**Growth in Christ: Part I**

Growth in Christ is shorthand for the term theologians call progressive sanctification. Other terms for growth in Christlikeness include growing in wisdom and knowledge, trusting and obeying, dying to sin and self and living to God, and putting off and putting on. These terms and others depict life after salvation. Once saved the believer is called to become more like Christ in thoughts, desires, and actions. He does as he puts off old patterns of thinking, wanting, and acting AND puts on Holy-Spirit motivated and directed thinking, wanting and doing. The answer to question #1 of the Westminster Shorter Catechism gives us some help. The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. The answer emphasizes a proper vertical reference for all of life (Matt. 22:37-40). The believer is to live heavenly-minded so he can be of earthly-good. See Colossians 3:1-3 and 1 John 3:1-3.

Moreover, one of God's primary purposes for creation and redemption is for man to dwell in His holy presence. After Adam and Eve were exiled from the Garden and God's presence, a real question arose. Was man to be allowed into God's presence, and if so on what basis? God's *yes* is recorded in the Bible initially in Genesis 3:15. The battle of the seeds (the woman's vs. Satan's) ensued: light vs. darkness, truth vs. error, wickedness vs. righteousness, and God's way vs. Satan's way. Evidence of this battle is seen in the world but is also demonstrated within the heart of every person. The bottom line is the age-old question of who you will serve. God posed this question to Adam and Eve in the Garden. Joshua posed this question to the Israelites (Joshua 24:14-15). It is the question posed to Christ by Satan in the wilderness (Matthew 4; Luke 4). It is the question posed to every one daily especially the believer. After salvation, for the believer, there is war within (Gal. 5:16-18).

In His time, God fulfilled His initial promise made in the Garden. Man was brought back into God's presence through the work of the God-man Christ Jesus. The Old Testament ritual system pointed to Christ's once-for-all sacrifice. A picture of sacrifice mediated by a special priesthood is throughout the Old Testament but especially after God met Moses at Mount Sinai. God ordained a sacrificial system and a priesthood to mediate the perpetual offering of a holy, harmless, undefiled sacrifice. This was ultimately fulfilled in and through the perfect, once-for-all work of the great High Priest Jesus Christ (Heb. 7:23-27; 9:9-10; 10:19-25). Moreover, He is the perfect sacrifice - the true Lamb of God (John 1:29, 36). His active obedience and lawkeeping and His perfect death on the cross was the source of redemption for every believer. The believer was saved and he has work to do. God called him to grow in Christlikeness (2 Cor. 5:9; 1 Thess. 4:1-3; 2 Peter 3:18). He was to develop the character of Christ. In later blogs we will discover just what that phrase means.

**Application**:

1. Read John 3:3-8.a. What did Jesus expect Nicodemus to know?

b. Where would that knowledge come from?

c. What was Nicodemus to do with that knowledge?

2. John 6:60-64 helps you answer the above questions:

a. The knowledge is supernatural knowledge - it is Holy Spirit derived (1 Cor. 2:16).

b. It is coupled with saving faith so that faith is informed and intelligent.

c. Compare this faith with the faith of the demons: James 2:19. What do you learn?