

THE BEREAN

"... examining the scriptures daily..." (Acts 17:11).

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Grow Unto Salvation

BY B. G. ECHOLS

Having exhorted his readers to personal holiness (1 Pet. 1:13-21), and to mutual love (1:22-25), Peter now exhorts them to grow. "Putting away therefore all wickedness, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, as newborn babes, long for the spiritual milk which is without guile, that ye may grow thereby unto salvation; if ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious" (1 Pet. 2:1-3).

"Therefore" connects the admonition to what has already been said. In view of our redemption and regeneration, we are to put away evils and grow in Christ. "Putting away" is to be once and for all, a renouncement. This involves repentance. We have been born again to a new life so the old is to be put away.

The word "wickedness" is translated "malice" in the footnote. If given the wider meaning, it would include all worldly vices, but the context suggests a desire to injure. Guile is deceit, trickiness, and insincerity. We cannot practice fraud. Notice the word "all" is repeated several times to stress the completeness of the change that is to be in us. Neither can we be counterfeit. Guile plots and hypocrisy pretends. A person who is characteristically deceitful and crafty is not a Chris-

tian. The Christian must practice from the heart what God teaches in His word. Our friendship to others in Christ cannot be counterfeit.

Neither must we be displeased at the abilities, prosperity, performance, or reputation of others, especially those in Christ. Envy is a mental cancer that eats away any goodness felt toward others who excel us in some way. Let us not insinuate, defame, backbite, and carry injurious tales. We should not make belittling remarks about others. We must not seek to put others down (Jas. 4:11). We must put away "all evil speaking." Remember brotherly love. We cannot cultivate love of brethren unless we put these things away. Clashes of personality will occur even among Christians to threaten our fellowship. All the evils Peter

mentions are the exaltation of self and the knocking down of another that self may stand higher.

Peter continues with the thought of being born again (1 Pet. 1:23). There is a certain child-like attitude we are to possess. Many believe the people to whom Peter wrote were new converts, but I don't think that is the idea. It seems better to think he is using the term "newborn babes" to suggest eagerness. The true Christian will always regard himself as a mere child in Christ. He will feel what little progress he has made in spiritual growth. Feeling this, he will long for nourishment. We are to act as babes in this respect. If we are babes, we are hungry and thus will not remain babes for hunger is a guarantee of growth. "Long for" means to desire earnestly, to love and have affection for. How strong is your desire for the word?

Drink the unadulterated milk of the word which is suited to your spiritual being. It is not designed for our bodies, but our minds. God's word has no deceit. It is all sufficient for our growth. We do not need some mysterious working of the Holy Spirit. Just as the mother's milk is perfect for the child, so the word of God is perfect for the development of the child of God. There is no growth in either case without food. To a

newborn such longing is wholly natural. The longing of which Peter speaks is something on which the readers must fasten their attention and effort. Growth in Christ is not spontaneous, but it is natural when conditions are proper. We must put away those things that will destroy it, and seek that which will promote it. We can grow. God does not command the impossible. This involves the continued feeding on the word with an advancement beyond the basic (2 Pet. 3:18). We must be active participants in our salvation. The word will not leave a person as it finds him. No one ever was made worse by a proper application of the word. The bud that does not flower is a failure. The Christian that does not grow is a failure. The purpose of the word is that we may grow.

"If ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious" continues the idea of eating. The verse alludes to Psalm 34:8. The idea is that they had taken the decisive step of accepting Jesus as Lord. When we experience the Lord through His word we find that He is good and kind. He is good to forgive and to promise us eternal life. It is ignorance of God that causes many men to despise Him. Once we know the taste is good, we want more. Obedience to God establishes the fact that His word is not harsh (1 Jn. 5:3). This suggests an approach to others. Let us see if we can give them a true taste of Jesus and New Testament Christianity, and that taste will produce a craving for more.

Lost Opportunities

"If sorrow could enter heaven, if a sigh could be heard there, or a tear roll down the cheek of a saint in light, it would be for lost opportunities, for the time spent in neglect of God which might have been spent for His glory." (Edward Payson)

My name is OPPORTUNITY. I knocked on your door as a friend, as a kinsman, as a neighbor lost in sin, needing desperately to learn the way of salvation, needing someone to encourage me spiritually, needing someone to help, but you "passed by on the other side."

I knocked again as a weak brother and sister in Christ, needing someone to take an interest in me, to help turn me around. I became weaker and weaker and now have left the Lord and His church. You knew I was astray, but made no effort to help restore me.

I knocked on your door as an aged, lonely, and infirmed brother and sister in Christ. Your visits would have meant so much to me. I waited, but you did not come. I've wondered why my friends in Christ have neglected me.

I knocked on your door at other times as a heavy-hearted and bereaved Christian, grieving at having lost a dear loved one. You knew of my loss, but extended no expression of comfort and consolation.

I called again as your elders and concerned brethren in the local church, needing faithful partners and offering you a part in the Lord's work, offering you a chance to grow in faith and usefulness. I have come to you in the form of Bible classes, worship services, and gospel meetings, all designed for your involvement and profit. Yet, for the most part, you have shunned me, even treating me as an imposition or a distasteful burden.

All the times you ignored me in the past are forever gone, never to return. I stand at your door now as Time, an expression of God's longsuffering and the last hope of the sinner. But I, too, will soon be gone. While I remain, you have a chance to repent of past failures and seek God's forgiveness. But, if you continue to ignore me, I will testify against you in judgment.

— Dan S. Shipley