

Articles

Psalm 1 — the Godly Man	1
Psalm One	3
God's Greatest Gift	4
True Leadership	5
Growing in Grace	6
The King's Son	9
Two Roads—Which?	10

Page

Psalm 1

Joel Portman

Every believer in Christ would benefit from following the pattern that Psalm 1 presents. The Holy Spirit has so arranged the Psalms that this psalm encapsulates one of the truths that prevail in this book, and that is the desirability of actively applying the truths and principles of God's Word to one's daily life. It is a psalm that prophetically anticipates the perfect life of our blessed Lord that always pleased His God. This presents the pattern that we should exemplify. The psalm also contrasts two types of persons, whether seen in a general aspect or specifically focused on Christ vs. the Antichrist. It is a psalm of definite contrasts that encompass every sphere of God's purposes for mankind.

This psalm divides into two parts and God presents the positive before He depicts the negative. It is always His purpose to concentrate our attention on what is desirable, what is blessed, and what will be for His approval and our pleasure. It extols the morally upright, godly man in contrast to the ungodly, the person who doesn't know God and has no relationship with Him. Believers are surrounded by negative examples; it is by fixing our minds on the positive example, our blessed Lord as well as the teaching and godly examples in Holy Scripture, that we are enabled to live for God's pleasure and our blessing. Worldly examples may attract temporarily, but they have no lasting character and will not stand in God's judgment or be accepted in His kingdom.

The first three verses describe the spiritual conditions that correspond with the Nazarite. He was marked by his associations (v. 1), his appetite (v. 2), and his appearance (v. 3). The Nazarite had chosen a life to displayed devotion to the Lord. That life (described in Numbers 6) involved practices that might seem to be inconsequential but they were essential in order to maintain their vow. This description in Psalm 1 also might seem unimportant to the

world, but it is very important and pleasing to the Lord, and there will be an eternal reward for those who have determined to live in this manner.

In addition, these first three verses correspond with three men of the Old Testament. V. 1 suggests Job, a man who refused to walk according to the counsel of ungodly men and honored God by doing so. V. 2 suggests Ezra, a man who delighted in the law of the Lord (Ezra 7:10) and meditated in it day and night. V. 3 makes one think of Joseph, one who was marked by prosperity in all that he did and who caused prosperity wherever he was (Genesis 39:2-3, 6, 23). All three characteristics were imperfectly displayed in these men but they are seen perfectly in our Lord.

The psalm presents contrasts between incompatible elements: 1. Godly compared with ungodly persons. 2. Two differing pathways of life. 3. Two results, either permanence and fruitfulness or impermanence and unfruitfulness, 4. Two eternal prospects, prosperity or perishing.

The Godly Man, v. 1

At the outset of this psalm we must note that God intends that His people should display a marked contrast with the ungodly world in which they live and move. At times, it's rather difficult to accept the fact that God wants you and me to be different. It is more natural to desire to "fit in", "to compromise", or "to conform". It may mean being alone in life if one rejects the norm of this world. It calls for one to turn away from all that will hinder this pathway. It is, though, to live a life much like that which our Lord experienced. Isaiah 53:3 says, "He is despised and rejected (abandoned, left alone) of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief". He was the One who "came unto His own but His own received Him not" (John 1:11). He was the "sparrow alone upon the housetop" (Psalm 102:7). Even in the midst of multitudes of people, including His disciples, He was alone but He was always pleasing His God and enjoying uninterrupted fellowship with His Father.

The ungodly world of sinners and scornful ones gives counsel that often affects our thinking. Alas, many believers have been caught in the trap of its advice to "get ahead", "climb the corporate ladder," "improve your image", "get more and more things." That counsel would seduce and trap a believer and cause him to compromise in possessions, emphasizing the physical elements of life, position in business or society, or pursuits of life in pleasures and occupations. That counsel always centers on this physical, present world and not on those things of eternity. It may seem logical, reasonable, and accept-

able, but it is the “wisdom of this world” (1 Corinthians 1:20, 3:19) and it is “foolishness with God.”

This person has discernment and right priorities. He isn't living for this world, doesn't desire to be accepted or admired by the ungodly, nor does he direct his attention or resources toward gaining a place in society. This person has been “redeemed from this present evil world (age).” (Galatians 1:4) and has been brought into the “kingdom of His dear Son” (Colossians 1:13). He is like Mr. Kelly, who had the potential to attain great heights in this world because of his knowledge of Greek and Hebrew. When he was told that he could achieve much in the world, his response was simply, “Which world?”

Others have commented that v. 1 presents a downward progression. That is, that to follow the advice of the ungodly will result in standing in the way of sinners and ultimately sitting in the seat of the scornful. The words used indicate an increasing antagonism to all that

is spiritual and eternal. And often this has been the case, for a believer who imbibes the advice of the ungodly will eventually find himself identified with those who are scornful of divine realities. The verse also describes an increasing involvement by the person; it is a movement from thinking to behaving to belonging, from listening and responding, to moving, to identification. It is a downward pathway and must be avoided with the determination to reject even the first step of receiving their counsel.

