

Did You Grow Spiritually This Year?

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Date: 29 December 2024

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- [0 : 00] I greet you in the name of Jesus this morning. It is good to be here. It is very good to be here. As we come to another new year, let me ask the question, did you grow this year?
- You know, trees, they get another ring around. Every year, there's another ring added. There's a growth mark. Did you grow this year in your spiritual walk with the Lord?
- I believe that it is the will of God that we continually grow, we continually draw closer to Him, we continually become more useful in His kingdom.
- In 2 Peter, the last verse, he says, but grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
- Before that, he warns them about deception and about falling away from their own steadfastness. And then he ends his letter with this.
- [1 : 37] But grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and forever. Amen. And I find that there is much in the Scripture talking about growth and talking about our walk with the Lord.
- That's what I want to look at this morning. There's many directions that we could go to, but I believe the Lord has given me what I will endeavor to share here this morning.
- In 1 Peter, we might come back and look at some of this later. But, you know, it doesn't matter where we are at.
- It doesn't matter if you just became a Christian this morning or if you've been a Christian for 3 years, 5 years, 20 years, 50 years.
- I believe this message applies to all of us. You know, I've been very aware the last while that many of these messages that I've been preaching here, the Lord is speaking to my heart and better fitting us, equipping us for the future.
- [3 : 07] This morning, just a little bit before we left, I believe the Lord brought a question to me that I want to lay out.
- Probably end with this also. But when we come to the end of our life, how will it be?
- Will it be well done? Or will it be you left it undone? I believe that in short, that is what we want to look at today.
- Is are we living our life that it will be well done? Or are we leaving things undone? In 1 Peter, the first chapter, toward the end of the chapter here, he talks about being born again.
- He says we're redeemed, not by corruptible things, but by the precious blood of Christ. Then in verse 22, seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth, through the spirit and unfaint love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently.
- [4 : 42] Verse 23 is actually the one I wanted. Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever.
- When we're born again, that seed of Christ is put within us. And you look at the natural.

When you plant a seed, it is a tiny little seed. But that seed has the potential to spring up and to grow into whatever plant it came from.

You look at an acorn, it's just a small little seed, but it can grow into a huge tree. We have been born again by that seed of Christ that's put within us.

And that seed, you know, you plant an acorn, and that acorn has everything in it that it takes to grow a large tree.

[5 : 53] That seed of Christ that is put within you has everything within it to produce Christ in you. Christ in you, the hope of glory.

It is all there. That potential is in us. God has put it there when we're born again. Are you living to your full potential?

You know, I believe it's in Luke where Jesus was talking, giving the parable of the talents, and then he goes on and he says, and that man that knew the will of God and he did not prepare himself, he will be beaten with many stripes.

You know, Jesus is looking for faithfulness. He gave that parable of the talents to one he gave five, to another, you know, he gave one, and another one he gave ten, but he's looking for faithfulness with what he has given us.

And he's put that life of Christ within us. That is the beginning point. Is that life within us?

[7 : 14] Are we feeding that life? Is it growing? Are we growing spiritually? You know, that new life, it will crowd out and replace the old life.

It is only as that new life grows that the old will be put under. If you feed the old man instead of the new man, the new man will shrivel away and die.

But if you starve the old man and you feed the new man, that seed will grow and it will produce Christ within you. It will produce Christ in your life.

And that is what he is looking for. That is what he's looking for. That is what he desires. Let's turn for a few minutes to Ephesians chapter 4. In Ephesians 4, he says, he talks about this.

He talks about the ministry gifts. And then in verse 12, he says, he gave these gifts for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, 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 fullness of Christ.

[9 : 00] That seed of Christ that is within you, it has the potential to grow up exactly what it says here, to be a perfect man.

To be a perfect man, to be, to grow up unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. You know, what did Paul say?

He said, that he travails in prayer until Christ be birthed in you. Until Christ be formed in you. You know, that seed of Christ within you, it has the potential to produce Christ.

That's why the believers were called Christians. It's because they reminded the people so much of Jesus Christ that they started calling them Christians.

the perfect man, Jesus Christ. That ye we henceforth be no more children tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the slight of men and cunning craftiness whereby they lie and wait to deceive.

[10 : 23] He wants us to grow up. He wants us to grow strong. He wants us to grow to the point that we will be established in truth.

