

The Brown Street Beacon

*"...Shine out among them like beacon lights,
holding out to them the Word of Life" (Phil 2:15-16)*



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Growing in Grace and Knowledge

Obeying the gospel of Christ is the smartest, most valuable decision anyone can ever make. There are some very important decisions that must be made in life, but none of them ranks as high as accepting Jesus as one's Lord and Savior. Upon making that great decision and actually following up on it by obeying the gospel, one's sins are remitted (Acts 2:38), and fellowship with God is established.

Now the work begins. When a person obeys the gospel, he is born again, making him an infant in the faith. That's a good thing, unless one stays an infant for years on end. The Hebrews writer criticized some Jewish Christians for remaining babes in Christ too long.

"For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe" (Hebrews 5:12,13).

Babies drink milk. When one grows and leaves that infant stage, he is ready for strong meat. That's true, not only of physical babies, but of those who are new converts in Christ as well (1 Peter 2:2). If a physical baby does not drink its milk, the growth process will be hindered. If Christians do not feed upon the milk of God's Word, they will not grow the way God expects.

Growth, however, should not just be the aim of those who have recently obeyed the gospel of Christ. We all need to grow, for none of us have reached full maturity as of yet. The words of Peter in 2 Peter 3:18 is applicable to all of us.

"But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

What are you doing to grow in grace and knowledge? A certain amount of physical growth takes place naturally with no effort whatsoever. Spiritual growth is different. It always takes diligence and determination. Peter spoke of growing in 2 Peter 1:5-10. He spoke of adding to our faith such things as virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness and love. Adding these things to your faith is to grow in grace and knowledge, but it not something done casually. Peter said, *"And besides this, giving all **diligence**, add to your faith..."* The word diligence means to exert oneself or to do something with earnestness and zeal. Peter is admonishing us to add to our faith purposely and with great effort.

We should all desire to grow, and we should make it our fixed purpose to do so. Involving ourselves in things that will help us to grow in the faith will prove to be very beneficial to our spiritual well-being.

Paul tells us in Romans 10:17 that faith comes by hearing the Word of God. If we are going to grow, then, the Word of God must take center stage. Apart from the Word growth is impossible. It is sad to say that there are too many Christians dying of malnutrition because they refuse to partake of the meat of God's Word like they should. That's a shame when we have so many opportunities today to feast upon God's Word. We all have Bibles. There are people living in some parts of the world who do not have free access to God's Word like we do. They can get Bibles, but not very easily. In this country anyone who wants a Bible can easily obtain one. Those of us who are Christians all have Bibles in our homes and still some are starving. That points simply to a lack of interest and love for the Word of God.

We have opportunity in our local churches to study the Word of God. Bible studies are held twice a week for everyone to feast upon the Word. In most congregations, the preacher preaches two sermons on Sunday. In this particular area there are several gospel meetings held every Spring and Fall where we can partake of God's Word. No Christian should lack spiritual nourishment in this country. We should all be growing in grace and knowledge and, with proper effort, such will be the case. Take advantage of your opportunities and make your calling and election sure.

Don

“Go and Do Likewise”

By Leon Willis

The historian Luke records that on one occasion a certain man challenged Jesus with the question, “What shall I do to inherit eternal life?” (Lk. 10:25). The question is surprising since the man was a lawyer, an expert in Jewish law, and as a serious student of the Law, he must have already known the answer. Actually, he was testing Jesus. Was Jesus’ reputation as a teacher deserved? Was His knowledge of the Law as profound as that of the questioner?

Note, however, the manner in which Jesus passed the “test.” Using one of His favorite teaching techniques, Jesus answered the question with a question, “What is written in the Law?” Although this lawyer seems to have a wrong attitude regarding Jesus, his answer was very perceptive. Instead of expressing his opinion about how to obtain eternal life, he quoted from the Law. He responded, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and soul, and strength, and mind; and love your neighbor as yourself.”

The lawyer was exactly right. When asked on a later occasion, “Which is the great commandment of the Law?” Jesus gave the very same answer. In Matt. 22:40, Jesus explained that “on these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.” The first commandment was the basis of man’s relationship with God and the second was the basis of man’s relationship with others.

Even though the lawyer knew the correct answer, there still seemed to be a problem. When Jesus told him, “Do this, and you will live,” the lawyer sought to justify himself. He defensively re-

plied, "Who is my neighbor?" possibly implying that the word was difficult to define, therefore the law could not be kept.

Actually, the lawyer probably knew the answer to this question also, but Jesus used another effective teaching technique as he related the "parable of the good Samaritan." A familiar parable to many, we understand the Samaritan was considered a good neighbor since he stopped and cared for the injured man. But why did the priest and the Levite NOT stop? They should have stopped! Like the lawyer, they were trained in the Law, and knew the "great commandment." The fact was the Law had no reality in their lives. They were "armchair theologians." To them, the Law was something to memorize, to argue about, to impress people with, but not something to live.

Jesus changed the whole emphasis of the lawyer's question. Jesus implied that if the Law had any meaning in the lawyer's life and if he really loved God and his neighbor, he wouldn't have to ask questions like, "Who is my neighbor?" but would be actively searching for ways to BE a neighbor. The lawyer's problem was that he KNEW, but he wouldn't DO! Jesus' answer seems simple enough: "DO this, and you will live...go and DO likewise." The same applies today. It is not enough to say we love God, or to even know His will. We must DO His commandments (Jn. 14:15).