Basis and Expression of Godliness, v. 2

This verse teaches us two things about this godly person. One is that the reason for that determination to avoid and reject all contrary influences is that his delight and spiritual sustenance is the solid foundation of God's Word. He “delights” in it, and this word indicates that he has a strong inclination toward it, a genuine interest in it. It is his pleasure and joy to be occupied with it. Reading God's Word (this word is “torah”, or the teaching that it gives to instruct) is not an obligation or responsibility. It is something that his heart appreciates and which brings joy to his soul. This is a test of the spiritual character of any person. We can ask ourselves what we would turn to if we had different options, the world's material or God's Word? What we feed upon reflects the spiritual state of the believer. The writer of Psalm 119 is obviously such a person. Repeatedly, he expresses his love for the Word of God by writing of it in every possible manner using every possible word of appreciation. Every part of it occupies and thrills his soul. This was certainly perfectly true of our blessed Lord and it should also be true of us!

“Delight” indicates an attitude, whereas “meditate” is an activity. It's one thing to read the Word but another to meditate on it. It occupies his soul, he thinks about it, he turns it over and over in his mind to derive the maximum benefit from it. So the second thing is that this is what feeds him and what forms his character. It is opposite to the “counsel of the ungodly” in v. 1. Rather than imbibe the one, he is feasting upon the other. One has said that we become like whatever we are occupied with. What the Word of God says is what makes him what he is. If one feeds on the material of this world, its fashions, patterns, counsels, or entertainment, it will inevitably produce its results in the life but if we feed our souls on spiritual food, then it will mold and direct our lives for God.

This corresponds with the exhortation given to Joshua in Joshua 1:8. By following that counsel, he was victorious in his battles with the enemy and a channel of blessing to Israel. At the end of life he could say, “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” (Joshua 24:15). The results of that counsel kept him until the end and made his life honoring to the Lord and effective in his testimony. We need the same in our day, when there is so much material available on the media in its various forms that will distract us and turn us aside from being

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like Caleb, who “wholly followed the Lord,” (Joshua 14:14).

Results of Godliness, v. 3

There are four phrases that v. 3 emphasizes that result from his character and occupation. They are

1. Stability and permanence. He is like a tree that is planted (lit, transplanted) to grow in a most beneficial place. Such a tree will be there year after year and receives its moisture from endlessly flowing streams of water (the word is used for rivulets and is plural, so it indicates never-failing sources of refreshment and supply). Its condition is not dependent on self, but the supply comes from that which is from above to constantly meet the need. This man is not characterized by vacillation or wandering, but he is dependable and constantly in his place, established where the Lord has put him. Ephesians 4:13-15 describes the effect that proper teaching of the Word and understanding of it will have; it will develop spiritual maturity and steadfastness so that a believer is no longer being “tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine”.

2. Productivity. He is a fruitful person and what he produces and expresses is the result of what has been working inwardly, since fruit expresses the nature of the tree. We only produce what corresponds to what we are feeding on, and since this man is feeding on spiritually nourishing material, he will be manifesting the result of it in his life. If a believer is feeding his soul and mind on worldly material, he can hardly be expected to produce what is godly and spiritual in his speech and behavior. Fruit in a believer is the expression of Christ resulting from the Holy Spirit using the Word of God to produce it. (Galatians 5:22-23).

3. Vitality. His leaf is vibrant and green, showing that there is good health. There is no drought in this person’s life, but the constant supply results in a genuine demonstration of good health. There may be times of dryness in one’s soul, but the overall tenor of this person’s life gives clear evidence of spiritual reality wrought by the Spirit of God. We can think of 2 Peter 1:4-11, where the good apostle exhorts believers to develop the marks of genuine faith that give evidence of spiritual liveliness.

4. Prosperity. Isaiah 52:13 tells us that this characterized the Servant of Jehovah; “...my Servant shall deal prudently (act wisely, or in some references, “prosper”), he shall be exalted and extolled and be very high”. This is the perfect Servant, always stable under every circumstance, always productive in all that He did, and always giving evidence that the eternal life was in Him (John 1:4) so that He always prospered. This will also be true of a believer who is following the same pattern of avoiding all that would detract or deter him from pleasing the Lord and who is feeding his soul on the deep and blessed truths of God’s Word. This presents a pattern for our lives that we should seek to follow constantly to please and honor our Lord.

The Disaster of the Ungodly (vs. 4-6)

The latter part of the psalm concludes with the contrasting depiction of the ungodly. All that the godly man is cannot be seen in or said about the ungodly man. He is not fruitful, only worthless chaff. He isn’t stable, for the wind drives him here and there. He is not permanent, for he cannot stand. He is not pleasing to God, and in the judgment, he will not rise up or be accepted. He won’t find any place among the gathering of the righteous ones but he will perish instead.

These things are true about every ungodly person. Perhaps they are prophetically speaking of the epitome of ungodliness, the Antichrist, who will stand in opposition to the Lord and be a complete contrast with all that He is. The ungodly man may appear to prosper for a time, and this was a dilemma to the man in Psalm 73. But it is only temporary and for a season, with his future demise and destruction being sure and determined by God.

The man of this world who lives without knowing God or taking knowledge of His ways may prosper for a season, but what really counts is what is for eternity. May God enable our minds and stimulate our souls to seek those things that are above (Colossians 3:1-3) and go in for a life that will be pleasing to Him and will receive His “well-done” when the journey has ended.

