**Growth in Christ- Part IV**

In progressive sanctification (growth in Christlikeness), there is to be a progressive pattern of “put off” and “put on.” God is still 100% active, but the believer is 100% active as well. (see Phil. 2:12-13 and 1 Thess. 4:1-3). The believer is to exercise (give evidence of) his heart change by putting off old habits of self pleasing, self trust, and self worship. These were developed while as an unbeliever in Satan's kingdom and family. Life as an unbeliever is one of running from God to self in order to do one’s “own thing.” Until salvation each person lives in his own world as much as he can. He creates his own virtual reality which competes with God. This rebellion can be very pronounced in some people while subtle in others. Either way it is anti-God rebellion. Habits of thinking, wanting, and doing as a self-pleaser are controlled by the “I want” and “I deserve” These patterns are carried over into person's life as a believer.

So what does growth look like? Although the specifics will differ per person, there is a common thread of growth in all believers. There will be change in regard to God, self, and others. When a person thinks about God differently he relates to himself and others differently. The vertical reference controls the horizontal reference of life. Enmity and dissatisfaction with God, twin characteristics of life in Satan's kingdom, are replaced by a desire to come and taste God and His goodness (Ps. 34:8). Thoughts and desires change. God is God and you are not. He deserves to be honored, served, and worshipped; you do not. Actions follow. You move toward God because He has moved toward you and indwelt you with His Holy Spirit.

A changed view of God, self, and others results in hunger for His Word and its application. The changing person will be quicker to rely upon and follow biblical principles daily. This is in contrast to being motivated by feelings, experiences, and logic removed from biblical truth. Therefore, concrete actions follow. For instance, rather than responding with sinful fear, sinful anger, depression, and worry in any situation, you recall such passages as Psalm 46:10 (*Be still and know I am God*). This is God's world; control is His business not yours; honoring Him is your duty, privilege, and blessing. You then return good for evil, consider others more important than self, and provide a gentle answer (Rom. 12:17-21; Phil. 2:3-5; Prov. 15:1).

Moreover, following Ps. 119:9-11 you continue to develop a faith-in-action plan - a biblical template - that is at your ready when tempted to please self. According to Heb. 4:12 and James 1:22 you have developed a list that includes what, when, where, how, and why it is easy for you to please self. These are times that you are to be diligent and function as a Christian oyster (2 Cor. 5:7, 9). The oyster uses irritations to make a pearl. The Christian's pearl is growth in Christlikeness. You will be excited about individual growth because it fits God's program of corporate (church) and cosmic regeneration. Ironically, change is a foundational cornerstone for the Christian even though he has an unchangeable God. The believer will embrace change as God's appointed means to bring about the reality of the new heavens and the new earth.

**Application**:

1. What kind of Son was Jesus? Was pleasing His Father simply duty? How does John 4:31-34, Heb. 12:1-3, and John 17:1-5, 24-26 help answer these questions?

2. Articulate succinctly the bad news and the good news of the gospel and determine how that knowledge stimulates you to please God.

3. Read Ps. 40:6-8 and Heb. 10:5-7. What do you learn about Christ and how does that motivate you?