



Spiritual
Growth

SPIRITUAL GROWTH

JOHN ORTBERG

(2 Peter 1:5-11)



he purpose of Paul's life was to help people experience spiritual growth: "Him [Christ] we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus" (Col. 1:28). With all of the energy God powerfully stirred up in him, Paul labored to present everyone "perfect in Christ." Given the intensity with which Paul lived and the passion for growth in Christ that he had, it is evident that spiritual growth is vitally important.

So what is spiritual growth? It is the developmental process through which a follower of Christ gradually becomes characterized by those traits that marked Jesus Himself. It involves a life of increasing wonder, awe, joy, simplicity, worship, gratitude, love, servanthood, humility, courage, and truth, among other qualities, such as those listed in 2 Peter 1:5-10. Sheldon Vanauken wrote that the best argument for Christianity is Christians—their joy, their certainty, their completeness. Guess what he said is the best argument *against* Christianity? The same answer—Christians, when they are somber, joyless, self-righteous, smug, narrow, repressive.

Therefore, it becomes terribly important for Christians to understand what true spiritual growth is, and what it is not.

MISCONCEPTIONS OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH

People commonly fall into two errors when considering what part of spiritual growth is their responsibility and which part is God's responsibility. The first error is when people think of spiritual growth as their own responsibility—turning it into no more than a moral self-improvement project. They may even become militaristic in their commitment to live more virtuous lives. One glaring problem with this approach is that it relies heavily on human willpower,

which has obvious limitations. Over time this approach makes people susceptible to spiritual venom in various forms:

- *Legalism*, which is the measurement of spiritual growth in superficial, mechanical ways designed to create a sense of being different from those outside the faith.
- *Judgmentalism*, which is the comparison of one's own spiritual growth with others' in a condescending manner.
- *Fatigue and defeat*, which can set in because of the life-sucking nature of such an approach.

The second error is when people see their role in the process of spiritual growth as to do nothing. A distorted view of grace fuels the belief that any of their own effort might be an affront to God's sovereignty or even a denial of His grace. Inevitably, they get stuck in a mire of passivity, which will not breed spiritual growth.

STEPS FOR SPIRITUAL GROWTH

Jesus told a parable describing the growth of the kingdom of God as seed scattered on the ground by the farmer. Day and night the seed grows—though the farmer does not know how (Mark 4:26-29). What is true for the growth of the kingdom is also true for individual spiritual growth. People cannot control their own spiritual growth any more than a farmer can control the

growth of the seeds in the ground. Growth is always a gift from God. Yet the farmer *was* involved in the process, and so we too must participate in our own spiritual growth.

The role that we play is crucial, and can be understood by identifying three key elements of spiritual growth.

Disciplines

Certain practices are indispensable if we want to open ourselves up to spiritual growth. Solitude, the withdrawing from society and stimulation to be alone with the Father, was irreplaceable in the life of Jesus and His followers (Mark 1:12, 35-37; 6:31, 32). The study of and meditation on Scripture are crucial to the renewing of our minds (Rom. 12:2). Silence and prayer, worship and service, giving and celebrating—these are the types of practices that should be in the lives of followers of Christ who are interested in growing spiritually. These activities please God and are also instrumental, indeed essential, in developing loving, joy-filled, truthful lives.

Relationships

Certain relationships help Christlike qualities to be formed in us. Spiritual friendships provide us with other people who intentionally help us pay attention to what God is doing in our lives. Confessional relationships offer us a safe place to speak of our struggles, temptations, and sins. Corporate gatherings for worship and learning mark our minds and hearts, and remind us that spiritual growth is not an individualistic endeavor. Being a member of a community inevitably involves knowing “difficult” people. How we learn to work with these people can help us gauge how far we have to grow if we are to love as Jesus did.

Experiences

Certain experiences open us up to growth. Suffering, pain, and trials are crucial teach-

ers of our souls (James 1:2). The Holy Spirit works in our lives in various ways. He convicts us of sin, guides us into truth, and assures us of God’s love (John 16:5-15; Rom. 8:12-17). Cross-cultural experiences often shake up old patterns of thinking and living, awakening us to the reality of a God who is far larger than our own lives. Shifts in perspective encourage us to think outside our comfortable box.

