

## Birth, Growth, and Development!

Scripture is very clear on the matter of God expectation “*perfection*” in our spiritual growth -- and that He has the same measuring rule and scales for all His children. It is not the “*outer man*” (the fleshly body), but rather, the “*inner man*” that will determine our rewards in heaven, or how much we will possess there.

We all realize that, in the natural world that, after the birth of a baby, development is very important if that new life is to enjoy and possess the things of this natural present world. Just to be born into this world is not enough. There must be growth after birth, for *birth demands growth, to fulfill the purpose of natural birth*. No one will doubt that! However, when it comes to spiritual birth, and growth, many of God’s people don’t want to believe in the need for growth after birth.

When a baby is born into this world, it may be a perfect baby, in that it has all its members of its body, perfect in size and perfectly functioning. However, if the little one does not “*grow*” and develop, it will be deformed and cease to be “*a perfect baby*.” Its little hands, arms, legs, and body must grow to full size or it will never be able to work, or play, or enjoy life in this world. Its little body must grow through several stages -- to go off to school and receive an education -- to work at some occupation -- to be able to drive a car -- to travel places -- to get married -- to have children of its own -- etc.

There are children born into this world that do not, for various reasons, grow properly. Many imperfections exist in natural children because of over 6000 years of sin, pollution, and moral contamination in the human family, that man’s the blood stream is no longer pure. But such things cannot be traced back to God, in the “*spiritual birth*.” We are born of the “*incorruptible seed of the Word of God*,” 100% perfect in our spiritual birth.

The Harvest of the Judgment Seat of Christ will reveal the spiritual growth and development of every one of God’s dear children -- and determine what we will be, and be able to possess in Eternity!

Jesus taught, “*Be ye therefore **PERFECT**, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect*” (Matthew 5:48). The word “*perfect*” has the meaning of “*growth into maturity of Godliness*” -- at the level of development one is at with God. When we were born into the family of God we were never more perfect or ready for heaven – we were born 100% perfect -- at the level of development we were at!

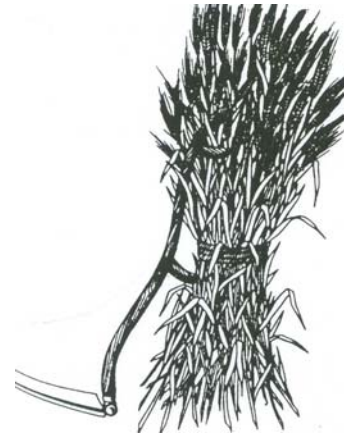
However, we were born “*babies*” into the Kingdom of God. Just as natural babies must grow or become imperfect. The elements of time demand that changes take place, day after day, month after month, year after year, until the little baby has developed into the likeness of the full image of adulthood. --We, as newborn babies in God’s Kingdom, must grow or we will become flawed in our Christian walk.

Jesus puts it this way, “*First the blade then the ear after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately the harvest is come*” (Mark 4:28).

King James, and several of the translations, render the word “*corn*” in this verse, however, it is not speaking of the “*corn*” that most of us think of when we hear that word. One could think of our American “*corn*” and not miss the message that Jesus teaches here, but the original word has the meaning of “*grain*” – as in a *grain* of wheat.

The New International perhaps renders it closer to the original meaning when it states, “*First the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come.*”

What Jesus taught is not only true in our spiritual walk with God, but it is also, of course true as far as horticultural essentials are concerned. You cannot have a perfect *grain of wheat* without first having a perfect *stock*; neither can he have the *perfect fully developed wheat in the head of grain* unless there is a perfect *grain*. One stage develops into the other and then it is ready for harvest. -- The perfect blade (stalk) can bring forth a perfect ear (stock of grain) a perfect ear can bring for the perfect corn in the ear (fully developed wheat in the head) and be ready for a fruitful harvest. The grain of wheat can be unashamed when the outer shell is removed at harvest time.



This is the truth that the Master teaches – and we cannot jump any stages of Christian growth! You cannot go from the perfect blade to the full corn stage, which some saints would like to do for there must first be the growth of the blade to hold the ear, then the growth of the ear to hold the corn in the ear. You cannot grow corn (the “*grain*”) in the blade (“*stock*”) -- it only grows in the ear (the “*head*”)!

