

Studies in I Peter (26)

The Responsibility of Salvation: We are to Maintain Spiritual Growth

Introduction

- A. The Christian life has been designed by God for success. To fail the Christian must live outside of God's will. Peter was aware that his readers, because of trials, may be neglecting their spiritual growth and thereby forfeiting the joyful experience of the grace of God.
- B. To remind his readers of the basic principles of the Christian life, Peter presented a series of examples of daily obedience. He has spoken of dedication (1:13), holiness (1:14,15), love (1:22), consistency (1:23-25), and now he speaks of the necessity of maintaining spiritual growth (2:1-3).

Wherefore, laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speaking, as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby, if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious. I Peter 2:1-3

I. The Basis for Spiritual Growth: "Wherefore."

- A. The believer's relationship with God, 1:23.
- B. The brevity of life, 1:24.
- C. The possession of the Word of God, 1:22,25.

Comment: Through the new birth every believer has been invited to enter into a life of fellowship with God filled with infinitely great benefits. The brevity of our life underlines the urgency to grow in this area. The Scripture is our blueprint for participation. These three great benefits of salvation emphasize the importance of the spiritual.

II. The Negative Condition for Spiritual Growth: "Laying aside malice"

- A. We are to "Lay aside all malice."
 - 1. The word "malice" refers to those ways whereby we hurt one another. The reference is to such sins as bitterness, grudges, criticism, hostility, resentment, contempt, evil-thinking, and hatred.
 - 2. We are to "lay aside" all malice. The word pictures "putting off a dirty garment." Many believers have ruined their daily walk with God because of a failure to love other Christians (1:22).
- B. We are to "Lay aside all guile."

The word "guile" mean "to bait" and could be translated "deceit." We commit this sin when we manipulate one another -- controlling a person for our own advantage. This is a way whereby we express our malice.

C. We are to "Lay aside all hypocrisies."

The hypocrite is one who "wears a mask" -- pretending to be different than he is. This sin is a profession of a commitment that is not being carried out. It is an attempt to hide one's true spiritual identity.

D. We are to "Lay aside all envy."

The word "envy" refers to that sin that is produced by jealousy. It is that animosity and prideful hurt which we feel when someone gets what we think we deserve. In Proverbs 14:30 we are told it brings a "rotteness to the bones."

E. We are to "Lay aside all evil speaking."

This sin is simply speaking evil of one another. Far too many Christians, when speaking of an issue, simply speak against other believers. We may not allow ourselves to indulge in a way of speaking that would include gossip, suspicion, insinuations, judgment, and questions which imply fault.

III. The Positive Conditions for Spiritual Growth.

A. What we are to do: "Desire the sincere milk of the word."

The Bible here exhorts every believer to be aggressive in seeking the spiritual nourishment found in the Scripture. The Bible, as we have seen in 1:22, will bring spiritual cleansing to us -- if we obey it. The importance of Peter's exhortation can hardly be overemphasized. So much of our spiritual growth is tied to our understanding and practice of the truth. Our simple neglect of the Bible -- thinking we have something more important to do -- has brought havoc to all of us. If we could only see what we are doing to ourselves we would be shocked and ashamed.

B. How we are to do it: "As a newborn babe desire"

We are told to seek to understand and practice the Bible with the same intensity a new born child will demand nourishment -- and will not be quiet until it is fed. If we would act with only a fraction of such desire, we would continually grow in the things of God.

C. Why we are to do it: "That ye may grow thereby."

The emphasis here is on the experience of spiritual development. The reference is to a continual deepening of one's fellowship with God, of growing in the joy of the Lord, of more proficiency in prayer and witnessing, of more strength to resist sin, of more love for the brethren. What could be greater for a believer -- than to grow spiritually?

IV. The Motivation for Spiritual Growth: "If so be You Have Tasted"

Every believer has a great store of experiences that testify to the goodness of God and the blessedness of living in His will. In times of trial we must learn to recall such times. Such knowledge will motive us to grow. If a believer does not have such a comforting past -- he has not yet started to grow.

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