

Title: How to Grow Spiritually

Text: I John 2:12-14

Would you open your Bibles, please, to I John. I John chapter 2 and beginning at Vs 12. I John deals with the great doctrine of assurance. How do you know that you are really a Christian? How do you know that you have eternal life and that you are saved? How do you know? Well, this letter was written to Christians that they may know without a shadow of a doubt that they have eternal life.

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 (58) We are looking at this whole area of fellowship. To have assurance involves an understanding of what it means to have fellowship with God. So, we have looked at the meaning of fellowship. We have looked at what is involved in Fellowship. We have seen how sin can stand in the way of fellowship. We have considered the Test of Fellowship Today, we come to the area of Spiritual growth. When you are in fellowship with God, you will grow spiritually. And in order to grow spiritually you need to know the different levels. So, John is giving to us four levels of Christian maturity...

The thing that I hope will happen ^{Today} today is that as we go through these four level of Christian growth, you will determine where your life is spiritually, and then determine with God's help to grow and reach a higher plain of maturity. You see, it is God's plan and purpose that all christians grow into spiritually mature believers. Hebrews 6 tells us to leave the elementary teaching about Christ and to press on to maturity. And that is what I pray will happen in many of your lives ^{Today} today.

(Read I John 2:12-14)

Pryer

Our Father, we thank you and praise you for the Word of God that lives forever. We know, our Father, that faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. And we pray that today in this service many will hear the Word of God and will respond with belief and faith. We know that no man will come to the Father except that the Spirit draws him. And so we ask, dear Lord, that the Holy Spirit will do his work in each heart. May thy will be done and may people respond accepting thee as lord and saviour of their life. We pray that Christians may grow in their faith and maturity. We ask this in the name of Jesus... Amen....

(1C) Introduction

I must confess to you that as I read and studied these verses, I have never seen the truth of the levels of maturity before, as I did in preparation for this message. It never dawned upon me that John was not repeating something just for emphasis. But, in truth he was giving to us a KEY as to the levels of spiritual maturity. Now, let me show you why this is true.

In Vs 12 and 13 you will find the verb "I write"...three different times. Actually you will find it four times. However, the fourth "I write"...found at the end of Vs 13 really belongs with Vs 14 and it is "I have written."

There are three verbs translated "I write"...meaning "I am writing to you now, " continuous idea....

There are three verbs translated "I have written." The first is found at the end of Vs 13 and the other two are in Vs 14.

So, again, as we study these verses: there are two verb forms used for "write."

only
I am now writing these things - NOW - and ^{the concept of} "I have written them."
Then, again, you have four words, here, to describe "MATURITY."

You will see three words in your text to describe maturity by way of growth. You will see: CHILDREN --- YOUNG MEN --- and FATHERS.

Notice them carefully -- Children, Vs 12 -- Fathers, vs 13 and Young men, vs 13.

Also, you will see Children in the last phrase of Vs 13; ^{and you} ~~will see~~ Fathers and young men in Vs 14.

will see
X NOW, there are four words he is using and not three. And because of ~~this~~ this - the Lord began to speak to ~~my~~ my heart concerning what is being said, here.

The difference is in the word "CHILDREN." The first word "Children" in Vs 12, refers to ^{little} "born ones." Those who are ^{NEW} born. And that is John's common name for Christians. "Little Born Ones."

The second word "children" which is in Vs 13 -- ~~is~~ ^{Greek} is the word which refers to a young child being disciplined. It comes from the root word that is translated many, many times in the N.T. as "discipline" or "chastening." *SO, it is really referring to a young child.*

Now, the word "young men" is repeated twice. And the word, "Fathers" is repeated twice.

So, you have once ^{little} "BORN ONES" - you have once - "Children by way of disciple."

You have used two times the word "YOUNG MEN". And ~~you~~ you have used two times the word "FATHERS".

(20) NOW, what does it all mean? ⁽¹⁰⁾ First---the word "children" which is translated ^{little} "Born ones" -- I believe is referring to "new Converts."

and that everything he says about each one of these, shows the level of maturity. ~~_____~~

And John is teaching the doctrine ~~of~~ ASSURANCE --OF KNOWING THAT WE ARE SAVED - And he is saying something that applies to these levels of maturity.

