

Salvation & Spiritual Growth



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Acknowledgment

With great honour, I acknowledge the power, revelation and inspiration of the Holy Spirit for this for this book project which I strongly believe will be a great blessing to the body of Christ at large.

I equally acknowledge and deeply appreciate the efforts of our SCHOOL OF LIFE teachers and ministers for your unrelenting labour in the word and doctrine especially towards this book project.

Worthy of special mention is the labour of Minister Tion Williams for this book project. May the good Lord bless and increase you more and more in Jesus name.

Pastor Damilola Oladapo's labour on the cover design of the book is greatly appreciated as well.

God bless you all mightily in Jesus name.

Pastor Olayinka Oluwaseye.

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Overview

In 1 Timothy 2:3-4, Paul wrote concerning the will of God which we can likewise call the desire of the Father.

1 Timothy 2:3-4 (KJV)

3 For this *[is]* good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour;

4 Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.

From Paul's writing, he outlines two primary things as the will of God. This we can refer to as the two-fold desire of the Father. Paul calls it SALVATION and COMING TO THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRUTH, the latter which is SPIRITUAL GROWTH.

Beloved, it is one thing to be SAVED and it is completely another thing to keep GROWING SPIRITUALLY. SALVATION is a gift of God and our inheritance in Christ to everyone, while SPIRITUAL GROWTH is a function of the READINESS and RESPONSIBILITY of the saints in Christ.

This book explores the dynamics of our SALVATION in Christ and especially our deliberate efforts and determination towards our SPIRITUAL GROWTH.

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CHAPTER I

THE DESIRE OF THE FATHER

1 Timothy 2:3-4 (KJV)

3 For this *[is]* good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour;
4 Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.

Paul wrote here about the will of God which we can also call the Father's desire, what God wants to see.

Notice what Paul writes in vs 4, we must ask, *who wills or who desires?* This is answered when we put vs 3 and 4 together;

1 Timothy 2:3-4 - For this *[is]* good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.

So, clearly, it is **GOD, OUR SAVIOUR** and that refers to **JESUS CHRIST**. So, we can say, "**God, our Saviour desires....**"

With this, we want to discover the desire in the heart of God. What is this pressing matter in God's mind that Paul writes about.

Notice that vs 4 captures what we can term "**the desire of the Father**". What is this desire?

Paul wrote;

1 Timothy 2:4 (KJV)

Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.

So, we can therefore say, the desire of the Father is for **all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth**. It is clear that the desire of the Father is two-fold

- i. That all men be saved
- ii. That the saved come to the knowledge of the truth.

Hence, further in this letter, Paul wrote;

1 Timothy 2:3-7 (KJV)

3 For this *[is]* good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour;

4 Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.

5 For *[there is]* one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;

6 Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.

7 Whereunto I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle, (I speak the truth in Christ, *[and]* lie not;) a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity.

Notice in vs 7, Paul shows us that **he was appointed a preacher, an apostle and a teacher**. Having known the desire of the Father, it follows that if anyone is appointed to be a teacher, preacher and

apostle, he must run in such a way as to fulfill the desire of the Father to see all men saved and come to the knowledge of the truth.

1 Timothy 2:4 (KJV)

Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.

Here, the word ‘**will**’ means desire, intention, bidding, or we can also say, a burden.

Knowing the two-fold desire of the Father, this shows us that the same way God desires to see men saved is the same way God wants to see men come to the knowledge of the truth. Salvation in a sense would be primary, however, some may be saved but never grow.

A vital thing we must also see is that all the emphasis in the epistles concerning spiritual growth is tied to knowledge. In the epistles, particularly the Pauline prayers, they are geared towards spiritual growth and enlightenment. Likewise in Peter’s epistles.

2 Peter 3:18 (KJV)

But grow in grace, and *[in]* the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him *[be]* glory both now and for ever. Amen.

So, anywhere growth is captured in the epistles, it is tied to knowledge.

So, when Paul writes about the desire of the Father;

1 Timothy 2:4 (KJV)

Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.

Notice, the second part of the desire of the Father - **God wants the saved to come unto the knowledge of the truth.**

The truth which he mentions here is summed up as “**doctrine**”. Doctrine would be a body of knowledge and a set of information. Coming to understand this specific body of knowledge is the path to spiritual growth.

CONCERNING SALVATION

Ephesians 2:8-10 (KJV)

8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *[it is]* the gift of God:

9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.

10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

Some of the things Paul wrote here concerning salvation is that;

- i. Salvation is a gift of God (vs 8)
- ii. Salvation as a gift is therefore received by faith in Christ Jesus (vs 8)

By describing salvation as a gift, it means we do not work for salvation, but we work towards our spiritual growth. So, salvation is not by works, yet, growth is by work. No man contributed anything towards his salvation, but there is much to contribute to your spiritual

growth. Salvation is the result of the finished works of Christ, but spiritual growth is your own work-in-progress. This means that although you have received salvation, spiritual growth is dependent on your readiness and willingness to work and spiritual growth unlike salvation would be a continuous work of the Holy Ghost in the believer.

Ephesians 2:1-6 (KJV)

1 And you [*hath he quickened*], who were dead in trespasses and sins;

2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:

3 Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

4 But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,

5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)

6 And hath raised [*us*] up together, and made [*us*] sit together in heavenly [*places*] in Christ Jesus:

From vs 1, Paul showed us that man could not have done anything worthwhile to contribute to his salvation. Hence, he wrote ***we were dead in sins***. Further in the reading, he describes the consequences of being dead in sins as **alienated from the life of God** (Eph. 2:12)

Ephesians 2:12 (KJV)

That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:

Such a man who is **dead in sins and alienated from the life of God** has nothing to give. This is why **nobody really gives his life to Christ – instead – man receives the life of Christ in salvation.** A man dead in sin does not have any life to give, he is the one in need of life. So, at salvation, what happened to the man is not what he gave, but what he received.

So, salvation would be what Christ worked for and what man receives, but spiritual growth is dependent on the participation of the man through the Holy Ghost, to take advantage of that life and power to influence his life. While salvation happens once which means it is instantaneous, spiritual growth is a continuous work, it is progressive. Jesus completed the course of salvation, so, we can call salvation a finished work of Christ. Salvation today is what Christ has done and it is a gift to us.

Although, we did not pay and we did nothing to receive salvation, we must never forget that **salvation is not free** – this simply means that **someone paid for our salvation and it cost him his life. The cost of salvation was the life of Christ, it cost him his blood.** So, Jesus paid for our salvation and we have access to salvation by faith in the gospel. Once any man believes the gospel, he is given a gift – this gift

is part and parcel of believing. The instant he believes, he receives. So, whereas salvation is so explained to us as a gift, we must never forget that it came at a cost, salvation came by the blood of Jesus, salvation is expensive, today, it is our inheritance in Christ Jesus. Salvation is the provision of the Father for mankind and all the Father needs men to do to receive this gift is **to believe**.

So, in looking at the cost of salvation, what Christ did, we must therefore understand the three major cardinal foundation of our salvation;

- i. Jesus as my Saviour
- ii. Jesus as my Sacrifice
- iii. Jesus as my Substitute

Jesus as my substitute means that he took my place in death, there was an exchange, he laid down his life. He became the sacrifice for sins. Understanding this reveals to us that although we were never there at the cross, although we did not contribute to that work, as substitute, Jesus took our place, so, he is the source and strength of our salvation.

SALVATION PRECEDES SPIRITUAL GROWTH

1 Timothy 2:3-4 (KJV)

3 For this *[is]* good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour;

4 Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.

One vital thing we must see in vs 4 is that **salvation precedes spiritual growth**. So, the desire of the Father must be accomplished in that order of salvation and then spiritual growth.

This means that you cannot have spiritual growth without salvation. The irony of this is that there are people today who are in church gatherings who were never saved, and there is every attempt to grow them spiritually, but all to no avail. There is no need exposing an unbeliever to discipleship and to spiritual training. We do not try to serve a meal for the saved to the unsaved.

Although salvation is instantaneous, yet some did not have that genuine experience and it is important to be saved because without salvation, a man cannot talk about spiritual growth. While salvation happens once, spiritual growth is tied to discipleship.

It is also important to point out that you cannot have a need of these two experiences at the same time. It is either you need salvation or you need spiritual growth, you can never be in need of the two at the same time. This means that at every given moment, a man will always be in need of one, either salvation or spiritual growth.

Whenever you meet men anywhere, they are always in need of either salvation or spiritual growth. Without this understanding, you may continue to preach salvation to the man who is already saved, meanwhile what he needs is spiritual growth. For example, if you meet a Christian who is not growing spiritually or a Christian “sinning”, the assumption is often that this man is not really saved,

but that is not true. His attitude does not connote that he needs salvation, he already has salvation, so what he really needs is spiritual growth.

So, you need to be saved first to be in need of spiritual growth and if you are already saved, you need to grow spiritually. Trying to expose an unsaved person to spiritual growth is potential tragedy, likewise, not exposing the saved to spiritual growth is a disaster waiting to happen. So, when you see a believer acting like “a non-Christian”, based on conduct or character, do not conclude on their salvation, that would be incorrect. This understanding will help us walk in love, have a large heart and learn to manage people carefully because spiritual growth is a process, it is progressive and it is continuous.

The only requirement for salvation is to believe in your heart what Christ has done for you, to believe in the Father’s provision of salvation for mankind, to believe in the sacrifice of Jesus for sins and to confess the same with your mouth. Paul put it this way;

Romans 10:9-13 (KJV)

9 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.

10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

11 For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

12 For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.

13 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

By this, a man is saved, fully saved and eternally saved.

The writer of Hebrews refers to Jesus as the author and finisher of faith, referring to salvation;

Hebrews 12:2 (KJV)

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.

The word **author** means that he founded it. When this is understood, men will understand the basis of salvation.

A lot of times, when men do not understand the basis of salvation, they tend to substitute their efforts towards spiritual growth as validation of their salvation. The fact that you are striving towards spiritual growth means that there is a tendency to think that those are the things that re-enforces your justification and your acceptance. So, you can study for long, pray long hours, but these things do not validate your salvation, they only contribute to your spiritual growth.

1 Timothy 2:3-4 (KJV)

3 For this *[is]* good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour;

4 Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.

So, just as God first wants all men to be saved, and then for them to grow spiritually, this shows that it is salvation that will produce the desire for spiritual growth. So, when a man is saved, this is what is referred to as regeneration. It is like a change of DNA [spiritually speaking], a man's spiritual nature is altered. So, the tastebuds of the man who is saved is changed. The desire of the man in Christ and the unsaved are totally different. This means that the saved would begin to desire things differently simply because he is saved.