Spiritual growth is a difficult to fully comprehend: As Paul experienced in his life, the struggles are worth the end result. It is eminently important that we focus not on where we begin, but where we are presently and where we finish. May we be able to say with Paul, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith” (2 Tim. 4:7). May our lives be living testimonies to the power of the God.

FURTHER MEDITATION:

Other passages to study about the issue of spiritual growth include:

- Proverbs 2:1-6
- John 3:30; 15:1, 2, 4
- Romans 12:1, 2
- Ephesians 4:14, 15
- 2 Timothy 2:15

To Learn More: Turn to the key passage note on spiritual growth at Psalm 1 on page 679. See also the personality profile of Matthew on page 1243.

BOOK ONE: PSALMS 1-41

PSALM 1

THE WAY OF THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE END
OF THE UNGODLY

- 1 Blessed is the man
Who walks not in the counsel of the
ungodly,
Nor stands in the path of sinners,
Nor sits in the seat of the scornful;
- 2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD,
And in His law he meditates day and
night.
- 3 He shall be like a tree
Planted by the rivers of water,
That brings forth its fruit in its
season,
Whose leaf also shall not wither;
And whatever he does shall prosper.
- 4 The ungodly are not so,
But are like the chaff which the wind
drives away.
- 5 Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in
the judgment,
Nor sinners in the congregation of the
righteous.
- 6 For the LORD knows the way of the
righteous,

But the way of the ungodly shall
perish.

PSALM 2

THE MESSIAH'S TRIUMPH AND KINGDOM

- 1 Why do the nations rage,
And the people plot a vain thing?
- 2 The kings of the earth set themselves,
And the rulers take counsel together,
Against the LORD and against His
Anointed, saying,
- 3 "Let us break Their bonds in pieces
And cast away Their cords from us."
- 4 He who sits in the heavens shall laugh;
The LORD shall hold them in derision.
- 5 Then He shall speak to them in His
wrath,
And distress them in His deep
displeasure:
- 6 "Yet I have set My King
On My holy hill of Zion."
- 7 "I will declare the decree:
The LORD has said to Me,
'You are My Son,
Today I have begotten You.
- 8 Ask of Me, and I will give You
The nations for Your inheritance,

KEY PASSAGE



Spiritual
Growth

STRONG, FRUITFUL TREES

(CH. 1)

This psalm contrasts the ways of the righteous and of the ungodly. An ungodly person is "like the chaff which the wind drives away" (1:4). That person has no substance and no roots. On the other hand, the one who is righteous is "like a tree planted by the rivers of water" (1:3). Believers are to be deeply rooted; they should continue to grow strong and bring forth good fruit. Such lives express their joy in God. These believers have grown strong in the Lord and can be used by Him to make a difference in the world.

Believers who want to grow spiritually and be rooted in their faith like strong oaks can follow the advice of this psalm:

- > Steer clear of advice from the ungodly.
- > Do not follow the paths of sinners.
- > Delight in God's law.
- > Meditate on God's law day and night.

To Learn More: Turn to the article about spiritual growth on pages 1670, 1671. See also the personality profile of Matthew on page 1243.

PARALYTIC
 ssed over, and
 behold, they
 ng on a bed.
 aid to the par-
 your sins are

bes said within
 mes!"

houghts, said,
 ar hearts? ⁵For
 ns are forgiven
 But that you
 has power on
 said to the par-
 and go to your
 eparted to his

saw it, they
 ho had given

ere, He saw a
 the tax office.
 e." So he arose

sat at the table
 f tax collectors
 u with Him and
 Pharisees saw
 Why does your
 and sinners?"
 e said to them,
 eed of a physi-
 But go and
 mercy and not
 e call the righ-
 re."^b

ASTING
 came to Him,
 Pharisees fast
 at fast?"
 Can the friends
 g as the bride-
 days will come
 ken away from
 No one puts a

3:31 ^aNU-Text
 vere afraid.
 epenance.
 culated.

piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; for the patch pulls away from the garment, and the tear is made worse. ¹⁷Nor do they put new wine into old wineskins, or else the wineskins break, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But they put new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved."

A GIRL RESTORED TO LIFE AND A WOMAN HEALED

¹⁸While He spoke these things to them, behold, a ruler came and worshiped Him, saying, "My daughter has just died, but come and lay Your hand on her and she will live." ¹⁹So Jesus arose and followed him, and so *did* His disciples.

