

Oaks-West Church of Christ

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Spiritual Growth, Paused?

by Warren Berkley

Postponed, Paused?

But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

– 2 Pet. 3:18

When we are under pressure – unusual circumstances, health crisis, family issues, economic stress – there may be some temptation to postpone spiritual growth, until things get better.

Our thinking may run rapidly through thoughts like this: Life is so hard right now; my concentration is broken; I'm exhausted. I'll get back into spiritual growth when things calm down.

Here are some elements of this ill-conceived notion.

1. Understand, to not grow equals decline. There is no neutral position. This may sound

strong but there is scriptural justification to say, the moment I stop growing I start dying. To go back to “milk” is “back,” backward (see Heb. 5:12-14). The whole notion is self-deceptive. It is neglected discipleship.

2. It is vigorous spiritual growth that brings God's strength into our lives. To put a pause on spiritual growth not only reduces your capacity to cope with difficulty. It amounts to turning away from the ultimate source of strength that gets us through whatever is or is perceived to be our present difficulty.

3. Read 2 Peter 1:3-15, then ask yourself: What part of this can I suspend or pause? Is there anything in this passage that you can safely neglect, offering your stress as the excuse? Can you postpone self-control for a while, thinking you will resume that discipline when things calm down?

4. To pause spiritual growth is just irresponsible, since the command is to

“grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” Peter wrote that in our text. He was under pressure and he was writing to Christians who were undergoing a tough time of it: “tested by fire,” (1 Pet. 1:7). Growth is not only honoring the Lord and essential to our survival, it is duty assigned to God’s people. Not something reserved for “normal days.”

Do these things and the God of peace will be with you. Phil. 4:9

Warning About Bitterness

by Warren Berkley

“See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no ‘root of bitterness’ springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled,” (Heb. 12:15).

The theme and backdrop for the book of Hebrews is a warning to Jewish Christians against turning back to the old ways of Judaism. The message is, Christ is here now, serve Him.

The bitterness of this text is most likely associated with Deut. 29:18. The Israelites came out of Egypt by God’s power under the leadership of Moses. But as they were taken out of slavery to freedom and ultimately to the promised land – they complained and became bitter against their leaders and God. Forgetting about the good life in Canaan that lay ahead of them, they murmured, rebelled, and therefore, failed to obtain the grace of God (that is, a whole generation missed out

of the promised land).

Thus, Heb. 12:15 becomes a warning to us. God, through Christ, has taken us out of the slavery of sin and has promised us the “promised land” of heaven. Complaining, murmuring and rebelling will gradually defeat us. It is like a bad root that eventually emerges and poisons others.

There is another context of bitterness referred to in Eph. 4:31. The bitterness of that verse has more to do with resentment toward people, holding grudges, harboring hostility, or smoldering resentment toward people – that has no spiritual value and helps nobody. Often, this bitterness toward people hurts the one who is bitter more than anyone else.

Additional Note:

In his commentary on the Greek text, John Eadie puts it best: “Bitterness is a figurative term denoting that fretted and irritable state of mind that keeps a man in perpetual animosity—that inclines him to harsh and uncharitable opinions of men and things—that makes him sour, crabbed, and repulsive in his general demeanor—that brings a scowl on his face, and infuses venom into the words of his tongue.”

Welcome!

When you visit our assemblies, you will be received friendly, kindly and courteously. We believe this to be the natural attitude of those who truly love God and mankind. Though you may at first be among strangers, we hope that you will come to know us well and count us as your friends.

We offer Bible studies as well as correspondence courses for those interested in learning more about what God expects of us.



Upcoming Ladies' Bible Classes - Next class March 9.

Services - The elders have decided to continue with the current service times of 10:45 am Sundays and 7:00 pm Wednesdays through the month of March. We will reevaluate in March. Thank you for your support and encouragement as we make these difficult decisions! --DT for the elders

Mark Your Calendars - our spring meeting with Tim Stevens is scheduled for April 25-28

If you know of upcoming events, please inform Darrell so they can be included here.



Please remember the following individuals in your daily prayers:

Jack Wilson
Jerry & Nancy Richardson
Ron & Sue Stanberry
Karen Hallmark
Morgan O'Hair
Dinah Williams
Bobbie Gibbons
Tyler Hairston
Don & Alene Simmons

And continue to pray for each other

If you know of someone that needs to be on this list, please tell Darrell (email preferred) and provide updates so names stay on the list as long as needed.

We have many that face challenges on a daily basis and need your prayers as well.

“praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints,”
(Ephesians 6:18 ESV)