So, in spiritual growth, the man who is saved needs food for growth, but his growth does not in any way contribute, enhance or validate his salvation. So, the believer must be firmly rooted in this understanding, he must know that salvation is what makes him righteous in Christ. Salvation comes with benefits, but you may not enjoy such benefits until you grow. Growth would help the believer to know and enjoy the benefits of salvation. So, salvation is a function of what Christ has done, but growth is a function of what I will do and what I am doing by the help of the Holy Ghost.

It is important to know that although it is God's desire to see all men saved and come to the knowledge of the truth, yet, God does not force anyone to be saved and in the same way, he does not force the saved to grow. So, although God wants the saved to grow, he does not compel it on anyone. So, your spiritual growth as a believer might have begun with prayers, but it does not end with prayers, there is much more to learn in spiritual growth.

1 Timothy 2:1-4 (KJV)

1 I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, [*and*] giving of thanks, be made for all men;

2 For kings, and [*for*] all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.

3 For this [*is*] good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour;

4 Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.

Paul began writing in 1 Timothy 2 with an exhortation to pray, make supplications and give thanks.

Notice that in vs 1 – he culminates that this prayer should be made **for all men.**

When read in context, vs 3-4 reveals that the focus of the prayer we ought to pray for all men and kings is for their salvation and spiritual growth which is good and acceptable in the sight of God.

By instructing to pray for all men including **Kings and those in authority**, it is to show that the Father's desire in salvation and spiritual growth is encompassing of all. So, God does not discriminate amongst men, rather, he includes all in his desire.

Something important Paul also leaves us with here is the fact that intercession and robust prayer is required for us to see the Father's desire for all men fulfilled. So, the primary reason we engage in prayers is because God desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

In vs 4, Paul discussed two issues which we have termed “the desire of the Father”, which is;

- i. The salvation of all men
- ii. The Spiritual growth of the man that is saved.

So, the Father’s desire is that we take these two issues seriously in prayers and in so doing, we pray for all men. Many do not have a life of prayer because their prayers are often about themselves and their needs, but here, we see that God wants us to pray so that we can run with His desires.

So, salvation is God’s idea, it is God’s gift from start to finish and God wants everyone to receive this gift. Man played no role in salvation; we only receive what God had done. So, salvation being God’s free gift is also God’s desire. Embracing the gospel produces salvation. To be saved, you need to hear what God has done. As you hear and believe what God has done for you, you will be saved. Paul puts it this way;

Romans 10:14-17 (KJV)

14 How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?

15 And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!

16 But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?

17 So then faith [*cometh*] by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

So, once the understanding of the gospel is set, believing produces salvation. For salvation to happen, man needs to hear the gospel which is what Christ has done.

One vital thing we have also mentioned is that nobody will ever be in a position where he/she needs salvation and spiritual growth at the same time. You can only need one per time even if the distance between those two needs may just be a few minutes. So, per time, men will either need salvation or spiritual growth. You may meet a man in need of salvation and in a few moments, he is saved, immediately he is saved, he is in need of spiritual growth and no longer in need of salvation. So, the unsaved will need salvation and the saved will need spiritual growth, not salvation.

Often, people are saved but not growing spiritually. Some may be long years in church, but it is not about duration, it is in taking responsibility. While salvation is a gift, spiritual growth is your responsibility. In salvation, we played no role, it is completely God's idea, it is His plan and His gift to us. From start to finish, salvation is God's work, man has no minor or major contribution. Upon salvation, we received the gift of the Holy Ghost. So, in receiving God's salvation, the man also receives the Holy Ghost. He does not receive the Holy Ghost at another time, we received the Holy Ghost in

salvation. Spiritual Growth is therefore what determines what we will do with what we have received.

So, salvation is God's gift, but spiritual growth is the responsibility of the believer. Paul describes spiritual growth as coming to the knowledge of the truth.

1 Timothy 2:3-4 (KJV)

3 For this *[is]* good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour;

4 Who will have all men to be saved, and **to come unto the knowledge of the truth.**

Many have become accustomed to the system, the language and the pattern of churches, but in those long years, they have not grown in the knowledge of the truth.

Peter, the Apostle wrote concerning where every believer begins from, **AS NEWBORN BABIES.**

1 Peter 2:2 (KJV)

As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:

So, in salvation, a gift made us a 'newborn babe'.

Just as nobody desired to be saved, nobody gave his life to Christ. We see this in the fact that man was dead in sin, so, in salvation, we received the life of Christ, we gave nothing to him. All we did was to believe and receive. In salvation, we received God's love and His life in Christ. Receiving His life is a gift, but from that point,

responsibility comes in. It therefore becomes important for the believer to learn, unlearn and relearn – this is spiritual growth.

This means that although salvation is once received, now that you are saved, you must understand that you are required to participate actively for your spiritual growth. The faith that dumps every responsibility on God is irresponsible. So, just as we must understand **THE FINISHED WORKS OF CHRIST**, we must also understand **THE ONGOING WORK OF CHRIST THROUGH THE HOLY GHOST**. There is the ongoing work of Christ in the life of the believer and the supervisor is the Holy Ghost and the believer must be fully involved.

1 Peter 2:2 (KJV)

As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:

Peter therefore instructs that the newborn babe **DESIRE**S. So, a newborn babe can remain a babe forever if there is no desire to grow.

Many believers have a problem when it comes to spiritual growth because they have been long in church yet they are not growing. Just as we have seen from 1 Timothy 2:4, it is one thing to be saved and another to grow spiritually. Although you did not have a role to play in your salvation except to believe, you have a major role to play in your spiritual growth.

To grow starts from DESIRE, it is TO CRAVE for it. So, growth is intentional, it does not just happen on you, you must earnestly desire spiritual growth. So, salvation is a gift, but spiritual growth requires your responsibility, salvation is God's work, spiritual growth requires your active participation. Spiritual growth would therefore be maximizing the benefits of salvation.

CHAPTER II

UNDERSTANDING SPIRITUAL GROWTH

2 Peter 1:2-5 (KJV)

2 Grace and peace be multiplied unto you **through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord,**

3 According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that *[pertain]* unto life and godliness, **through the knowledge of him** that hath called us to glory and virtue:

4 Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

5 And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; **and to virtue knowledge;**

In vs 2, the Apostle shows us that *grace and peace is multiplied through KNOWLEDGE.*

Peter further wrote that *all God has given us for life and godliness is in THE KNOWLEDGE OF HIM that has called us to glory and virtue.* (vs. 3)

Peter also instructed to ‘**GIVE ALL DILIGENCE**’ in vs 5.

Peter is here writing to believers; hence, this is a reminder to the believer that while salvation is a gift, spiritual growth comes by taking responsibility.

In vs 5, he further instructed that *to virtue, we should add KNOWLEDGE.*

In Peter's writing, there is a repeated emphasis on **KNOWLEDGE.** This is just as we mentioned earlier that **spiritual growth is a function of knowledge, it is tied to knowledge.**

Colossians 2:19 (KJV)

And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.

Paul writing concerning the church explains that from its head which is Christ, we draw nourishment which results into spiritual growth. So, the nourishment we draw continuously from Christ results in growth.

Ephesians 2:20-22 (KJV)

20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner [*stone*];

21 In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord:

22 In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

Paul here shows that growth happens when a believer is being built on the foundation of the apostles and Christ being the chief

cornerstone. The foundation of the apostles refers to their doctrine. If this is accomplished, the result is growth.

Ephesians 4:15-16 (KJV)

15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, [*even*] Christ:

16 From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

Here, Paul taught that as we speak the truth in love, we grow up in Christ. The truth which he referred to is the doctrine of Christ which is the gospel.

Paul had earlier explained in Ephesians 4:11-14 that a consequence of not growing spiritually is that the believer stays a child.

Ephesians 4:11-14 (KJV)

11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

14 That we [*henceforth*] be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, [*and*] cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

In vs 14, children in the context as used by Paul will refer to believers who are easily carried about with every wind of doctrine or every kind of doctrine.

When believers are not eager or craving for the sincere milk of the word which is the undiluted word of God capable of building them up and causing them to grow spiritually, what that results to is they will remain children. Having seen that the desire of the Father is also spiritual growth, we can say **it is not the desire of the Father to see any believer stay a child** because God wants to see us grow.

One critical thing required for growth is that eagerness and openness, always craving for spiritual growth which is accomplished through KNOWLEDGE.

2 Peter 3:18 (KJV)

But grow in grace, and [*in*] the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him [*be*] glory both now and for ever. Amen.

Peter wrote that believers ought to grow in grace and this they will do by growing in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

A vital thing to see here is that growth is a function of **the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ**. Like Paul, Peter also shows

us that the desire of God is that we grow spiritually and there is a particularly knowledge required for spiritual growth.

What is this knowledge required for spiritual growth?

Ephesians 4:11-14 (KJV)

11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and **of the knowledge of the Son of God**, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

14 That we [*henceforth*] be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, [*and*] cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, [*even*] Christ:

16 From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

In vs 13, Paul shows that the knowledge required for spiritual growth is **the knowledge of the Son of God**

In his letter to Timothy;

1 Timothy 2:4 (KJV)

Who will have all men to be saved, and **to come unto the knowledge of the truth.**

Paul describes this knowledge as **the knowledge of the truth**

Peter wrote about this as;

2 Peter 3:18 (KJV)

But grow in grace, and *[in]* **the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.** To him *[be]* glory both now and for ever. Amen.

So, while spiritual growth is possible and it is God's desire for every believer, not every kind of knowledge results in spiritual growth, there is a kind of knowledge that makes spiritual growth possible. This knowledge is **the knowledge of the truth which is the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who is the Son of God.** It is clear that this knowledge is well-defined.

Spiritual growth is important for the believer primarily because this is what God desires for all men. Ageing is different from growing. Naturally, everyone ages, but not everyone grows. So, while calculating how long you have been a believer or how old you are, you must ask yourself that all important question, AM I JUST AGEING or AM I GROWING? So, what is a believer to celebrate? His duration as a believer or his spiritual growth?

The desire of the Father is not merely long years as a believer, God wants us to grow, we must grow and we should grow. As we have

seen progressively, spiritual growth comes as a longing, a craving and a desire. No one grows accidentally, growth is systematic, it is deliberate and intentional. There is focus around growth. You need not do anything to age but you must do several things to grow.

Ageing is a natural phenomenon, it does not come with responsibility, but growth must be a deliberate decision with actions to back it up. If you see a man grow spiritually, that is a man that has made a commitment to growth, he has a plan for growth, a burden for it, a vision for it and a desire to grow.

1 Timothy 2:4 (KJV)

Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.

The desire of the Father is that all men are saved and that they grow. God does not want the saved to remain children, He wants them to grow.