As soon as a man finds God and consecrates his life to Him, his blessedness begins...divine promises come trooping in the footsteps of self-denial.

Psalm One

The Blessed Man

His negative and positive life. Some people's lives are all negative and no positive, that is, they don't do much wrong, but they do little or no good. Negative Christianity is a poor thing, and savors of Pharisaism, but Scriptural Christianity is positive; it is active.

The Blessed Man is a Separated Man:

Walks not in the counsel of the ungodly. Three examples.

1. Our blessed Lord was undoubtedly this blessed Man and we believe this Psalm has its first application to Him. The Devil tried to get Him to walk according to his ungodly counsel, but He refused. He took the Lord to the

pinnacle of the temple, and then to a high mountain, telling Him to fall down and worship him and he would give the kingdoms of the world to Him. But the Lord refused to do so. He would not walk in this ungodly counsel. Here Adam and Eve failed.

2. Enoch is the first man whose walk is mentioned in Scripture, and thank God he was a happy man for he walked not in the counsel of the ungodly. We read he walked with God, and one day while doing so, God took him home to Heaven, there to walk with Him forever. God loved the company of Enoch, and Enoch loved God's company so well, that God took him home to Heaven without dying, for he pleased God.

3. Noah is the other and next man in the Bible of whom it is said he walked with God. The word translated walk here in connection with Enoch and Noah means to walk habitually, not now and then, but constantly. Think of the! time when these men walked with God. They did so in days of terrible apostasy and declension. They did so when there were none else doing so. When all flesh had corrupted its way on the earth, when violence and wickedness was rampant, so this should encourage us, for Jesus said that, what characterized the days of Noah would characterize our days and is characterizing them. But in the midst of appalling apostasy we may, like Enoch and Noah, walk with God. This is our privilege and our responsibility. So Enoch and Noah were like the happy man of Psalm 1, they were separated men standing aloof from the corruption all around them.

Some who did walk in counsel of the Ungodly:

2 Chronicles 18:1. Jehoshaphat, alas, walked in the ungodly counsel of the wicked king of Israel. First he went to visit him, then he listened to him, and when Ahab counseled him about going to battle with him he went, but for God's mercy he would have lost his life. Many a Christian has lost their Christian life through walking in the counsel of the ungodly.

2 Chronicles 22:3. Ahaziah walked in the wicked ungodly counsel of his mother. We read: "He did wickedly for his mother was his counselor". Think of a mother giving ungodly counsel. Many a father and mother have done this, some counseling their children against accepting Christ, others against following the Lord in baptism, and gathering to His Name.

Peter stood in the way of sinners and denied his Lord.

Lot sat in the gate of Sodom. Contrast Abram sitting in his tent door.

The Blessed Man is a Studious Man:

He delights in the law of the Lord. God would have us all to be studious. We are exhorted to study to show ourselves approved unto God, workmen that need not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth, and if we are to be happy we must delight in God's Word. Job, Jeremiah and Joshua all did so. Job said he esteemed the

Word of God more than his necessary food. Jeremiah said he ate God's Word and to him it was sweet. David said sweeter to him was the Word of God than honey in the honey comb. Has God's Word lost its sweetness to your soul? Then get into His presence and find out the cause and confess the sin that has robbed you of your relish for it.

We should read God's letters over and over again, studying them till we are able to rightly divide the truth. What enabled Job to overcome the severest trials any human ever endured? It was God's Word; he said, "Thy law is within my heart." A good place for a good thing.

The Happy Man is a Fruitful Man

"He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water bringing forth his fruit in his season" ..

As we have said, the first half of this Psalm brings Christ before us. How fruitful that life of His was! He yield Root out of the dry ground, a tender plant for God. Joseph was as a bow by a well, and his branches ran over the wall. Oh, like Joseph, we may abide by the deep sweet well of love. Abide in Christ, may the roots of our faith strike deep into His love, His grace, that we too shall be like Him, and be fruitful, bringing forth fruit in season. Galatians 5; John 15.

The Happy Man is a Fresh Man

"His leaf also shall not wither." Christ was God's great evergreen. We too should be fresh in soul, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. Of Moses it is recorded, when he was 120 years old, that his eye was not dim nor his natural force abated, he was fresh for God. It is nice to see young Christians with the dew of their youth upon them, but better still to see old Christians after weathering many a storm still fresh for God. Andrew Frazer said he would rather have a happy soul than \$5,000.

"I will build My church." Think of being a part of that which Christ Himself builds for His own pleasure throughout eternity!

God's Greatest Gift

James Brown

It is proper to express gratitude to God for His "so great salvation" (Hebrews 2:3), His salvation by grace, (Ephesians 2:8) and "the gift of eternal life" as stated in Romans 6:23. A host of benefits flowing from God's salvation are listed in Ephesians 1 and as they are

enumerated (Psalm 68:19), we can't help but be awed by each blessing God has showered upon us as unmerited favor. Citing 2 Corinthians 9:15, Paul bursts into praise, "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift" as he communicates to those saints in Corinth how God gave them the Ultimate Gift while teaching them about personal giving in the assembly. I am deliberately withholding the thesis point here by using an illustration below.

