

Praise the LORD! I will praise the LORD with my whole heart, In the assembly of the upright and in the congregation. The works of the LORD are great, Studied by all who have pleasure in them. His work is honorable and glorious, And His righteousness endures forever. He has made His wonderful works to be remembered; The LORD is gracious and full of compassion. He has given food to those who fear Him; He will ever be mindful of His covenant. He has declared to His people the power of His works, In giving them the heritage of the nations.

The works of His hands are verity and justice; All His precepts are sure. They stand fast forever and ever, And are done in truth and uprightness. He has sent redemption to His people; He has commanded His covenant forever: Holy and awesome is His name.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; A good understanding have all those who do His commandments. His praise endures forever.

- Psa. 111

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Assemblies

Sunday Morning	9:00 a.m.
Sunday Evening	6:00 p.m.
Wednesday	7:30 p.m.

Elders

Tom Brown	502-921-2778
Laymon Byers	502-957-3627
John Smith	502-231-5341

Evangelists

Ron Halbrook	502-955-1748 halbrook@insightbb.com
Steven F. Deaton	502-543-9686 sfdeaton@earthlink.net

Phone: 502-957-5115

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Spiritual Growth

“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God,” which separates us from God (Rom. 3:23). Our only hope for reconciliation to God is through “the precious blood of Christ” who died as the perfect sacrifice for sin (1 Pet. 1:18-19). Until we turn to Christ, we remain “dead in trespasses and sins,” destined to face God’s wrath in eternal torment (Eph. 2:1-3). The man who thinks he can draw closer to God while living in sin deceives himself.

Spiritual growth begins with a spiritual rebirth. Sinners are “born again” and purify their souls “in obeying the truth” (1 Pet. 1:22-23). This happens when they believe in Christ, repent of their sins, confess the deity of Christ, and submit to immersion in water. Since we reach the atoning blood of Christ when we are baptized, the Bible says that “baptism doth also now save us” (1 Pet. 3:21). At that moment, we become new creatures in Christ and begin to grow spiritually “as newborn babes” (1 Pet. 2:2).

Spiritual growth is an ongoing process. Those who “grow in the grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” are “partakers of the divine nature” (2 Pet. 3:18; 1:4). Such growth is a struggle requiring dedication and sacrifice--“giving all diligence.” Faith in Christ is the foundation for growth in the character traits listed below (2 Pet. 1:5-7).

Virtue is moral courage, the determination to do what is right at all costs. Knowledge is the true knowledge of God and His will which we learn from His Word and incorporate into our lives. Temperance is self-control, self-discipline, and self-sacrifice, bringing our will into submission to God’s will. Patience is endurance, staying power, sticking-with-it. Godliness is an active reverence toward God, a life of reverential obedience to Him in all things. Brotherly kindness is the genuine, warm concern, courtesy, and consideration shared in a family--in this case, the family of God. Charity is an active love which seeks

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the welfare and good of others, rather than being wholly absorbed with self.

Spiritual growth requires resisting the sinful desires of the flesh. We must learn to live “as obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance” and we must “abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul” (1 Pet. 1:14; 2:11). As partakers of the holiness of God, God’s people do not participate in such things as sexual immorality, profanity, pornography, gambling, alcohol, dishonesty, malice, spousal abuse, immodest dress, dancing, and lying.

Spiritual growth requires resisting false doctrine. God often warned of “false prophets” and “false teachers” who promise greater “liberty” but lead men into bondage to sin (2 Pet. 2). Many souls are misled by evolution and modernism which deny the Bible account of creation and other Bible miracles. Moral relativism denies the moral absolutes of Scripture, making every man a law unto himself. Multitudes are deceived by the liberal philosophy that allows men to replace Bible teaching with their own theories on feminism, homosexuals, and unscriptural divorce and remarriage. Denominationalism deludes men with human doctrines and practices (names like Methodist and Mormon, sprinkling for baptism, instrumental music in worship, etc.).

Those who grow in Christ will receive “an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you” (1 Pet. 1:4).

- Ron Halbrook

For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.

- Hebrews 5:12-6:2

In The Lord

Salvation is found in the Lord. Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (Jn. 14:6). As such we ought to find out what it takes to be “in the Lord.” Paul says we must be baptized into Christ (Rom. 6:3, 4; Gal. 3:26, 27). This, of course, is predicated on belief, repentance, and confession (Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38; 8:36-38). Paul also tells us there are some things we need to do in the Lord.

Stand fast. “Therefore, my beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved” (Phil. 4:1). To stand fast in the Lord is to remain faithful. Put another way, “be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord” (1 Cor. 15:58). Too many Christians are swayed by the winds of false doctrine, lured by the temptations of the devil, or drift away out of neglect (Eph. 4:14; Jas. 1:13-15; Heb. 2:1, 2). Rather than this, we need to be “rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith” (Col. 2:7). The way to do this is through persistent service to the Lord in prayer, study, and assembling with the saints (1 Thes. 5:17; 1 Pet. 2:2; Heb. 10:24, 25).

Same mind. “I implore Euodia and I implore Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord” (Phil. 4:2). To have the same mind is to be united; to be in fellowship. John said the way to fellowship with each other is to have fellowship with the Lord. “. . . that you may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ” (1 Jn. 1:4). Notice, if we stand fast in the Lord, we will have the same mind—and speak the same thing and have the same judgment, with no divisions among us (1 Cor. 1:10).

Rejoice. “Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I say, rejoice” (Phil. 4:4). The life of a Christian ought to be a life of joy. When we stand fast in the Lord and are united with brethren, we cannot help but to rejoice. Jesus told His disciples to keep His commandments and by doing so they would have joy (Jn. 15:10, 11). It is when we are weak and wavering, divisive and destructive that we have no joy. In such times there is only heart ache and sorrow.

After we are baptized into the Lord, let us be committed to stand fast, have the same mind, and rejoice in Him.

- Steven F. Deaton