

Continuing to Grow

TEXT: 1 Pet. 2:1-2

INTRODUCTION:

- A. GROWTH IS NECESSARY FOR US(**Eph. 4:14-15; 2 Thes. 1:3; 2 Pet. 3:18**).
- B. SPIRITUAL GROWTH MUST BE BALANCED.
 - 1. We must grow in knowledge, zeal, faith, Christ-like character, good works.
 - 2. Growth involves the elimination of evil and worldly elements.
- C. THIS LESSON IS INTENDED TO HELP US CONTINUE GROWING.

I. HINDRANCES TO GROWTH.

- A. LACK OF EFFORT.
 - 1. Growing in Christ is not automatic.
 - 2. One may still be a "babe" after many years(**Heb. 5:13; 1 Cor. 3:1-3**).
 - 3. Requires effort, but the lazy will simply not put out. They drift(**Heb. 2:1**).
- B. DISCOURAGEMENT.
 - 1. Some people make a good beginning, but get discouraged and quit
 - 2. Reasons may vary: lack of encouragement from others, personal problems, church troubles, etc.
 - 3. But consider the example of the apostle Paul(**2 Cor. 11:24-29**).
 - a. Yet he did not "lose heart"(**2 Cor. 4:8-9**).
 - c. He knew his labor was not in vain(**2 Cor. 4:16-5:1**).
 - 4. And so he encourages us(**Gal. 6:9; 1 Cor. 15:58**).
- C. DISUSE OF ONE'S TALENTS.
 - 1. Like an unused knife, we can get rusty!
 - 2. Drifting is often the result of neglect(**Heb. 2:1-3**).
 - 3. Growth is the result of exercise(**1 Tim. 5:7-8**).
- D. INTERFERENCE(**Mark 4:18-19; 2 Tim. 2:4; 1 John 2:15-17**).

II. SUGGESTIONS FOR CONTINUING SPIRITUAL GROWTH.

- A. BECOME ACTIVE IN THE WORK OF THE CONGREGATION.
 - 1. Begin immediately! It is important not to delay (remember the "hindrances").
 - 2. There's work for everyone, and it's best to start something easy.
 - 3. Humble service can be a joy(**Psa. 84:10; John 13:12-17; Matt. 10:42**).
 - 4. Look for work needing to be done!(**Isa. 6:8**).
 - 5. Most of us are good critics; here is how we can put that ability to good use:
 - a. When we see something we want to criticize, take that as an opportunity to SHOW (not tell) how it should be done
 - b. In other words, "Don't criticize, energize!"
- B. SPEND TIME IN STUDY, MEDITATION AND PRAYER
(**Psa. 1:1-3; Dan 6:10**).
- C. PARTICIPATE IN AN INFORMAL BIBLE STUDY GROUP(**Deut. 6:6-8**).
- D. BECOME INVOLVED IN LEADING PEOPLE TO CHRIST.
 - 1. Even if you don't do the actual teaching, you can do what Andrew and Philip did: lead a friend to Christ!(**John 1:40-46**).

2. Those involved in teaching others continue growing in Christ themselves!
- E. PRACTICE CONSTANT SELF-EXAMINATION(**2 Cor. 13:5**).
1. Here are some questions we should often ask ourselves:
 - a. Do I have a better Bible knowledge than one year ago?
 - b. Am I as interested in Jesus Christ today as when I was baptized?
 - c. Have I helped someone else to become a Christian?
 - d. Am I enjoying life as a child of God?
 - e. Am I improving my life, my disposition, and becoming more like Christ?
 - f. Do I set a good example for other Christians?
 - g. Am I growing in such activities as Bible study, prayer, worship?
 - h. Am I able to identify sin and eliminate worldliness from my life?
 2. Self-examination is not easy , but spiritual growth is impossible without it!

CONCLUSION:

- A. TOO MANY CHRISTIANS HAVE JUST ENOUGH RELIGION TO MAKE THEM MISERABLE(**James 1:6-8**)..
- B. OUR LIVES ARE TO BE FILLED WITH WHAT?(**Gal. 5:22-23**).
- C. HIS WILL FOR US(**John 10:10**).