Paul wrote concerning the tragedy of the believer who does not grow;

Ephesians 4:11-14 (KJV)

11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

14 That we [*henceforth*] be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, [*and*] cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

The tragedy of the believer not growing is that he is tossed about by life, by religion, by false prophets and the only way not to be a victim of this is that you grow. Hence, growth ensures that we are stable.

Concerning stability, the Psalms put it this way;

Psalms 46:1-5 (KJV)

1 God [*is*] our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

2 Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;

3 [*Though*] the waters thereof roar [*and*] be troubled, [*though*] the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah.

4 [*There is*] a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy [*place*] of the tabernacles of the most High.

5 God [*is*] in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, [*and that*] right early.

The believer can experience stability, the believer can be firm and rooted. We can be so stable in our growth in Christ such that we cannot be tossed about by issues of life.

Spiritual growth must be a part of your vision. You must plan to grow, you must be on a mission to grow and you must be consistent with it. Growth does not just happen, you cannot ONLY pray to grow, neither does growth come by prophecy, you must take responsibility for it. The laying of hands is powerful, but hardly can anyone impart spiritual growth to you. An impartation can stir up a desire within but you will do well to leverage on that desire to make a commitment towards spiritual growth.

Many may not have hands laid on them, yet, you will see such a man who has a burning hunger and passion for spiritual growth. An example is the man David, as a young man in his days, the men his age were in the city, in the army, in the spotlight in Israel, but David who kept his father's sheep in the wilderness was having dealings with God and an accumulation of this resulted in his growth.

1 Timothy 2:4 (KJV)

Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.

The desire of the Father is not to only see us saved but to experience spiritual growth. Salvation is a gift but growth is not. We received salvation, but the next thing is to maximize what we have received in salvation through spiritual growth. It is spiritual growth that helps us to learn to maximize what we have received upon salvation. It takes spiritual growth to have proper and accurate knowledge of all that Christ has done for us and to walk in it.

Ephesians 4:11-13 (KJV)

11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

In vs 11-12, Paul shows us that the reason God gave gifts of men to the church is to ensure that the saints in Christ grow until they come to a place of maturity. So, while we are already saved, coming to a place of knowledge which is growth shows that we are on a journey.

Ephesians 4:11-14 (TLB)

11 Some of us have been given special ability as apostles; to others he has given the gift of being able to preach well; some have special ability in winning people to Christ, helping them to trust him as their Savior; still others have a gift for caring for God's people as a shepherd does his sheep, leading and teaching them in the ways of God

12 Why is it that he gives up these special abilities to do certain things best? It is that God's people will be equipped to do better work for him, building up the church, the body of Christ, to a position of strength and maturity;

13 **Until finally we all believe alike about our salvation and about our Savior, God's Son, and all become full-grown in the Lord**—yes, to the point of being filled full with Christ.

14 Then we will no longer be like children, forever changing our minds about what we believe because someone has told us something different or has cleverly lied to us and made the lie sound like the truth.

The reason God gave ministry gifts is so that we can all come to an understanding that ensures growth. God wants saints all over the world to have the same understanding concerning salvation and the Saviour. God wants every believer to know and believe alike.

So, growth must be a vision, a longing and a burden. Growth will not just happen to the believer; it comes with commitment and being deliberate. The desire to grow comes with responsibility and you must be willing to take up the challenge for growth.

Having looked at the specific knowledge that ensures growth, this means that as important as spiritual growth is, not everything can make a believer grow. There is therefore a particular diet for the spiritual growth of the believer. There is a specific knowledge which makes spiritual growth happen.

It is important to know that **spiritual growth and that specific knowledge go hand in hand**. So, the believer must pay attention to the knowledge which results in growth. This knowledge is not the religious studies or Bible knowledge taught in schools. Paul already explained that the new man can only grow by knowledge. The new

man is the man in Christ, but advancement in this new life is by knowledge.

So, as much as growth is the desire of the Father, you cannot be lazy and grow. Growth is not for the lazy, it is for the diligent. Lazy people do not grow, you must be diligent and disciplined to grow spiritually.

CHAPTER III

GROWTH AGENTS

We began by looking at the desire of the Father from Paul's writing in 1 Timothy 2:3-4

1 Timothy 2:3-4 (KJV)

3 For this *[is]* good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour;

4 Who will have **all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.**

It is clear that the desire of the Father is 2-fold

- i. That all men be saved
- ii. That the saved come to the knowledge of the truth. It is coming to the knowledge of the truth that we have captured as Spiritual Growth.

As we have seen previously, when we read scriptures making reference to spiritual growth, it is clear that what is responsible for spiritual growth is knowledge. This knowledge is not general knowledge, it is not the Christian Religious Studies taught in schools. Anyone can have knowledge, but our focus is on the knowledge required for spiritual growth. Hence, two parts of our focus would be to explain;

- i. Growth Agent(s)
- ii. Growth Diet

Let us begin with Growth Agent(s);

Ephesians 4:7-16 (KJV)

7 But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.

8 Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.

9 (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?

10 He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.)

11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

14 That we [*henceforth*] be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, [*and*] cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, [*even*] Christ:

16 From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working

in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

In vs 8, Paul shows us that **Christ gave gifts to men**

In vs 10, the reason Christ gave gifts to men in vs 8 is because he wants to fill everything (everyone) with himself (from the very lowest to the very highest)

Vs 8, 10 and 16 put together would show that **Christ gave gifts to men so that we may grow up in all things into Him.** So, the reason God gave gifts to men captured in vs 11 as Apostles, Prophets, Evangelist, Pastors and teachers is that **WE MAY ALL GROW UP IN ALL THINGS INTO HIM (CHRIST).**

This means that when the apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers use their gifts adequately, then, Ephesians 4:16 would be accomplished, which is, **we will all grow up in all things into him.** So, Jesus who rose from the dead having purchased the church with his blood, he gave gifts to men, these men are what we can call **GROWTH AGENTS.**

Having seen that to grow spiritually connotes to grow in knowledge and spiritual growth is responsible for the believer maximizing all God has made available in salvation, it means that a believer will not be able to take full advantage of the grace of God if he does not embrace all God has made available which is **THE GIFTS OF MEN** who are responsible for his spiritual growth.

So, we can say that **Christ gave gifts to men so that men can be gifts to the other men or to the church, the body of Christ.** This means that to take advantage of the grace of God, you must know how to receive from the men God has given. If you do not understand this, you may never maximize what God has given. We have captured the grace of God as the person of Christ Jesus, so, spiritual growth is to be taught the knowledge of the person of Christ. To receive this knowledge, you must acknowledge the place of the agents (gifts, men) responsible for growth.

Jesus died for us, he paid the price for our salvation, but Jesus is not the one responsible for our spiritual growth and He can never be. Hence, in His resurrection, He gave gifts to men, he has played his part. The only story where the hero died is in the story of redemption, Jesus died for us because there was nothing we could do for salvation. When He rose, He gave gifts to men; the import of that is Jesus saying to us, **‘this is where my assignment stops’** – So, Jesus has played His part and He has given gifts to men to continue His work. So, **Jesus is not your Pastor and He will never be**, there is no provision for that, instead **the provision in God’s plan is that Jesus gave us Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and teachers** – He gave us these gifts for our spiritual growth.

So, **Jesus is your Saviour, not your Pastor.** He gave gifts to men so that they would be responsible for your spiritual growth. **Jesus is my Saviour and He gave me a Pastor**, this means that **as Saviour, Jesus is responsible for my salvation not my spiritual growth.**

Ephesians 4:7-11 (KJV)

7 But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.

8 Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.

9 (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?

10 He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.)

11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

In vs 10, Paul shows us that Christ wants to fill everyone with himself, that is why He gave us men as gifts in vs 11, so that they would be responsible for our spiritual growth.

We have come to an age where many do not want to be in the gathering of believers and having known that the church is a gathering of believers, it means those who do not gather are out of order and they deny themselves of spiritual growth which is obtainable only in the gathering of believers.

The wisdom of God for you to grow spiritually from the point of salvation is that CHRIST GAVE GIFTS. So, the gift of God after salvation is THE GIFT OF MEN. Hence, the choice of a local church is important for every believer, it is not to be based on proximity or

popularity, it is a deliberate decision because that is the place for your growth.

Having gathered the elders of the church at Ephesus, this was Paul's instruction to them;

Acts 20:28 (KJV)

Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

Paul said *the Holy Ghost had made them overseers*. The word 'overseers' is the same as **shepherd**, it means to have oversight.

Observe what Paul said to them – **feed the church of God which He [Christ] has purchased with His own blood.**

From this instruction, it is clear that **Jesus purchased the church with His blood but Jesus cannot oversee, shepherd or feed the church**. Hence, even in earlier days, Jesus instructed Peter to likewise FEED HIS SHEEP;

John 21:15-17 (KJV)

15 So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, [son] of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, **Feed my lambs.**

16 He saith to him again the second time, Simon, [*son*] of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, **Feed my sheep.**

17 He saith unto him the third time, Simon, [*son*] of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, **Feed my sheep.**

Just as we saw Paul instructing the elders to **feed the flock**, Jesus had previously instructed A MAN [Peter] to feed his sheep. So, **JESUS GAVE A MAN THE RESPONSIBILITY TO FEED AND TO OVERSEE.**

So, the shepherd in Acts 20:28 refers to men [the elders of the church]. The Holy Ghost made MEN overseers, He made men Pastors. So, Jesus had done his part, He had purchased the church with his blood, **the Pastors are now responsible for the feeding and oversight of the church.**

So, you may watch preachers online or listen to their tapes and be blessed, yet, that does not make those men your pastors or shepherd. They are not your pastor because they will not give account over your soul. So, the many other itinerary ministers you may listen to online are not your pastors because they are not found in the same local church as you.

Your spiritual growth is tied to a man, to a leader, to a pastor, because he oversees your growth and he will give account for your soul. So,

you will do well to recognize the voice of God in the man by recognizing him as the AGENT OF GROWTH that God has put in your life.

Ephesians 4:11-12 (KJV)

11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

So, the reason Christ gave men [gifts] in vs 11 can be seen in vs 12 – **to train, to equip, to mature, to prepare and to perfect the saints [THIS IS THEIR PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY].**

So, a pastor who has oversight over you must be found in a local church because that is where you will find nourishment for your spiritual growth. **Ministry gifts are the gifts of grace to us and for us to grow up in Christ. Christ gave Himself for your salvation, but He gave men for your spiritual growth.**

Not understanding this is to experience a setback, it is to experience retardation, this is the reason many are stagnant, easily falling away and thinking they do not need a local church. It will take you to be wise to co-operate with God's plan to go to a local church gathering and stay in a local church.