A number of years ago, a dear friend of mine bought a very nice electric guitar and small amplifier as a present for me on a milestone birthday. The model of the guitar was exactly like the one I once owned many years ago. It was quite a surprise, not to mention that the expense of this gift was considerable (several hundred dollars). In subsequent years, I enjoyed playing the instrument as a form of leisure, appreciating everything about both it and the amplifier which I need not detail here.

As a shuttle driver for a car dealership for eight years, I chauffeured well over a thousand different passengers and in the course of time, the subject of music would come up in conversation. This gave me the opportunity to tell them about the guitar and amp I owned but I always made it a point to tell them how I obtained it. Many of my passengers stopped me and asked, as in disbelief, "Wait, did you say your friend just gave you that set-up?" With much more than the joy of guitar ownership, I was always both happy and proud to reply, "Yes, he did!" And almost invariably, I'd hear them respond, "Man, that is some friend you have there. Wish I had a friend like that!". I went on to tell my passengers that my friendship with the man who gifted me the guitar and amp highly exceeded my appreciation of the gifts he gave me, which they'd generally have no difficulty understanding. And at that point, I found established ground to mention another Faithful Friend of mine to anyone who had ears to hear.

So here is the simple point of emphasis to conclude. It is not wrong to be thankful for the all the blessings we receive at the hands of Him from whom "every good and perfect gift comes from" (James 1:17), but we all do well to be careful not to have our gratitude so focused on the benefits we're loaded with, including eternal life, that we forget how God told Abraham that He, *Himself*, was his "exceeding great reward" (Genesis 15:1), not just His covenant promise, soon to be realized in Isaac. Everywhere we see the word "gift" in scripture as it pertains to the Lord Jesus Christ effecting for us eternal life on the cross by giving Himself voluntarily, may the Holy Spirit coax us a bit further to recognize *Him* as our exceeding great reward as the unspeakable Gift Paul was referring to in his various epistles. I must admit, my own worship needs to be adjusted weekly to ensure that I don't drop into the practice of thanking Him only for all the blessings that stem from His salvation, but instead, continue striving to increase my appreciation for the unspeakable wonder of His remarkable Person, God's greatest Gift!

True Leadership

Carlos Fariñas

"And when David departed thence, he fled to the cave of Adullam; and when his brethren and all his father's house heard of it, they came to him there. And all the afflicted were gathered to him, and all that were in debt, and all that were in bitterness of spirit, and he was made ruler over them; and he had with him about four hundred men." 1 Samuel 22:1- 2

In the quoted portion, there are several details that are of great interest to the people of God today, and to study them we will consider four points that stand out in the story, namely: 1-3. The role played by David with those who followed him. 4. David's final condition.

In chapter 16 of the same book, the anointing of David as king of Israel (16:1, 13) in place of Saul and by God's command is pointed out. In 17:50 we are told how the young David killed the giant Goliath without having a sword in his hand. In 21:10 it is commented that David needed to flee from Saul's presence. And finally in the scripture already mentioned at the beginning, we find David hiding in the cave of Adullam. This cave was on the outskirts of a city located 8 km south of Bethshemesh in Judah. The rightful king of the nation was brave to the test and diligent in the fulfillment of his duties, even the most humble, as evidenced by several portions that comment on his task as shepherd of his father's sheep, and his obedience to the orders that his father had given him to attend to his older brothers. He was the personal and very close friend of Jonathan, as well as the humble and faithful servant of Saul. David also stood out as a musician, skilled in composing songs and playing the harp. With all these attributes, we now find him fleeing from Saul to save his own life, and on the recommendation of his great friend, Prince Jonathan.

It is quite paradoxical that he is now hiding in that cave, after also fleeing from King Achish. But it is evident that God, who does not make mistakes but has clear purposes, led him to this situation in which we find him now.

The obedient and humble young man learned to be important; the beloved of Jonathan and his sister comes to be hated by the same king whom he served faithfully. The once brave slayer of giants, is fearfully in hiding. Apparently he had lost everything only because of the envy and jealousy that his aptitude produced in the king.

2. Secondly, we must consider those who followed him and joined him in Adullam, as well as the conditions that existed there. By some adjectives his new companions are pointed out to us: chiefly they were his own brethren and relatives of his father's house. But there were many more, until they numbered about four hundred men, a

small army. But it is said that with him were all the afflicted; that is, people who for various reasons had sorrow in their souls had come to him. David, who had experienced the same feeling, would now become their leader. His previous experience gave him the authority to do so. For all those in debt, who had no way to pay their debts and therefore ran the risk of losing everything (Proverbs 22:27), David would now try to provide for their needs and make them feel comfortable and secure. Those who had bitterness of spirit. Although the reasons for this feeling are not specified, we can deduce that they were resentful people who harbored hatred in their souls and found no satisfaction in the ways of their lives. To these he should not only comfort them, but give them a new reason to fight, a new and better goal to live for. Here David is presented as a wonderful figure of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, who being a true king, knows and sympathizes with our sorrows (Hebrews 4:13-15/ 5:7-9/ 10:19-24), encourages us and presents us with a new goal of life and joy, and stimulates us to be like Him to our fellow men. We marvel to contemplate the growth of David's company, as today that of the Lord for similar causes.

