

We Must Grow...

As born again baptized believers in Christ, it is essential that we must grow to be effective in carrying out the command of our Christ to go into all the world preaching and teaching the Gospel to every person, and baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

When we become Christians, we enter into a relationship with God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit that will cause us to **grow** as a church. With the power of the Holy Spirit, we are called to become more like Jesus and to become more holy, which leaves us with no more excuses. It is this spiritual growth that becomes a birthmark of our faith! And as members of the Lord's church, locally practicing at First Baptist Church Maddoxtown, it is imperative that as individuals who are a collective group worshipping in Christ, fellowshiping in Christ, and serving Christ, we have to convince ourselves, there is something I must embed in my head, heart, and habitude; this - **I** as an individual, voluntarily, committedly, and devotionally grow to do what helps edify the body of Christ. ***"I must know to grow; I must grow***

to go, I must go to make, I must make for the sake, of being like Christ!"

The Bible – the Word of God is what we use for our faith and practice as the Saints of God. And I don't know what you think about it, but ***"I choose to believe the Bible because it's a reliable collection historical documents written by eyewitnesses during the lifetime of other eyewitnesses. That reports supernatural events that took place in fulfillment of specific prophecies and claims that their writings are divine writings rather than human in origin."*** -- Voddie Baucham (2 Peter 1:16-21)

Now that's all well and good, it even sounds good, but here's what **w**e must learn for certain from the Bible to know, to grow, to go, and make, and that it is Good and Sound, for as **M**elody Beattie says, Faith is like a muscle. It must be exercised to grow strong. The Bible reminds us:

Psalm 1:1-6 (KJV) ¹ Blessed *is* the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. ² But his delight *is* in the law of the LORD; and in his

law doth he meditate day and night. ³ And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. ⁴ The ungodly *are* not so: but *are* like the chaff which the wind driveth away. ⁵ Therefore, the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. ⁶ For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish.

Psalm 92:12-14 (KJV) ¹² The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.

I'm talking about ¹³ Those that be planted in the house of the LORD shall flourish in the courts of our God.

For them, growing old isn't a problem, because:

¹⁴ They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing.

That's because:

Matthew 5:6 (KJV) ⁶ Blessed *are* they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness:

for they shall be filled.

This is all made possible by the Word of God, and we know that:

2 Timothy 3:16-17 (KJV) ¹⁶ All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:
¹⁷ That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

Therefore,

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

1 Timothy 4:15 (KJV) ¹⁵ Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all.

You can go forth expectantly:

Philippians 1:6 (KJV) ⁶ Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform *it* until the day of Jesus Christ:

So,

2 Peter 3:17-18 (KJV) ¹⁷ Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye **know** *these things* before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness.

¹⁸ But **grow** in grace, and *in* the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever. Amen.

Matthew 5:48 (KJV) Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

2 Corinthians 13:5-7 (KJV) ⁵ Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. **Know** ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates? ⁶ But I trust that ye shall **know** that we are not reprobates. ⁷ Now I pray to God that ye do no evil; not that we should appear approved, but that ye should do that which is honest, though we be as reprobates.

Hebrews 6:1 (KJV) Therefore, leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us

go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God.

There **must** be proof of our growing as we do in sanctification, and it looks like this:

1 Corinthians 13:11, KJV "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things."

1 Corinthians 14:20, KJV "Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men."

This is serious brothers and sisters; we have two foci:

Hebrews 5:12-14, KJV "For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: **for** he is a babe. But strong

meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."

In fact, that is part of what my prayers to God for you are about:

Ephesians 3:16, KJV "That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man."

And that He continues doing this:

Ephesians 4:13-15, 20-24, KJV "Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may **grow** up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ . . . But ye have not so learned Christ; If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: That ye put off concerning

the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."

Hear me well tonight:

Romans 12:1-2 (KJV) ¹ I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is your reasonable service.* ² And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

Philippians 1:9 (KJV) ⁹ And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and *in* all judgment;

Colossians 2:6-7, KJV "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving."

Colossians 3:9-10, KJV "Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old

man with his deeds; And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:"

Now we can do this, but we can't do it on our own, however, the good news is you don't have to. The Bible clearly states that we who are in Christ, we are definitely in the Lord's hands, and no one can pluck us out. However, the word also clearly states that in this LIFE you will have tribulations.

