

Spiritual Growth is a Choice

By David Phillips

Introduction

1. Many people respond to the gospel call because they long for the blessing of salvation that comes through Christ.
2. Yet, we learn in the scriptures that salvation is not the only blessing given to God's people.
3. We are told in Eph. 1:3 that we are given "*every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.*"
4. One such blessing is that of renewal or transformation as a child of God.

Discussion

I. The Necessity of Spiritual Growth

- A. Spiritual growth is essential to the life of a Christian.
 1. Paul commanded in Rom. 12:2, "*And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*"
 2. This spiritual growth is just as essential to our spiritual lives as our obedience to the gospel.
 3. It is the expectation God has of His people once they have been cleansed of their sins.
 4. It is also the necessary result of the work and fellowship of the church which belongs to Christ.
 5. This is what we are told in Eph. 4:11-16.
- B. It is a part of the great commission.
 1. When we think of the Great commission we think of the need to preach the gospel to the lost.
 2. And so we should, for it is written, "*Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit...*"
 3. However, one part of Christ's commission to His church that is often neglected is the command to "teach them to observe all things that I have commanded you."
 4. The result of fulfilling both parts of this great commission is that Jesus will be with us, "*even to the end of the age.*"
 5. But we must all put ourselves in the shoes of those who have been discipled according to verse 19.
 - a. Are you striving to learn all that Jesus commanded you?
 - b. Are you striving to observe all that Jesus commanded you?
 - c. This is the spiritual growth that God expects of His people.
 - d. We fulfill the great commission when we evangelize the lost.
 - e. But if we are not doing all we can to grow as His disciples then we are neglecting our responsibility as His people.
- C. Spiritual growth brings great blessings.
 1. Yes, growth is commanded and yes it is necessary.
 2. But there is a very good reason.

3. When we are growing and maturing we receive blessings far beyond the reach of men who choose to be stagnant in their spiritual lives.
 - a. Those who do not overcome their sins are bound to endure the emotional and physical consequences of their sins for the rest of their lives—they never find peace.
 - b. Those who do not draw closer to God can never experience the joy of God drawing near to them, as it is written, “*Draw near to God and He will draw near to you*” (James 4:8).
 - c. Those who do not learn how to pray and lay their every burden upon God will never learn to have the peace of God as it is written in Phil. 4:6-7.
 - d. Those who choose not to be diligent in their work in the kingdom will never know the good pleasure of God upon His servants, as Jesus said in the parable of the talents, “*Well done good and faithful servant*” (Matt. 25:21).
4. Life is like water.
 - a. In a river that is constantly moving is fresh and clean.
 - b. But a swamp where the water is stagnant and motionless is full of all manner of disease, grime, and filth.
 - c. Even so, when we are growing and show great moving in our spiritual lives we will be as fresh water, both clean and beautiful.
 - d. Even nature shows us the outcome of being lazy and motionless.
5. Therefore we must understand that the great blessings promised by God are promised to those who are striving to grow in their spiritual lives.
6. This is just one of the lessons we learn from Peter in 2 Pet. 1:5-11.

II. Spiritual Growth is a Choice.

- A. There is much we may discuss on the subject of spiritual growth.
 1. There is enough to last years. Indeed, spiritual growth is something that must continue on for a lifetime.
 2. However, our time here is limited.
 3. Rather than getting into all of the ways we must grow as Christians, we will focus our minds on a truth that is so important, that without it we will never be able to grow.
 4. That is that spiritual growth is a CHOICE.
- B. Many things to choose from.
 1. Physical life has much to offer; therefore we have many things to choose from.
 - a. We choose the kind of life we are going to live.
 - b. We choose the kind of career we are going to have.
 - c. We choose the schools that we are going to attend.
 - d. We choose the kind of house we want.
 - e. We also choose what values we are going to emphasize in our lives.
 2. When it comes to values, every Christian must choose whether they are going to emphasize physical things or spiritual things in their life.
 - a. Consider the story of Mary and Martha when Jesus was visiting at their house.
 - b. Martha was “*distracted with much serving*” and, as Jesus said, she was “*worried and troubled about many things*” (Luke 10:40-41).
 - c. But while Martha was worried about serving in physical things Mary was sitting at the feet of Jesus learning all that He had to teach.
 - d. When He compared the two women, Jesus said of Mary, “*But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her*” (vs. 42).
- C. We all have to make a choice.

1. Those of us who are Christians have chosen to obey the gospel.
 2. But now that we are disciples of Christ, we have to make the choice whether or not we are going to grow as His disciples.
 3. The point begin that we need to choose, as Mary did, “*the good part, which will not be taken away*” from us.
- D. Our choice must be backed up by action.
1. When we believed in the gospel we were not saved until we repented and obeyed.
 2. The same is true of our decision to grow in Christ.
 3. If we are going to grow it is going to take work, it is going to take sacrifice, and it is going to take diligence and perseverance.
 4. Men go so school; they make the sacrifice of time, money, and energy, because they know the benefits are worth it.
 5. The benefits of spiritual growth are worth far more that anything this life has to offer. Do you believe that?
 6. We have seen what spiritual growth can do for us according 2 Pet. 1:5-11 and other passages. How much does it mean to you?

Conclusion

1. It is your decision.
2. Are you willing to grow in your service to God?
3. How are you going to choose?