

GOD'S PATHWAY OF GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE TRUTH

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"We are continuing with lessons on GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT" (on God's pathway to Life Eternal). "It is all right to go up on the first step, or the second step to a house, but the thing which really counts is the life in the house, to go up the steps, enter the house, and enjoy the comforts and benefits of that home.(the Pastor said).

To be converted and born again, and filled with the Spirit, are all necessary, but the main thing of importance after all, is whether we grow; whether or not we turn aside, or go forward in the Way by our meeting the various circumstances which arise, as God's Word declares.

The first step for a born-again person is to intelligently and fully surrender their life to God, and the moment we will do that and say "Yes" to His Will (which is always best for us), He will fill us with His Spirit. Then we are to meet things exactly as His Word says, and just to the extent that we do, we will grow and develop.

God has a plan (as has been said many times before), a plan for every detail of life, for our home life, our bodies, our finances, our business, or church work, and a plan for meeting things and people right. And, just to the extent that we meet these things right, our growth and development in the Truth of God will depend.

The importance of this cannot be overestimated. The moment we fail to meet things as God says, at that moment we go backward instead of forward. That is God's plan; if we meet things as He says, we go forward; if we meet them contrary to what He says, we will go backward (and soon be tempted to fall-away from the Truth of God).

We should not think so from that remark, that God is a hard taskmaster, for He does not ask us to meet anything until we are ready; but the real thought in this matter of growth is like

that of a carpenter preparing to build a house. He does not expect the house to be built all at once, but he does, however, expect the foundation for the house to be laid first, and then add one thing after another until it is completed.

A child starting out in school is another good illustration. The teacher does not expect them to do decimals and fractions on the first day but only asks them to do a lesson they are capable of learning. God is just as gentle, tender, and merciful, and more so than any human being could possibly be, so He only asks us to learn the lesson that we are ready to learn.

How often during our school life we may have thought it useless to do the lessons we were called upon to do, and how difficult they seemed to be at times, but the teacher insisted upon our doing them because they knew it would benefit us to meet thing to come, in life.

Just so, God will lead us step by step, and never asks us to meet a trial until we are ready for it; He then allows something to stir up our resting place, some temptation or trial to throw us out of the nest, as an eagle does her young eaglets.

The eagle builds her nest upon a solid place, and after the eaglets come out of the shell, she scours the land in order to get food for them. She brings it to them and all they do is open their mouths, and she places the food in. "What a pleasant world to be in! That is the way young Christians feel," he said, "everything is nice, and we have good feelings that nothing will happen to disturb our nest, and that there will never be anything unhappy again."

However, after a while that mother eagle (after those eaglets have grown a little), she finds that it is time for them to be taught their first lesson on how to fly. So, she goes to that nest and takes them one by one and slings them into the air. Those eaglets flap their little wings and become very much upset. The mother eagle is on the watch, however, (just like God is on the watch over a surrendered soul), and so, after she has allowed the eaglet to flap around for a while, then she swoops down and gets underneath that weak fluttering bird and carries it back to the nest. That was just the first lesson.

Those lessons continue, and in a short time those eaglets which were so helpless without any power in their wings, or body, are able to soar through the heavens. That is the

way God teaches us. He stirs up our nest (our resting place) which we have made and planned to rest in for the remainder of our life; He allows somebody to say, or do, something to disturb us; allows some financial reversal to strike us, or some physical battle to come about; something to occur in our home or workplace, which just seems to upset everything.

We had thought we had such a good foundation, such a safe resting place. So, we begin to wonder what is going to happen next. Well, God is working with us, as the mother eagle does with her young birds. He leads His people, and He teaches and trains them how to grow in the Truth of His Word and Promises.

We have examples given in the Bible of how the Lord does this, one of which is when He took the prophet down into the potter's house and showed him the potter working on a 'vessel of clay'. The potter did not expect that vessel to be perfect all at once; he added one touch after another at the time and place which was suitable and reasonable. But somehow that vessel was not pliable in his hands (if one may express it that way), as it refused to turn out the way he desired it to be, and the consequence was that it broke into pieces.