We all have meet Christians that seemed so dedicated and spiritual in their walk with God that they exuberated the presence of the Lord wherever they go. It appeared, in the spiritual level, that they glowed and overflowed with the indwelling Holy Spirit. And we’ve said, “*I’m going to be like them,*” but, try as we would -- it seemed like an impossible task.

The problem is that we fail to remember the many years of development as they walked with God. Granted that some new-born believers develop must faster than others, however, there must be times of testing and trials -- that comes as a result of living in obedience to the will of God.

Like children who would like to become adults over night -- *Life just does not work that way!* We cannot jump any of its stages. We must go through them by growth and development. And if we do not grow we will ever remain in that stage of our development where we stopped growing!

If you are only a “*blade*” – be a perfect one!  
That’s what you will be as God removes you from the field  
of opportunity of growth!

We are perfect in our state of growth, and our development, we feel at home anywhere, among others. Notice, even, the baby in the crib, the child in its play-pen, etc. They do not feel bad that because they are a child and you are bigger than they, for someday they will be big also. But you put the man in the crib and see how he feels and what people will say. He has grown to know that life is more than “a crib and a play pen.”

Birth requires growth -- *if* -- the purpose of that birth is to be realized, and the perfection of birth must be carried on into perfection of growth, *if* the perfection of full development is ever reached, and the stature of God’s Perfect Son is to be attained. .

Jesus did not only save us from hell by the new birth, but when He rose from the dead, He gave to the Church (consisting of every believer) ministries, so that we would not stop with just the spiritual birth, but grow up into the real purpose of God, as taught by Paul in Ephesians 4:11-16.

*“And he [Christ] gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; **For the perfecting** [maturing] **of the saints**, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying [building up] of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, **unto a perfect man**, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth **be no more children**, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him [Christ Jesus] in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.”*

This passage of Scripture teaches that Christ loved us so He would not just make possible “New Birth” but would give to the Church (that’s us) needed ministries to help the newborn babes in Christ.

I repeat, “Birth is not the end of the purpose of life.” Can you imagine a city that had hospitals where mothers go to give birth to their children – but did not have any schools, colleges, etc.? You would have a city full of “dummies” who would not know why they were born or understand the real purpose of life – which is not just to live with yourself and please yourself, but to learn how to live with others and get an understanding of the real purpose of life in a world like this.

You may need a doctor to be born, but you need a teacher later so you will learn how to grow up and not always be a child!

God teaches in Ephesians 4:14, “That we henceforth be no more children – [babies] -- tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine -- [like a feather in the wind, going whatever way the strongest wind blows] -- by the sight of men and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive -- [through the trickery and the craftiness of men, towards the snares of error].”

Paul said (by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit) that the devil was working to prevent the children of God from growing. Since Satan has lost these children of God to his own kingdom, he now, at least, wants them to be children without purpose or responsibility in life, running to and fro, and being deceived by men, who could make merchandise of them, and destroy the purpose of God in their hearts.

A small child does not know the real purpose of life or its values. Offer him an ice cream cone in one hand and a thousand dollar bill in the other – and he will grab the ice cream, without even looking at the thousand-dollar bill. Why? He does not know the real values of things, but lives for one moment at a time.

Paul says, *“Once you have passed through the child-stage of your Christian life, do not return to it.”*

Spiritual birth is much like natural birth, in that both are brought forth mainly by the power of another and both may come forth as perfection. However, at both births the person is cut off from the power of Mother, and as a new life-channel is opened up by God. In both cases, unless the person born joins in co-operation drawing from this *“New Life Line”* for their life and development, the perfect birth will result in death, or an imperfection of growth. Birth demands care and must be fed, because it is just the beginning of a planned program, and can die short of its God-given purpose.

Listen to Peter, *“As **newborn** babes, **desire** the sincere **milk** of the **word**, that ye may **grow** thereby: If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious [or Life Giving]”* (1 Peter 2:2-3). We are *“grow in grace and knowledge.”*

Peter tells us as newborn babies in Christ’s family, we are to learn a lesson from a healthy newborn baby in the natural family -- we can get a real lesson from life! A child born into the Kingdom of God should desire the *“milk of God’s Word,”* just like a healthy baby desires natural milk, and the purpose of the milk is to cause growth -- growing out of the baby stage and growing up to the various stages of growth.

