Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Spiritual Growth, Part 1
Scripture: Selected Scriptures
Code: 90-24

I'm really going to share my heart with you and just not worry about where we start or where we finish each night. And work our way through what I believe to be the foundational things necessary for spiritual growth. Now we are assuming that: you know the Lord Jesus Christ; that you know the gospel; you understand what the church is all about. And given that as a fact, although we will at least touch base with the reality of salvation in moment, let's assume, for at least our introduction, that you know Christ. That you have been born into His family, that you're now a believer.

And many of you are new believers. Now you've come to know the Lord Jesus Christ recently and you're in the process of spiritual growth. Like a baby we all want to grow, spiritually. A baby that does not grow physically is a tragedy. And a Christian that does not grow spiritually is equally a tragedy. So we are called to spiritual progress.

Let me just share with you a few passages of Scripture that might of help to you. In 1 Peter 2, Peter writes this, in verses 1 and 2, "Therefore putting aside all evil and all guile," that's deceit, that's the word for a fishhook, which is a very deceitful instrument if you're a fish, "hypocrisy and envy and all slander." In other words put aside all this wickedness. "Like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the Word. That by it, you may grow in respect to salvation, if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord. Having tasted the kindness of the Lord and received His salvation, you desire to grow. And if you are to grow, you must lay aside evil and drink milk like a baby."

The idea that he has here is that in the same way that a baby desires milk you should desire the Word and God. And as we know, babies desire milk more than anything else. In fact, they really don't desire anything other than milk. They are totally unconcerned with all the trappings around them. They want to be fed and that's all that really matters. And so it should be with the new believer in Christ, with the Christian who's been a believer for a long time. There should be that consuming desire for the Word of God that is like a baby's desire for milk.

In 2 Peter, also, Peter speaks to the same matter of spiritual growth in chapter 3 and verse 18. He says, "But grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." Same idea. Grow in grace. Grow in knowledge. In 1 John, I would draw your attention to one very important passage while you're moving through that section in your Bible. Look at 1 John chapter 2 and verse 12. He says, "I'm writing to you little children," spiritual children. And here he uses a word that means children, in general, not infants. And therefore he's talking to all believers. I'm writing unto you all as children of God, very general term. "Because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake." You're

saved and you're in the family and writing to you as His children.

Then he separates spiritual children into three groups. "I am writing to you, fathers because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men because you have overcome the evil one." I have written to you children because you know the Father. I have written to you fathers because you have known Him who is from the beginning. I have written to you, young men because you are strong and the Word of God abides in you and you have overcome the evil one.

Now he takes the idea of children, all of us are children, and divides us into three categories: infants, young men, and fathers. And the word for children used in verse 13 and 14 is a different word than the one used in 12. The one used in 12 is just children in general of any age, any offspring. The word children in verse 13 and 14 means infants or babies. So he says I write unto you generally, recognizing that some of you are spiritual babies, some of you are spiritual young men, you're a bit more mature, and some of you are spiritual fathers, you have come to the point of maturity.

Now we can learn about these different levels of spiritual growth from the passage by looking a little more closely. He says I have written to you children, verse 13, because you know the Father. Spiritually infancy is basically characterized by recognition of God. It's sort of like spiritual Da-Da. You know who God is. You know He's your loving Father. You know who Christ is. Like a child comes into the world saying, first of all, "Ma-Ma" and "Da-da", so it is in the spiritual dimension. And that's exactly what he wants us to understand. There are those who are spiritually babies. They only have a sort of parent/parental recognition. They know God their Father and Christ their Savior and they know not much else.

Then he says I also have written to you, young men. And in verse 13 he says you have overcome, past tense, the evil one, meaning Satan. He tells how in verse 14, because you are strong. And how did you get strong? The Word of God abides in you and thus you have overcome the evil one.

What is a spiritual young man? A spiritual young man is one who's gone beyond parental recognition, knows who God is, knows who Christ is, knows he belongs to Christ, to the point where he has overcome the evil one. You say you mean there's a point in our life when we actually overcome Satan? That's correct. What you have to understand is that does not mean you overcome sin. But Satan and sin are not necessarily inseparable. You can sin plenty without Satan being around. It's in your flesh; it's in the world. Temptation can come from your flesh, from the world, from demons, or from Satan occasionally. But it is possible to overcome the evil one in this sense: according to Paul's letter to the Corinthians, he says that Satan appears as an angel of ... what? Of light.

