

# **Living Word Fellowship Church**

Pastor Paul Cannings D.Phil.

## **Series: "Grow and Glow"**

### ***Steps to Spiritual Maturity***

#### **Lesson I**

#### **I. Introduction**

We can encounter day-by-day insurmountable challenges. This does not include our inner battles, the war between the flesh and Spirit that the Bible says will take place for every believer, including the Apostle Paul (Galatians 5:16-19; Romans 7:24-25). Interestingly the scriptures instruct us not to view these challenges and struggles as if something strange is taking place (1 Peter 4:12). It teaches us that this is God's way of discipling those whom He loves (Hebrews 12:7) while guiding us to spiritual maturity (James 1:2-4). We must submit our lives to experience His work in us for His purposes (Phil 2:13) as we decisively commit to "*work out our salvation in fear and trembling.*" (Philippians 2:12). This salvation is deliverance from the negative influences of the flesh to eventually become drunk (walk in the Spirit and not in the flesh any longer; Ephesians 5:1-18) in the Spirit. Based on the guidance and direction of the Holy Spirit, applying ourselves to grow spiritually is one of the MOST IMPORTANT and dynamic endeavors to which a believer can surrender their lives. A believer that is now drunk with the Spirit becomes so immersed in the work of the Holy Spirit within them (Ephesians 3:16) that they become empowered to continuously resist the attacks of Satan (1 John 4:4) because "*greater is he who is in them.*" As evil, as Satan is and with the insurmountable troubles that a believer can experience, there is no way anyone should not allow anything, a person, or a circumstance to hinder the development of their spiritual maturation process.

Spiritual maturity empowers a believer to be able to walk in step with the Spirit of God (Gal. 5:26), understand the will of God (Rom. 12:2) through His Word (1 Cor. 2:6-16), enjoy everlasting inner blessings (Gal. 5:22-23; Eph. 3:16), allows Christ to transform their lives into His image (2 Cor. 3:18), as they effectively serve Him (Eph. 4:13) based on their spiritual gift (1 Peter 4:10) which in turn further accelerates the spiritual maturation process. This transformative process engenders a believer who, like Paul, can say, "*I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me.*" (Gal 2:20-21; NASB) God views this process as the main reason Christ died (John 15:13-14). "*The thief comes only to steal, and kill, and destroy; I came that they might have life, and might have it abundantly. I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.*" (John 10:10-12; NASB)

#### **II. Repentance**

- A. Definition - Repentance means to turn around, to change one's direction and go another way (Acts 2:38; 3:19). It can also mean to have regret for one's ways and decisions made in the past with a sincere commitment to turn away from this manner of life and with commitment respond to God. "....that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance" (Acts 26:19-20).
- B. When a believer is repentant, God will grant them salvation (Acts 11:18).
- C. The act of repentance leads to a believer experiencing eternal life (Acts 11:18; 2 Tim. 2:25).
- D. Repentance was Christ primary mission on earth (Matt. 9:13).

***"Salvation is therefore impossible without repentance."***

### **III. Salvation, the Deliverance - The Transformation Process – New Person**

- A. Our salvation must be genuine. God examines our hearts; *"that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and **believe in your heart** that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved; for with **the heart** man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed."* (Romans 10:9; NASB)
1. Heart in the scriptures means the mind, will, and the entire spectrum of the person's emotions. There is a turning one's life over to the Lord God. He will check the heart (Luke 8:11-15).
  2. We become a brand-new creation because the Holy Spirit is now poured into us (Ephesians 1:3-4; Titus 3:4-8).
- B. The Holy Spirit now lives in us (Romans 8:1-2; 8-9; Eph. 1:13-14; 2:22; 5:18; 1 John 4:13). Our spirit is quickened (Romans 8:15-17) by the Holy Spirit to work in synch with Him (Romans 8:15-17). This blesses our maturation process so that He does the following:
1. Convict believers when we sin (John 16:7-11).
  2. Brings our spirit alive to righteousness (Romans 8:10). This is because He blesses those saved to put to death the misdeeds of the body (Romans 8:13)
  3. Causes believers not to be controlled by the sinful nature (Romans 8:9-10,13).
  4. Guides believers to understand the Word of God (1 Corinthians 2:10-15).
  5. The Spirit renews those saved (Titus 2:5) functionally to a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17).
  6. Provides resurrection power so believers are empowered to move from death to life (Romans 8:11).
  7. The Spirit fills believers so that we can, through the sanctification process, experience God fully (Ephesians 3:14-19; 4:12-13).
  8. It does not allow believers to be slaves to fear (Romans 8:15; 2 Tim. 1:7).
  9. The Spirit reminds believers of the Word of God (John 14:26).
  10. The Spirit blesses believers to live by faith and not by sight causing *"all things to work out for our good"* (Romans 8:28).
  11. Because of the Spirit, *"nothing can separate us from the love of God"* (Romans 8:38-39). He is with each saved individual forever (John 14:16-17).
  12. The Spirit causes all believers to desire God's Word like a baby desiring pure milk (1 Peter 2:2).
  13. The Spirit guides believers to the truth (John 14:17; 16:13) which is essential to experiencing the eternal life's transforming power (John 14:6).
  14. A commitment to live by the Spirit produces spiritual fruit (Galatians 5:22-25).
  15. The Spirit provides all believers the opportunity to experience God's peace (John 14:27).
  16. The Spirit provides discernment so a believer can come to learn what is good and evil (Philippians 1:9-11; Hebrews 5:14).
  17. The Holy Spirit blesses believers to walk wise, making use of the time (Ephesians 5:15-18)
  18. This is why *"He who is in us is greater than He who is in the world"* (1 John 4:4).
- C. We now have a mediator in heaven to respond to our prayers (Hebrews 7:25; 9:15).
1. The Spirit prays for us when we are hurting (Romans 8:26-27).
- D. When believers willingly commit to the sanctification process, God places angels around them (Hebrews 1:14; Psalm 34:7-9).
- E. When we commit to *"work out our salvation in fear in tremble"* (Philippians 2:12) it is only possible because of the Spirit of God working in us. It is His *"workmanship"* (Ephesians 2:10; Philippians 1:6, 2:13).

- F. Because the believer's flesh (mind, body, emotions) is still infected with sin (Romans 6:14,18; Galatians 5:17; Romans 12:1), they experience the war between the flesh and the spirit (Romans 8:4-8). This is because:
1. Their minds still need to be renewed (Rom. 12:2).
  2. Their tongues still need to be controlled (James 3:3-12).
  3. God provides us with a spiritual gift (1 Peter 4:10) and, in turn, allows believers to functionally engage in the church, which in turn enhances their spiritual maturity (1 Cor. 12).

#### IV. Conclusion

To be saved and just come to church with no desire to grow and enjoy the blessing of walking intimately with the Lord is like a child born into a family with no desire to mature and become a responsible productive adult. The child sees the parents as problems, is in constant need of everything, and can hurt other people around them.

Spiritual growth is not a religion. It is about allowing the Holy Spirit to functionally complete everything Christ died to achieve for God's glory and the blessing of the believer. *"I came that they might have life, and might have it abundantly. I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep."* (John 10:10-11; NASB)