Notice, first of all - NEW CONVERTS -- those who are now born of the spirit of God. Let's suppose that you have just come to know Christ. Some of you are new in the faith. You have recently come to know Christ as your personal Lord and Saviour. WHAT IS THE ONE THING THAT YOU NEED TO HAVE ASSURANCE ABOUT? HERE IT IS *** VS 12

"I am writing to you, little born ones, because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake." Or literal - "ON ACCOUNT OF HIS NAME."

The one thing that a new convert needs to get into his head and to never forget is that your SINS ARE FORGIVEN YOU. There is nothing so wonderful as having peace of mind concerning your sins. If you are new in Christ, remember the moment you accepted Christ as your saviour, your sins were covered by His blood at Calvary and you have been forgiven of all sins. That happened the moment you accepted Christ. By way of penalty, Christ has paid for your sins. *Past - Present - Future*

I hope that if you have never come to believe this that you will, today. Christ offers more than anything else, - he offers forgiveness. Over and over again in the Gospel of John, Christ offers forgiveness. When he heals somebody, he says: "Arise, ~~thy~~ *thy* sins are forgiven."

The point is: that the two main issues of a new convert that he must get into his mind is that I have ^{salvation} ~~eternal~~ life, not on my own merits, not ~~by~~ by any works of my own, but through faith in Christ.

And secondly, that my sins have been forgiven me, ^{on account of his} ~~account of his~~ name, ~~and~~ -- on account of what Christ has done for me.

~~_____~~
~~_____~~
John Chapter 1:9: Let us walk in the light as a man

may stay on the level

Now That is the foundation. Again, if you are having a problem, look back to chapter I of 1st John and vers 7: "If we walk as a habit of life in the light as he is in ~~the~~^{the} light we have fellowship with one another. It is something we share in common - eternal life. And the blood of Jesus His son continually, constantly cleanses us from all sin.

And then I John 1:9: If we confess our sins, ~~as a christian~~, He is faithful and just, he is righteous, to forgive us. WHY? because Christ already took care of sin at the cross.

"I write to you, little ^{New Converts} born ones, because your sins are forgiven you on account of His name."
Let me ask you how you are doing?

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(ID)

Now, on the second level of maturity, ~~go to the word~~ ^{let's is found in that second word} "children." The second step in maturity in growth is the word, "Children at the end of Vs 13. And it is "children" by way "of discipline."

And I have called this level: "STRUGGLING CHRISTIANS." And some of you are about to put your hand up and say: "That is me." Jama

STRUGGLING CHRISTIANS. We are children by way of discipline. And notice what he is saying to them: At the end of Vs 13: "I have written to you, children, because you know the Father."

The point is: ~~the~~ The relationship of the Father to his son in the matter of discipline.

Let me show you something. Would you turn, please, to Hebrews chapter 12 and Verse 5-11. Hebrews 12 and beginning at vs 5. And every time you see the word "Chastened"(KJV) or the word "Discipline" (NAS) it is the same root word as "Children" in 1st John 2:13. It is child by way of discipline. It is the idea of discipline. Now, every time you see the word "chastening" remember that-and watch this passage.

Hebrews 12 verse 5: "And you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, 'My son, do not regard lightly the chastening (or discipline) of the lord, nor faint when you are reproved by him.'"

Now

How many christians who have come out-off the new birth stage, who are no longer babes, put who are now faced with the struggle, the flesh is waring against the spirit. They are in a battle and they are experiencing discipline in their life, but they are complaining. They are complaining about the discipline. Remember, God is saying, don't look down upon the discipline. Don't faint when you are reprovod by ~~WHY~~ OF HIM. -- God.

SOFTLY

Did you ever stop to think about that fellow who rubs you the wrong way is doing it under the direction of God? ~~As I have often said:~~ YOU KNOW: A lot of the rebukes we get from people and opposition is much like sand paper -- it cause a lot of friction, put it is also rounding off the rough edges. YOU SEE.