Colossians 1:27-28 (KJV)

27 To whom God would make known what *[is]* the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:

28 Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; **that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus:**

Just as we saw in Ephesians 4:12, the purpose of the gifts of men is ‘PERFECTING THE SAINTS’, here in Colossians, Paul says ‘THAT WE MAY PRESENT EVERY MAN PERFECT IN CHRIST JESUS (vs 28)

So, Paul lets us know that ‘ministry gifts’ are the ones that mature every believer in Christ Jesus. **To be mature is to be basic, it is to be simple and clear.** Maturity is to be basic and CHRIST is that basic. So, from Colossians 1:28, the Pastor is teaching to bring men to maturity in Christ, so, **the Pastor is a Growth Agent, while Jesus is your Saviour.** Your Pastor is your Growth Agent to bring you to maturity in Christ Jesus.

1 Thessalonians 5:12-13 (KJV)

12 And we beseech you, brethren, **to know them which labour among you,** and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you;

13 And **to esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake.** *[And]* be at peace among yourselves.

Paul wrote in vs 12 that you KNOW THEM or RECOGNIZE THEM – that is those who labour among you. How do they labour? They labour in WORD AND DOCTRINE.

In vs 13, he tells us to ESTEEM THEM VERY HIGHLY because of their labour. We are therefore to know and recognize our spiritual leaders if we are to grow up spiritually.

The word ‘**admonish**’ in vs 12 means *to instruct in order to mature*. So, ministry gifts nurture us. Their job is nurturing, building, growing men, bringing men to maturity – they are AGENTS OF GROWTH.

Hebrews 13:17 (KJV)

Obeys them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that [*is*] unprofitable for you.

Hebrews 13:17 (MSG)

Be responsive to your pastoral leaders. Listen to their counsel. They are alert to the condition of your lives and work under the strict supervision of God. Contribute to the joy of their leadership, not its drudgery. Why would you want to make things harder for them?

Hebrews 13:17 (AMP)

Obeys your spiritual leaders and submit to them [continually recognizing their authority over you], for they are constantly keeping watch over your souls and guarding your spiritual welfare, as men

who will have to render an account [of their trust]. [Do your part to let them do this with gladness and not with sighing and groaning, for that would not be profitably to you [either].

The writer of Hebrews wrote that the ministry gifts, or men over you are to;

- Watch over your soul
- Give an account for your souls

So, a Pastor online is not your Pastor because he will not give an account over you. Nothing is a substitute to a local church. Online programs cannot be your local church. Even evening programs coming up here and there cannot be your local church. **Church is where you belong, you know the Pastor and he knows you. Church is a place where your growth can be monitored, you can be questioned, challenged and held responsible.**

The writer of Hebrews also wrote that **your Pastor will give account for your soul** – so, help them to do their job well, gladly and joyfully. Do not make the job harder for them. **The job of a Pastor is already tough, do not make it harder for them.** Say to yourself – *I won't make it harder for my Pastor.*

To grow up spiritually therefore, you must obey and continually recognize the ministry gifts over your life. So, **you cannot have many Pastors over your life – HAVE ONE PASTOR.** You may listen to 'many' teachers but you cannot have many fathers. You

cannot also have many Pastors, you have only ‘ONE FATHER who is YOUR PASTOR’.

You may relocate to another city, temporarily or permanently, or for work and if you have to stay a prolonged period, a week or more, LOOK FOR A LOCAL CHURCH, then find a house to settle in. It is not your house that should determine your Local Church, it is the Local Church that determines your abode. The first thing in your mind in any city is to go get a church and a Pastor, then, that will determine where your house will be.

Your Local Church is important because that is where your spiritual growth is tied to. So, when you get to a new place, first answer this question – **where is my local church?** and do it prayerfully. Your choice of a local church determines who your pastor is and this will further determine your spiritual growth.

The decision of a local church is important because your local church determines your Pastor, your Pastor determines your diet, and your diet determines your spiritual growth. That is the progression, not social media preachers, not mp3, not DVD, not even Christian books.



Fig. 1.0. The impact of a local church on your spiritual growth

So, you must know your Pastor and your Pastor must know you. You cannot claim a Pastor or a spiritual father from afar, a preacher in another country or another city cannot be your Pastor or worse still, your mentor. Even in larger Christian gatherings, they have smaller cell gatherings or units with a Pastor overseeing the cell meeting or house fellowship so that you can know and have a Pastor you are accountable to – that is wisdom in the local church.

Remember your Pastor will give account for your soul, so, anyone that will not give account over your soul is not your Pastor. This means that there must be an interaction and a dealing between you and your Pastor. **You do not watch a minister online and call him your Pastor or your spiritual father, that is the deception of the devil, not God’s plan. You also cannot claim that you cannot find a local church.**

A vital thing to see in spiritual growth is the fact that where you will be led to and stay in as a local church is a function of your tastebud. If your tastebud has grown and has been adjusted, you can walk into a place and by the diet being served, you can determine whether to stay or not. So, settling in a local church is important, it is not about proximity, it goes beyond how you are welcomed to the church, it goes beyond the venue of the church meeting, it goes beyond the lighting, the sound, the air conditioning, it is not about paparazzi.

Lighting, sound and air conditioning is good, but that cannot be the primary reason for choosing a local church. Remember, the local church will determine your pastor. So, who is your Pastor? Who is your Growth Agent? And your answer must be an actual man, not someone from social media, not Facebook, not from zoom meetings. Many know how lax they dress and behave behind the mute mic and video during zoom meetings, this is just to show you how lax virtual meetings can be, so, your local church is not from a zoom meeting, neither should be your pastor.

Today, we are privileged to see church gatherings all over the place, yet, we have millions of people in their houses with their phones claiming to ‘attend’ church online, this is the devil’s ploy to make men retarded in their spiritual growth by keeping them tied to where there is no physical platform for oversight, for interaction and instruction. **You cannot attend church ‘online’, you can only watch a church meeting online.** So, we must all find a sound and good local church where we can experience spiritual maturity. GOD’S WISDOM IS THE LOCAL ASSEMBLY.

So, you must treat the local church as very important because Jesus is your Saviour, not your Pastor. He will never switch roles; He has given you a Pastor. JESUS IS NOT YOUR PASTOR, instead, JESUS GIVES PASTORS. So, when you are under such a man who is a pastor, you are also under Christ. This is the order.

2 Corinthians 1:24 (KJV)

Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for by faith ye stand.

Paul said – ***Pastors do not have dominion over your faith, but they are helpers, they are workers, to ensure you continue to stand in faith.*** Pastors do not have dominion over your faith, they are helpers of your joy.

Pastors are partners, walking alongside you, helping you to grow and to stand firm. Pastors do not lord it over you, they help you, they strengthen you. Pastors are fellow labourers and their job is to promote your joy, to promote your faith. That means there is a limit to the intervention of your pastor over your life. You determine how far he can go with you. The space you give him is what he will work with, he cannot work beyond that. **So, you must trust God to lead you to a church where you can believe in the grace in the life of the man (pastor) over you.**

GROWTH AGENTS: RELATIONSHIPS

So, THE FIRST ASPECT and THE MAJOR AGENT for spiritual growth is your Pastor. The other aspect of Agents of Growth is MEN, we can say RELATIONSHIPS. In this, we will see the place of men and women in your growth.

Acts 4:23 (KJV)

And being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them.

After the apostles had been threatened not to preach the gospel, it is recorded that they went to their company and reported all. It is important to see that **THEY HAD A COMPANY**. They had **PEOPLE WHO WERE THEIR COMPANIONS IN THE FAITH**.

Outside your Pastor (the major agent of your Spiritual Growth), some minor agents are in your relationships, your friends, the person you marry, all these people will determine your spiritual growth. Those with whom you keep company will determine your passion and growth in the Lord.

Who you marry can also determine how far you will grow spiritually. In some marriages, the husband is lax about spiritual things, so, on the Sunday where the wife is dressed for church meetings, he begins to ask for food to eat, probably, pounded yam as breakfast, and he does not consider the fact that you are headed for church. So, the wife goes to make pounded yam and by the time she is done, it is 10:30am, she is tired and that means no church for that Sunday.

Other times, a partner might have been on a long retreat, spending time in the word and prayers only to come home to meet a quarrel or a partner that decides to argue over something small, that alone quenches the fire, the zeal they gathered from that retreat. This is just to emphasize the fact that you must guard your company, **BE VERY SELECTIVE** about who you allow into your life and into your space,

in your plan to marry, likewise the company of people from your place of work, school, or where you live.

Many have abandoned the faith, many have been distracted from following Jesus because of the group they found themselves in, because of the men and women they have allowed into their lives.

Daniel 2:17-19 (KJV)

17 Then Daniel went to his house, and made the thing known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions:

18 That they would desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret; that Daniel and his fellows should not perish with the rest of the wise [*men*] of Babylon.

19 Then was the secret revealed unto Daniel in a night vision. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven.

In vs 17, we see the men that we can regard as Daniel's companions. All the wise men in Babylon were threatened and Daniel took the matter to his company. The company you belong to determines your destiny and fate in life.

Daniel made it clear to his company that their survival was at stake and notice that together with his companions – THEY PRAYED (vs 18)

Your association is so powerful that it determines whether you will grow spiritually or be static in life. In the case of Daniel, he had a

company and this is not necessarily about your pastor, but every other person you allow into your life.

Not everyone you know should have access to your life, not everyone in your office is in your company, some relationships are best left as professional, they start and end in the office, not everyone should have access to your private space, not everyone should know where you live, not everyone should even pay you a visit.

Proverbs 13:20 (KJV)

He that walketh with wise [*men*] shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.

Proverbs 13:20 (AMP)

He who walks [as a companion] with wise men is wise, but he who associates himself with [self-confident] fools is [a fool himself and] shall smart for it.

Proverbs 13:20 (MSG)

Become wise by walking with the wise; hang out with fools and watch your life fall into pieces.

You get into some associations and your life of prayer is gone, evangelism jumps out of the window, your love begins to wax cold. There are people that will ignite you, while some others are fire extinguishers. Some companies make you lose the fire, the steam, the zeal, the passion, the commitment towards your spiritual growth. So, outside your Pastor, you must take care of your relationships, be

selective, be very jealous in your choices about who you marry, and about everyone else in your space.

The decadence in society today is traceable to companions, it is traceable to company. You find kids in secondary schools with body parts for rituals and everyone is asking how we got here. It is not far-fetched, just check their companions, check the company they keep, check the friends they listen to and walk with.