2 Corinthians chapters 11 and 12 discuss this matter. He says Satan appears as an angel of light. That is to say he disguises himself in false religion. He is a liar and a deceiver. 99.9 percent of his

time is occupied in the development of and propagation of false teaching. And so when you have a become a spiritual young man, and you are strong in the Word of God, you have overcome the evil one insofar as his ability, as an angel of light, to deceive you.

I can give you personal testimony along that line. I don't believe at this point in my life, and I'm not saying this boastly, I'm saying this because I believe in this truth in Scripture, I do not believe at this point in my life that I could be deceived by false doctrine. I don't believe that. I believe that I have at least the level of a spiritual young man because I know what the Word of God teaches. And I would say many of you are in the same category. You are not a child, Ephesians 4, "Tossed to and fro and carried about by every wind of doctrine." It's why Paul says be no more children who are in that situation. Why? You have learned the Word of God. And false religion does not deceive you at all. What it does is make you ... what? Make you angry.

And what happens to the typical spiritual young man who's reached that level of maturity. Well it's been my experience that when someone grows the maturity of a spiritual young man, as soon as they arrive at they age; they begin to want to battle false religion. They want to take on the cults. They want to argue with the Mormons and the Jehovah's Witnesses. Why? Because they have their theology, they are armed and they want to fight. What good is it to be armed and not have an enemy? They want to attack. That's a sign they've reached the second level of spiritual development.

So you want to pursue that. And how do you get from being a spiritual infant, tossed to and fro and carried about by every wind of doctrine undiscerning and undiscriminating, just like a child crawling along the floor sticking everything in its mouth without any discrimination whatsoever? A child does not know what is best for it. A child does not know what to put in its mouth and what not to puts in its mouth. But a spiritual young man does. Why? Because having fed on the Word of God, he is doctrinally strong and, in that sense, is not victimized by the wiles and the craftiness of the deceitful liar who is appearing as the angel of light, namely Satan.

But spiritual growth doesn't stop there. It goes to another level. He says I am writing to you, fathers. And then he describes a spiritual with a most interesting phrase: you have known Him who has been from the beginning. This is the epitome of spiritual growth. And what it means is that you have now ascended in your spiritual development to the point where you not only know doctrine but you intimately know the God who is the author of it. You commune with the living God. It's a tremendous truth. Every one of us should pursue that, to go behind the page to walk with God, to talk with God, to know God.

This usually shows up in an enhanced and enriched devotion to God and an enhanced and enriched life of praise and adoration toward God. It shows up in a deep and consistent and faithful walk in righteousness. There is an intimacy with the Author. That is the epitome of spiritual growth. That's

what we want in our lives. We want to go beyond being victims as little children of every wind of doctrine that pushes us from pillar to post. We want to be spiritual young men who know the Word of God and are strong 'cause we have longed for the Word as a baby longs for milk. It's more than the milk of the Word. And because we longed for it and nourished our souls on it, we're strong.

But we want to go beyond that. I understand what's in the Scripture. Oh, I'm sure I don't every little detail of all of it. But I understand it, generally. In fact, I don't really read the Scripture anymore in my life, to find out what it teaches. Can you understand that? I don't read the Bible or study the Bible to find out what it teaches. I read it and study it that I may better know the One who wrote it. And that's the desire of my heart that I would someday come to be a spiritual father who has a deep and lasting and continuous intimate walk in the presence of God. Just knowing someone like that is a tremendous experience. So we want to grow.

Let me give you another passage that will help you grasp this. 2 Corinthians 3, and this is just some general introduction tonight, 2 Corinthians chapter 3 and verse 18. When I sign my name sometimes in autographing a book, I'll put this verse down because I love this verse. In 2 Corinthians 3:18 it says, "But we all," all of us believers, "with unveiled face," and when there's no veil over our face we can see clearly, "beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord." We're looking at the glory of the Lord and I believe that glory is revealed in His Word by His Spirit. "And as we gaze at the glory of the Lord, we are being transformed into the same," what? "Image. From one level of glory to another level of glory [implied] to another level of glory, to another level of glory, just as from the Lord the Spirit."