3. Thirdly. We have already considered above that the needs of those who joined David led David to behave as the Lord does today with all who draw near to Him. David was deeply comforted by the love of Jonathan, who also gave him protection and security. Paul tells us that our God is the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we also may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble by the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God (2 Corinthians 1:3-4). Brethren reading this article, we too should do as David did. The Lord has been allowing various trials in our lives, preparing us so that we can also help others, especially those who do not know God and who, through our comfort and help, could be saved.

4. Fourthly. After much anguish and many trials, David is guided by God to go up to Hebron and there the men of Judah anointed David king over the house of Judah (2 Samuel 2:4). Thus began a new stage in his life, for the help of the nation and for the glory of God.

These brief considerations should serve as a sure guide for our responses to the trials of life, and the attitude we should take accordingly toward them and toward others who are suffering and need help.

Clothe yourself with the silk of piety; with the satin of sanctity; and with purple of modesty; and God himself will be a suitor to you.

Growing in Grace

F. B. Hole

Are you growing in grace? Growth is one of the surest signs of healthy life. It is so, whether in the vegetable or animal kingdom, nor is it otherwise in the realm of grace. Growth, therefore, we expect to see in every Christian. In Nature, at a certain point, growth stops and decay sets in, but with the believer it should continue all his earthly days. No sensible person expects the convert of yesterday to be anything but a babe. But we do not expect him to remain a babe. With a keen appetite for wholesome spiritual food, a good digestion, plenty of Heaven's fresh air and exercise, he is bound to grow. And the scripture, "Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18), applies to every one of us.

What is growth? Growth has no direct connection with age. A man may be white with years, and have passed many a milestone since his conversion, and yet be spiritually a stunted child. Some of the Hebrew believers were like this. They were stumbling over the Christian alphabet when they should have been teachers, and needing milk when they should have been fit for strong meat. (See Hebrews 5:12-14). Growth is not necessarily connected with what we do. There may be much earnestness and activity, yet no growth. The Ephesian Christians sadly exemplified this in their later years. When the Apostle Paul wrote his epistle to them, they were like a tree planted by rivers of waters, green and vigorous; but when the Lord Jesus addressed them through His servant John, though recognizing their works, labor, and patience, He had to say, "Thou hast left thy first love. Remember, therefore, from whence thou art fallen." The top shoot of the fair young tree had been nipped by frost, and growth was stopped (Revelation 2:1-7).

Growth does not even depend upon what we know. Our mental development may far outstrip our spiritual. An "infant prodigy," whatever he may be in musical or educational circles, is a pitiable object in the Christian sphere, and comes to a bad end. The novice, if capable of seizing abstractions, may speedily grasp much truth in his mind, but let him not assume that he has therefore become a giant and able to instruct his grandfather. Under this delusion some of the Corinthian believers fell. They were enriched in "all knowledge" (1 Corinthians 1:5); they assumed to be wise (3:18), they even began to let their minds run riot with the cardinal truth of resurrection (15:12-35). As a matter of fact, they were ignorant (6:2, 3, 9, 15:19; 8:2; 10:1; 12:1; 14:38; 15:36), fleshy and but babes (3:1-3). They used their "knowledge" to the damage of some of their brethren (8:11). Such knowledge only puffs up. Love builds up (8:1). Growth therefore is altogether a question of what we are.

The very epistle that exhorts us to “grow in grace” opens with a fine statement of what it really is. It runs thus: “Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity” (or love) (2 Peter 1:5- 7). With faith we all have started. But to it virtue or courage must be added, if it is to count for much. Courage needs to be controlled by knowledge. Knowledge to be tempered with moderation. Moderation to develop into patience (or endurance). Endurance begets godliness. Godliness produces and develops brotherly kindness. Love, Divine Love, crowns the whole and welds all together in the heart of the believer. These things, notice, are to be “in us and abound” (v. 8). They are not to be put on as a man puts on a coat, but to be produced inwardly in the power of the Holy Spirit, so that they become part and parcel of ourselves. The Apostle Peter was really desiring that the features of the beautiful life of Christ should be reproduced in these believers. Growth, then, is a question of character. As we grow we are molded more and more into conformity to Christ.

Are you growing?

Ask yourself, then, is this kind of thing going on with me? Is there beneath my Christian activity and increase of Bible knowledge a sturdy development of Christian character?” Having asked, answer with candor and great care. In thus doing, however, a danger lurks. While nothing is so helpful as honest self-judgment before God, nothing is more harmful than allowing this necessary inspection to degenerate into self-occupation. Beware of getting your thoughts morbidly centered upon yourself. Three children, let us suppose, have little gardens prettily marked out in their father’s grounds. How very different they look! In this one the weeds grow rank and long, the flowers few and feeble. No traces of a trowel and rake and watering-pot! In the second all is tidy, the weeds kept well down, and the flowers, if not high-class, are healthy; while the third shows marks of much labor. Indeed, it is almost painfully tidy, but every flower is either drooping or dead. How easy it is from the state of the gardens to divine the character of the children! And if the careless, go-as-you-please style of number one is to be deplored, the feverish anxiety which led number three to continually pull up one and another of the plants to see how the roots were getting on is almost as disastrous from a practical point of view. Avoid both extremes. May the good Lord deliver you from that careless and easygoing kind of religion which never allows you to honestly ask yourself the question: “Am I really growing in grace?” for fear of being disturbed; and also from the morbid self-occupation which leads you to be always asking yourself that question, and everlastingly tugging up everything in your poor heart by the roots in the endeavor to answer it. Hit the happy mean by facing the question with the heart

in the sunshine of the love of Jesus, and if driven to the conclusion that your growth is but small, let it spur you cheerfully on to know more of Christ.