In a short time, people quickly lose grip of the convictions they have held to for many years because of their company. Things you could never be a part of, you are now gradually losing grounds, making excuses and allowing them creep into your space. That is how much of an effect your company can have. They can either spur you on or mar your progress. If you want to grow, you must watch out for your company, your friends and those you give access into your life.

Association can come in and swallow up deficiencies and weaknesses. Associations can strengthen you. The reverse can also be the case, it can amplify your deficiencies.

It was said concerning the apostles that **they had been with Jesus.**

Acts 4:13 (KJV)

Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that **they had been with Jesus.**

So, who have you been with? Who is your friend? Who is your Father-in-law [God or the Devil]? The choice of who you want to marry is critical to where you want to go or how far you want to go. If you have value for spirituality, then, the man or woman you want to marry must also have value for spirituality. If your relationship does not allow spiritual growth to happen in your life, it is not an agent of growth, it is an agent of ‘disaster waiting to happen.’

In the book of Acts and in the epistles, we always saw men in their companies and with their companions, we always read of **Peter and John, Paul and Barnabas, Paul and Silas, Aquilla and Priscilla** – these were the apostles and other believers and leaders in good companies. So, learn from them and guard your space closely, do not let just anyone in.

You cannot go farther than the quality of your pastor and association. If the only kind of friends you have are those who are satisfied with outings in good eateries or those with whom you go to sport centres or those whose satisfaction comes from their lust, then know that these kinds of company can make you lose your convictions, they make you weak, they do not add much to you. Many troubles believers experience today is traceable to their company. Maturity is that you have come to a place to allow what is necessary and you can put a stop to some other retardants.

There are other relationships where you find yourself, some that you cannot leave, perhaps, someone you are married to, others are your

siblings, and then your parents, in these kinds of relationship, trust the Lord for wisdom in your dealings with them, so that regardless of the fact that you may not leave this company, yet, their impact in your life will be minimized and you can yet grow spiritually. **Today, take responsibility for your growth towards your pastor and your company.**

CHAPTER IV

GROWTH DIET

To experience spiritual growth, we have highlighted two vital things;

- i. Growth agent(s)
- ii. Growth diet

Having explained agents of growth to be primarily your pastor and then the relationships you keep, growth diet will refer primarily to what you are fed with in order to grow. Your growth agent and diet go hand in hand. Your diet is a function of your Pastor who is your main growth agent and then your company.

Ephesians 4:11-16 (KJV)

11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

14 That we [*henceforth*] be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, [*and*] cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, [*even*] Christ:

16 From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

In vs 11-12, 15, we see that Growth Agents are to grow and mature the saints so that they will grow into all things into Him (Christ).

In vs 12 above, the word ‘**perfecting**’ means to mature and to grow. For growth therefore to take place, there must be adequate feeding.

Food is essential for growth naturally, for anyone to grow physically, feeding is important and more importantly, feeding well. Anyone who feeds well naturally is considered to eat balanced diet, however, in the context of the scripture, we do not have that kind of balanced diet which is a mixture of many things.

1 Peter 2:2-3 (KJV)

2 As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:

3 If so be ye have tasted that the Lord [*is*] gracious.

In vs 2, a key word here is that we should **DESIRE**.

In 1 Timothy 2:3-4, we saw **the desire of the Father** to have all men saved and come to knowledge of the truth, here in 1 Peter 2:2, we have **the desire of the saints**.

As believers, there is a desire the Lord expects us to have which is for the Word of God that will cause us to grow. The key thing we must note here is that what is required and what will ensure our growth is the Word of God and it is the duty of the agents of growth to serve us food that will ensure our growth.

Hence, our focus in this chapter is on **GROWTH DIET**

1 Peter 2:2 (KJV)

2 As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:

The first thing we must see here is **OUR ATTITUDE TO THE WORD OF GOD**. This is the reason for the use of the word **desire**.

So, our attitude to the Word of God is to be seen in our desire, as we intensely crave, passionately and deliberately desire the word of God. Believers must have the right attitude to the word of God because our attitude to the word will determine how far we will go in our walk with God. God has so blessed us with Growth Agents, who are the gift of men. Having now received salvation, we need to grow.

Ephesians 4:7-13 (KJV)

7 But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.

8 Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.

9 (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?

10 He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.)

11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

In vs 10, Jesus in the resurrection saw that there was a need to fill everything with himself. To do this, he gave us men (gifts), their sole assignment is to perfect the saints, to grow the saints by preaching and teaching the knowledge of the Son of God. (vs. 11-13)

Jesus wants us to grow, that is why he gave Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers, for our nurturing, to mature the saints. **The only instrument the agent of growth has to do his work is the Word of God.** Agents of growth do not have any other thing to use, they have no other instrument or tool to engage the saints outside the Word of God.

Seeing the Word of God is the only medium, avenue and platform that we can grow by, our attitude to the Word of God becomes very essential. So, we cannot joke with the Word. Just as a man cannot live

without physical food, his body craves for food and water, **the believer must see the Word as essential to his learning to live out this new life.**

Man needs food for survival, to live, to be active, to function well and to be useful. Even the development of our body from birth is dependent on the quality of food and the rate of feeding etc. Food has a lot to do with our physical development. There is a connection between your body structure and feeding. Naturally, a man needs balanced diet and if naturally food is this important, then it is even more spiritually.

Agents of growth only have the Word of God to ensure men grow, and it is not everything that men call the Word of God that can make men grow. **It is not every preaching or teaching that will result in the growth of the new creation.** The new creation or the new man is the one who has received the life of Christ and has had the old man evacuated.

Colossians 3:10 (KJV)

And have put on the new [*man*], which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:

The believer has put on the new man. The new man is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.

The phrase **‘to be renewed AFTER’** speaks of a pattern or a model. So, the knowledge that the new man is renewed with is AFTER

“SOMETHING SPECIFIC” not after several things or anything. It is AFTER THE IMAGE OF HIM THAT CREATED HIM, which is CHRIST JESUS.

It means that the new man cannot be renewed after just anything. **The life of Christ is given to us at the new birth, which is at salvation, but it will take the knowledge of Christ to ensure we are formed fully.** The only way to grow in the life you have received is that you learn ‘to know your creator (CHRIST)’ and become like him.

Recall in Ephesians 4:15,

Ephesians 4:15 (KJV)

But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, [*even*] Christ:

Paul wrote ‘*we grow in all things into Him which is the head, Christ*’. So, our growth has a pattern, it has a focus, it has direction.

Like a gardener has a shape in his mind and he conforms the plant or flower to this shape, there is a pattern in the mind of the Father, the One who gave us this new life, who created us, there is a pattern he wants our growth to conform to, this pattern is according to the knowledge of Christ Jesus.

Colossians 3:10 (TPT)

For you have acquired new creation life which is continually being renewed into the likeness of the One who created you; giving you the full revelation of God.

At salvation, we received new creation life, it is a brand-new life in Christ. It is however continually renewed into the likeness of the One who created us. So, the only thing that will make us grow into Him is via THE REVELATION OF GOD. Your growth is to be like him, it is to be patterned after the One who created you.

So, **growing for the believer is not growing into everything. Our growth has a pattern, it has an expectation.** So, there is a diet that can cause that to happen. Our diet as the new creation is custom-made. If you want to grow into him (Christ), then there is a custom-made food. It is customized and it is specific. That means, it is not everything in the Bible that will make the new man grow, that is why some professors may know the bible so much, yet, all of that does not translate into spiritual growth, because **what translates to growth is not a general knowledge of the bible, it is THE REVELATION OF CHRIST**, otherwise called the Word of His grace, the wisdom of God, the Word of life, the gospel. This is the custom-made food for the new creation.

The new creation is fashioned after a life and only the one who created this life can decide the growth pattern. Anything outside this will produce INFORMATION not TRANSFORMATION. So, you may have much information, but it does not result into growth, renewal, maturity, increase and development [spiritually]. If it is spiritual growth that you desire as a new creation, then you must choose your diet and you must be deliberate about it. Our diet is customized

because there is a desire in the Father's heart which is for us to conform to the image of Him after whom we were created.

Just like a machine, if you want to make optimum use of it, then you must read the manual because it is written with the mind of the manufacturer to provide essential information on how to run the machine, so also, for the new creation, our Creator came up with a manual, he has put in place knowledge, precepts that will cause us to grow. There is a body of knowledge, understanding and insight that will make the believer to grow in the life he has received so that when men see you, they will see you like the one who has made you.

It was said of the apostles because of how they spoke and behaved that they had been with Jesus.

Acts 4:13 (KJV)

Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marveled; and **they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.**

It means that there is something Jesus was doing with his apostles and to them. It can be seen in what he was serving them with, what he fed them with so that eventually, they could not look like any other thing or person but Christ.

The concept of discipleship therefore goes beyond talking and teaching, the apostles must have watched Jesus, they must have seen the calmness around him, how he responded to different situations,

the apostles had been tutored and trained, this same calmness, we can find in their lives much later. Jesus had modeled a particular kind of life and pattern to them and they having learnt well began to look, act, speak and behave like Christ.

Growing up for a believer is therefore GROWING UP INTO CHRIST JESUS. If we grow up into anything else, then the fundamental problem would be in our DIET. So, the goal of the growth agent is to teach and preach so that the believer will grow into Him in all things.

So, the growth agent is to focus on the right meal, not moral instructions. The growth agent which is the Pastor does not teach moral instructions or character adjustment. Character adjustment will be achieved when the life of Christ is formed in you. So, dishing out rules and regulations does not transform the new man. We do not teach character adjustment or rules and regulations because that is not the diet for the new man. Interestingly, when rules and regulations are taught, there is a tendency for people to go against what you have instructed them not to do – it is called curiosity. Just like Paul wrote, the knowledge of the law brought about the awareness of sin.

Romans 7:7 (KJV)

What shall we say then? [*Is*] the law sin? God forbid. **Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law:** for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.

We must understand the import of the diet of the new man. As a man in Christ, you must know that your growth has a focus, there is

something in view for your growth, you are to grow in all things into Him, that is Christ Jesus. So, mere bible stories will not result in growth, the story of Samson and Delilah will not make you to grow into all things in Him. Not every knowledge can cause you to grow.

So, if a Pastor is feeding you with the right diet, he may not need to bother about monitoring your every step because there is a way Christ is formed in you that conditions where you go, how you act and what you say. There is a way the love of Christ constrains us, we become bondservants, we submit our necks to be yoked with Christ. But when the life of Christ is not cultivated or built and men are not open to receiving the understanding of Christ, spiritual growth cannot happen.

We have a lot of information that is preached today which is not patterned after the image of Him that created the new man. When it comes to spiritual growth which is growing in Christ, you must be selective about what you are exposed to, that is the diet that you feed on.