And we will not be blown about by every wind of doctrine. You know, this man says this and so we want to cater that way and then somebody says something different.

We want to go that way. That's being unstable. James says that the double-minded man is unstable in all his ways. There's only one. There's only one way and that's the Bible way and we must stand upon it.

But speaking the truth in love may grow up into him in all things. See, grow up into him. It's not an instant thing.

It doesn't, it doesn't all happen the day you're born again. But it happens through life, through the experiences of life and through the trials and the tribulations and as we live life, the Lord will work in us to form Christ that we will grow.

[11 : 35] The experiences of life, the trials and the temptations and the testings of life, they will work in us, work in us to form Christ within us that we may grow up into him in all things which is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body fitly joined together, compacted by that which every joint supplieth according as the effectual working in the measure of every part which maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

That is a body that is growing and is maturing as it edifies itself in love, fitly joined together and compacted.

You know, that's something that happens as we go through life, as we face situations, as we, you know, we go through trials and we go through hard times, we go through testings and we are compacted together.

Yes. Romans talks about being conformed to the image of Christ. Being conformed to the image of Christ.

That is what God is looking for. The growth of the new person, the new man, that new man within you.

[13 : 16] The growth of the new person accomplishes the death of the old. You know, and as I was, I guess, I just had to think of the children of Israel.

Many times we look at them and how they left Egypt, how God brought them out of Egypt. They were delivered from Pharaoh.

And we are, as we are delivered from our old taskmaster, we are delivered from the taskmaster of this world.

But the children of Israel, I just want to look at them and that some of their history, some of the things that befell them. You know, they were led out of Egypt in a great and mighty victory.

You all know the story, and I don't want to spend a lot of time in those first 40 years. But they couldn't enter into Canaan because of unbelief, because they doubted our God.

[14 : 36] You know, after all the great deliverance and all the miracles and the manna and all of that, they doubted God.

Forty years later, they come again and they enter the promised land and they go in and they, and they, and they conquer the land.

However, I want to, I want to go to Exodus and look at a few of these things as they were, as they were beginning this.

as they were ready to begin the conquest of Canaan. But God said in Exodus 23, starting in verse 20, Behold, I send an angel before thee to keep thee in the way and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared.

Beware of him and obey his voice. Provoke him not, for he will not pardon your transgressions, for my name is in him. But if thou shalt indeed obey his voice and do all that I speak, that I will be an enemy unto thine enemies and an adversary unto thine adversaries.

[16 : 13] And he says, this angel that he will send, he will go before them. And he will cut off all the people there.

But he says, from, let's just read through this.

For mine angels shall go before thee and bring thee unto the Amorites and the Hittites, the Parasites, the Canaanites, the Hivites and the Jebusites.

And I will cut them off. Thou shalt not bow down to their gods nor serve them nor do after their works, but thou shalt utterly overthrow them and quite break down their images.

And ye shall serve the Lord your God. He shall bless thy bread and thy water and I will take sickness away from the midst of thee. There shall nothing cast their young nor be barren in thy land.

[17 : 13] The number of thy days I will fulfill. I will send my fear before thee and will destroy all the people to whom thou shalt come. And I will make all thine enemies turn their backs unto thee.

I will send hornets before thee which shall drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite and the Hittite from before thee. I will not drive them out from before thee in one year lest the land become desolate and the beast of the field multiply against thee.

By little and little I will drive them out from before thee until thou be increased and inherit the land. Now there's a few things I want to notice here and you know to God as he was making these promises he was making this statement he was commanding them to serve him and not be sidetracked and not turn aside but then he said he will drive them out.

He will he will take care of the people of the land he was giving them this land they were to go in and possess it and to live there.

In verse 29 he says I will not drive them out from before thee in one year lest the land become desolate but little and little I will drive them out before thee.

