

18 February 2018

Essential ingredients for Christian growth Pt.8 Trial of our faith

This is our eighth study on our topic – Essential ingredients for Christian growth. In our previous teaching we established the need to live and walk in the Spirit & be led by the Spirit. In this study we will cover the need to grow in faith, which takes place during periods of trial and temptations.

Scriptures upon which this teaching is founded.

1. We grow as a Christian when we grow in faith – exceedingly.

“We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren...because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth” (2Thes.1: 3).

2. Our faith grows during periods of trial.

“That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ” (1Pet.1: 7).

3. One example of a trial is a time of manifold temptations.

“Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations” (1Pet.1: 6).

Trials test our faith, as to whether we will obey the word and trust in the Lord or not – and

- i) Abstain from pollutions of idols, things strangled and blood (Acts 15:20 & 29), fornication (Acts 15: 20, 1Thes.4: 3), fleshly lusts (1Pet 2:11, Rom.8: 13) and all appearance of evil (1Thes.5: 22).
- ii) Flee from Idolatry (1Cor.10: 14), youthful lusts (2Tim.2: 22) and fornication (1Cor.6: 18), and
- iii) Mortify (die to) the deeds of the body (Rom.8: 13), your members – uncleanness (Col.3: 5), and
- iv) Crucify (die to) the flesh (Gal.5: 24).
- v) Bottom-line is – in a time of manifold temptations do we depart from iniquity (2Tim.2: 19) and therefore show our fear of the Lord (Prov.16: 6)?

Applying the teaching to our life today.

Laidlaw College and others, I am sure, would hope to be a breeding ground for stretching young believers in their faith and so see Christian growth as a fruit, such that a person's faith would end-up being strengthened by the experience of college. But when Christians graduate with only a knowledge that “God is”, then college did not stretch and grow their faith, but almost destroyed their faith. But that in itself is a trial.

Question to think about.

What is the difference between a person who falls in a time of trial and temptation, and a person who stands?

My answer to our question from the scriptures.

If we go through a trial and remain standing without giving in to the temptation then we bear the fruit of patience which is evidence of Christian growth.

If we go through a trial and fall in our time of manifold temptations (and “God will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able” (1Cor.10: 13), then God will chastise us. And when we come to the end of God's chastisement we bear the peaceable fruit of righteousness (Heb.12: 11).

Hence, unless we get handed over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh (because of our falling – as was the example in 1Cor.5: 5), then whether we keep standing or fall during a trial, our faith has grown “exceedingly” as we have born fruit which is evidence of spiritual growth. Therefore, our faith grows as a result of trials – the only difference between a person who stands during the trial and a person who falls is the level of grief they feel, and the length of time God takes to bring forth spiritual growth – whether it is following the trial or subsequent to God's chastisement for falling. Therefore the trial of our faith is an essential ingredient for Christian growth.