In other words, as you gaze at God. As you gaze at the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. As you focus your life on that, the Holy Spirit will move you from one level of glory to the next. That is another way to look at spiritual growth. You focus on the Word. And as you focus on the Word, you focus on the glory of the Lord revealed in the Word. And as you focus on the glory of the Lord revealed in the Word, the Spirit will move you from one level of spiritual glory to another. Spiritual growth then is a dynamic that should be operative in all of our lives. It's what the Word of God produces and it's what the Spirit of God produces. And those things we've seen. But it also demands our best commitment, for we must desire the Word like babies desire milk.

Now having introduced the thought to you that way, let me just give some misconceptions about spiritual growth. First of all, and I'll give you just a handful. First of all, spiritual growth has nothing to do with our position in Christ. Spiritual growth has nothing to do with our position in Christ. Look with me at Colossians 2:10 for a moment ... Colossians 2:10. And this is a marvelous statement. It's talking here about Christ. You could actually go back to verse 9. And it says in Christ, "In Him all the fullness of deity dwells in bodily form." Okay. There is all of God that can exist, exists in Christ. All the fullness of deity dwells in Him in bodily form. Now look at verse 10, "and in Him you have been made," what? Complete. You are complete in Him, it says, in the Author's eyes. You are complete

in Him. When Christ came into your life, you were made complete.

2 Corinthians 5:17 says, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation. Old things have passed away behold new things have come." You're a new creation. You are complete in Christ. Please notice 2 Peter chapter 1 verse 3, and this is what it says, "Seeing that His divine power," speaking of Jesus our Lord, "has granted to us everything pertaining to life and Godliness through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence." We have all things, everything pertaining to life and Godliness.

Now when you became a Christian, spiritually speaking, you were placed in Christ. In fact, Paul says your life is hid with Christ in God. You became a new creation. God put a new heart in you. Took out the stony heart, Ezekiel says, gave you a heart of flesh. God gave you His spirit. God sees you covered with the righteousness of Christ. When God looks at you He doesn't see you as wretched and vile and sinful. He sees you as covered with the righteousness of Christ. It's as if your sinfulness is cloaked with Christ's own perfect holiness.

Now the point that I want you to note is that you cannot improve on your position. Spiritual growth has nothing to do with your position. If you grow very, very slowly you're still perfect in Christ in your position, just not in your practice. You will still enter into glory into Heaven; your sins will still be forgiven. Your spiritual growth is not a matter of your position. That is eternally settled. You are in Christ. And I believe if you are a genuine Christian you will grow and fruit will be produced. But the injunction of Scripture is to grow as rapidly and as faithfully as you can. So spiritual growth has nothing to do with our position in Christ, it's not as if we have to grow into being accepted by Christ. We're accepted in Christ by faith in Him.

Secondly, spiritual growth has nothing to do with God's love for us. Nothing. In Ephesians, familiar verse, verse 3, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ." He loves us so much that He would die for us when we were sinners. He commended His love toward us, Paul says in Romans 5, and that we were at sinners Christ dies for us. He loved perfectly as sinners; He loves us now perfectly as His children. And there's nothing you can or I can do to make Him love me more.

In fact, in John 13:1, it says that He looked at His disciples and He loved them to perfection. And the amazing thing about it is they were arguing about which of them would be the greatest. One of them was about to betray Him. Another of them was about to deny Him. The rest of them were about to forsake Him. And all of them were, at best, immature. And He loved them to perfection, it says in John 13:1. Don't ever say to someone, "Well if you be good, Jesus will love you more." He couldn't love you any more than He does because He loves you perfectly ... perfectly.

So spiritual growth has nothing to do with our position in Christ as made righteous, made new, and bound for Heaven. Spiritual growth has nothing to do with God's love for us. He loves us perfectly no matter how we grow. Thirdly, spiritual growth has no relationship directly to time. It has no relationship to time. We might be under the assumption that if you just wait around long enough, you're bound to grow by virtue of passing time. May I remind you that spiritual is not measured by the calendar? All of us know about people who have named the name of Christ for years and years and years and have grown barely at all. And if there is growth, it is well nigh imperceptible.

I always think about Hebrews 5:12 where the writer of Hebrews says for the time that has passed you ought to be teachers. But instead of being teachers, I have to teach you again, the basics. And in their case, the gospel because they hadn't even embraced that. But they'd been around the truth and around the assembly of the redeemed. Long enough to be teachers and they weren't even able yet to still learn the first lessons. It's not measured by the calendar. It's not measured by the clock. Have you seen someone who comes to faith in Jesus Christ and just grows at tremendous speed, rapidly? Sure. And you also have known people who have followed Christ for a long years and they seem to make very little, if any, perceivable progress.

