

Directions Of Growth

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October 11, 2011

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Psalms 1:3

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Spiritual growth is a vital subject in the Bible. One either grows or is a failure.

The Psalmist David compares a righteous man to a flourishing tree. A flourishing tree grows in four directions — Downward, upward, inward, and outward. These are also the directions we must grow as Christians.

Downward

The root system of a tree is very important. With a good root system, a tree can withstand storms and drought; it can draw water and the proper minerals it needs from the earth.

Our spiritual growth must also be rooted properly. Eph. 3:17-19, *“That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.”*

Just as a tree that is properly rooted can withstand the storms, so can we withstand the devil when we are rooted and grounded in Christ.

We can also withstand any persecutions or trials that may come our way. Col. 2:7, *“Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.”*

The early Christians taught us how we can have thanksgiving even when things seem to go bad for us. 1 Pet. 4:12-16, *“Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: 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. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men’s matters.”*

Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.”

Peter admonishes his listeners to grow in grace and knowledge. 2 Pet. 3:17-18, *“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. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever.”*

Upward

Since man is involved with physical things, he often fails to look up.

We must continually look up to Jesus. Heb. 12:2, *“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.”*

Paul says the Christian’s conversation is in heaven. Phil 3:20, *“For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.”*

For proper growth, we must seek the kingdom first. Matt. 6:33, *“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”*

One’s only hope for growth is to look up to the crucified Christ. John 19:37, *“And again another scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced.”*

Inward

Many fail to grow because they never truly change their hearts.

It is important to look inside ourselves to keep our hearts pure. Matt. 5:8, *“Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.”*

A Christian must strive daily to think pure thoughts. Prov. 23:7, *“For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he: Eat and drink, saith he to thee; but his heart is not with thee.”*

One’s outward life reflects what is inside. Matt. 5:16, *“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”*

If you are not getting stronger, is it because you are not growing inward?

Outward

From the beginning of Christianity, we are taught to look outward.

We must look beyond ourselves; share good news with others.

- Mark 16:15-16, *“And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.”*
- Matt. 28:19-20, *“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”*
- Luke 24:47, *“And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”*

When we teach others, we help them to grow, and we grow ourselves.

Conclusion

Have you grown as a tree by the waters? Psalms 1:3, *“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.”*

Have you spiritually died because you did not grow as a Christian?

One cannot grow unless he is first planted in Christ. Rom. 6:4-6, *“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. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.”*

If we have not grown in Christ as a tree, we will be pulled up and cast away.

- Matt. 15:13, *“But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.”*

- 1 Cor. 3:6, *“I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.”*

How can a person grow like a tree? One must first be planted. The following are the steps necessary to make that happen:

- **Faith.** Heb. 11:6, *“But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”* When I was in high school (I was about 17 years old), a neighbor boy my same age told me he was an atheist. Since I had been baptized, I took the opportunity to talk to him about the scriptures. He told me that he could see that living the life of a Christian was good, but he wasn’t sure if he believed there was a God. But to be on the safe side, maybe he should go to church, and when he dies and stands before God (if there is a God) on the day of Judgment (if there is a Judgment), maybe if God sees that he has gone to church and lived a good life that God would send him to heaven (if there is a heaven), and not to hell (if there is a hell). I told him, “It doesn’t work that way. You have to believe in Him with all your heart or you cannot please Him.”
- **Repentance.** Acts 2:38, *“Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”* Acts 11:18, *“... Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.”* If while you were sleeping, you heard a noise in the other room, and you think to yourself, “There’s a burglar in my house!” So you reach for your cell phone, and as quietly as you can, you call the police, tell them there is a burglar in your house, and you give them your address. Soon, you heard them arrive and capture the thief. He yells, “I’m sorry; I’m sorry!” What is he sorry for? He is sorry that he got caught; not that he stole. In true repentance the thief would be sorry that he ever stole and wants to change his life so that he would never steal again. That is true repentance. It is a change of mind that brings about a change of action. That is what we have to do before we can become a Christian.
- **Confession.** Rom. 10:9-10, *“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the*

mouth confession is made unto salvation.” What do we confess? That we believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

Note that in the above scriptures that faith (believing), repentance, and confession are “**UNTO**” righteousness, life, or salvation. “Unto” means toward something; not that one has already attained.

- **Baptism.** It is baptism where righteousness, life, and salvation are attained. Jesus, himself, was baptized to fulfill all righteousness, “*But John forbid him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him. And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*” (Matt. 3:14-17). Jesus was baptized because God said it was the right thing to do. Did you see how pleased God was about Jesus being baptized? Jesus also said “*it becometh **us** to fulfil all righteousness.*” We are baptized because it fulfills His righteousness, not because it is of our righteousness.

In fact, if we are not baptized, we are still in our sins. “*Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.*” (Acts 2:38). Peter, what did you say the reason of baptism is? “for the remission of sins”. Why would anyone want to leave out the step that removes our sins?

Jesus commanded that to reach salvation we must be baptized. “*And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth **and** is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.*” (Mark 16:15-16).

Ananias told Saul (before he was rename Paul) the very same thing, “*And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.*” (Acts 22:16). Baptism is a requirement given by God.

Baptism is called a burial. “*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.*” (Rom. 6:4). Our old man is to be dead to us. “*Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into*

Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? 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. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.” (Rom. 6:3-6). Baptism is God’s blueprint for applying the blood of Christ in our lives by baptism. We are free from our old sins only when we are baptized.

This doesn’t mean “sprinkling. The scripture above says baptism is a burial. We don’t take a dead body to the cemetery and sprinkle a little dirt over it; we bury the body.

If you have not yet been planted in Christ's church, won't you consider it today?