[19 : 00] And you know as we look at this I want to liken this to our growth as in our in our spiritual walk of life in our in our life as we progress through as we grow year by year you know in the natural a baby is born and and you don't expect much of that baby you don't expect it to go along to work you don't expect it to get up on you know and and to help build a building not at all you give him time to grow up and God I believe he gives us time to grow he gives us time to grow up but he expects us to grow now the children of Israel we'll just look at a few things let's go to

Joshua chapter 1 here Moses had died and God was instructing Joshua and they were getting ready to cross over the Jordan and God told him here in chapter 1 in verse 3 he says every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon that have I given unto you as I said unto Moses you know God said I will drive out those people God said I will give you this land but there were conditions they had to walk with God and they had to claim the land they had to actually walk this land if they were going to claim it he said every place the sole of your foot shall tread upon

I have given you so if there was a place that they didn't go it didn't belong to them and guess what as we go on we will find out that wherever the children of Israel did not go the enemy stayed and in our walk with God how are we walking are we walking with him are we claiming the land that he has set before us are we slow in claiming the land let's look a little bit more here in verse five God speaking to Joshua he said there shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life as I was with

Moses so I will be with thee I will not fail thee nor forsake thee be strong and of a good courage for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land which I swear unto their fathers only be thou strong and very courageous and then you know and he repeats that little phrase be strong and of a good courage be strong be strong be courageous don't be intimidated in verse eight he says this book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth thou shalt meditate therein day and night you know do we meditate upon our savior day and night or is it is he is he just a Sunday thing that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous and then thou shalt have good success have not

I commanded thee be strong and of good courage be not afraid neither be thou dismayed for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest you know and and then you know we won't we won't look at what we'll skip on here to chapter 17 or 18 but you know Israel went in and they and they they conquered much of the land and and there's a long list of kings that they conquered and all of that but yet there were areas that they had not conquered and there were places that they could not go because they did not conquer the land they did not go there they didn't they didn't claim it for their own now some years after they had come into the land

[25 : 01] Joshua gathered the people together and in chapter 18 verse 3 he says how long are ye slack to go to possess the land which the Lord God of your fathers has given you you know and you know as I look at this I it's easy to think it's easy to see how you know so after what about six years maybe that they were continually fighting and conquering the land and all of that and finally they kind of settled down and the land was somewhat divided among the tribes and all of that and they settled down and they started living life they started living life you know in in judges just not far from where we're at in judges chapter two an angel of the Lord came and he came up from

Gilgal and he came on up and he started talking and this is what he said I made you to go up out of Egypt and I brought you into the land which I swear unto your fathers and I said I will never break my covenant with you ye shall make no league with the inhabitants of this land ye shall throw down their altars but ye have not obeyed my voice why have ye done this wherefore I also said I will not drive them out from before you but they shall be as thorns in your sides and their gods shall be a snare unto you so here we have the children of Israel and they you know and there's an account of one of the tribes

I believe it was Ephraim came to Joshua and they said you know the land you gave us it's too small for us we're a great people and we need more land and so Joshua said well there's more land just go and conquer it and so they did but they were lax in conquering the land and continuing to overtake and continuing to conquer the land I believe this was maybe 25 years or so after they had entered the land of Canaan and in those years they had settled down and they started raising crops and living life and they got used to you know they hadn't chased out some of the evil influence some of the wicked people the Canaanites that lived there and so you know after all there's room for them and us in this land right and so they compromised and they let them stay this was not what

God had commanded but you know in chapter one here it gives kind of a summary and it's amazing it's amazing to look through this so in Judges chapter one in the beginning of the chapter we have we have Judah asking Simeon to go with them and they went and they conquered some country but then going on in verse 19 says the Lord was with Judah and he drove out the inhabitants of the mountain but could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley because they had chariots of iron you know think back 25 years ago when there were chariots of iron they didn't wince they didn't draw back but they went on and they overcame but now now that they're settled down and life you know how will I say a life of ease and plenty there's chariots of iron and they can't overcome them they could not drive them out in verse 21 the children of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites for the Jebusites dwell with the children of Benjamin in Jerusalem unto this day and it goes on in 27 neither did Manasseh drive out the inhabitants of Beth Shan nor the inhabitants of Beth Eber in her towns neither did Ephraim drive out the Canaanites that dwelled in Gezer neither did Simeon drive out the inhabitants of Kitron nor the inhabitants of Nahath but the Canaanites dwelled among them and became tributaries in verse 31 neither did Asher drive out the inhabitants of Achish nor the inhabitants of Zidon nor of Alab nor of Axiph nor of Helba nor of Aphe nor of Rehob but the Asherites dwell among the Canaanites the inhabitants of the land for they did not drive them out neither did Naphtali drive out the inhabitants of Beth Shemesh nor the inhabitants of Beth Anath and the Amorites force in verse 34 force the children of Dan into the mountain for they would not suffer them to come down to the valley now look at this now the people of God are being told where to live and they're forced out of the prime land where they should be living in the land of promise the promised land they're being forced out of it why because they're not going forth in faith and fighting the

