

# SPIRITUAL GROWTH IS A CHOICE

Ephesians 4:14-16

## INTRODUCTION:

- A. Growth is a universal activity of our universe.
  - 1. Little babies grow into toddlers, start school, finish high school, go to college, get married, have children of their own, etc.
  - 2. Animals grow: that cute little puppy you got might turn into a lot more than you expected.
  - 3. Trees grow. Flowers grow.
- B. More important than any other growth is that which takes place in man:
  - 1. PHYSICAL growth in body.
  - 2. INTELLECTUAL growth in mind.
  - 3. SPIRITUAL growth in soul.
- C. The spiritual growth is what is most important.
- D. In most instances, growth is automatic:
  - 1. Physically, we eat when we are hungry, sleep when we are tired, exercise because we like to be active. Then, growth just happens.
  - 2. Occasionally, something goes wrong and growth is interrupted, as seen in some children.
  - 3. A tree or a plant might grow even where you don't want it to grow. Even if you don't plant it, water it or care for it.
- E. Spiritually, growth is NOT automatic.
  - 1. Spiritual growth does not take place without planning and effort.
  - 2. It can be achieved only by conscious desire and diligent work.
- F. Sadly, not ALL Christians grow CHOOSE to grow spiritually.
  - 1. Many have been Christians for years, with little change or improvement.
  - 2. They are no more, often less, useful to the Lord than when they first became Christians.
  - 3. Failing to grow, they become stagnant, like a pool of water.
- G. That is because "*Spiritual Growth Is a Choice.*"
  - 1. It doesn't happen by default (unlike physical growth)
  - 2. Spiritual growth occurs only when we CHOOSE to grow
- H. If we do not make that choice, and stick to it, there will be no spiritual growth!
- I. To encourage us to make the right choice regarding spiritual growth, let's remember that "***Spiritual Growth Is a Choice***":

## I. SPIRITUAL GROWTH IS A CHOICE COMMANDED BY GOD.

- A. Though we are not FORCED to grow, we ARE commanded to grow. It is our CHOICE as to whether or not we obey the command.
- B. “but, speaking the truth in love, *may grow up in all things into Him* who is the head--Christ--” *Ephesians 4:15.*
- C. “as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby,” *1 Peter 2:2.*
- D. Peter begins his second epistle describing how we are to grow- **2 Peter 1:5-8.**
  - 1. Adding to your faith such graces as virtue, knowledge, self- control, etc.
  - 2. Abounding in these graces, being fruitful, *which implies growth.*
- E. Peter ends his second epistle with a command to grow in grace and knowledge, **2 Peter 3:18.**
- F. Christians who did not grow were sternly rebuked, **Hebrews 5:12-6:1.**
- G. Spiritual growth is a NOT JUST AN OPTION, reserved for a few select Christians. ALL Christians are commanded to grow.

## II. SPIRITUAL GROWTH IS A CHOICE THAT REQUIRES EFFORT.

- A. UNLIKE PHYSICAL GROWTH.
  - 1. People grow physically by default (unless there is some disorder)
  - 2. No effort is required on our part; we mature physically whether we want to or not
- B. Paul wrote: “*Be diligent* to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” *2 Timothy 2:15* (NKJ).
- C. Peter wrote that it requires DILIGENCE, *2 Peter 1:5,10.*
  - 1. “*giving all diligence*, add to your faith virtue ... “ v.5.
  - 2. “be even more *diligent* to make your call and election sure,” v.10.
- D. SPIRITUAL GROWTH REQUIRES *CONCENTRATED EFFORT.*
  - 1. Don't think that just because you grow older, you are growing spiritually.
  - 2. Paul wrote that it requires:
    - a. WORK, “*work out your own salvation* with fear and trembling.” *Phil 2:12.*
    - b. PRESSING ON, “*I press toward the goal* for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.” *Philippians 3:14.*
- E. ILLUSTRATION: High in the Alps is a monument raised in honor of a faithful guide who perished while ascending a peak to rescue a stranded tourist. Inscribed on that memorial stone are these words: HE DIED CLIMBING. A maturing, growing Christian should have the same kind of attitude, right up to the end of life.

### III. SPIRITUAL GROWTH IS A CHOICE THAT IS ASSISTED BY GOD.

#### A. God will not leave us alone:

1. Jesus told His apostles when He sent them out: “Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:20).
2. The Hebrew writer quoted God: “I will never leave you, nor forsake you.” (Heb 13:5).

#### B. Likewise, He will not leave us alone in our efforts to grow:

1. God gives us the strength that comes from His Word, “So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.” **Acts 20:32.**
2. He provides the armor to stand strong in the power of His might, **Eph 6:10-11.**

#### C. THE PSALMIST KNEW THAT GOD WAS HIS STRENGTH:

1. The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; my God, *my strength*, in whom I will trust; my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. **Ps 18:2**
2. Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, *my strength* and my Redeemer. **Psalm 19:14.**
3. The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is *the strength of my life*; of whom shall I be afraid? **Psalm 27:1.**
4. God is our refuge and *strength*, a very present help in trouble. **Psalm 46:1.**

#### D. With God as our aid, spiritual growth is possible. And not mediocre growth, but spiritual growth beyond what limits we might think hinder us!

### IV. SPIRITUAL GROWTH IS A CHOICE THAT IS BLESSED BY GOD.

#### A. The blessings BEGIN IN THIS LIFE.

1. “I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.” John 10:10.
2. We have justification, peace, grace and hope in Christ, **Romans 5:1-2.**  
“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”
3. “Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, *for if you do these things you will never stumble.*” **2 Peter 1:10.**

#### B. THE BLESSINGS CONTINUE INTO *THE LIFE TO COME.*

1. “Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.’” **Matthew 25:34.**
2. “Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.” **Revelation 2:10.**

## **CONCLUSION:**

- A. We have been talking about spiritual growth, the kind of growth that is:
  - 1. Commanded by God.
  - 2. Requires diligent effort.
  - 3. Assisted by God.
  - 4. Blessed by God
- B. If we desire to experience the blessings of the right kind of growth, then never forget that "Spiritual Growth Is a Choice"!
- C. Are you making the right choice today and every day?

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- A. The blessings enjoyed in Christ include a new beginning. From baptism, we rise to "walk in newness of life" - **Romans 6:4**.
- B. The new beginning we find in Christ *involves the concept of spiritual growth*.
  - 1. Just as a healthy physical life is one of growth
  - 2. So a healthy spiritual life is a process of growth
- C. Similarities between physical and spiritual growth:
  - 1. Physical growth takes physical nourishment, exercise, freedom from disease.
  - 2. Spiritual growth takes spiritual nourishment, exercise, freedom from the disease of sin.
- D. A DIFFERENCE between physical and spiritual growth:
  - 1. Generally physical growth occurs anyway.
  - 2. Unless there is a disease or some abnormality, growth will occur.
- E. However, spiritual growth is a CHOICE. It does not come naturally. You must choose and make an effort to grow spiritually.
- F. Sadly, not ALL Christians grow CHOOSE to grow spiritually.
  - 1. Many have been Christians for years, with little change or improvement.
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