

Lesson # 5 -- The Promise Regarding the Believer's Growth.

Introduction

- A. In this series we have been discussing the provision God has made for the believer's daily life. We gain an understanding of what God has for us and how He wants us to live by considering the promises He has given to us.
- B. While it may and must be said that Christianity is historical, that it is a doctrine, a way of living, a way of serving, that it has important principles related to philosophy, psychology, sociology, and education -- we must never forget that it is highly practical and should involve every facet of daily life.
- C. One of the important areas of our daily life has to do with our spiritual growth. Some of the most valuable benefits that we can possess, for ourselves, and for our family and church, are derived from such progress.

I. The Biblical Theme Regarding Our Spiritual Growth.

- A. Our growth is related to faith and love.

*We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth. II Thess. 1:3*

Comment: Faith and love are two of the three virtues which are constantly emphasized in the New Testament as important for the believer's daily life. In fact, one cannot grow, or obey God, or be fruitful without both of them. Faith describes our response to God whereby we put His Word into practice in the activity of trust. And love is the reason why we obey God by faith -- it reminds us that He is worthy of our worship.

- B. Our growth is related to the Word of God.

*As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby. I Peter 2:2*

Comment: The Scripture may be regarded as a blueprint for our daily life. As we read the Bible we are told how to respond to God by faith and love so our life may be characterized by obedience and fruitfulness. Because of sin the knowledge of how to walk with God has been lost. Through the Word of God that understanding can be regained.

C. Our growth is related to grace and knowledge.

*But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.*

II Peter 3:18

Comment: The words "grace" and "knowledge" both refer to the provision God has made for us so we may grow in our spiritual life. The statement "grace of God" is used in the Bible to indicate the character of redemption (freely given), and the statement "knowledge of our Lord and Savior" refers to the truth that salvation is basically a living relationship with Jesus Christ.

The content of this exhortation has to do with the believer's need for an understanding of the basic truths of redemption. God can bless us, only as we learn the truth and practice it (John 8:32).

Summary: It is more than a coincidence that the believer's spiritual growth is related to these three important areas of the Christian life: faith and love; the Word of God; and a understanding of grace and knowledge.

1. Faith and love explains how we grow.
2. The Word of God explains the blueprint of our growth.
3. Grace and knowledge explains the content of our growth.

II. The Biblical Explanation of our Spiritual Growth.

A. The believer's walk and the atonement.

*Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.* Romans 6:4

Comment: We can grow in our spiritual life because of the divine provision made for us in Jesus Christ. The verse before us presents many valuable principles designed to teach and encourage us.

1. The believer is identified with Jesus Christ in His death. The Lord Jesus came into the world to be our representative. He acted for us in His life, His death, His burial, His resurrection, His ascension, and in the day of Pentecost. God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, by grace ye are saved, and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Ephesians 2:4-6

2. All the value of the Savior's representative work was freely given to us when we were born again. This is the meaning of the words "buried with Him by baptism into death." Every believer has all of this provision of grace -- legally. However, the power of the work of Christ becomes evident in our life only as we learn to practice these truths by faith.
3. The life we can live is here described as "newness of life." It is described as "newness" in contrast to the way we lived before we became Christians. It is a life of forgiveness (not guilt), a life of righteousness (not unrighteousness), a life of freedom (not bondage), and a life of peace (not anxiety).

Summary: The believer has been given the spiritual power in his new birth that will enable him, when it is practiced, to live a life free from sin and characterized by fruitfulness.

B. The believer's walk and the Holy Spirit.

*This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. Galatians 5:16*

Comment: The Holy Spirit has been fully given to every Christian to teach us how to live in harmony with the work of the Lord Jesus. We "walk in the Spirit" when we follow His instructions.

1. The titles of the Holy Spirit indicate what He has sent to do in our lives. He is called the Comforter (Helper) (John 14:16), the Spirit of Truth (John 4:17), and the Spirit of Christ (Romans 8:9). It is rather overwhelming to realize that God the Holy Spirit dwells in us to be our helper, as a teacher, to guide and enable us so we can give the person and work of Jesus Christ rightful place in our life.
2. We grow in our spiritual life as we learn to follow the instruction of our divine Teacher. He will teach us the Bible and enable us to practice it by faith and love.
3. The Holy Spirit has assumed the responsibility for our spiritual welfare. Too often He has to treat us as children by some process of reward and loss. All of us have sensed an inner conflict when we were making wrong choices or not concerned enough about our walk with God.

4. The promise in the verse before us, "Walk in the Spirit and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh" is a great comfort to the spiritual Christian. It reminds us, not only of the adequacy of God's grace, but also how this provision has been designed to help us in one of the most difficult areas of our life, the "flesh" (old nature). If we want to -- each of us can learn how to live a holy life characterized by the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22,23). This is not easy, because of the power of sin, but we have the enablement to do so in the presence of the Holy Spirit.

C. The believer's walk and daily priorities.

That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God, strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness, giving thanks unto the Father . . . . Col. 1:10-12

Comment: This remarkable passage not only explains some of the practical aspects of the will of God but it is also a promise of the kind of life that God wants to give us. Our response of faith to this implied promise would be in the area of our daily priorities. We must make each of these nine virtues or benefits a daily goal. When we want the will of God, as explained in these two verses, as a part of our walk with God -- the Holy Spirit will enable us to have them. This is what it means to grow in the grace and knowledge of God.

Too often we are not as concerned about these priorities as we should be. If we could see ourselves, from the viewpoint of eternity, of in the light of the spiritual person we could become -- we would work harder at this.

God has made an adequate provision for us in the work of the Lord Jesus, and the ministry of the holy Spirit. He has even written the instructions into the Bible. We must make our response of faith, establish these priorities, and obey Him.

III. The Biblical Application Concerning our Spiritual Growth.

- A. Our growth is directly related to our knowledge of spiritual things.

And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.  
John 8:32

Comment: There is an important principle emphasized in this verse. We are reminded of the place of truth in success. No amount of sincerity or hard work can take its place. If we do not know the truth (what to do) -- we cannot make it a practice in daily life. Too many of us are confused because we are sincere, and we do work real hard at the Christian life -- only to fail in some areas.

Christianity is inseparably related to truth. The foundation is in a divine revelation. The way we progress is through decisions of faith to practice the truth. The Holy Spirit of Truth lives in us to enable us to understand and obey.

We are brought to the conclusion that we must practice what we know and learn the truth about the areas where we are not growing. The advice given at the conclusion of last week's lesson would apply here.

B. Our growth is directly related to our priorities.

*This people have I formed for myself, they shall shew forth my praise. But thou hast not called upon me . . . thou has not brought me the . . . offerings, neither hast thou honoured me with thy sacrifices . . . thou hast brought me no sweet cane with money . . . but thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities.*  
Isaiah 43:21-24

Comment: Sin has caused us to live with perverted priorities. We have lost the true measurement of worth. Many of us have spent a great deal of money, time, and effort on that which is of very little value.

In order to grow in the spiritual life we must "take charge" of our own lives. We must determine what is valuable and establish the patterns of daily life which will enable us to achieve them.

No believer can grow without Bible study, prayer, involvement in a scriptural church, and some regular fellowship with other Christians. If you are lacking in one or more of these areas then make the correction that is necessary soon. As we practice the truth -- God will lead us into a growing Christian life.

Conclusion: We must all face the question as to whether the life we are now living is worth it.