

J.J.

SPIRITUAL GROWTH

1 John 2:12-14

*1 John 2: ¹²I write to you, dear children
because your sins have been forgiven on account of his name.
¹³I write to you, fathers,
because you have known him who is from the beginning.
I write to you, young men,
because you have overcome the evil one.
I write to you, dear children
because you have known the Father.
¹⁴I write to you, fathers,
because you have known him who is from the beginning.
I write to you, young men,
because you are strong,
and the word of God lives in you,
and you have overcome the evil one.*

INTRODUCTION

We are still in “Rooted In Christ” series where we started showing you the four stages of Spiritual Growth : Infancy, Children, Young Men and Fathers.

The last time I showed you a person who was already 50 years old who still wanted to be a baby.

Apparently, he’s not alone.

<https://fb.watch/kdDsNAouoP/>

If we find it strange in the physical life but there are still a lot of Christians who are like spiritual babies. We need to grow. We need to mature.

The first thing we will notice in the passages are that there are four types of spiritual maturity : there are stages – babies, children, young men, fathers.

Review :

I. INFANTS

1 Corinthians 3: 1 Brothers and sisters, I could not address you as people who live by the Spirit but as people who are still worldly—mere infants in Christ. 2 I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready.

So who are baby Christians? It's not necessarily new Christians. There are people who have been saved for a long time and yet they are still babies, spiritually speaking.

According to God's Word, **baby Christians are people who are still worldly.**

What does it mean to be worldly?

KJV : "carnal" "sarkikos" governed by animal nature or animal appetites.

How do we grow up from babies?

1 Peter 2:2 Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation,

Remember, continue to hunger for God's Word with the intention of obeying it.

Quote : Spiritual maturity is not reached by the passing of the years, but by obedience to the will of God. – Oswald Chambers.

Quote 2: Physical maturity is bound to time. Spiritual maturity is bound to obedience. – John Bevere

Illustration : We might say, "But pastor, I'm trying to live a life of obedience and yet I fall a lot."

Let me show you this video (Video is Theo trying to walk but falls down.) Zak, his dad, doesn't get mad when he falls down. In fact, he helps him back up. Eventually, he will be able to walk easily.

It's the same with the Christian life. You are living a life of obedience and yet you fall. What matters is you get back up.

Proverbs 24:16 The godly may trip seven times, but they will get up again. But one disaster is enough to overthrow the wicked. (NLT)

II. CHILDREN

1 John 2: 13... I write to you, dear children because you have known the Father.

Etymology : (paidion – young child), a child that still needs to be trained by his or her father

Quote : A spiritual life cannot be formed without discipline, practice, and accountability." – Henri Nouwen, (Spiritual Direction)

In short : In order for a young Christian to grow, he needs to be disciplined. And that's what our Father in heaven does in order for us to grow spiritually.

*Hebrews 12: because the Lord disciplines the one he loves,
and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son."*

7 Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their father? 8 If you are not disciplined—and everyone undergoes discipline—then you are not legitimate, not true sons and daughters at all.

Remember : Discipline is not only correcting bad behaviour but more importantly it is forming good spiritual habits

Example : We teach a child to brush their teeth everyday; to do their homework...it's forming good habits

What is the purpose of God's discipline? To increase our faith.
because you have known the Father.

That's what children to a father is. They are not afraid of anything or worry about anything because the father is with them.

A Christian who has become a child has passed that stage. They have grown from about just looking after themselves from being disciplined and trained to have faith in God.

III. YOUNG MEN

*1 John 2:13... I write to you, young men,
because you have overcome the evil one*

*1 John 2:14.... I write to you, young men,
because you are strong,
and the word of God lives in you,
and you have overcome the evil one.*

Etymology : young men "neaniskos"; it is used to describe men between 24 to 40 years old.

But of course, as we have seen, we are talking about spiritual maturity here and not necessarily age.

So, if we're going to chart this in Spiritual Growth

Infants – Worldly – controlled by their feelings and appetites

Children – Growing - Learning about God's Word

Young Men - Strong -

Remember, God's will is for us to grow in our spiritual life :

Ephesians 4: 13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. 14 Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. 15 Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ.