The baby *“on the bottle”* shows his desire to life. All children want to grow. When the baby see the bottle of milk his hands, feet, and eyes are stirred up and when his hands get on the bottle, he knows what to do with it, and soon there is evidence that the milk is disappearing into the baby. He stops everything else and centers his desire on the milk -- and consequently he grows.

However, many Christian newborn babies do not desire the milk of God’s Word, yet nothing can keep us spiritually alive, except the milk of God’s Word.

Peter writes that the way some believers treat the Word of God after they are saved, he wonders if they got the right taste the first time. They should know where to receive spiritual nourishment. But Peter said that some newborn Christians do not act like they know. They have very little hunger for the Word of God and just take enough to stay alive, but not enough to grow thereby.

Milk is to bring perfect of growth in the *“baby stage”* -- it fails to give strength enough for the full development of character for service and labor, which is the purpose

of birth. God wants more than spiritual babies. After the time of childhood has past we will be imperfect if we do not grow, for birth demands growth to fulfill its purpose.

Paul writes that he labored as God's minister to bring about perfection of growth in the believers that were born under his ministry.

*Colossians 1:28-29, "Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: Whereunto I also labour, striving according to His working, which worketh in me mightily."*

When Paul had to leave the believers, he commanded them to God, but also to the "Word of His Grace," which was able to build them up, and also thereby give them an inheritance (Acts 20;32).

Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 3:18, *"And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal? Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour."*

Paul states that Christians can miss the knowledge of the purpose of their spiritual birth because they are like natural children who only want to take milk from the hand of their mother, forgetting it is not *who* gives the bottle that makes one grow, but it is the "milk" in the bottle.

There are those who have been born-again, however, their loyalty seems to be "to personalities" -- (or a certain denomination) -- rather than to Christ through His Word. Paul, in this passage above, spoke of those Christians who had formed the "Paulite" Denomination, because they followed Paul -- there were those who formed the Apollosites denomination, because they had been saved under the minister of Apollos, and, therefore, followed him, then, there was the "Peterites" denomination, those who would gather around when Peter was speaking.

Paul wrote that they were still "babies," and acted like little children, and were missing the plan of God for their growth and development.

Hebrews 5:11 through 6:1 reads, *Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing. For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.*

*Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God,*

This passage states to all Christians, that God has more than “milk” for those who have a “desire” to grow up into the stature of God’s Son, Jesus Christ, and desire to be workers together with Christ in God’s vineyard

The writer of this book of Hebrews says that there were some Christians, “*who ought to be teaching others,*” but they had not yet been willing to give up their baby stage of Christian life, living only to please themselves and have a good time in the Lord, rather than to develop in the plan of God and become a helper and teacher of others.

God will put up with a lot of mistakes of His children as long as their love is pure, and they have a real desire to grow up. If this is true in our life, God will work along with us and overlook many of our mistakes.

Paul states in 1 Corinthians 13:11 that he “*put away certain things.*” :One of the greatest signs of growth is the leaving behind those things that belonged to the past stages of growth. It not only the “*reaching out for new things*” only, but the “*leaving behind*” those things that are no longer needed because of growth. God help us to never stop “reaching out” for higher heights and deeper depths in God, until we come into the stature of the “*perfect person*” God wants us to be.

A baby leaves the crib for a playpen -- the highchair, for a chair -- the walker to walk alone -- the kiddy-car for a bicycle, etc. He gives up his rattle for a little horn -- he gives up the horn for building blocks -- and the block-set for things no longer built, to be knocked down, but to building things that will remain. All this is proving growth, not only reaching for new things, but also, laying aside the thing that once were part of his life.

Most children play that they are adults – dress up in mother, or dad’s clothes and shoes -- but this only lasts a couple hours in a “*play game. They must live in the stage to which they have developed.*” They must go back to their own shoes and garments. However, the day will come when they can live in mother and dad’s things and it will not be a play-game.

What have you left behind in your Christian growth?

If we want to feel at home in heaven as far as being at home in the presence of Christ and His perfect -- [matured to the level of growth we should be in our relationship with God] -- m children, must will depend on our development in God since the time of our New Birth. It is only when a person is “*imperfect*” that he feels out of place in the presence of perfect ones.

We can’t ever forget that we are to come into the presence of the triune God-Head, who gave everything we need in this Life to become perfect before them in our development.

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