**Growth in Christ: Part VI**

 **Every Believer: A Functional Christian Oyster**

 The Holy Spirit makes use of various figures of speech to make a point. One example is a metaphor. The Bible uses words in a metaphorical sense to emphasize comparison. The idea derived from one object is carried over to another object. The metaphor is a comparison by direct assertion. A few examples from the New Testament include Herod as a fox (Luke 13:32), the people as a flock of sheep (Luke 12:32), and Jesus as the Good Shepherd and His people as sheep (John 10:16). Certainly Herod was no literal fox, the people were not a flock of sheep, and Jesus was not a literal shepherd.

We must be careful when using any figures of speech including metaphors. The word being compared may not be in the original language and it may be used out of context. Man is not an animal, certainly no oyster. I prefer to convey the idea that the Christian is to function as an oyster. Just as the oyster uses a grain of sand - an irritant - to build a beautiful pearl, the believer is to use the situation, unpleasantness and all, to make the pearl of Christlikeness. Jesus teaches this concept in John 4:31-34 and Paul teaches it in 2 Corinthians 5:9: *So we make it our goal/ambition to please Him whether we are at home in the body or away from it.*

 The oyster was created with the capacity to take an irritant - sand - and fashion the pearl. The oyster uses the irritation (a foreign substance) provided by God. The oyster's work is not simply "life" or "the way it is." Biblically speaking, believers know that nothing *just is*. We have an all-controlling God Who brings all things to pass, including irritations for the oyster and His people. These irritants include unpleasantness and trouble sometimes from the sins of others and sometimes from our own sins. The believer has been change at regeneration such that he is able to grow in Christlikeness. According to Romans 8:28-29, Romans 5:1-5; 1 Peter 1:6-7; James 1:2-4, the Christian is in the "spiritual pearl-making" business of growth in Christlikeness. This activity is not protective. Rather it is "an offensive move." It is what the believer was designed for in eternity past (Ephesians 1:4). It is one of the lessons of the cross. Jesus took what was evil and used it to accomplish a good God's purpose (Gen. 50:19-21).

 In a fallen world, you can expect irritations and unpleasantness and even "I don't like" situations. The cross and a crucified holy, harmless, undefiled Savior rightly understood was one of the greatest events in all history (don't forget the resurrection - the cross and the resurrection are the twin pillars of the gospel: 1 Cor. 15:1-4). Rightly understood God's providence - all situations - are the context AND the tool for the believer and the church to use to grow and change. When that happens God's kingdom is advanced and God is glorified.

**Application**:

1. List your irritations in order of priority and record how they are irritations.

2. Apply the truths developed and learned from Romans 8:28-29 and 2 Corinthians 5:9.

3. Record the results in terms of changed thinking and wanting in regards to God and self and the resultant actions.