

## The Dire Need to Grow in Grace!

As I write these words I am preaching in San Jose, California. I took a morning walk today, coupled with a time of prayer. As I was approaching a bend, I observed a young man pushing his bicycle up an embankment. The timing was such that we would arrive at the bend the same time. And as is often the case I sensed the sweet, still voice of the Master say, "Here's one for you to witness to." We briefly made our acquaintance, did the minimal amount of small talk to establish rapport and then I began to pursue a soul talk. I asked, "Paul, if you were to die today, do you know for sure you would go to Heaven?" In quick reflex action, he responded with an immediate curse word, followed by "...yes, I would go to Heaven." Now for the fact that the language he was using was rough, I was tempted to laugh at his response because the expletive that he used was the extreme opposite of Heaven. He caught himself, slowed his speech down and later apologized at the use of this profanity. After further questioning, he gave pretty good evidence of having committed his life to Christ when he was thirteen. I then asked him when he was baptized and he had not received beautiful believer's baptism since he was saved. He has showed interest in coming to our service tonight and the Youth Rally I am speaking to tomorrow. My heart went out to a young man, now seventeen who has allowed four years to go by without growth in grace.

When a baby does not grow in four years after birth, it is because something is wrong. The case in point when compared to spiritual growth is comparable. In II Peter 3:18, the Bible says, *"But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen."* There are a lot of Pauls out there in our world. They have been saved, but have not grown. Why not? Although we don't pretend to have all the answers, let me list three assignments that need to be done after a person gives their heart to Christ.

### **1. Be baptized.**

We follow the custom of John the Baptist and the disciples of our Lord. When evidence is on hand that a person has converted, we follow the command to baptize them in the name of The Father, The Son, and The Holy Ghost. *"Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?"* (Acts 10:47). There may be some reading these words who wonder why there is an absence of peace in your walk with the Lord. It may be as simple an answer that you have not obediently submitted to the identifying picture that baptism displays which is the death, burial, and resurrection our Lord and Savior, as well as your personal statement that the water baptism illustrates according to Romans 6:4, *"Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."*

### **2. Be in the Word of God.**

Colossians 3:16 says, *"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom...."* Another word for "richly" is the word "abundantly." When we allow the Word of God to dwell within our minds and heart abundantly then we discover power to be clean and pure and to stay that way: *"Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word"* (Psalm 119:9). *"Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee"* (Psalm 119:11). On a personal basis, I admonish you to read the Bible daily, systematically and attempt to memorize Scripture regularly, daily is best. What antioxidants do to our physical health, the Bible will in a similar way build up our resistance to spiritual demise. Even more inclusive than a singular way of nourishing your spiritual health, the Bible is likened to bread. *"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God"* (Matthew 4:4). From the energy supplied to the preventive benefit, the Bible is just something you and I cannot do without.

### **3. Be in fellowship.**

Colossians 3:16, goes on to say, *"...teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns*

*and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."* So let us allow the Word to dwell in us, but then also, make a concerted effort to get into the fellowship of other believers where the Bible is taught and we are admonished to live right and praises to our Lord are sung. Hey! It sounds like church, doesn't it? I just received a very nice email from someone who was part of our fellowship years ago. He did not go into detail, but it sounded as though he had been very disappointed in other Christians. He still had fond memories of Christchurch and when he discovered he could pod cast our sermons, he was excited. He went into some detail explaining the blessing. Then he said something to this effect, "I haven't found anywhere where I feel at home, so I guess I'll just keep listening to your pod cast." I am glad he can reap this blessing through the internet, but I wrote him back that he still needs to be in fellowship with God and his people in the local church atmosphere. We all need this accountability.

I noticed after just a few verses of shared Scripture and admonition my young new friend Paul began to change. In just a few minutes I saw him soften before my eyes with an apparent desire to learn more. *"But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord"* (II Corinthians 3:18). Think of the power of a Sunday morning Bible study in Sunday School!

This is a big reason in our up-coming Fall Program we are emphasizing to get visitors to attend our Sunday morning Bible Study as well as worship. We need the Sunday School class and we need the music and the Word in the main services. I John 1:3, 4 says, *"...that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full."*

- Pastor Pope -

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