Lord's battles they're not claiming the land you know God told Joshua everywhere the sole of your foot will tread that will I give you and they stop going they stop claiming that land it was it was okay with them to allow to compromise and to allow the enemy to stay in the land you know and I was you you just look at the word compromise it's promise with the com in front of it God had made a promise the promise was the land of Canaan but they compromised that nullified the promise and let me say it's the same way with us today we have great and exceeding precious promises but if we compromise it will nullify the promise in our life they were discouraged because it was a slow hard process it was a slow hard process you know these people didn't leave willingly you had to go fight them and then when they went to fight them then

[34 : 02] God would drive them out but they actually had to go and they actually had to do it it was a long and a hard process they became content in the midst of compromise they became content to have to have the Canaanites as their neighbors but they doing that became a snare to the children of Israel the enemy tries to convince us to be satisfied it's not worth the battle pick your battles it's not worth the battle that's what he says he comes over and over and he says he tells us that it's not worth the battle it is worth the battle it's worth every part of it it's worth every minute of it there's a reward over yonder it's worth every minute yes the promise was

I will drive them out the compromise was there's room for all we can just live together in peace how did that work out you know if you read through the book of Judges it's filled with with the children of Israel going into idolatry and then God raising someone up and delivering them again and then they go back into idolatry and then another judge raises up and they might serve the Lord during his lifetime but then they go back to idolatry again up and down up and down that's the history of Israel that's the history that will be our history that will be our story if we compromise they thought they found an easier way they found an easier way it's a lot of hard work to go fight the enemy Judges the angel told them they shall be thorns in your side their gods will be a snare a trap and they will lead you astray they compromised they accepted the

Canaanite in the midst of the promised land what are you accepting what are you allowing that is hindering your growth what are you allowing that is keeping you from fulfilling all the will of God what are we allowing that is robbing us of the power and the anointing of the Holy Spirit Hebrews chapter 12 he tells us here he says wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses let us lay aside every weight and the sin which do so easily beset us and let us run with patience the race that is set before us let us run with patience the race that is set before us let us not become weary let us not let us not draw back it's not it's not an easy life it's not an easy race it's not being born again and then coasting on into heaven that's not the

Christian life it's a race it's a battle it's a war and as we run this race he admonishes us to lay aside every weight and the sin which just so easily beset us lay aside all sin yes lay aside every weight a weight might not necessarily be sin but if it hinders you you must lay it aside it will be sin if it hinders you in your walk with the Lord and he goes on he talks about chastening you know if we hang on to sin or we hang on to those weights the Lord will bring chastening into our lives to try to get us to lay them down to try to deliver us from ourselves to try to get us to a place of usefulness verse 10 says he chastens us for our profit that we might be partakers of his holiness that is that is his desire that is why he brings chastening is that we might be partakers of his holiness chastening is meant to set us free from whatever bondage is holding us back from whatever hindrance is in our heart that is keeping us from fulfilling all the will of

God what is holding us back and hindering us from being full of the Holy Ghost and walking in the anointing and being a man that God can use the promise of life is ours will you will you inherit the promise or will you compromise as the children of Israel did grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ faith is how we enter into that grace it's how we receive that grace maybe we should just read that verse in Romans 5 in Romans 5 he says readers Jewish being justified uveações made obeyed a we have access by faith in this grace wherein we stand and rejoice in hope of the glory of

[41 : 47] God we have access by faith into this grace are we walking in faith or are we drawing back you know the children of Israel they draw it back there came a time when their faith was weak there came a time when they didn't have the faith to go face those chariots of iron what happened they had compromised they had compromised God had told Joshua you meditate on my law day and night but they were meditating on other things they were meditating on the latest happenings in Canaan they were meditating on their neighbors and watching them serve their idols and wanting to go serve their idols and they lost their faith

God will never change and he will his word will work it will it will stand the test of time if we will stand upon it if we will walk this walk God will back it up if we will walk in obedience he will be there he will be there when we face the enemy when we face those chariots of iron he will be there he will be there Joshua asked the question how long are you slack to possess this land that God has given you you know where we at today are we possessing the land are we possessing the promises you know there's this word is full of promises that God has given us are we are we experiencing them are we compromising instead in 2nd Peter chapter 1

