

We're Either Growing or Dying

by Bryan Gibson

Let's consider three simple questions related to spiritual growth, and then answer them by using the Scriptures.

How important is it to grow spiritually?

According to God, it is extremely important, and He shows us this in several different ways.

1) He gives us a command to grow—"grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18). 2) He sets forth perfection or maturity as the goal for His people—"that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God" (Colossians 4:12; see also 1 Corinthians 14:20; Ephesians 4:11-16; Colossians 1:28). 3) He rebukes those who do not grow spiritually (1 Corinthians 3:1-4; Hebrews 5:11-14). 4) He commends those who do (2 Thessalonians 1:3); and 5) He reveals the eternal destiny of those who grow (2 Peter 1:5-11), and of those who do not (Luke 13:6-9).

What can we do to help us grow?

1) Study the word diligently—"desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby" (1 Pet. 2:1-3). 2) Let Christ live in us—"it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me" (Galatians 2:20; see also John 15:1-8). The more we study and apply the word, which reveals the character of Christ, the more we become like Him. 3) Pray for spiritual growth—for greater faith, for stronger love, for more wisdom and understanding, etc. (Colossians 1:9-12; 4:12). 4) Spend time with other Christians, both in the assembly (Heb. 10:24-25), and outside the assembly (Heb. 3:12-13). Can you think of some others?

What will keep us from growing as we should?

1) A failure to do the things just mentioned—to study, to let Christ live in us, to pray, and to spend time with other Christians. 2) A failure to put self to death (John 12:24-26; Galatians 5:22-24). We can't grow if we're still more interested in doing our will than doing God's will. Here's the right attitude: "Have thine own way, Lord! Have thine own way! Thou art the Potter; I am the clay. Mold me and make me after thy will, while I am waiting, yielded and still." 3) Love for the world. Read the Parable of the Sower, especially the part about the thorny ground: "Now the ones that fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity" (Luke 8:14). When we pay so much attention to the things of this world, it leaves little time to pay attention to the things that matter most. "If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in Him" (1 John 2:15).

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled" (Matthew 5:6).