Again, the Growth agent must therefore revisit the desire of the Father;

1 Timothy 2:3-4 (KJV)

3 For this *[is]* good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour;

4 Who will have **all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.**

The desire of the Father is to see **all men saved** and ‘the saved’ **come to the knowledge of the truth**. The former being salvation and the latter, spiritual growth which is the responsibility of growth agents. Jesus’ responsibility makes him Saviour, Jesus is not responsible for your spiritual growth. This is why He gave gift to the church

Ephesians 4:11 (KJV)

And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

The assignment of these gifts is to ensure that **we grow into Christ in all things**.

Ephesians 4:15 (KJV)

But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, [*even*] Christ:

Seeing the assignment of Growth Agents is to feed, to nurture, to ensure believers grow – how do they do that? How do the Growth Agents accomplish growth in believers? The only instrument they have is the Word of God. Hence, Peter wrote;

1 Peter 2:2 (AMP)

Like newborn babies, you should crave (thirst for, earnestly desire) the pure (unadulterated) spiritual milk, that by it you may be nurtured and grow unto [completed] salvation.

One key word here is the attitude of the believer to the Word of God which is to crave, thirst for and earnestly desire.

1 Peter 2:2 (KJV)

As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:

The instrument for growth is **THE WORD OF GOD**.

One key word we have continued to explore is **DESIRE**. The word **DESIRE** connotes our attitude to the Word of God. It talks about having an intense craving for the Word of God.

Paul calls the **Word of God – the Word of His Grace**

Acts 20:32 (KJV)

And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to **the word of his grace**, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.

THE WORD OF HIS GRACE refers to the spiritual food and the sincere milk that is able to build up and ensure that the believer grows and matures.

Our attitude therefore to the Word of God must be deliberate and intentional. We used the physical importance of physical feeding to explain how feeding is likewise important spiritually. The nutritionist would call it the balanced diet. Some people did not feed well naturally and it reflected in their growth, their growth was retarded. This means that merely eating well is enough to make a man grow. As the believer likewise feeds on the undiluted word of God, it has the capacity to make you grow.

1 Peter 2:2 (KJV)

As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:

Here in 1 Peter 2:2 - Notice the phrases;

DESIRE THE SINCEERE MILK OF THE WORD – this refers to our attitude to the Word

THAT YOU MAY GROW THEREBY – this refers to the potency of the word.

This shows that;

- Your attitude to the Word of God is your responsibility, while, the potency and the ability of the Word is God's responsibility.
- So, your response to the Word of God is your attitude, it is your responsibility and inherent in God's word is the ability to cause men to grow, to make men become all they can become in Christ and it has never failed.
- Your attitude and response to the Word of God plays a major role in your spiritual growth. Respond rightly to the Word of God and watch yourself grow.

The fact remains that the Word of God is key to our Spiritual Growth and the Word of God is the spiritual food for the believer. The Word of God is therefore our **GROWTH DIET**.

For us to grow, we must feed enough on the Word of God. When we say Growth Diet, which is the Word of God, we must also make that distinction - it is not everything in the bible that can make a believer grow.

Colossians 3:10 (KJV)

And have put on the new [*man*], which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:

Colossians 3:10 (MSG)

Now, you're dressed in a new wardrobe. Every item of your new way of life is custom-made by the Creator, with his label on it. All the old fashions are now obsolete.

Colossians 3:10 (TPT)

For you have acquired new creation life which is continually being renewed into the likeness of the One who created you; giving you the full revelation of God.

Repeatedly, in Colossians 3:10, we see the emphasis that the new man is renewed in knowledge.

From the point of salvation, you have acquired that new creation life. The life you have received, for you to mature in it, it has to be renewed in knowledge. So, we can only grow and make progress in the life we have received when we subject it to a process of renewal in knowledge after the image of the One who created it.

This knowledge is very specific, it is according to the image of Him that created this life. The knowledge that can ensure a believer grows and matures in Christ is customized. So, it is not everything in the bible that is able to make the believer grow and mature. **Bible knowledge does not produce renewal or maturity in this new life.** This is the reason many have enormous bible knowledge and it does not translate into spiritual growth, they do not understand that **information is different from transformation.**

So, scattered bible knowledge can give you information, but it does not lead to transformation. You need to get into what is required for your growth. It is a good thing to read and study the scriptures but it is much more important to look for the Growth Diet of the believer. We can mature and grow in this new life by being deliberate and intentional to check out the Growth Diet of the believer. This is the kind of understanding that the apostles had, hence, in their epistles, they wrote;

1 John 5:20 (KJV)

And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, [*even*] in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.

There is a knowledge you need to labour in, that is the knowledge of Jesus who came to give us an understanding - which is a full definition of God.

Paul would say concerning his preaching;

1 Corinthians 2:2 (KJV)

For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

We also see Paul's determination here. What he preached was only Christ and him crucified. So, Paul shows us that there may be several things to know but he was determined to know and preach only this.

Philippians 3:10 (KJV)

That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;

Paul's words - **That I may know him** – we must wonder, at what point was Paul making this statement? Certainly not at the point of his salvation, it was much later in his life and after much labours in the ministry. This therefore informs us that there are several things you can learn, but stay focused on the right thing which is **to know Him.**

Paul was determined and focused, he wanted to know him (Christ) because **the revelation which unveils Christ also reveals the believer in Him, what Christ has done and made available.** So, the more you know Him, the more you know who you are in Him. The truth which unveils the power and authority of Christ also reveals the power at work in the believer.

Luke 24:44 (KJV)

And he said unto them, These [*are*] the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and [*in*] the prophets, and [*in*] the psalms, concerning me.

Here, Jesus took the liberty to explain to his apostles that the law of Moses, the writings of the prophets and the Psalms were all trying to say only one thing. There is a central theme to the scriptures which is Christ Jesus.

So, in the story of Abraham, there is a story God wants us to know and learn. The fact that Abraham with Isaac carried wood and fire upon Mount Moriah does not help us, but in that story, God was pointing to the fact that a time would come when God would be a man and God would take man's place in death.

In reading the bible therefore, we must look for the growth diet, that is what to feed on that would necessitate spiritual growth. So, it is not about Abraham and Isaac, not about Jeremiah, not about Samson and Delilah or the physical strength of Samson, those would be merely stories – this is why in Luke 24:44, Jesus explained the scriptures as written concerning him, and we can say Paul had that Luke 24:44 orientation, hence, he was determined to know only Christ and Him crucified.

Similarly,

John 5:39 (KJV)

Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.

Here, Jesus showed the Jews that eternal life is not in the mere stories of the scriptures, but when read concerning him, that would be eternal life. So, all the scriptures testify of Jesus.

John 16:12-14 (KJV)

12 I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.

13 Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, [*that*] shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.

14 He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew [*it*] unto you.

Jesus already informed his disciples on the things the Holy Ghost would do and speak about. It is clear that the Holy Ghost therefore does not have a message for the church, he has nothing to say on His own. What the Holy Ghost has to give to the churches is what He hears.

So, even when you say the Holy Ghost is the one speaking or leading you, one acid test to know the insight and revelation of the Spirit is that the Holy Ghost will not speak about anything outside of the

revelation of Christ. It does not matter the shout, the noise or manifestation around certain things when it is not glorifying Jesus, it cannot be the Holy Ghost. **So, the diet of the new creation man is the revelation of the scriptures that point to Christ.** As you take your time to learn this, it results in spiritual growth.

The Growth Diet of the believer is the finished works of Christ which was;

- i. Promissory notes in the law,
- ii. Prophecies in the prophets and
- iii. In the epistles, we have the fulfilment.

So, in our learning, we must say like Paul - **THAT I MAY KNOW HIM.**

What is therefore expected of the growth agent in communicating these things that believers may grow thereby?

Ephesians 4:11-13 (KJV)

11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

Vs 11 captures the Growth Agents

Vs 12-13 captures what the Growth Agents will feed saints with.

We can therefore say, there is a feeding system, there is a way the Apostles, the Prophets, the Evangelists, the Pastors and Teachers will feed the saints that will make men to be equipped for ministry. There is a level of feeding that will make you desire ministry. There is a feeding that makes you empowered for life. On the other hand, there is also a feeding that will make you dependent on pastor for every decision in life.

You can raise Christians who can stand on their feet because they are well-taught and equipped. The only thing responsible for equipping the saints is the preaching of Christ. **Not knowing Growth Diet is like the blind leading the blind.** Saints that are equipped understand what Christ has done and provided for them. They do not run around or from pillar to post. They do not need to use water or oil to heal the sick, the anointing is on your inside, they simply lay hands, this is because they have been equipped to know that.

There is therefore a systemic way of teaching that can ignite passion for the work of the ministry, it makes it burn in your heart. In the service of your local church and outside, you are committed to the work of ministry. **Ministry becomes a channel opened for an outward expression of God's inward work in our hearts.** If you are saved and the life of Christ is being formed in you, one thing that will come about is the desire and passion for souls. Anywhere you go, you have that mindset of ministry.

What do you feed on for ministry to happen?

Ephesians 4:11-13 (KJV)

11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

14 That we [*henceforth*] be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, [*and*] cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

When the growth agents do their job well, this will be the result;

In Vs 13 – **TILL WE ALL COME** (not some but ALL)

Come to what? In vs 13 – **Come in the unity of the faith** – this is where we should all be heading for always, every message must head to this point, every prayer meeting. Once that happens, the result will be growth.

This growth is stated in vs 14 as ‘**no more children**’. The reverse is why many are not growing. Although they have being in church for long, yet are not growing.

As stated in vs 14 - **Children are tossed to and fro** – we can say, they are unsettled and unstable. **Children are carried about with**

‘every wind of doctrine’ – they feed anywhere, they are not deliberate, they do not realize our growth diet is standardized.

So, location does not change the diet, the content does not change the diet. The gospel we preach must not change or be doctored anywhere to suit anyone, if it changes, it has lost its relevance. The gospel is standardized. The content of the gospel must be the same. So, even a rich man is helpless regardless of his fortune if he has not received the gospel and the same applies to the poor. The gospel, the revelation of Jesus is standardized, that is what Bible school should be for. When you have been properly fed, you should be able to discern the truth.

As we saw concerning this diet, your local church determines your Pastor, your pastor determines your diet and your diet determines your growth. So, if you are mindful of your growth, then you must be mindful of your local church.

Believers respond to life based on the teaching they have received. As we understand what Christ has done for us, we understand His provision, we are equipped for life, our tastebuds have changed in Christ Jesus, certain things cannot satisfy us anymore. The only way to grow is to feed well. The Local Church is the place to feed, to study, to be well taught and to deliberately learn the word.

