

THE MATTER OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH

I. THE OBLIGATION OF A CHRISTIAN CONCERNING SPIRITUAL GROWTH

- A. Every believer becomes a spiritual "babe" in Christ at the moment he is saved (I Cor. 3:1). No one becomes a spiritually mature Christian overnight but rather he must go through a process of spiritual development (Eph. 4:11-15).
- B. Every believer not only has the capacity for spiritual growth but he also has an obligation or duty to develop spiritually (II Pet. 3:18).
- C. Notice also that every Christian is either making progress in spiritual development or he is going backward - there is no standing still. Failure to develop spiritually is not only disobedience but such disobedience is rebuked in the Scriptures because it hinders and limits the believer's ability for service (Heb. 5:11-14).

II. THE OUTLINE OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH

- A. Every believer needs to experience spiritual growth and development in the area of the knowledge of God and how He deals with us (Col. 1:10; Heb. 12:5-11).
- B. Secondly every believer needs to grow spiritually and develop in the area of Christian character (I Thess. 3:12; II Thess. 1:3; II Pet. 1:4-8).
- C. Every believer needs to grow spiritually in the area of his relationship to Christ and the relationship between Him and proper service (Jn. 3:30; Phil. 1:21; II Cor. 5:14; Rev. 2:4).
- D. Every believer needs to grow finally in the area of discerning what is God's will and then fulfilling His will in one's life (Eph. 5:17; Col. 1:9; Heb. 13:21).
- E. Notice failure on the part of a believer to grow in these areas results in a bad testimony for the Lord

and excludes him from various areas of Christian service.

III. THE OBJECTS OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH

- A. It is the goal for every believer to become increasingly more and more like the Lord Jesus Christ in every aspect of one's life (II Cor. 3:18). He is our example for every situation and He sets the standard for our attitudes, actions, associations, and affections (Heb. 12:3; Jn. 21:21,22; I Pet. 2:21). He is the measure of the perfect man and when we follow His example we are always doing the right thing and pleasing God (Rom. 8:29; Eph. 4:13).
- B. It is also the goal for every believer to develop spiritually for the purpose of serving God to the fullest extent of one's abilities (Eph. 4:13-16; Rom. 6:11-13; II Tim. 3:16).
- C. Notice oftentimes folks misunderstand the purpose for which they are saved. Believers are saved to serve and it is through a life of service that the Lord is glorified (Eph. 2:10; I Cor. 10:31; Jn. 15:8).

IV. THE OBTAINING OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH

- A. Spiritual growth involves certain things which are very similar to natural or physical growth.
 - 1. First of all just as physical growth requires regular and proper nourishment so does spiritual growth. The nourishment necessary for a believer to grow is the Word of God (I Pet. 2:2; Jn. 6:23; II Tim. 3:16,17; Psa. 1:1-3).
 - 2. Notice secondly as natural growth demands exercise in its development so does spiritual growth. Spiritual exercise is involved in acts of obedience to the Word of God (I Jn. 2:5). In other words doing what God says leads to spiritual growth and development.
 - 3. Thirdly just as rest is necessary for physical growth so does spiritual growth require rest. Spiritual rest involves a matter of appropriating the promises of God and resting on these in Him (Rom. 1:17; 4:21; Heb. 10:23; Titus 1:2; Rom. 8:28).

- B. Spiritual growth involves a matter of submission to authority and obedience to instruction which are similar to and necessary for a child to develop. Just as a child must submit to the authority over him and do what he is instructed to do for development, so must the child of God be subject to the leadership of the Holy Spirit and obedient to God's Word (Gal. 5:16; Heb. 12:6-11; I Pet. 1:22).
- C. Notice since spiritual growth is predicated in much part by receiving the nourishment of God's Word there are certain things which will hasten our spiritual development.
 - 1. First, a believer can grow spiritually through his own personal Bible reading and devotional time.
 - 2. Secondly, a believer can grow through a life of faithfulness to church services and Sunday school.
 - 3. A believer can also grow and develop spiritually by fellowshiping with spiritually mature Christians.
 - 4. There are a host of other mediums involving the Word of God such as Christian literature, broadcasts, seminars and Christian retreats.

V. THE OBSTACLES TO SPIRITUAL GROWTH

- A. No one is ever going to properly develop spiritually who is not faithful in church services (I Cor. 4:2; Rom. 10:17; Heb. 10:25).
- B. Believers who neglect daily devotions will also fail to grow spiritually.
- C. Believers who do not submit to the leadership of the Holy Spirit and obey God's Word will not grow spiritually (Gal. 5:16).
- D. Then believers who do not rest upon God's promises and learn to trust Him in different situations will not grow spiritually.

VI. THE OUTCOME OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH

- A. First of all God is glorified when a believer grows up spiritually and yields his life in service to Him (Col.1:10).
- B. Secondly those who develop spiritually become qualified to serve the Lord in ways that immature Christians can never serve (Acts 6:1-6; I Cor. 6:4; Gal. 6:1; I Tim. 3:6).
- C. Spiritual growth prevents carnality and many personal, as well as, church problems (I Cor. 3:1-3).