That is sometimes what happens in the Christian life, because people are not pliable in God's hands; instead, they will turn their backs to Him and go opposite to what He wants them to, and all they have previously gained is then lost.

So, the lesson of which could have finished an extinction of self from their heart, has been lost sight of. However, in God's Word there is a very comforting thing, within that sad circumstance which had come about: for it says that the potter gathered up all the pieces of clay, and, then that vessel (which had been marred), was made into a vessel which he could use. *As our merciful God inspires us to make corrections of our mistakes, we will then have progressed in our own growth and development by God's grace and guidance (for He does not want us to fail), and He can make us into a vessel that He can use.*

This illustration was given to impress each one of us with the fact that we are to be in the hands of God exactly the same as that clay

is in the hands of the potter. We are to learn that lesson of being pliable in God's hands, and be enabled to meet every requirement of God, the Master-Potter, so that we might grow and develop, and that we may have all blessings as needed (as He intends for us to have through our submission to Him).

We were given an illustration of this in the life of Israel. They came to Kadesh Barnea and were able to go in to possess the land of Canaan; they could have learned that lesson of victory and deliverance over the nations of the land, but they refused to go in (at least the vast majority) and with only two exceptions, Caleb and Joshua.

The result was they lost everything they had gained. God was compelled to train them forty years in the wilderness before they were willing to be perfectly pliable in His hands, and to go in and possess the land. God did a perfect work, and it would have been a hundredfold better for them to have gone into that land in the first place.

We all need to realize that it would be far better if we went through with God at the beginning. However, it is encouraging to know that God does not desert us or throw us aside (even when we do make mistakes), or when we make a bad failure in our Christian life. There must come a time sooner or later, when we must go through with God, (nothing nor nobody left between us and God) when we are pliable in His hands, because it takes that pliability, that following Him, and that walking with Him, for us to be ready to meet Jesus.

Unless we have learned our lessons and are pliable in His hands which form us into the image that He wants us to be, Jesus could not take us with Him; unless we are prepared and ready for His coming and having met our trials successfully. Otherwise, it would be impossible.

So, it is very important that we at all times, be pliable in the hands of God; then we will very quickly, easily and steadily grow from grace to grace, and glory to glory, and soon grow into an image of Christ, our Living Head in all things. (Eph.2:10) "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them."

We must remember that "we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus." When we come to that dividing of the road, where we are called upon to go one way or the other. The true thought is that we are always to choose God's road, His pathway, regardless of a seeming danger, regardless of the risk, regardless of the losses or gain, (or whatever it may be.)

On another matter Jesus said: "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." (Luke 14:26) The thought He was portraying to us, is, that people are to sit down and count the cost of this life with God, before they start. If we do not start out right, we begin the Christ-life with the idea that it is an experiment; so, we do not start out putting God ahead of everything else. God knows that, and so does Satan, therefore, we are brought into a difficult place, things to upset us, which calls us to choose between God and our families, between God and our money-matters, between God and our lives, between God and everything near and dear to us, humanly speaking.

Then the person who always gives God their decision, chooses Him in every crisis, they will grow and develop rapidly. Such a person will never lose anything. Some people are led to think that if they displease their husbands, wives, or children to obey God, it will drive those people from the Truth and make great trouble for them.

Well, that might be true in human affairs, but 'one with God' is a majority. *When God's will is put first, He will control the other person (or persons) involved with our decision to obey God. Satan, who was the cause of the trouble, will be cast out of that loved one, and God can make them to be kinder and gentler than ever, and will soon be brought into the Truth. However, if we compromise with God's truth in order to please a loved one, it will just give Satan greater control over them, and they will become worse off than ever.*

It is the same with our own lives. The Bible tells us that if any man will save his life at the expense of God's Word, he will lose it. "He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that

loseth his life for My sake shall find it." (Matt.10:39).

The plain thought is- "He who risks his life shall find it." That means it makes no difference what the risk may be, 'I am to put God first', then the power of the enemy is broken, and I am made 'more than conqueror' in everything.

