itself to build the spiritual house of the people God, or not.

Will we pay the price to grow?

Will we become soldiers in the army of God?

One of my favorite movies from days gone by is Independence Day, the story of an alien invasion where the end-game was to steal earth's resources and eradicate all life on earth. When negotiations were attempted after the destruction of many cities: the only terms given were to “die”.

A quote from William Shakespeare's *Henry V*. Copied and modified for the film.

The end speech of the President:

"Good morning. In less than an hour, aircraft from here will join others from around the world. And you will be launching the largest aerial battle in this history of mankind.

Mankind -- that word should have new meaning for all of us today.

We can't be consumed by our petty differences anymore.

We will be united in our common interests. Perhaps its fate that today is the 4th of July, and you will once again be fighting freedom, not from tyranny, oppression, or persecution -- but from annihilation.

We're fighting for our right to live, to exist.

And should we win the day, the 4th of July will no longer be known as an American holiday, but as the day when the world declared in one voice:

"We will not go quietly into the night!

We will not vanish without a fight!

We're going to live on! We're going to survive!"

Today, we celebrate our Independence Day!

We live in such a time but don't realize it.

One day we will celebrate our Independence Day from the tyranny of the devil, from slavery to sin and death, and from a corrupt creation.

But until that time we must engage in warfare by growing in grace, handling the sword of the Spirit and the shield of faith.

Until then we must grow in grace!

Are you available for His ability? **Availability.**

Are you faithful to His faithfulness? **Discipleship.**

Are you a praying saint? **Devotional.**

Are you walking in His power? **Exhilarating.**

Are you desiring a holy life? **Exceptional.**

Are you walking with God and serving His people? **Extraordinary.**

Are you eager to win souls out of the kingdom of darkness into His marvelous light? **Illuminating.**

The Revelation closes with these words from Jesus,

“Yes, I am coming quickly.”

Then John eagerly adds, “Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen.” (Rev. 22:20-21)