²⁰And suddenly, a woman who had a flow

of blood for twelve years came from behind and touched the hem of His garment. ²¹For she said to herself, "If only I may touch His garment, I shall be made well." ²²But Jesus turned around, and when He saw her He said, "Be of good cheer, daughter; your faith has made you well." And the woman was made well from that hour.

²³When Jesus came into the ruler's house, and saw the flute players and the noisy crowd wailing, ²⁴He said to them, "Make room, for the girl is not dead, but sleeping." And they ridiculed Him. ²⁵But when the crowd was put outside, He went in and took her by the hand, and the girl arose. ²⁶And the report of this went out into all that land.

PERSONALITY PROFILE



Spiritual
 Growth

MATTHEW: A CHANGED LIFE

(MATTHEW 9:9)

Jewish tax collectors in Jesus' day were the despised of the despised. They were called traitors in the worst sense. The Jewish people viewed them with double disgust because Jewish tax collectors actually worked for the Roman government, making their money off their own people by receiving a percentage of the income from the taxes they collected. They were lumped with harlots, murderers, and thieves, and were considered offensive and off-limits to respectable Jews. Jesus offended many religious people when He called the tax collector Matthew to be one of His intimate inner circle.

Matthew's Jewish name was Levi. Jesus' simple appeal to him was dramatic and direct: "Follow Me." Matthew's instantaneous response indicates the irresistible nature of Jesus' person and character, as well as the openness of Matthew's life. We have no idea whether Matthew had any previous contact with Jesus or not. We can only assume that he must have had some awareness of the significance of the life and ministry of Jesus in order to respond to such a command.

Although Matthew rarely got mentioned by name during the events Jesus experienced with His disciples, he was there, observing, noting, and remembering. Some think the only things he took with him when he left his tax table were a pen and a keen mind for details and accounting. But Matthew's biography of Jesus bears witness to what he learned from Jesus. Unlike Mark and Luke, Matthew decided to record Jesus' life in categories. Events and lessons in the Gospel of Matthew are not organized by time sequence, but by common themes (see for example, all the parables in chapter 13).

Matthew's example offers several unique lessons about spiritual growth:

- God's calling in our lives is such that it demands an intentional response.
- Our past holds keys to God's purposes in our lives.
- God sees unlimited potential where others have given up.

Like Matthew, we don't know what the future holds. But we can choose, like he did, to follow Jesus—the very One who holds the future.

To Learn More: Turn to the article about spiritual growth on pages 1670, 1671. See also the key passage note at Psalm 1 on page 679.

may possess this good land, and leave it as an inheritance for your children after you forever.

⁹“As for you, my son Solomon, know the God of your father, and serve Him with a loyal heart and with a willing mind; for the LORD searches all hearts and understands all the intent of the thoughts. If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will cast you off forever.

¹⁰Consider now, for the LORD has chosen you to build a house for the sanctuary; be strong, and do it.”

¹¹Then David gave his son Solomon the plans for the vestibule, its houses, its treasuries, its upper chambers, its inner chambers, and the place of the mercy seat; ¹²and the plans for all that he had by the Spirit, of the courts of the house of the LORD, of all the chambers all around, of the treasuries of the house of God, and of the treasuries for the dedicated things; ¹³also for the division of the priests and the Levites, for all the work of the service of the house of the LORD, and for all the articles of service in the house of the LORD. ¹⁴He gave gold by weight for things of gold, for all articles used in every kind of service; also silver for all articles of silver by weight, for all articles used in every kind of service; ¹⁵the weight for the lampstands of gold, and their lamps of gold, by weight for each lampstand and its lamps; for the lampstands of silver by weight, for the lampstand and its lamps, according to the use of each lampstand. ¹⁶And by weight he gave gold for the tables of the showbread, for

each table, and silver for the tables of silver; ¹⁷also pure gold for the forks, the basins, the pitchers of pure gold, and the golden bowls—

he gave gold by weight for every bowl; and for the silver bowls, silver by weight for every bowl; ¹⁸and refined gold by weight for the altar of incense, and for the construction of the chariot, that is, the gold cherubim that spread their wings and overshadowed the ark of the covenant of the LORD. ¹⁹“All this,” said David, “the

“As for you, my son Solomon, know the God of your father, and serve Him with a loyal heart and with a willing mind; for the LORD searches all hearts and understands all the intent of the thoughts. If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will cast you off forever.”