Another comforting thing about our dealing with God, (that is), the real cause and reason God deals with us-is for Him to destroy the self-life in one's heart. Self is all wrapped up in its own plans, both for this life and everything that concerns it. But we must die to all those plans, lay them aside forever! You will easily notice that self has a plan for the healing of the body, a plan for money matters to be decided in the ways of the world, and that these plans are entirely different from God's plans. To give an illustration and a very important truth, the world's plan' is to have human means for healing of the body. God's plan is to be healed by the Holy Spirit's power alone (an entirely different method, and as much opposed to the world's method, 'as darkness is to light'.

In money matters the world's method is to lay up their treasures on earth; God's plan is to lay them up in Heaven, which is also an entirely different plan from the world's. We need to die to our plan of trusting in man for the healing of our bodies, and 'risk our lives' on the Word of God, as well as, to die to our plan for money matters. That is a very difficult decision for the flesh of man to make. 'O How we like to hold on to our money' and have our finances under human control, especially with our rainy-day account. That old self life loves money. No wonder Paul wrote to Timothy as he did. "For the love of money is the root of all evil:" (1 Tim.6:10) (and that it 'sinks mankind into destruction and ruin.')

As long as the plan of self is in our money affairs and decisions (many times deciding on the cheapest way instead of according to God's Word, it will prevail in one's life, when that 'root of evil' is still present. It would not be otherwise. If we place money ahead of God, self will dominate our life. Our profession outwardly may be all right, but in reality, we would be like Job, a "self-righteous person."

It should be our desire and wish that we all may see clearly, that it makes no difference what the risk is, or what we may be called upon to lose in obeying God; nor how much we have to give up, our earthly accumulation of money, our human plans for healing, self-control of our homes, God's Word says, 'there hath no man forsaken anything for the kingdom of God's sake, but he shall receive a hundredfold in this life,'.

That means that if one were to lose it (humanly speaking), if they give it up in order to obey God, they will receive a hundred times as much in its place, right in this life here and now. If one has risked our life to obey God's plan of healing, we are going to receive a life and health a hundred times better than the life that we risked. If one turns aside the wishes of a wife, husband, father, mother, child (or anyone), in order to please God, they are promised they will receive a hundredfold in return.

Or we could say that when (for the sake of obeying God's Truth) you need to turn someone aside from their wishes, God will make things a hundred times better than they previously were. God will do that; He has so promised, and He makes good on His promises for those who put their Trust on Him. (Matt.19:29) "**And everyone that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.**"

We are to receive a hundredfold in this life, with persecution. People will begin to persecute you when you get on Scriptural grounds, but it is much easier to die to these things when we know it is such a good investment; we are to receive right here in this life.

We need to remember the two points being made from God's Word. The first is, that God only asks us to learn the lesson we are ready to learn. We may not think we are ready, and it may not be a comfortable and pleasant lesson for us; and we would rather not meet the trial or temptation, but we must realize that God knows what He is doing. It is His business (so to speak, that is, to prepare us for Eternity in Heaven.

When we are willing to go through the trial, we will receive the grace and strength to go through it successfully; God will grant us all that grace and power as necessary to go through and be overcomers. As we go through in God's way, and come out successful, we will be brought into a large place of blessing, knowledge, faith, and love.

We will know and see things more clearly than we have ever seen or known them before, with an understanding of God's truth and of the principles of faith, and to receive blessings we have never known before. We will receive real advancement in a life of Christ if we meet trials right. As has been said often before, "our hope of heaven depends upon our meeting trials right." (James 1:12) "**Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.**"

That is something not usually known nor understood among many people, that is, our hope of heaven depends on the way that we meet trials in this life. As most people think that if they received a taste of salvation years ago, that will take them to heaven, and that it makes no difference what has happened in the interval time. A plain translation of this verse is: "Blessed is the man who successfully goes through trial, for when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life."

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www.fcgchurch.org

PO Box 24283

Philadelphia, PA 19120

fcgchurch1@gmail.com

S428R 0813 25W

The First Century Gospel Church/Philadelphia