Fourthly, spiritual growth is not simply a matter of knowledge. It is not simply a matter of knowledge. Paul in writing to the Corinthians reminded them that knowledge puffed up, made boastful. But love built up. It's not a matter of knowledge; it's not just knowing the information about the Scripture. Again, you can go back to Hebrews 5. A long time had passed and they had been under much teaching and he says you could be teaching now based upon what you know, but I have to teach you the basics again, because you haven't even begun to grow.

I think there are some folks who are under the assumption that spiritual maturity is directly related to information. That's not true. Some of the most dangerous people in the world are immature Christians armed with a lot of information. Very dangerous and very, very difficult to bear for the individual who has the immaturity along with the information because they tend to be proud and not humble. You can know an awful and be very immature.

Let me give you another thought. Fifth: spiritual growth is not simply a result of activity ... of activity. Or to better put it, spiritual growth is not necessarily a result of ministry. It's not necessarily a result of ministry. You can be busily engaged in the work of the church. In fact, you can just about wear yourself out, and be little different than the Pharisees who busied themselves with their traditions and knew nothing about the truth of God and grew not at all.

You can be like Israel. Paul writes about them in Romans chapter 10. He says my heart's desire, prayer to God for them, is their salvation. I bear them witness. They have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. This just absolutely floors me: for not knowing about God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they didn't subject themselves to the righteousness of God. Can

you imagine Paul's commentary on the people of Israel? They didn't understand the righteousness of God. What a statement. They had been around spiritual activity, ceremonial activity. They had tried to carry out every facet of the law. They were functionaries in terms of their religion. They had no spiritual maturity whatsoever.

Now those are the things that I want you to just keep in the back of your mind, all right? Spiritual growth has nothing to do with your position in Christ, that's settled forever, will never change. That is an absolute. Spiritual growth has nothing to do with God's love for you. That too, will never change. That is an absolute. He can never love you more or less because He loves you perfectly. Spiritual growth has no direct relation to time. It is not measured by the calendar. You can be a Christian for years and grow very slowly. And be a Christian for weeks and grow very rapidly. Spiritual growth is not simply a matter of knowledge. You can know a lot and be immature. And spiritual growth is not simply a result of busyness or ministry. Lots of people spend lots of time hearing about the Bible and engaging themselves in ministry and are very immature.

Now having said all of that, naturally we're going to ask the question well what is spiritual growth related to? What is it related to? How can I apply in my life the factors that cause spiritual growth? Well, there are several. In fact, I'll probably give you ten before we're done. We'll go through them rather rapidly. But tonight I want to give you the master key before I give you the rest. Okay?

There is one thing that is the overriding in spiritual growth. And this is something we all have to understand. And let me have you look into it with me for just a moment. Turn in your Bible to Psalm 16 ... Psalm 16. And David gives to us here, a hint--well more than a hint really--an insight into this matter. In Psalm 16, I want to draw your attention to verse 8 and then to verse 9. And notice what David says in verse 8: I have set the Lord continually before me. Because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my glory rejoices." Now I just want to grab one thought of there. The statement of David, "I have set the Lord continually before me." The key, the real master key, in unlocking this progress of spiritual growth is to do just that: to set the Lord always before you, to concentrate on Him, to focus on Him. Very much like we read this morning in Hebrews 12:2, "Looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith, the Perfecter of our faith." It's that God-consciousness. It's that God-ward focus. It's that preoccupation with the Divine One. That is the key to spiritual growth.

You see, God made everything for His glory. He made absolutely everything for His glory. Psalm 19:1 says the Heavens declare what? The glory of God. The firmament shows His handiwork. Isaiah 43:20 says that the beasts of the field will give Me glory. Everything God made, He made to give Him glory. When Jesus Christ was born, you remember in Luke, it tells us that the angels said, "Glory to God in the Highest." Paul, writing to Timothy in those familiar words, 1 Timothy 1:17, "Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever, amen."

God made everything for His glory. It says of Christ, all things were made by Him and ... what? For Him, for His glory. For His honor, for the exaltation of His name. The magnificent, glorious benediction, doxology at the end of Romans 11, "for from Him and through Him and to Him are all things to Him, be the glory forever, amen." That's the issue that really unlocks spiritual growth. We have to understand that we live to give God glory.

