

Grow Up in your Salvation

Easter-Powered Lives:

1 Peter 1:13 – 2:3

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Peter wrote to Christians these words:

Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good. (1 Peter 2:2-3, NIV)

Have you ever thought of us Christians as immature, spiritual babies that need spiritual milk to grow up in our salvation? Have you ever wondered why we are spiritual babies?

In the beginning Adam, Eve and God were tight. They knew one another, loved one another, and trusted one another. In the morning cool, Adam and Eve would walk with God in the world they governed. They grew in wisdom as they worked and walked with God. This is how God planned life for us humans. We were to mature and grow as we both walked and worked with God and one another in this world; however, that got all messed up. Through the temptation of Satan, Adam and Eve became estranged from God and one another. They became enemies of God in their minds, hearts and actions and began to live as pawns for Satan's manipulation and destruction of one another. They and their offspring were lost, wandering in deception through this world without the wisdom and fellowship of God.

Now when you and I hear the gospel of Jesus Christ, when we become convicted that we are rightly judged and condemned by God, and when we put our faith in Jesus' power to free us from the guilt and grip of our sins, we experience peace. We taste the love of God. That taste is the Spirit of God. Peace and love is the experience of the Holy Spirit moving within you. You

now experience a trust in God, a trust that must be nurtured and developed. This is the trust that Jesus was born with. Only God gives you the faith to believe so that your fear is quieted by love. When that happens, you are born again with the spiritual potential of Jesus. Water baptism is the public adoption ceremony that God gives the world to identify you as a child of God. However, we children must grow up in salvation. Absent intimacy with God, Adam and Eve matured in only some knowledge; but in many ways they were immature lacking wisdom and acting selfishly and destructively. Look at this video clip (Game Plan C9: 0:47:48 – 0:49:02).

In the movie *Game Plan*, a daughter helps a football star grow up. The football star begins to change his belief in what is important and true. In life, people help people grow up. People help one another see what is important and true. Unfortunately, if you hang with the wrong people or if you escape the world through drugs, alcohol or addictions, your growth stops. You must be involved with mature people and make good choices to grow up in the maturity of Adam and Eve. However, to grow up in your salvation is to grow up in the maturity of Jesus Christ. You can't do that by reading the Bible. You can't do that by praying. You can't do that by efforts of your own. Jesus himself ran into bitter Bible scholars, and I have too.

Jesus makes new people, spiritual babies by giving his own Spirit to everyone who repents of their sin and trusts in him. However, Jesus calls his followers to make disciples. He said, "Go, make disciples of all nations." We believers don't make children of God. Jesus does. He gives people new birth. Instead, we followers of Christ help spiritual babies become disciples of Jesus. People become spiritual babies as Jesus responds to their faith in him; however, they become disciples of Jesus as they consciously take on the attitudes, actions and the vocation of Jesus in this world both in response to and in concert with Jesus' followers.

On the video screen is a checkerboard. Each square stands for a belief we have. These beliefs are formed as we grow up in a world that is estranged from God. Some beliefs are godly and some are ungodly. The light squares are where truth shines, but deception shadows the dark squares. We always act on these beliefs. We always speak and act on them although we may not always be conscious of them. For example, we may say that God is always present, which is a godly belief; but then we may act as if we are alone, which means that in our situation we believe God can't or won't do anything important, which is an ungodly belief. To grow up in our salvation, we must replace these ungodly beliefs with godly beliefs.

Addressing these beliefs, Paul wrote the Ephesians that he was praying that God would give them a spirit of revelation and wisdom to know God better, and that God would enlighten *the eyes of their heart*, so that they could see their hope, their inheritance as God's children and their power as Christ's disciples, in other words, know themselves better. Jesus said:

The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness! (Matthew 6:22-23, NIV)

Jesus was saying that if our spiritual eyes are dim, we'll wander about lost in deception, destroying others and being destroyed ourselves. However, if our vision is informed by God's light, then we will mature in our salvation.

Consider that checkerboard again. Think of the first row of squares as beliefs you have about God. How many of your beliefs about God are light, authored by Christ? How many are dark, shadowed by deception? How much of your worry, fear and discouragement comes from ungodly beliefs about God? Think of the second row as beliefs about yourself. How many squares are truths that God has revealed about you, your identity, gifts, potential, your purpose,

and calling? How many squares are darkened by hurt, insult, accusations, failure, trauma and other deceptions? Think of another row as beliefs you hold about your mate, a parent, or an authority leader that God has given you? How many are godly beliefs? How many are ungodly? You have many rows of beliefs about everyone and everything in your world, beliefs on which you consciously and subconsciously act. Christ's forgiveness determines your destination of heaven; however, these beliefs determine your destiny on your way to that destination.

Spiritual people, led by the Holy Spirit, equipped with the words of God in the holy Bible must help you see your sin, or you're destined for stumbling. They must help you see your forgiveness, acceptance and special identity in Christ. Fear, guilt, anger, bitterness and the behaviors they feed can trap you and destroy what Christ died to free. You must grow up in salvation, grow up in confidence, grow up in love, grow up in forgiveness. You must grow up in the maturity of Jesus.

All of this depends on whether you will crave spiritual milk or reject it along with the people who dispense it. Babies need people to prepare the proper diet at the proper temperature in the proper dispenser. They need to be lifted, cuddled and patiently loved as they receive food they do not choose for themselves.

Will you crave the word and companionship that forms you as a disciple? The Bible says:

Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect. (Romans 12:2, NLT)