Vs 5
01 Aug 12

"My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor faint when you are reprovod by him." WHY? "for these whom the Lord loves he disciplines, and He scourges every son(how many sons) every son whom he receives."

If you are going through the stage of being disciplined as a Christian, COUNT IT FROM GOD. THANK GOD FOR IT, THAT HE IS ROUNDING OFF THE ROUGH EDGES.

Vs 7: "It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons." Notice, the father-son relationship. "For what son is there whom his father does not discipline?"

Now, come down to Vs 10: "For they." meaning Fathers after the flesh. "For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He(God) disciplines us for our good." God never disciplines us - he never puts us into the struggleing stage except it be for our own good. It is for our good, even through we ~~can't~~ might not see it at the moment.

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We may be disappointed at the moment. We may be discouraged about the Christian life - we are not growing - we are not making progress

And we know it. And God knows it. And we are rebelling against the discipline that God is bring us. It is, almost, as through there was a coldness going up between God and us. And there is a struggle and we are about ready to give it up. But remember this: Discipline comes from God. It is from the Lord. And whom the Lord Loves he disciplines. If I love my children, I am going to discipline them. If I hate my children, I am going to let them do what they want to do. If you let your children do what they want to do, as one old time evangelist said: "They will go to hell."

My Christian friends, discipline comes from God. Thank him for it. It is the Father's love. If he didn't love you, he wouldn't discipline you. He disciplines us because he loves us.

Look at Vs 11, "All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful." I don't know anyone who is going through discipline that would say: "Oh, isn't this wonderful..." "Isn't it wonderful that I have suffered so much this week."

Now, you should say that if you understand the plan of God. Thank God I have suffered so much for His glory. But, the discipline isn't joyful at all. In fact, it is hard. But, please notice the PROMISE in Vs 11... "yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yeilds the peaceful fruit of righteousness."

Also, notiaace the last part of Vs 10: ~~And here is the point: What~~ ^{God's Concerning} ~~is~~ the purpose involved in discipline? NOTICE, that we may share His holiness. God wants to left you out of that struggling stage and help you to come to an understanding of his love. He is a Holy God.

We are going our own selfish way; and ^{our} it is drawing us further away from that holiness that He wants us to fellowship in... "To share in His Holiness"... That is why He disciplines us. Not to discourage us... But because He is trying to bring us back to himself.. He is trying to say something to us.

OK
Now, let's come back to I John. I digressed a little bit, but only to expand the meaning of the word "children". ~~A~~ Children by discipline. A level of maturity. ~~At~~ Vs 13: "I have written to you, children, because you know the Father." The Father to the Son by way of discipline.

*The struggle's Christ =
*---**** growth is
Level in spiritual growth is*

(3D) Third, the third ~~level~~ ~~level~~ "YOUNG MEN." And I have chosen to call this VICTORIOUS CHRISTIANS. ~~WHO~~ ~~level~~ ^{Now} WHY ~~DO I~~ SAY VICTORIOUS CHRISTIANS. ~~Now~~ Follow very carefully because it is very obvious that there is going to be a fourth level beyond Victorious Christian *living*.

Many Christians say they are hoping for a victorious Christian life. If they can achieve that, they will have it made. I will have arrived at the state where God wants me. OH KNOW-- THERE IS A LEVEL OF MATURITY BEYOND VICTORIOUS LIVING.

But, let's suppose you are having a ^{Victory} ~~problem~~ ^{Problem} over ~~VICTORY~~. Alright, What does John say about these young men. 2 Things

One phrase that he repeats, which is the key, is: "YOU HAVE OVERCOME THE ~~EVIL~~ ^{EVIL} ONE." Notice, Vs 13 and Vs 14. In writing of the Young Men John uses one phrase in Vs 13 and then he repeats it in Vs 14. "YOU HAVE OVERCOME THE EVIL(WICKED-KJV) ONE."

Notice over in Chapter 5 Vs 4 of I John: He says: "~~For~~ ^{Who} ever is born of God." "For whoever is born of God." You say that you are a christian and that you have been born of the spirit of God. "~~Who~~ ever is born of God overcome the world." This means "continually as a habit of life." WHY? "BECAUSE THIS IS THE VICTORY THAT HAS OVERCOME (meaning it has happened) HAS OVERCOME THE WORLD" AND WHAT IS IT? OUR FAITH.