I was thinking of Matthew 25 verse 23 and it says, you remember the parable here about the talents. The master said to the servant, who had been faithful, just as he said in verse 21, well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things. I will put you in charge of many things. Enter into the joy of your lord or your master. Down in verse 30, and cast out the worthless slave into the outer darkness in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Now listen, this pictures the fact that there are only two kinds of people: those people who honor the Lord and those people who dishonor the Lord.

Those people who honor the Lord, or if you will, glorify the Lord are rewarded. Those people who dishonor the Lord and refuse to glorify Him are punished ... are punished. There are only those kinds of people in the world. The ultimate condemnation of man is related to this issue. Look at Romans 1 ... Romans chapter 1. And I think this is so very, very important. In Romans 1:21 here is the condemnation of the race of men. It says, "For even though they knew God they," what? "They glorified Him not as God." And then it says as a result they became futile in their speculation, their foolish heart was darkened, professing to be wise they became fools, they exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures. In other words, they made idols. Then what happened? God gave them over the lusts of their hearts. Verse 26, "God gave them over to degrading passions." Verse 28, "God gave them over to a depraved mind." And verse 32 says they are worthy of death. Why? They refused to glorify God. That's the basic issue, beloved, in condemnation. The human race is condemned because it refused to glorify God.

This is serious with the Lord because He will judge those who refuse His glory. Look back with me at Jeremiah chapter 13, as we build our case a little stronger. In Jeremiah 13 verse 11 we read this. Jeremiah, of course, here vivid way giving an illustration, "For as the waistband clings to the waist of the man, so I made the whole household of Israel and the whole household Judah cling to Me, declares the Lord, that they might be for Me a people for renown for praise and for," what? "For glory." In other words the people of Israel were to be a people to give God glory.

So He says Jeremiah speak this word to them. "Thus says the Lord the God of Israel, every jug is to be filled with wine." And when they say to you do we not very well know that every jug is to be filled with wine. Then say to them, "thus says the Lord, behold I am about to fill all the inhabitants of this land, the kings that sit for David on his throne, the priests, the prophets, and the inhabitants of

Jerusalem with drunkenness." Imagine God doing that. "I'll dash them against each other, both the father and the sons together." What incredible language, I'll crush a father and a son together. Smash their heads. "I'll not show pity or be sorry or have compassion that I should not destroy them."

And then Jeremiah cries out, "From the heart of God, listen and give heed. Do not be haughty or proud. For the Lord has spoken. Give glory to the Lord, your God before He bring darkness and before your feet stumble on the dusky mountains, and while you're hoping for light, He made it into deep darkness and turned it into gloom. And if you will not listen to it, my soul will sob in secret for such pride and my eyes will bitterly weep and flow down with tears. Because the flock of the Lord has been taken captive." He says God's going to crush you unless you turn, and verse 16, "give glory to the Lord your God." And, of course, you know the story. They didn't. They refused to give glory to God. And so came the Babylonian captivity and the devastation that followed that. Giving glory to God is the issue. The race is characterized in Romans 1 as a race of people who refuse to give God glory. Even Israel refused. The race is damned for such refusal. Israel was severely and fatally punished for such a refusal.

Let me give you a couple of personal illustrations. Look at Daniel 4. Vivid. Daniel chapter 4 says about Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon. Verse 29 says that he was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon. That was quite a place; the hanging gardens of Babylon were one of the Seven Wonders of the World. They tell us that this would have been one of the earliest air-conditioned buildings in human history. What they did in that hot part of the world was put all kinds of tiers going up toward the top of this great edifice. And then they draped plants, the hanging gardens, over the side. Filled them with water. And as the water ran down the plants and dripped, the breeze blowing through the waters, in effect, air-conditioned the building. Here's Nebuchadnezzar walking on the roof and admiring, of course, the greatness of his world empire. He is, after all, the head of gold.

The king reflected and said, "Is this not Babylon the great, which myself have built as a royal residence by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty." Aren't I something? Look what I've done for the glory of my majesty. Of course, the Old Testament says that God said my glory will I not to ... what? To another.

While the word, verse 31, was in the king's mouth. While he was still extolling his greatness, a voice came from Heaven saying, "King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is declared sovereignty has been removed from you." You have overstepped the boundary. "And you will be driven away from mankind. And your dwelling place will be with the beasts of the field. You will be given grass to eat like cattle. And seven periods of time," seven years no doubt, "will pass over you until you recognize that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes." You didn't build this, God gave it to you and you're going to pay for stepping into the boundaries, over the boundaries, God had said.

