



*"From the cowardice that shrinks from new truth, from the laziness that is content with half truths, from the arrogance that thinks it knows all truth, O, God of Truth, deliver us."*

## **A Controversial Newsletter "The Printed Voice of Summit Theological Seminary"**

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George L. Faull, Editor

## **The Experiential Growth Process!**

--By Arza Boswell

### **Mentally and Physically!**

Did you ever stick your tongue on a cold piece of steel? I did that one time when I was about 6 years old. It is quite an experience! You would like to have your tongue back, but it's fast. I don't remember how I escaped from the predicament, but I never did that foolish trick again. I learned from experience.

When we are born, there are not many things that we know. However, God created us with this amazing capacity to learn. A newborn baby quickly learns that crying will get attention. They learned it by **experience**. It worked before, so they do it again and again.

Immediately after a child is born we begin talking to them, teaching them to communicate. It takes a while but eventually they begin talking back to us. We show them how to do things and that incredible memory that God created within each of us keeps track of our experiences and they become a key to our maturing process, for no matter how old we get we can remember "back when".

We can remember when we were a small child, when we were a teenager, our courting days, our first job, our wedding day, the birth of our children, their graduation, and hopefully, the day we accepted Jesus as our Savior and turned our life over to Him. Our memory is filled with experiences from the life we live.

**Life's experiences** mold us and make us a **mature person**, capable of making wise decisions, and a useful member of society.

### **A New Life -- A New Birth -- A Transformed Mind!**

But there is another life significantly more important than the life of 80 or 90 years we have mentioned, because it has eternal consequences. It begins when we are born again, **John 3:3b**, "Truly I say unto you, 'unless a man is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.'" And again He says **John 3:5b**, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of the water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

We become a new person in Christ. This is our **Spiritual life** and it begins much the same way as the physical life does. We start out as a baby in Christ we are not full-grown. There are a lot of things we have yet to learn and that is as it should be. That born-again babe is just as saved as that person who has years of spiritual learning, but that spiritual babe needs to grow.

Several years ago I was seated in a restaurant and a young lady came to wait on me, She had this button pinned on her. PBPGINFWMY. It got the desired results because I asked her what those letters stood for? Her answer: Please Be Patient, God Is Not Finished With Me Yet.

We're not expected to be full-grown Christians with a head full of answers when we are asked us about the hope that is within us when we are just babes in Christ. However, we need to grow up; we need to mature, so that we might be productive servants of the Master.

There is a process called "experiential" or "progressive" sanctification and when it fails to happen we need to address it just as Paul did in **1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 3:1-2**, "And I brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of the flesh, as to infants in Christ. I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it indeed, even now you are not able."

And in **Hebrews 5:12-14, 6:1a**, "For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes *only* of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. But solid food is for the mature, which, because of practice (*experience*) have their senses trained to discern good and evil. Therefore, leaving the elementary teaching about Christ, let us press on to maturity."

### **Don't Confuse With the Gift Of Salvation**

Sanctification must not be confused with salvation itself. That is termed, "positional or Initial sanctification". Salvation is a gift.

**Titus 3:4-6**, "But when the kindness of God our Savior and *His* love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on

the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and the renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior.”

About a year ago I wrote an article on Spiritual growth and sent it out to a group of about 80 people. My son, Ken, quoted **Ephesians 2:8-10** and talked of two different kinds of works, but ended by saying, “*The second are works we do because we are in-dwelt with the Holy Spirit and it is just our new nature to do them. I don’t think we can ever enjoy Christian service until we realize that it is the natural outgrowth of the new nature that the Spirit creates in us. Nothing we do can add to what Jesus did for us. We just do it because it’s our genetics now. The same reason an apple tree produces apples. It can do no other naturally.*”

David Bayless had this comment: “*My Brazilian ‘son,’ Ricardo, lived with us off and on for two or three years. He always cleared the table after a meal. He did that because he lived here, not so he could live here. Same works, different motivation—an illustration of works we do because we are Christians, not so we can be.*”

Let me re-emphasize: When we talk about experiential sanctification, we are not talking about “positional” or “initial” sanctification, which is a gift. We are talking about the bearing of fruit that is our new nature. In **Romans 7** Paul is telling them they are freed from the Law. 4b “So that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God.”