In what do we grow?

It is important to remember that as believers we stand in the grace (or favor) of God (see Rom. 5:2), and hence it is we are told by the Apostle Peter to “grow in grace.” Grace, then, is the soil in which the believer is planted. Not the world, though if one judged by the ways of some Christians, one might almost think so. Though all believers stand in grace, many so surround themselves with a worldly atmosphere that all progress is stopped. It is very easy for us to abjure the world in the abstract, whilst heavily indulging in its pleasures in detail. To illustrate this. Some time ago a prayer meeting was being held. Considerable fervor was manifested in the meeting. A man commenced to call upon God. In earnest tones he cried: “Lord, save us from the world!” “Amen! Amen!” rose in loud chorus from all parts of the building. A moment’s pause, then: “Lord, save us from the tobacco!” Dead and ominous silence! It seemed to kill the meeting. You may not approve of praying in this fashion, but it shows how easy it is to pray to be preserved from the world in the abstract and to cherish it in detail. Solomon’s vines, remember, were nipped and spoiled by the “little foxes” (Song of Solomon 2:15). There were plenty of them, and being small, they crept in without attracting much attention. Many Christians, too, suffer from living in an atmosphere of law. They live and move, read and pray, serve and worship, by rule. No one can expect to grow if encased in cast iron! How sweet is the liberty that grace gives! Liberty, I say, and not license. For the grace that brings salvation also teaches “that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world” (Titus 2:12). Let us strike our roots deep down into grace. Let us bask in its sunshine. Oh! The humbling, soul-subduing effect of knowing that, in spite of all we find in ourselves, the sweet and perfect favor of God rests upon us because of Christ, and nothing can separate us “from the love of God which is in” -not ourselves but- “Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:39).

How do we grow?

Of late, a good deal has been said in public about the poor physique of thousands of children attending school. The practical question is, What is to be done? Will the case be met by giving them plenty to do in the way of exercise and activity? No, they have not the stamina or vigor for much of that. Shall we include some health instruction in the school studies, and teach them how the human body grows, adding cell to cell and tissue to tissue, the value of different kinds of food, and the laws governing the process of digestion? Six years of such studies will not add as many inches to their stature as a

six months' course of good feeding--substantial meals of suitable food, four times a day and seven days a week! If you would grow, then select good spiritual food. Good food, remember. Not novels, light literature, or other worldly rubbish. And digest it. Take time to meditate and turn things over in your mind. When the ox chews the cud it generally lies down. In the same way spiritual digestion is greatly favored by a little quiet, with the knees bent in prayer. The food of the Christian is in one word CHRIST--"increasing in (or 'by,' see margin R.V.) the knowledge of God" (Colossians 1:10)--and since it is in Christ that God is known to us, Peter puts it, "Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." It is good to know about Him, and everything that helps us in this direction is profitable, but the point of supreme importance is to know the Lord Jesus Christ Himself; to enjoy that holy intimacy which is the fruit of daily living and walking in His presence. Even here upon earth to be, "Close to His trusted side In Fellowship divine." Then bit by bit we shall discover His many-sided glories, and appreciate the various characters in which He stands related to us. In the following lines we shall try to suggest a few of them.

The beginning of our acquaintance with Jesus is as SAVIOR, --TO DELIVER. To the anxious sinner, burdened with guilt, groaning under sin, and trembling before death and judgment, Jesus stands forth as Savior. He has grappled with sin; He has died and is risen again. How perfect and attractive He is! No wonder that the newly-pardoned sinner cares for no one and nothing else. Can you look back to a moment when you tasted the joy of salvation, as Israel did when on the further shore of the Red Sea's judgment flood they stand, saying, "I will sing unto the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously...and He is become my salvation"? (Exodus 15:1, 2). Or as it was with Israel centuries later, when David met Goliath of Gath, and in the mane of Jehovah wrought deliverance? Then the awful tension and suspense was ended. A mighty thrill ran through the watching hosts, "and the men of Israel and of Judah arose, and shouted." (1 Sam. 17:52). It was so with us. We have been delivered. Our days of mourning and suspense are over. The victory is won, and Jesus lives! And though perhaps years have rolled away since first we knew Him thus, the thrill of that moment is in our hearts today.

We do not advance far before we see the same Jesus in another character. He is LORD, --TO COMMAND. The Gospel, of course, presents Him to us as Lord (2 Corinthians 4:5). We not only believe with the heart unto righteousness, but also confess Him as Lord with the mouth unto salvation (Romans 10:9, 10). But some little time passes ere we realize what this means. Jesus is in the place of authority. It is His to command, ours to gladly obey, and that means the surrender of our wills to His. The conversion of the Apostle Paul was an ideal one. He reached the point of surrender very speedily (see Acts 9:5, 6). While in the dust of the road to