So immediately the word concerning Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled. He turned into a raving maniac. From the crown of gold, from the head of the greatest nation in the world's history, he was driven from mankind, began eating grass like cattle, outside the city gate, crawling around in a field, chewing on the grass. He body was drenched with the dew of Heaven, just like all the other animals who stayed outside. His hair grew like eagles' feathers and his nails like birds' claws. He was absolutely, in a legal terminology, insane.

Seven seasons passed while he grazed like a cow. And verse 34 says, "At the end that period, I, Nebuchadnezzar raised my eyes toward Heaven. And my reason returned to me and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever. For His dominion is an everlasting dominion. And His Kingdom endures from generation to generation. And all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing. But He does according to His will and the hosts of Heaven. And among the inhabitants of earth, and no one can ward off His hand or say to Him, 'What hast thou done?' And at that time, my reason returned to me and my majesty and splendor were restored to me for the glory of my kingdom. And my counselors and my nobles began seeking me out so I was re-established in my sovereignty and surpassing greatness was added to me. Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise, exalt, and honor the King of Heaven for all His works are true and His ways just." And I love this, "and He is able to humble those who walk in," what? "Pride." It's very serious not to glorify God. It can cost you your life; it can cost you your sanity.

Acts chapter 12. In Acts chapter 12, very similar situation. Verse 20 talks about Herod being angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon. And he wants to strengthen his position in the eyes of all the population. He wants them to know that he's a strong and formidable force. And so in order to strengthen his position and set himself up in a place where he will maybe not be threatened, to establish his greatness, verse 21 says, he appointed a day. And on an appointed day Herod, having put on his royal apparel, took a seat of the rostrum and began delivering an address to them. He gets on his royal robes, this Herod Day ... Herod Day ... National Herod Day ... honor me day. Puts on his royal robes, sits up on the podium, and begins to speak. Must have been a gift orator. Verse 22, and the people kept crying out, "The voice of a god and not a man!" He is supernatural! Listen to him! Wow! He's god, not a man! And he was loving it, just loving it. And immediately, an angel of the Lord struck him because he did not give God ... what? The glory. And he was ... what? Eaten by worms and died. I don't think that was the planned ending to Herod Day. That's how it ended. You better be careful when you start of glorify yourself instead of God. All the glory belongs to Him.

Revelation 14. This brings it into such clear focus that it is absolutely unmistakable. In Revelation 14, John has one of his many visions. And in the sixth verse, please. He says, "I saw another angel flying in mid-Heaven," or in the midst of Heaven, "and this angel had an eternal gospel to preach to those who live on the earth and to every nation and tribe and tongue and people." Now stop at that point. What's the eternal gospel? What is it? Find out, read verse 7. What did the angel say? He

said with a loud voice, "Fear God and give Him," what? Glory. That's always been the Good News. Fear God and give Him glory because the hour of His judgment has come. And worship Him who made the Heaven and the earth and the sea and the springs of waters. The eternal gospel: that is to say the message that God has always given, whether in the Old Testament or the New, is to fear God and give Him glory. And the truth of Christ is that which makes it possible.

So the master key to this whole thing of spiritual growth is to give God glory, to live my life for the glory of God. To focus my life on giving Him glory. That was the problem with Adam and Even in the Garden. They refused to give God glory and He kicked them out of there. They wouldn't the chicana presence of God with pure hearts. They wanted their sin. And God said then you can't have My fellowship.

And then, when in Exodus 33, Moses went up onto the mountain, God put His glory all over his face. And he went back to face his people, in a sense, to call them to see again the glory of God. And when he came down to reveal to them, as God's instrument, God's glory he was furious because he found them worshipping a golden calf. And he shattered the law of God. And then the Lord gave them instruction to build a tabernacle and they built the tabernacle and the chicanaglory of God came into the tabernacle and dwelt there. And they refused to recognize His glory and they all died in the wilderness.

And then He told them to build a temple. And they built a temple. And in the temple, God put His glory in the holy of holies. And yet, when you come to 1 Kings chapter 8 verses 10 and 11, you see that the temple is desecrated. And by the time Ezekiel writes, in chapter 8 of Ezekiel's prophecy, there are pictures of idols all over the walls of the temple. And people in the temple are worshipping the sun god. And God says Ichabod, which means the glory hath department and the glory of God leaves and goes up over the door and out over the mountain and disappears. And He says if you're going to refuse My glory, then you're going to have relationship with Me and you're going to be judged.