CHAPTER V

GROWTH PROOFS (THE EVIDENCES OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH)

2 Peter 1:4-9 (KJV)

4 Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

5 And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge;

6 And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness;

7 And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.

8 For if these things be in you, and abound, they make *[you that ye shall]* neither *[be]* barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

9 But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.

In vs 4, Peter begins gives a description of the believer's salvation. This description is what he refers to as **being partakers of his divine nature having escaped the corruption in this world through lust.**

This follows that in vs 5 – the word **FAITH** would therefore mean **the FAITH the believer has received in salvation**. So, **faith** would be a description of that salvation experience in vs 4.

So, in vs 5, when Peter says **ADD TO YOUR FAITH** – he is not talking about doing something to improve your salvation. Your salvation is complete, this addition does not contribute to your salvation, neither does it improve it. With respect to salvation, what Christ has done is a perfect and complete work. This has become our **faith experience**, we have come to receive **faith** in what he has done, so, we are in the faith.

So, the phrase “**add to your faith**” does not mean improve your salvation. Instead, what he calls **virtues** are fruits that the knowledge of Jesus should produce. So, virtues do not improve our salvation, our salvation is complete, it is total, it is a gift. What Peter tells us to add to our salvation is spiritual growth. Men may not be able to tell if you are saved or not because salvation is primarily what you have received in your spirit, the only evidence men around you will see and confess to your salvation and learning is your spiritual growth. So, men cannot see your knowledge or revelation, but they see your virtues which is to be the things produced by the fact that you are learning.

So, the fruitfulness of knowledge are the evidences of spiritual growth. You should look like what you are eating. If I am feeding on the revelation of Christ, then, I should look like what I am eating and

learning. The only proof is that as I feed on the growth diet, I look like what I am feeding on.

So, when Peter says **ADD TO YOUR FAITH**, it would be to add **spiritual growth** to that complete salvation we have received.

So, in vs 8, Peter writing summarily would show that the things you have added in spiritual growth would be seen in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Just like Paul wrote in 1 Timothy 2:4 – God’s desire is that all men are saved and that **they come to the knowledge of the truth**.

In vs 8 – Peter shows us that there is a possibility to experience unfruitfulness in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. So, the knowledge that we receive, we are supposed to be fruitful in it.

Knowledge gives birth to spiritual growth in your life, this means that for spiritual growth to be determined to be taking place in your life, then you must be receiving knowledge and be fruitful in that knowledge.

To be fruitful means to bear fruits. So, the knowledge of Christ you are receiving must come to the point where it bears fruits. This is what has been captured as the evidences of spiritual growth. We can refer to them as growth proofs.

Growth proofs are the proofs we can use to gauge and measure if a believer is growing. So, spiritual growth is not about merely receiving and gathering knowledge. There is a possibility to be unfruitful in the

knowledge of Christ and there is also a possibility to have fruits which means to have evidences of spiritual growth. **It is important that we do not come to the point where the only thing we have as proof of spiritual growth is knowledge.** It will be more havoc because knowledge puffs. Where there are no growth proofs, there is a possibility that the life in the scriptures will not produce more than just knowledge.

2 Peter 1:8-9 (KJV)

8 For if these things be in you, and abound, they make *[you that ye shall]* neither *[be]* barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

9 But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.

So, in vs 8 – by saying **if these things be in you and abound [in you]**, Peter would be explaining what the knowledge of Jesus is capable of producing in the life of a believer. This would be the evidence of spiritual growth, not salvation. Remember, salvation is received, in salvation, we received God's nature, we are partakers of his divine nature, it is our spiritual experience, it is God's gift, but we are to grow in knowledge which refers to spiritual growth.

In vs 9 – Peter showed that if these proofs of spiritual growth are not available, you will probably appear to be unsaved, although a believer. So, a believer may be feeding on the right growth diet but he is unfruitful in it. This means that often times, the challenge is not

salvation, but spiritual growth. So, many are in church but the knowledge they are receiving is not fruitful in them. This is like Jesus' parable of the Sower, where some were receiving the word, yet, unfruitful in it.

So, Peter raised a serious issue, he wrote that it is possible that you are going after the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, you are increasing in learning, but there is a possibility for you to be unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus. That means, a man can have knowledge, but he must be careful to ensure that the knowledge he is feeding on produces fruits.

So, in vs 8, Peter showed that the more you allow "these virtues" abound in you, you will grow strong spiritually because those things will become fruits and evidences of the fact that you are learning and growing.

Galatians 4:19 (KJV)

My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you,

Ephesians 4:15 (KJV)

But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, [*even*] Christ:

The Word of God that we receive should produce fruits in our lives. If we are being fed well and the goal is that Christ is formed in us,

that we grow up in all things in Christ, then, there must be proofs, it must go beyond 'head knowledge'.

Evidences of Spiritual Growth

1. The degree of conformity to the Word of Christ and the image of Christ.

One evidence that must be seen from your learning is that your life is in conformity to the word of Christ and the image of Christ, this is a clear sign of spiritual growth. The only way we will know the word is effective is if there is an increasing degree of conformity of the life of the believer to what he hears.

The Word of God is first an inward operation in the believer and ministry is the outward expression of that inward operation. So, the inward operation must come first. One evidence of spiritual growth is knowledge and understanding. But Spiritual growth goes beyond just knowledge, it should be that your life is conforming to your learning, you must look like what you are eating.

Colossians 3:10 (KJV)

And have put on the new [*man*], which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:

If Colossians 3:10 is the case, then we must look out for the conformity. Conformity is not improving on our salvation. From start to finish, salvation is God's work and God's gift.

Ephesians 2:8-9 (KJV)

8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves:
[it is] the gift of God:

9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.

So, even when conformity is absent, it does not nullify that salvation experience, neither does having that conformity improve our salvation experience.

So, proofs of spiritual growth would simply mean that we are making progress in this new life. If we are feeding on the right diet, there should be a degree of conformity of my life to the image of Christ, that is CHRISTLIKENESS. What we received in him is full salvation, our salvation is complete, but a man can be saved, yet, his life is not in conformity to the Word of Christ. That conformity is Christ being formed in a man and he progressively looks like Christ.

So, although our action or inaction does not change the love of God toward us, spiritual growth will be seen in that man who receives and understands the love of God and by that knowledge, he continues to be conformed to the image of Christ. So, a believer has knowledge about what God has done, but when his attitude to taking responsibility in the faith is faulty, his lifestyle will probably not look different from the unbeliever, this is what Peter describes as being unfruitful, that man looks like he has one foot in and the other out.

Salvation is what you do once, it is an instantaneous experience, once you are born-again, you cannot be 'unborn'. So, a man has received the gift of salvation, but he does not know how to work out what he

has received. What validates your works of righteousness or practical righteousness is the gift of righteousness. In our walk in Christ, **righteousness is a gift and it further produces right living in the believer.** Spiritual growth would be that I have received a gift and I live responsibly because of that gift.

Romans 5:17-18 (KJV)

17 For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of **the gift of righteousness** shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.)

18 Therefore as by the offence of one [*judgment came*] upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one [*the free gift came*] upon all men unto justification of life.

So, good works does not save anyone, but once we are saved, our salvation should produce good works.

Ephesians 2:8-10 (KJV)

8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: [*it is*] the gift of God:

9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.

10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

As the degree of conformity over time increases, habits and addictions lose their hold. So, the man that is saved and constantly exposed to the Word of God, his degree of conformity gets higher, it increases,

this is spiritual growth, it is Christ being formed, it is conforming to the image of Christ.

This is the reason Paul's burden for the believers in Galatia was not salvation because they were already saved. When Paul said;

Galatians 4:19 (KJV)

My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you,

He was looking for conformity to the life and nature of Christ which they had received.

So, salvation is akin to the nature the believer receives, but spiritual growth is growing in stature. This means that we do not grow in nature, we only grow in stature. The gospel hands to us the nature of God, it is called regeneration. Salvation is not character adjustment, it is not character improvement, it is an evacuation of the old man. **It would therefore mean it was the Spirit that got saved, the mind and body are not.**

Romans 12:1-2 (KJV)

1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *[which is]* your reasonable service.

2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *[is]* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

This portion of Paul's writing does not refer to the believer's spirit, but the mind. This is why in vs 1, Paul addresses them as **brethren** to mean **believers**. So, their salvation was not in doubt, but Paul wanted to address their spiritual growth.

Hence, in vs 2 – the conformity Paul saw was not a conformity to the Word or the image of Christ, but to the world, this is why he instructs them to renew their minds.

So, the Spirit is in a perfect state. The believer has a recreated Spirit. That man who is a new creation has no old record.

2 Corinthians 5:17 (KJV)

Therefore if any man [*be*] in Christ, [*he is*] a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

The spirit of a man who is saved is in a state of perfection, yet, habits and addictions may remain in that man's lifestyle and the only way to deal with that is by the renewing of the mind which leads to transformation – that is spiritual growth.

So, when a believer says, ***“the things I used to do, I no longer do, the things I struggled with, I no longer struggle with”*** that is spiritual growth, it is a growing conformity to the word which a man hears. So, the knowledge or understanding that does not lead to a conformity and eventual transformation cannot be spiritual growth.

So, a good place to start in growth is learning, however, as you continue to come to that place of knowledge and understanding of the

scriptures, it may not be sufficient alone to say that you are growing spiritually.

Principal to conformity is that we must always remember that our growth diet is the revelation and knowledge of our Lord Jesus. So, spiritual growth will not happen if you do not feed on the growth diet.

Romans 12:1-2 (KJV)

1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *[which is]* your reasonable service.

2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *[is]* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

Knowing Paul was writing to believers by his use of the word “**brethren**”. His plea therefore was to “people that were and are saved”.

In vs 1-2 – the two issues Paul was talking about is “**their bodies and their minds**”. In salvation, your spirit comes into that state of perfection, but your mind is not saved. The renewal of the mind is the reason why you can eventually present your body as a living sacrifice. That means, Paul knew that the believers who although saved were not in conformity to the Word, but much more in conformity to the world.

They were not in conformity to the life of Christ and the only way to achieve this conformity is by the renewing of their minds according to Word and not the world. So, we have men who are believers, but those around them cannot tell, some may even pray in other tongues, they may increase in their learning, but there is no conformity to the Word they are learning.

The job of the preacher therefore is not to hammer on your conduct or to give much moral instructions, instead, he is to teach the Word. Your eventual learning should produce a conformity to the Word. The preacher is to expose you to the Word of God, to the teaching of Christ and as long as you are learning, we should begin to see your interaction with the word in your departure from the world. Gradually, you should look, sound and act like you are indeed learning. It is conforming to the nature of God which you have received. So, there are things you should not be struggling with after years of learning.