1 CHRONICLES 28:9

LORD made me understand in writing, by His hand upon me, all the works of these plans.”

²⁰And David said to his son Solomon, “Be strong and of good courage, and do it; do not fear nor be dismayed, for the LORD God—my God—will be with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you, until you have finished all the work for the service of the house of the LORD. ²¹Here are the divisions of the priests and the Levites for all the service of the house of God; and every willing craftsman will be with you for all manner of workmanship, for every kind of service; also the leaders and all the people will be completely at your command.”

OFFERINGS FOR BUILDING THE TEMPLE

29 Furthermore King David said to all the assembly: “My son Solomon, whom alone God has chosen, is young and inexperienced; and the work is great, because the temple^a is not for man but for the LORD God.

29:1 ^aLiterally palace



SOUL NOTE

Omnipresent (28:9, 10) David instructed Solomon to serve God “with a loyal heart and with a willing mind.” He reminded him that God “searches all hearts and understands all the intent of the thoughts.” Nothing is hidden from God.

People can attempt to run from Him or hide from Him. People can pretend to be loyal to Him, but God cannot be fooled. “Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart” (1 Sam. 16:7). As believers grow spiritually, they will be sensitive to God’s presence in their lives at every moment. This will affect their every word, every action, and every thought. Remember, we always have an audience of One.

Topic: Spiritual Growth

Spiritual Gifts

members of one another. ⁶Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, *let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; ⁷or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; ⁸he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.*

BEHAVE LIKE A CHRISTIAN

⁹Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. ¹⁰Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in

honor giving preference to one another; ¹¹not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; ¹²rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; ¹³distributing to the needs of the saints, given to

¹⁴Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. ¹⁵Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. ¹⁶Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion.

¹⁷Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. ¹⁸If it is

SOUL NOTE



Like Oil and Water (12:3) God is against arrogance. Like oil and water, pride and faith don't mix. God created each person with great care. Every believer is valuable and needed by God. Each has gifts, uniquely given by God, to use in furthering the interests of His kingdom. Believers should humbly serve with those gifts in whatever circumstances God has put them. No one should "think of himself more highly than he ought to think," but "think soberly." We should thank God for His great love and serve Him with all our hearts. **Topic: Pride**

SOUL NOTE



Guidelines (12:9-13) Christ had said that the two greatest commandments were to love God and love one's neighbor (Luke 10:27). We should run every aspect of every decision through the filter of whether it is loving toward God or loving toward another person. In these verses, Paul gives further advice, warning people against hypocritical love and hanging on to evil ways. He advises kindness, diligence, fervent service, joy, patience, and prayer. In addition, believers should be known for giving and for hospitality. Following this advice through the guidance of the Holy Spirit will help believers live to glorify God. **Topic: Spiritual Growth**

SOUL NOTE



Careful in Conflict (12:14-21) Conflict is inevitable. Paul advised believers to be careful in conflicts with those outside the faith. Christians must resist the temptation to retaliate against evil; instead, they should bless their persecutors, refuse to repay evil for evil, and "overcome evil with good." That's because God will take care of the vengeance, the repayment, and the punishment. As much as we might like to take matters into our own hands, God will handle the situation for us, in His time and in His way. Following Paul's advice can keep us out of worse situations, and may even help bring the perpetrators to Christ. **Topic: Conflict**

by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets: ⁶that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel, ⁷of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power.

PURPOSE OF THE MYSTERY

⁸To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, ⁹and to make all see what is the fellowship^a of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ,^b ¹⁰to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, ¹¹according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord, ¹²in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him. ¹³Therefore I ask that you do not lose heart at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.

APPRECIATION OF THE MYSTERY

¹⁴For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,^a ¹⁵from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, ¹⁶that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, ¹⁷that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and

length and depth and height—¹⁹to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

EPHESIANS 3:20, 21

²⁰Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly

that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, ²¹to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

WALK IN UNITY

4 I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, ²with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, ³endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. ⁴There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling: ⁵one Lord, one faith, one baptism; ⁶one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you^a all.