Damascus he acknowledged Jesus as his Lord, and his whole life was transformed. Most of us lag far behind him. Still, to that point all of us have to come. We were talking to a Christian young man the other day, and during our conversation he referred several times to "the old days," when he was a worldly, easygoing believer, having just a languid interest in the things of God. He said, "I really believed on the Lord Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of my sins, and had I died I am sure I should have gone to heaven. Still, they were "the old days," for a new day had dawned with the discovery that Jesus was his Lord, a Master to live for and to serve. Passing under this new management a great alteration took place. He was a different man. Has this new day dawned in your history? If not, may it speedily come! It lies at the very beginning of Christian growth. One of the first results of a hearty acknowledgment of the lordship of Christ is that the convert gets plunged into a good bit of trouble and soul exercise, since his very efforts to do the will of his newly found Master bring him into conflict with his own will. Three things at least have to be learned. First, the true character of the flesh (i.e., the old evil nature still within us), hopelessly bad. "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing" (Romans 7:18). If "no good thing," then not even a good desire is to be found there. Yet how long it takes most of us to abandon all expectation of good or even improvement from within. Second, the terrible power of the flesh. Such power that even the fact of being born again, and therefore possessing a new nature, does not of itself enable us to overcome. We find a man saying, "The good that I would I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do" (Romans 7:19). He desired the good, proving the existence of the new nature within him; yet such was the power of the old that it overpowered the new, bringing him into captivity (v. 23), and making him a thoroughly wretched man (v. 24). Have you never started out to live, as you supposed, a valiant Christian life for the Lord, only to find yourself defeated, not by giant foes without, but by the traitor "flesh" within? This, then, is the lesson you are learning.

Thirdly, what God has done as regards the flesh in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. "God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh" (Romans 8:3). What a relief it is to know this! God now treats the flesh as a condemned thing, and has done with it. It just remains for us to fall into line with God, and in our turn to treat it as a condemned thing, to be done with. This we can do, inasmuch as having believed in Jesus we have received the Holy Spirit, the new power, and He is more than a match for the power of the flesh. Led by the Holy Spirit, we lift our eyes to heaven, and Jesus now becomes to us an Object--to Control. And this is the real secret of the believer's practical deliverance from the power of the world, the flesh, and the devil. Satan, the wily adversary and accuser, busies himself in attacking the faith of the

saints (see 2 Corinthians 11:3; 1 Thessalonians 3:5; 1 Peter 5:9), and hence to meet him the shield of faith is needed (Ephesians 6:16). The flesh supplies us with all those baser desires, which each of us knows too well, as also with every other desire not in accordance with the will of God. The world—the gigantic system around us, which Satan and man have engineered between them in the vain hope of making the latter happy and contented without God, like Bunyan's great "Vanity Fair," contains within itself attractions suitable to every taste and temperament, and all appealing to the lusts of the flesh within. Though volumes could well be written as to the believer's deliverance from this threefold enemy, and the way of it, that deliverance itself is simply and sweetly enjoyed by those who, having learned enough of the world and self to be sick of both, turn to Jesus and find in Him- "...The Object bright and fair To fill and satisfy the heart." Is Jesus this to your soul—and Object to love and live for? Paul said, "the law [or control] of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law [or control] of sin and death" (Romans 8:2). A striking illustration of the power of an object to control occurred when the first military airship made a trial trip round London. During the brief hour that it hovered over the Metropolis it became the object of a million pair of eyes. Everything else was forgotten. The latest fashions lost their attraction, shops were deserted, dinners left to get cold. The man of business dropped his pen and the student his books. Everybody stopped and gazed at this new object in the sky, and for the moment got clean delivered from their ordinary life. It was the novelty of the thing that attracted, however. Not so with Jesus. He who has loved Him longest and known Him best most feels His blessed and permanent attractions. Summed up in one word, it is all centered in His mighty and eternal Love. Just as a powerful magnet will extricate a needle from a heap of sawdust, the magnetic love of Jesus will deliver a soul from any amount of worldly and fleshly rubbish. May God bring both readers and writer under its power increasingly.

If all this is to be kept up, we shall know and appreciate the Lord Jesus in another character, viz., as High Priest—to Sustain. There are a good many Christians about who want to be more devoted, or to live "the higher life." But though their desires are good, their circumstances are trying, and their performance poor. Are you one of them? Possibly you are acquainted with the Epistle to the Hebrews, and therefore know well that Jesus is your great High Priest in heaven (4:9), but the question is, Do you really and practically know Him as your great High Priest who sustains your soul day by day, amid the many trials and difficulties of life? Only those whose faces are set in the right direction need expect the help of the Priest. To help a man on the wrong road is no real help at all. Hence the careless, worldly-minded believer will not get the help of the Priest; he needs the services of Jesus as Advocate to touch his conscience

and put him right. The earnest-minded believer who heartily acknowledges Jesus as Lord, and loves Him as Object, will both need it and get it, the result being not only that he is carried sagely on to heaven by and by, but also carried into the holiest (i.e., the consciously realized presence of God) now (Hebrews 10:19-22). Nothing that can be said on the subject, however, will give such a sense of the grace and power of Jesus as our High Priest, as a little practical experience, gained in turning to Him in moments of difficulty and need. So take good heed to the exhortation: "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16).