It is unreasonable and the beginnings of spiritual denial to suggest that someone can come to Christ and never have a problem; never go through a crisis; never have pain; never have trials. The truth of the matter is that we are not shielded from the problems of life – but we have an edge in handling our problems – we have God on our side. The growth is displayed when you can grasp what the song writer suggests when she looked back over the troubles that she had experienced and the heartache; Margaret Douroux penned the words, *"if it had not been for the Lord on my side, tell me where would I be?"*

But yet:

1 Peter 4:12-13 (KJV) ¹² Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: ¹³ But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.

You see, your response makes all the difference:

Romans 5:3-5 (KJV) ³ And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; ⁴ And patience, experience; and experience, hope: ⁵ And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

Paul says:

1 Thessalonians 5:18 (KJV) ¹⁸ In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

Philippians 2:13-15 (KJV) ¹³ For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of *his* good pleasure. ¹⁴ Do all things without murmurings and disputings: ¹⁵ That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of

a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world.

Then you will be able to say:

Philippians 3:8 (KJV) ⁸ Yea doubtless, and I count all things *but* loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them *but* dung, that I may win Christ,

God has assured us that He will not permit us to be attacked with trials or temptations that are too overwhelming for us to handle. He will grant us grace to be overcomers. And as God faithfully pours out His grace upon us in the midst of each fiery trial, we can endure hardships and overcome the enemy in God's strength. Scripture reveals that there are great rewards for responding to trials with grace. We have:

We have The strength of Godly character

We have Exceeding joy in God's glory

We have God's strength in our weaknesses

We have Fellowship with Christ

We have Heavenly rewards

We have the privilege of Reigning with Christ

And not only that, we have some witnesses to prove it:

Hebrews 12:1-2 (KJV) Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Meditation/Reflection/Application

How do we grow in Grace?

- We grow in grace by reading God's Word and letting it "dwell in us richly" (Colossians 3:16) and by praying.

Those actions by themselves don't mature us, but God uses these **spiritual disciplines** to help us grow. Spiritual disciplines can be described as those behaviors that augment our spiritual growth and enable us to grow to spiritual maturity. This process of spiritual growth and development begins to take place the moment a person encounters the risen Christ and comes to Him for salvation.

The purpose of spiritual discipline is the development of our inner being, that which has been transformed by Christ at salvation (2 Corinthians 5:17).

- The foremost of the disciplines is that involving the Word of God and constitutes the reading, study, memorization, and meditation of Scripture.

If this discipline is neglected, no other effort to discipline ourselves will be successful because we simply do not have the power to overcome the resistance of the sin nature in which our new natures reside. Nor do we have the power to overcome the resistance of demonic influences whose aim is always to separate us from the only means of spiritual growth, the Word of God.

Therefore, maturing in our Christian life is not about what we do, but about what God does in us, by His grace. Understanding and applying God's grace in our lives is important. We are not to impair it by being proud, because God says that He resists the proud but gives grace to the humble (James 4:6). Grace is that attribute of God that enables us to break free of our sinful nature and follow Him. It gives us strength and protects us. Without God's grace, His favor, we would be hopelessly lost in this world. The more grace we have and ask God for, the more mature as Christians we will be.

To grow in grace does not mean gaining more grace from God. God's grace never increases; it is infinite, it cannot be more, and according to the nature of God, it could never be less.

How much more grace could there possibly be than that? But to grow in grace is to grow in our understanding of what Jesus did and to grow in our appreciation of the grace we have been given. The more we learn about Jesus, the more we will appreciate all He has done, and the more we appreciate His love and sacrifice for us, the more we will perceive the never-ending grace of God.

- Scripture memorization is also essential. We always have the freedom to choose what we place in our minds. With that in mind, memorization is vital. If we truly believe that the Bible is the Word of God, how can we not memorize it? Memorization enables us to keep it constantly in the forefront of our minds, and that makes it possible to react to all life circumstances according to its precepts.

- The second discipline is that of prayer.

Our prayers are a spiritual communion with God through means of thanksgiving, adoration, supplication, petition, and confession. The wonderful thing about prayer is that God meets us where we are. He comes alongside us to lead

us into a deeper, more real relationship with Him, not motivated by guilt, but driven by His love. Prayer changes us. Prayer changes lives.