Spiritual young men are spiritually strong

- **STRONG**

*1 John 2:14.... I write to you, young men,
because you are strong,*

Etymology : strong “ischyros” is-khu-ras, from is-khus - strong, mighty, from one who has the skills to do something.

How do you know that a person is spiritually strong?

Observe this :

*1 John 2:13... I write to you, young men,
because you have overcome the evil one*

*1 John 2:14.... I write to you, young men,
because you are strong,*

- **OVERCOMER**

So a spiritually strong person is one who has overcome (nikao) the evil one.

Etymology : nikao root word “nike” victory.

A spiritually strong person is one who has won against the evil one.

So the question is :

How does the evil one (Satan) try to defeat us?

Remember, we have an enemy of our soul. That's why Paul says in Ephesians, about the power we have in Christ (Chapters 1-3) and then since we have this power, he then instructs us on TO APPLY this power towards our relationship in church, in your life, in our family, in our work, etc. (Chapters 4-6) and then his final words in our Christian life is in Chapter 6

*Ephesians 6: 10 **Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.** 11 Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.*

So how does devil try to defeat us?

- Discouragement

When do you become discouraged? It's not when everything is alright in this world. It's when you are undergoing trials and sufferings.

I love this illustration which had come in many forms.

It was advertised that the Devil was having a garage sale all of his tools. On that date the tools were laid out and all the demons came out to check the items. They had prices marked on them for public inspection, and there were a lot of treacherous instruments: hatred, envy, jealousy, deceit, pride, lying, and so on. Laid apart from the rest of the Devil's tools was a tool, but it was worn more than any of the others and was priced very high. "What's the name of this tool?" asked one of the customers.

"That," the Devil replied, "is discouragement."

"Why have you priced it so high?"

"Because discouragement is more useful to me than all the others. I can pry open and get inside a man's heart with that when I cannot get near him with any other tools. It's badly worn because I use it on almost everyone, **since so few people know it belongs to me.**"

Remember this discouragement is the most powerful tool of the devil and you are only discouraged during times of failure, trials and sufferings.

Biblical Illustration : Satan was trying to discourage Job in believing in God
Discouraging in what?

Remember that Satan had an audience with the Lord and it was the Lord who pointed out Job to Satan. In short, He was saying to Satan, "Look at Job, he follows Me, worships me." What was Satan's reply :

Job 1:9 "Does Job fear God for nothing?" Satan replied. 10 "Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land. 11 But now stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face."

You know what happened : God allowed Satan to take away everything in Job's life – his wealth and his family. Then what happened.

Here's the reply of Job :

Job 1: 20 At this, Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head. Then he fell to the ground in worship 21 and said:

*"Naked I came from my mother's womb,
and naked I will depart.*

*The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away;
may the name of the Lord be praised."*

He was still worshiping God.

And you know what happened then? Satan had an audience again with the Lord. And it was the Lord who pointed out Job to Satan and said that Job still follows Him closely even if Satan tried to discourage him. What did Satan reply?

Job 2: 4 "Skin for skin!" Satan replied. "A man will give all he has for his own life. 5 But now stretch out your hand and strike his flesh and bones, and he will surely curse you to your face."

And you know what happened, right? Even his wife said to curse God and die because she can't take that her husband was suffering, what did Job say?

Job 2: 10 He replied, "You are talking like a foolish woman. Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?"

See this? Satan knows that discouragement is his most effective tool and he will try to discourage us from what? FROM TRUSTING AND FOLLOWING OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST!

That's why our Lord Jesus said :

John 16:33 "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

Young men, are overcomers because they know through God's Word that our Lord Jesus Christ has already given us the victory!!!

Look at what happens when you are undergoing trials and sufferings and the devil tries to discourage you.

Luke 22: 31 "Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat. 32 But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers."

Remember, this during your times of trials and sufferings, OUR LORD HIMSELF IS PRAYING FOR US.

AND THAT IN ITSELF IS ENCOURAGING!

So that even if we fall down, we might get up again and when you become strong – we strengthen others.

And that's what strong Christians do...it's not about themselves alone... it's about ENCOURAGING OTHERS AND THAT IS THE REASON WHY WE GO TO CHURCH.

We'll continue with that next week THE SECRET OF BECOMING OVERCOMERS AND THEREBY GROW IN OUR SPIRITUAL LIFE.

S.G.D.