Did you know that the moment you believed in Christ by faith- at that moment - you have had victory over the world? You have already achieved it. It is by faith and you just may not have realized it. *The way some christians live, I believe they just haven't realized it.*

Romans 6:6

And by faith we should count ourself dead unto sin and alive unto God. Because our old self has been curified by Christ, that the body of sin might be rended useless - that from now on we might not be slaves to sin" - ~~Romans 6:6~~.

And so- a tremendous truth is being taught, here, that young men - ~~men~~ ^{People} who have come to this level of maturity in christian ~~growth~~ growth - not young men from the standpoint of age - young men from the standpoint of christian growth - you may be 70 years old and be a young man, "spiritual" - and it is a wonderful place to be because it is a place of victory - of learning that we have overcome the world. *Now Can look to Chapter 2 and*

Notice, ~~some~~ ^{from something} else in Vs 14: "Because you are strong." MEANING that you know the source of your strength. And we can be characterized now in our level of growth and saying: "you are strong Christians."

And the key to being a strong Christian is in the next phrase: "The Word of God abides in you." The secret to being strong - ~~The~~ secret to knowing how to overcome the world is having the Word of God abiding in us.

So, here is ^{The Third} a level of ~~maturity~~ maturity: VICTORIOUS CHRISTIANS. I hope you are there. If you are not, and you are going through the stage of discipline, remeber that the Father loves you. And he is bring you to that place of victory.

Isreal was REDEEMED from bondage, put before she was allowed to ~~enter~~ ^{enter} the promised land - the land of victory - she wondered for 40 years in the wilderness. And many of us are wondering just about that long. *The Way To MOVE UP The ladder is to get into the land*

^{Now} (4D) NOW, THERE IS ONE FINAL LEVEL. And I believe that is found in the word "FATHER". John repeats the word twice. Here is what he says: Vs 13: "I am writing to you, fathers, because you know Him who have been from the beginning." He is not talking about "The Beginning" from a point of time. He is talking about an eternal concept. "FROM BEGINNING."

Can do all things through Christ who always lives with us Phil

and

† Vs 14: "I have written to you, father, because you know him(again) who has been from the beginning."

Who is from the beginning? Look at Vs 1 of Chapter 1: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we beheld and our hands handled." WHO IS HE TALKING ABOUT? HE IS TALKING ABOUT JESUS CHRIST.

Notice, what he says: "I have written ^{to} you, father, because you have known him from beginning." WHAT IS HE SAYING? ^{Concept of a maturity} The maturity ^{Level of} that is being discribed is a DAILY EXPERIENCAL KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

Those who have come through the stages of being "Born" who have gotten assurance of forgiveness ~~of~~ sin, those who have come through the stage of struggling Christianity and ^{know the} knowing ~~that~~ the discipline of God, Some ~~fell~~ we never leave this stage. And I am sure that is true from the stand point of certain occassions in our lives. But as a habit of life all we know is struggle - we come out of that - we learn of VICTORY - We count ourselves to be alive unto God. We learn the principles of Victorious Christian living. BUT MY FRINEDS MANY CHRISTIANS LEARN THAT AND NEVER GO ANY FURTHER.

The Fahter Concept of mature Christians is one who constantly knows by experience - "he is in christ." ARE YOU GETTING BETTER ACQUAINED WITH JESUS, TODAY? OUR ^{you} ~~BE~~ LEARNING MORE ABOUT THE LORD THIS YEAR THAN WE LEARNED LAST YEAR? DAILY EXPERIENCAL KNOWLEDGE ABOUT JESUS CHRIST.

To learn to know Jesus with whom we will spend eternity. ~~...~~ ^{secretly -} GIVING BULL TO ~~...~~ ^{knowing the heart}

My friends - are you growing in Christ? Are you maturing in the Faith Let us leave the elementary teaching about Christ, and let us press on to maturity."

Prayer