Although your action or inaction does not change the position of God towards you because the love of God is constant, yet there are matters or areas of the kingdom that will not be committed into your hands. So, the Father loves us all equally, but he does not commit matters of the kingdom to all men because some are babies, they will cause havoc.

So, salvation is complete, but spiritual growth is a process. As you continue to learn, there are habits, addictions and conducts that should be losing their grip on you. If you are learning and not given to

conformity, you will be ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. **You will know hymns and never know Him, you will know church language, church talk, church system, but the life of Christ is not being formed in you.** The degree of your conformity is a sign that you are growing spiritually.

After a while, some believers are still being chased after, some are long years in church yet no commitment to growth, no commitment to prayer, no commitment to studying, these are signs that they are still immature although saved. God cannot send them on an errand, they are fair weather believers, they are Sunday-Sunday believers, bread and butter believers, some pick up their bible only on a Sunday and clean the dust off with the same rag used for their shoes [dusty bible – dusty believer – dusty life].

So, believers may have no commitment to the word of God, yet their salvation is complete. This poor attitude does not alter their salvation, but there are matters accompanying salvation which must be given attention. So, spiritual growth helps you maximize the things that come with salvation, there is a measure of growth you need after salvation to take delivery of what is available to you in salvation.

For example, the common ground for all believers to walk in miracles is that they have believed the gospel. Jesus said;

Mark 16:17-18 (KJV)

17 And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues;

18 They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.

These signs shall follow them that believe – so, exploits is for all believers, not just pastors. Yet some believers are chasing gatherings with miracles, with signs and wonders meanwhile Jesus does not want you to be a chaser of signs and wonders, He has already made you one.

So, the difference between those who know this and those who do not is a function of feeding or knowledge which is growth diet which also is how and what they are fed with. So, God’s desire is that conformity to what you are learning which ought to be learning Christ.

Romans 8:29 (KJV)

For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate *[to be]* conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

The phrase “**to be conformed**” shows us God’s agenda. So, we have Christ as “our firstborn” and God wants us all to look like Christ. So, you are saved, but you will need to be conformed to the image of his Son. So, the degree of your conformity is an evidence of your spiritual growth, not your salvation.

So, we do not doubt the salvation of men because in salvation, all a man needs to do is believe. Spiritual growth demands your learning

and conformity. So, when you hear some of the questions believers ask, you can tell if they are growing or not, some still bother much about whether drinking alcohol is a sin or not, or the kinds of place they are to go to. The man David knew better;

Psalms 1:1-2 (KJV)

1 Blessed [*is*] the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

2 But his delight [*is*] in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.

In vs 1, he already showed that there are people you should not walk with at all. Hence, you cannot stand or sit with them (vs 2). Your circle will influence you and you can develop a ‘false boldness’ in your actions. If there is no difference between you and the world, then, you are not growing spiritually. **In spiritual growth, there is therefore a conformity to the Word and a departure from the world.**

2. The degree of your stability in life

Ephesians 4:11-14 (KJV)

11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

14 That we [*henceforth*] be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, [*and*] cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

From vs 14, we can ask, **how do we know that we are no longer children?**

Paul in vs 14 shows that the moment we come to a place of stability in knowledge, we will no longer be carried about by every wind of doctrine, which is to be tossed to and fro – this is when we are no more children.

You will meet men, crafty men whose preparation is a plot to sway many from the truth. So, being carried away is done by teaching, hence Paul wrote in vs 14 - **with every wind of doctrine**. Men invent practices which are erroneous and the goal is to mislead, they are false preachers.

The preacher of the gospel is to teach you until you come to a place of stability in your learning, such that you will know where to sit, what to say, where to stand and with whom to walk. Some have prolonged their infancy by not growing spiritually, so, they have become an easy target for impostors. You will need to come to a place of stability in your learning as a believer such that you are sure of what you know. An example of such an unstable man was Reuben;

Genesis 49:3-4 (KJV)

3 Reuben, thou [*art*] my firstborn, my might, and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power:

4 Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel; because thou wentest up to thy father's bed; then defiledst thou [*it*]: he went up to my couch.

Reuben gives us a type of a believer who does not understand his identity in Christ.

Vs 3 would be a type of the description of the believer when it says **my firstborn, my might, the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity and the excellency of power.**

Vs 4 reveals that despite that description in vs 3, a lack of stability made a caricature of Reuben's life. An unstable man is carried about, he is tossed to and fro.

Peter wrote about such unstable believers and how they fall prey of false preachers.

2 Peter 2:1-14 (KJV)

1 But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.

2 And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.

3 And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.

4 For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast *[them]* down to hell, and delivered *[them]* into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment;

5 And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth *[person]*, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly;

6 And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes condemned *[them]* with an overthrow, making *[them]* an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly;

7 And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked:

8 (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed *[his]* righteous soul from day to day with *[their]* unlawful deeds;)

9 The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished:

10 But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government. Presumptuous *[are they]*, selfwilled, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities.

11 Whereas angels, which are greater in power and might, bring not railing accusation against them before the Lord.

12 But these, as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not; and shall utterly perish in their own corruption;

13 And shall receive the reward of unrighteousness, [*as*] they that count it pleasure to riot in the day time. Spots [*they are*] and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings while they feast with you;

14 Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children:

This is a discourse on false teachers and preachers.

In vs 14 – Peter shows us those that are vulnerable to those false teachers, he calls them **UNSTABLE SOULS**.

So, you cannot fall prey to the heresies of false teachers if you have come to a place of stability. It is unstable souls are the ones who fall prey of false doctrine. False teachers cannot entice everyone, just the same way fraudsters cannot deceive people who are not greedy for gain. The only people that can be enticed are unstable souls.

So, Paul placed so huge emphasis on spiritual growth;

Ephesians 4:11-14 (KJV)

11 Filled earth with his gifts. He handed out gifts of apostle, prophet, evangelist, and pastor-teacher

12 To train Christians in skilled servant work, working within Christ's body, the church

13 Until we're all moving rhythmically and easily with each other, efficient and graceful in response to God's Son, fully mature adults, fully developed within and without, fully alive like Christ

14 No prolonged infancies among us, please. We'll not tolerate babes in the woods, small children who are an easy mark for impostors

In vs 14, the emphasis is **do not stay in babyhood which is prolonged infancy.**

By growing up, we take responsibility, for how we live and for our conduct. So, as believers, we do not practice sin, the believer does not make a habit of sin, but it is a different matter to fall into sin.

1 John 2:1 (KJV)

My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:

John therefore says - **do not sin.**

Paul in Romans 6 shows us that we have been delivered from sin and the body of sin has been destroyed.

Romans 6:6 (KJV)

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.

The church has been taught concerning sin as though we are weaklings and helpless people, but the cross has dealt with sin.

Titus 2:11-12 (KJV)

11 For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men,

12 Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;

By saying – **denying ungodliness and worldly lusts**, this means that because sin is dealt with and we have received God’s grace, we are men empowered to say NO.

1 John 2:1 (KJV)

My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:

John goes on to write “**if a man sins**” – **we have Christ as a defense, as our righteousness.**

So, while John says “do not practice sin”, he yet says, perhaps “you fall into sin”, that is not the end, it is not a closed case, instead, you have Christ as your defense. So, believers do not practice sin, sin is not a habitual practice for a man in Christ. So, never come under a teaching that gives you a “false boldness” to live and practice sin.

Paul wrote on what inspires our conduct

2 Corinthians 5:14-15 (KJV)

14 For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead:

15 And *[that]* he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.

So, we take responsibility from the understanding of the love of Christ. As you know God's love as reckless, constant and extravagant, also come to the point where you are constrained by the love of God. Know that this love is constant for you, but it also constrains you. So, we cannot despise the reality of his sacrifice, it compels and constrains us – this is Christianity. **In understanding these things, our growth is seen even as we become stable.**

3. The degree of our love-walk

Galatians 5:22-23 (KJV)

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

The fruits of the Spirit which Paul lists out is similar to what Peter listed that we should add to our faith.

2 Peter 1:5-8 (KJV)

5 And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge;

6 And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness;

7 And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.

8 For if these things be in you, and abound, they make *[you that ye shall]* neither *[be]* barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We can say that **the gifts of the Spirit** are not as much an indicator of spiritual growth as **the fruits of the Spirit**. So, we often mistake gifts of the Spirit as a sign of spiritual growth rather than the fruits of the Spirit expressed in a believer's life.

The consistent manifestation of the fruits of the Spirit in a believer's life is a sign of spiritual growth. So, growth in the expression of love, joy, peace, longsuffering etc. This is a vital proof that a believer is both **learning and living** by the Word of Christ, he is imbibing the character of the Spirit of Christ.

The goal is not to only learn about Christ, but to live the life. So, it is not enough to learn, or to show forth the gifts of the Spirit.

Galatians 5:22-23 (KJV)

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

Paul wrote that **the fruit of the Spirit is love** – when I grow in love, then joy, meekness and all other fruits would be seen. The fruit of the Spirit is love but it is expressed in various forms. So, the degree of my love-walk is a sign of spiritual growth. Meekness is not weakness, it is a sign of spiritual growth, it is strength and power under control.

Other evidences of spiritual growth are;

- **Supernatural boldness**
- **Assurance in God and His Word**
- **Rest**

As we have seen, stability therefore helps us to have rest. As we feed, as we learn, rest becomes the order of the day. Spiritual growth deals with the issue of prolonged infancy. So, you must ask yourself, **am I growing spiritually or am I just ageing?**

Isaiah 33:6 (KJV)

And wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times, [*and*] strength of salvation: the fear of the Lord [*is*] his treasure.

Knowledge stabilizes the believer. This stabilizer is the knowledge of Jesus, as you are fed with it, you are stable and sound.

James 1:5-8 (KJV)

5 If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all [*men*] liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

6 But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.

7 For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.

8 A double minded man *[is]* unstable in all his ways.

A double minded man is an unstable man, he is a victim of false prophets and teachers, of their plotting and trickery. A believer must therefore be stable, be bold and assured in God's Word.

ABOUT THE BOOK

As believers in Christ, it is important for us to understand the will of God which is salvation and spiritual growth. This salvation is the gift of God, it excludes the efforts of any man. God however does not merely want men to be saved. He also wants men to grow spiritually. So, the believer must have a clear understanding of what salvation is as well as spiritual growth.

This book leans on the scriptures entirely to explain what God would have us know about salvation whilst it places great emphasis on the spiritual growth of the believer. Spiritual growth would require the co-operation and deliberate efforts of the believer. This book will help the believer as it explores the dynamics of our SALVATION in Christ and especially our determination towards our SPIRITUAL GROWTH.

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