SPIRITUAL GIFTS

⁷But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. ⁸Therefore He says:

*"When He ascended on high,
He led captivity captive,
And gave gifts to men."^a*

3:9 ^aNU-Text and M-Text read *stewardship* (dispensation). ^bNU-Text omits *through Jesus Christ*. 3:14 ^aNU-Text omits *of our Lord Jesus Christ*. 4:6 ^aNU-Text omits *you*; M-Text reads *us*. 4:8 ^aPsalms 68:18

SOUL NOTE



Growing Up (3:14-19) These words describe the goal of all Christians as they seek to mature in their faith. Believers can pray to be strengthened by the Holy Spirit, so that they can withstand temptations and fears. They can pray for Christ to dwell in their hearts, helping them remain "rooted and grounded in love."

Finally, they can pray "to know the love of Christ," a love that is incomprehensible, yet able to be known by experience. When we pray for spiritual growth for ourselves and others, we can use the words of this prayer. **Topic: Spiritual Growth**

GREETING

1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,

²To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ *who are in Colosse*:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.^a

THEIR FAITH IN CHRIST

³We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, ⁴since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of your love for all the saints; ⁵because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel, ⁶which has come to you, as *it has* also in all the world, and is bringing forth fruit,^a as *it is* also among you since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth; ⁷as you also learned from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf, ⁸who also declared to us your love in the Spirit.

PREEMINENCE OF CHRIST

⁹For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; ¹⁰that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing *Him*, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; ¹¹strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; ¹²giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. ¹³He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, ¹⁴in whom we have redemption through His blood,^a the forgiveness of sins.

¹⁵He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. ¹⁶For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. ¹⁷And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. ¹⁸And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.

RECONCILED IN CHRIST

¹⁹For it pleased *the Father* that in Him all the fullness should dwell, ²⁰and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.

²¹And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled ²²in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight—²³if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister.

SACRIFICIAL SERVICE FOR CHRIST

²⁴I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church, ²⁵of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God, ²⁶the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints. ²⁷To them God

1:2 ^aNU-Text omits *and the Lord Jesus Christ*.

1:6 ^aNU-Text and M-Text add *and growing*.

1:14 ^aNU-Text and M-Text omit *through His blood*.

SOUL NOTE



Let's Pray (1:9-12) Believers can pray for spiritual growth for themselves and for others. Paul's prayer for the Colossian believers is a model of such a prayer.

We can pray for wisdom and spiritual understanding in order to know God's will.

And we can pray that we will live for God, being fruitful in His service. Then we can give thanks to God for making us "saints in the light." When we pray this way, we are praying for spiritual maturity. **Topic: Spiritual Growth**

"All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass.

The grass withers, and its flower falls away, but the word of the Lord endures forever."

25

"Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious; but to those who are disobedient,"

"The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone,"

and

"A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense."

They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed.

"But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.

1:24 NU-Text reads all its glory. 1:25 Isaiah 40:6-8 2:2 NU-Text adds up to salvation.

2:6 Isaiah 28:16 2:7 NU-Text reads to those who disbelieve. Psalm 118:22 2:8 Isaiah 8:14

"Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious,

contained in the Scripture.

God through Jesus Christ. Therefore it is also

to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to

built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood,

precious, you also, as living stones, are being

indeed by men, but chosen by God and pre-

THE CHOSEN STONE AND HIS CHOSEN PEOPLE

Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected

indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gra-

precious.

of the word, that you may grow thereby,"

ing, as newborn babes, desire the pure milk

Therefore, laying aside all malice, all de-

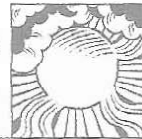
ceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speak-

preached to you.

Now this is the word which by the gospel was

SOUL NOTE

"Evils of Envy (2:1) God's people have been purchased at a great price—the precious blood of Christ" (1:9). Believers should be so grateful to the One who called them to be holy that they desire to be that way in every aspect of their conduct (1:15). This means "laying aside all envy" because envy has no usefulness in God's kingdom. Envy causes hurt, dissension, and division. People who compare themselves to others will feel either superior or inferior. God wants us to stop comparing our looks, possessions, jobs, or abilities with those of others, and to focus on being His child and serving Him. Topic: jealousy



SOUL NOTE

"Drink Your Milk (2:2, 3) Believers should never stop growing up. Just as newborn babes constantly desire and need milk to help them grow, believers should always crave God's Word, for they constantly need its nourishment. Like milk, the essential food for babies, God's Word sustains believers' spiritual lives. If we desire to continue to grow closer to Christ, to mature in our faith, and to be powerful in our service, we need to nourish ourselves by studying God's Word every day. Topic: Spiritual Growth