Simon Peter a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Savior Jesus Christ we have obtained like precious faith like our brother Peter right grace and peace be multiplied unto us through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord grace and peace be multiplied to us but how it's it's it's it's through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord according as his divine power has given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness through the knowledge of him that has called us to glory and virtue 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 we have received exceeding great and precious promises are we are we experiencing them are we living in them are they a reality to us he said it is by these by these great and precious promises by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature that divine nature the nature of our

Lord Jesus now we're back again to that seed of Christ that is planted within us if you've been born again you have that seed of Christ within you and as it grows it can produce it will produce Jesus if you if you will walk with him in full surrender if you will walk with him fully surrendered like we sang this morning it doesn't matter what comes my way it doesn't matter where the Lord will take me you know cause me in lands afar to roam cause me whatever you have Lord is that your heart today that we might be partakers of the divine nature the very nature of our

Lord Jesus having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust have you escaped that's the old life that's the old man are you feeding the new man are you starving that old man as that new man grows the old will die yes besides besides this giving all diligence these things don't happen don't happen on easy street they don't happen automatically no but he says giving all diligence add to your faith virtue to virtue knowledge to knowledge temperance to temperance patience to patience godliness to godliness brotherly kindness to brotherly kindness charity you know these things they don't happen overnight but they take many growth rings to be produced in our hearts and lives yes we might see them in a small way but god wants to bring them forth in a big way god wants his son to be produced in us in a big way yes he wants to show forth the praises of our god through us he wants to show Jesus to the world through us verse eight 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 if these things are in you and abound you know when these things as these things grow in us they they they push out the canaanite the hittite the jebusite they're pushed out the works of the flesh they're pushed out these things are in you and abound they make you that you shall be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our lord Jesus Christ you will not be barren or unfruitful that means you will be fruitful you will be fruitful but he that lacketh these things is blind and cannot see afar off and has forgotten that he was purged from his old sins you know that's what happened to the children of Israel they compromised and eventually they were serving the gods of the heathen round about them and they forgot they forgot that they were purged from their old life they forgot that they were delivered from Egypt they forgot the god that had delivered them wherefore the rather brethren give diligence to make your calling and election sure for if you do these things ye shall never fall for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our lord and savior Jesus Christ oh hallelujah is this not what we all want but he admonishes us to give diligence to give diligence you know if you are diligent what will you do you know

[51 : 54] if if you're diligent about a job you will go and you will you will make sure it gets done if you're diligent you know we just come through hunting season you were diligent about getting an elk and you pursued that thing have you pursued our lord jesus have you pursued him with diligence are you pursuing with diligence to make your calling and election sure remember that when you come when you come to the end of life will it be well done or will it be you left it undone give diligence to make your calling and election sure paul at the end of his life what did he say second timothy four verse six and seven eight for i am now ready to be offered and the time of my departure is at hand you know when you come to that point and you see that your time on earth is done can you say with the apostle paul i have fought a good fight i have finished my course i have kept the faith henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the lord the righteous judge shall give me at that day and not to me only but to all them also that love his appearance his appearing he has given us exceeding great and precious promises let us not turn that into a compromise you know the meaning of compromise it has many many meanings one of them i wrote down it's a mutual promise a settlement in which each side gives up some demands or makes concessions peace what the children of israel did we'll let you stay here but let us live in peace are you making peace with your enemies are you making peace with the enemies of god are you making peace with that besetting sin are you making peace with that spirit that that says ah

you're a christian anyway don't worry about it what's wrong with it anyway oh it's not that bad after all they do the same thing and they're christians at the very least you know what those things will do they will rob you of the power of god and they will rob you of the calling of god remember give diligence to make your calling and election sure god has a work for each one of us god's calling on your life is very precious don't miss it i i'm convinced that millions of christians miss what god has for them because they compromise because they're satisfied in where they're at they're satisfied in in in what god has done they're they're satisfied with being a christian and living a good life he says give diligence give diligence to make your calling and election sure grow in grace and in the knowledge of our lord and savior jesus christ amen let's pray lord we thank you for your great and exceeding precious promises lord i pray that you would help us to give our diligence that we will enter in to all that you have for us we will allow you to take us on we will trust you in every in every situation of life we will trust you and we will walk with you and we will fulfill all that you have for us lord help us lord that our hearts will truly be completely surrendered to your will and to your way we pray in jesus name amen