In his second letter, the apostle Peter wrote to those who had a faith of the same kind as ours, by righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ (Positional or initial sanctification), but we became partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.

However, they should **add to their faith**, (Experiential or progressive sanctification) with all diligence these things: Moral excellence, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, love, and says, “**2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 1:8** “For if these *qualities* are yours and are **increasing**, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” To the **Philippians** Paul has this to say: **3:14-15a** “*I press on* toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, have this attitude;” It is a way of life; it is surrender, a commitment, and a pledge that I will serve Jesus until the day I die.

Life will not always be easy. There will be hills to climb and the road may be a difficult one. God knows what it takes to get our attention. It is not His goal to destroy us. His goal is to build character in us. There will be those times when we say, “God, I can’t handle this” and if this is really true, it will be those times when He picks us up in

His arms and carries us. God measures our growth by how we respond to life’s difficulties, but will not press us beyond our ability to cope with any given situation.

The key to Spiritual growth is found in **Romans 12:1-2**, “Therefore I urge you brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which* is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect”

Be like Christ! (*Experiential or progressive sanctification*) How do we do this? How do we grow up spiritually and become that mature Christian that God would have us to be? In the Hebrew letter, the writer, after listing a host of people who were justified by their faith, has this to say. **12:1-2** “Therefore since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, **let us also** lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

1. **Encumbrance:** We get rid of the excess baggage. It is easy to get so busy doing things, that there is not enough hours in the day to accomplish them all. They are not bad things. They are things that are sapping our time and strength and we have to take a look at what’s on our plate and see if there is any excess baggage there. Is there something that I can lay aside?
2. **Sin: Romans 6:1-2**, “What shall we say then! Are we to continue so that grace may increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?” **Galatians 5:19-21** lists some of those sins we need to lay aside. We need to make a conscience effort to rid our lives of these things, then we will have the time and energy to load ourselves down with the fruit of the Spirit listed in **verses 22 and 23**.
3. When we become a Christian, we sign on as a part of the team. We have a race to run and we need to run it with **endurance**. It is so easy to become discouraged, want to give up, we are tired of taking on too much of the load while others don’t seem to care. We have to put those thoughts aside. They are selfish thoughts and we have little room for self if we want to be like Christ. So! When these discouraging thoughts enter our mind we need to **look to Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith**.
4. Jesus could have chucked it all. He might have said, “Father they are not worth it. They don’t care a whit for anyone but themselves. They have no desire to quit sinning. I’m down here wasting my time. Send the

angels, Father and get me out of here.” But He didn’t! Because He knew that His Father is not willing that any perish, but wants them all to come to repentance. He knew about the rejoicing in Heaven over one sinner who repents. He could see the millions upon millions of Christians who would repent and follow Him **and it was for this joy set before Him that He endured the cross.**

If you want to be like Christ, you need to study the instruction Book and let it guide you to a closer walk with Him.

If you want to grow Spiritually, if you want experiential sanctification, if you want progressive sanctification, if you want people to be able to see Christ in you, if you want to be a soul winner, if you want to be a mature Christian make every effort to grow in Jesus.

Run the race with endurance. Lay aside those things that hold you back. Look beyond this veil of tears to the joy that awaits you. There is an eternity out there.

If you have never accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior, (*Initial or positional sanctification*), don’t put it off. If you stepped out of the baptistery and have never known the joy of growing and maturing, and producing fruit, (*experiential or progressive sanctification*), study the Book and begin to grow. Let the mind be in you that is in Christ Jesus.