The bottom line in Christian living, the bottom line for the human race is to give God glory. And if we are to grow spiritually, the soil in which spiritual growth occurs is giving God glory. You say that's fine, how do I do that? That's what I want to answer. All that was introduction. How do I do that? I'm going to give you one of several ways. This is the first one. The first way you glorify God is by confessing Jesus as Lord. And that's the only one we're going to mention tonight.

The first way you give God glory is by confessing Jesus as Lord. That's salvation. You can't glorify God and reject His Son. God said if any man love not the Lord, let him be a curse. He said it through the apostle Paul, 1 Corinthians 16:22. If you don't love Christ, you are cursed. You cannot glorify God at all, apart from confessing Jesus as Lord. Listen to Philippians 2. It says God has highly exalted Him, verse 9, and bestowed Him or given Him a name above every name. That at the name

of Jesus every knee should bow of those that are in Heaven and on earth and under the earth. Now listen to this: and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. Here comes the reason: to the glory of God the Father.

You are to be saved and confess Jesus as Lord to the glory of God. Somebody says well aren't we saved in order to get out of hell? Yeah, but that's not the main reason. Aren't we saved in order to be delivered from the guilt of sin? Yes, but that's not the main reason. Aren't we saved so that we can share with somebody? Yes, but that's not the main reason. Aren't we saved so that we can enjoy the blessing of God? Yes, but that's not the main reason. Aren't we saved so that we can enjoy the eternal Heaven? Yes, but that's not the main reason. The main reason you are saved is because your salvation does what? Glorifies God.

That's why Romans 1:5 says we have received grace, Paul says, and apostleship in order to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles. Listen to this: for His name's sake. Not theirs. His. His namesake. That's why that wonderful little statement in 3 John 7, "For they went out for the sake of the name." I love that. They went out for the sake of the name. You say I don't quite understand that. How? When we confess Jesus as Lord, how does that glorify God? Well, first of all God said of Christ, "This is My beloved Son." And when you acknowledge that, you're acknowledging the truthfulness of the Word of God. When God said this Son of Mine is come to seek and to save that which was lost. And you embrace Him in faith and receive that salvation; you give glory to the God who provided the sacrifice. When you confess Jesus as Lord, you acknowledge Him to be who He is. And thus, you affirm the truth of God. When you acknowledge His sovereignty, when you acknowledge His deity, when you acknowledge His saving power, He is glorified.

That's the motive for missions: that He may be glorified. Henry Martin, when he went to India, was involved in reaching people deep, deep in Hinduism. He wrote in his diary upon his arrival and first visit to a pagan Hindu temple, "I cannot endure existence if Jesus is to be so continually dishonored." And he ran weeping, from the place. Salvation is first and foremost so that you might give glory to God. You understand beloved, that for a man or a woman to live in unbelief and reject Jesus Christ is to dishonor the God of grace and love who gave His Son? It's to mock Him. It's to show indifference to Him. We glorify Him when we confess Jesus as Lord. To deny that He's Lord is to deny that God's Word is true, is to refuse to give God glory, is to be condemned eternally and lost.

So to grow spiritually, one's whole life must be involved in glorifying God. And it starts by confessing Jesus as Lord to the glory of God the Father who said He is Lord and who desires that we praise Him as Lord. We'll stop at that point, much more to come. Let's pray together.

Father, so refreshing to our hearts, as Peter said, to be reminded of things, to capture back the basics. We are here to live and fulfill one purpose: to be to the praise of Your glory. You saved us for that. Ephesians 1 says it three times: we were saved to the praise of the glory of Your grace. And

that's where we begin our growth. When we acknowledge Jesus as Lord to the glory of God the Father, we receive the new life principle and begin to grow. Help us Lord, help us to be faithful, not losing focus. Like David the Psalmist, set the Lord always before us, content, more than that, compelled to live to Your glory. To do all we do for Your honor and Your praise. And know that therein lies the key to real spiritual growth that we might become spiritual young men and then spiritual fathers who commune deeply with the living God. That we might be taken by the Holy Spirit from one level of glory to the next level of glory to the next level of glory because we are so totally focused on the glory of the Lord. Accomplish all Your good pleasure in us. In Christ's name, amen.

Available online at: http://www.gty.org
COPYRIGHT (C) 2014 Grace to You
You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (http://www.gty.org/connect/copyright).