All this will teach us to look joyfully up to the Lord Jesus as the Head—to Direct. Christ is the Head of the Church, even as the husband is the head of the wife (Ephesians 5:23). From Him, too, as Head all nourishment, our everyday needs, and the supply of them is not in ourselves, but in Him. As Head He is the overflowing source of all. To "hold the Head" (Colossians 2:16) is to appreciate and cleave to Him as such, and thus to really find in Him that which makes us happily independent of man's wisdom in the way of rationalism (v. 8), and his religion in the way of ritualism (vs. 20-23). Christ is everything, and thus He becomes everything to the believer's heart. We look outside Him for nothing. One word of warning. Do not think that each one of these steps in the knowledge of Christ stands alone. They are closely connected, and often merge into one another in the believer's history. The great end is that we may be thoroughly established; no longer children, but full grown men, Christ being everything to us.

There is nothing that endures so short a time as the memory of mercies received; and the greater they are, the more frequently they are recompensed with ingratitude.

The King's Son

C. H. Burchell, Birmingham, England (WIS Feb 1935)

In 2 Kings 11 we have a condition of things very much resembling those of the days we live in. Athaliah having, as she thought, murdered all the rightful heirs to the throne, usurped the authority and reigned in ignorance that one of the "seed royal," Joash by name, had escaped. He was being securely held by the high priest in

the house of the Lord against a day of subsequent manifestation to the nation. So the great usurper of Divine authority in this world, by his agents, endeavored to get rid of earth's rightful King by way of the cross, but God has raised Him from the dead, and keeps Him secure in His house above until the day when the diadems of imperial rule shall be placed upon His head "King of kings and Lord of lords."

It was in the "seventh year" (v. 4), a Scriptural period of completeness, that Jehoiada conveyed the secret of the King's safety to those whose loyalty to the royal house could be depended upon, and who doubtless had sighed and groaned at the wickedness of Athaliah; and having done this he "brought them to him into the house of the Lord . . . and shewed them the King's son" (v. 4). What a sight for those dear men, and a joy too, that the true king was in safe keeping in the house of the Lord even if Athaliah sat upon the throne.

If we look around today, do we not see the increasing power of evil on every hand; things not getting better but worse, notwithstanding the siren voices which misname "evil" as if it were "good," and cry "Peace, peace," when the Prince of Peace is absent. What is wrong then? The great usurper is on the throne, and until Revelation 20:3 takes place, he will still "deceive the nations."

Can nothing be done for those who sigh and cry for God's will to be done on earth? Yes, listen! If you are loyal to God's appointed king of Psalm 2, "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him and He will shew them His covenant" (Psalm 25:14). But this secret can only be learned, and the "King's son," seen, in the House of the Lord. He is hidden from the world, for the "seventh year" has not arrived for manifestation. We get a little picture of it in Luke 2:25-32, where Simeon "waited for the consolation of Israel," i. e., the coming of the Messiah, and he was told that he should see the Lord's Christ ere he died. But where could he have this view? Only in the house of the Lord, verse 27.

What a blissful moment for dear Simeon! No wonder that when he had seen God's "salvation" he acquired a satisfied heart. He felt that there was nothing more left for him here as he prayed "Lord now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace." May I ask my reader, as well as myself, whether the experience of Simeon in any way corresponds with your own? Has the sight of a glorified Savior in the House of the Lord so entranced us that we feel there is nothing left in this poor world to attract or satisfy the heart?

"I have seen the face of Jesus —
Tell me not of aught beside;
I have heard the voice of Jesus —
All my soul is satisfied."

We learn from 2 Kings 11:12 that although the crown was ready in the house of the Lord, (for Athaliah had not the crown even if she had the throne), it was kept

there for the "crowning day" of the "king's son" — verse 12. And we see Jesus today - not with the royal diadems of Rev. 19:12, but with the victor's crown of Hebrews 2:9. The day for the public display of majesty has not yet arrived, but the Person and the crown are ready. Satan may now have the throne (Isaiah 14:13) like Athaliah, but he never possesses a crown.

What a day of national happiness it was in 2 Kings 11:12, when those loyal subjects "clapped their hands and said, God save the King!" and Athaliah fled! Judgment, however, speedily overtook her, as it will ultimately, her great antitype Satan. But the "seventh year" has well nigh come when earth's rejected One of Calvary shall have the crown and scepter of universal dominion (Psalm 72:8) and from assembled multitudes of heavenly and earthly beings, in which I think mine shall not be the least, there shall be the mighty triumphant shout of —"Alleluia; for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth." (Revelation 19:6).

Two Roads... which?

As you now sit here in your seat,
'tis sure, you have a God to meet;
How will you meet Him--- saved or lost?
Dear friend, I pray you, count the cost.

Before you lie two paths ahead,
To think—it fills our souls with dread—
That some are in that place of woe,
Where the wicked and the careless go.

To take that downward path today,
Preferring idle fun and play;
Rejecting Him, the God of love,
Refuse the Spirit from above,
Will end in endless ruin and pain,
In Hell—to ne'er return again.

The path to heav'n shines bright and true,
The Savior came and died for you;
His precious blood shed on the tree,
Sin's price He paid for you and me.
Why would you linger in your sins?
The door is open—enter in.

Make haste, for time is flying fast,
One day, so soon, will be your last;
Believe His Word, and trust His Son,
New life with Him will have begun.

Millions have entered and gone on,
Have begun to sing th' eternal song;
You could enjoy the same blest joy,
Make Christ your choice, trust Him today!