After Salvation, What?

C. V. Hunter

Varied reasons have been given for the slow progress that the Christian faith is making in our civilization. These include the following: psychological and sociological changes; emphasis on secular education to the neglect of spiritual nurture, and two World Wars. In the midst of these several diagnoses is suggested another that has been a primary reason for the Gospel being hindered in its progress and influence in the world. This diagnosis has to do with the lack of understanding on the part of the individual Christian concerning his post-salvation living.

The meanings of "save" in the Scripture include: deliverance from the presence and inward power of sins and sin (Mt. 1:21), deliverance from danger (Mt. 8:25), deliverance from disease (Mt. 9:21), and deliverance from God's condemnation (Mt. 10: 22; 24:13). These meanings are somewhat related, but the meaning of "salvation" in this article comprises the range of Bible teaching of the experience of a person who in consequence of repentance toward God and faith in Jesus Christ has been born of the Spirit (Ac. 20:21; Jn. 3:7). Whereas the individual person had been spiritually dead by being separated from the Lord, he becomes spiritually alive in the experience of salvation by being thereby related to the Lord. Stated otherwise, salvation is a free gift of life to the believer (Eph. 2:8, 9).

Nothing that the Lord bestows on man terminates in himself. Even in the past when He delivered the Jewish and Gentile believers from their personal sins, He reinstated among them the lost unity of mankind, hence such deliverance was given as a means to a further end. In view of this fact it has been correctly stated "religion is the mistress, not the handmaid in human affairs. She will never consent to become a mere ethical discipline,...a ladder held for men to climb up into

their self-sufficiency."[1] The Apostle Paul states this truth thus: "His gifts were made that Christians might be properly equipped for their service, that the whole Body might be built up until the time comes when, in the unity of common faith and common knowledge of the Son of God, we arrive at real maturity" (Eph. 4:12, 13, Phillips). This means that if the believer is to fulfill adequately the purpose for which the Lord redeemed him, he must recognize his obligation to move forward to the completeness and maturity of Christian character.

The apostle exhorts the converted person to make every effort to secure for himself and for others the greatest spiritual success. He states the sure method of such achievement in terms of a continuous addition:

> Add to your faith virtue; and to virtue, knowledge;
> and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance,
> patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godli-
> ness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness,
> charity....If ye do these things, ye shall never fall:
> for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you
> abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord
> and Saviour Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 1:5-11).

Whatever else this indicates, it tells the saved person that he has a task to perform in relation to his own growth in grace, as well as in his attitude toward others in society.

One of the major points which hinders Christians from progressing toward this desired maturity is the lack of understanding about the meaning of growth. Life is the basic and primary condition of growth, and always precedes it. The living animal or plant has the potential of growth, and when either dies it rapidly decomposes. The process of growth is by reception and appropriation. This is the universal law of growth in the spiritual realm as well as in the physical or psychological realm.

Life is never static. It is growing and developing or it is regressing, and that which determines growth in the life of a disciple does not come from some automatic and unfailing process after his salvation experience in Christ.[2] The individual

---

1. G. G. Findlay, *The Expositor's Bible: Ephesians* (New York: The Macmillan Company, n. d.), p. 144.
2. W. T. Purkiser, et al., *Exploring Our Christian Faith* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1960), p. 428.

Christian should realize that "progress in grace can be made only by continual choices for good, by a daily self-discipline and determination to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.... To mature in love man must direct his paths continually in following the footsteps of the Master."[3]

With respect to this process of growing toward Christian maturity it is important to accent the fact that entire sanctification plays a significant role. Without such a purging of the heart from inward sin and the fullness of the Holy Spirit the believer will fail to attain the greatest possible development in the spiritual life. However, let it be pointed out that such an experience in Christ of heart holiness does not dehumanize the individual, but instead it rather "returns human nature to normality by taking out the foreign and intrusive nature of sin."[4] No post-salvation experience ever removes the dynamics of personality. These urges, impulses and drives are vital and are a part of the constitutional make-up of the human being. These are neither good nor bad in themselves, but may become beneficial if properly directed, and will surely be destructive to the soul if misdirected.

These impulses or drives which are part of our human nature have been variously named, but one of the most helpful listings of the more important ones is given by W. T. Purkiser.[5] He states them thus: (1) self-preservation, including desire for food; (2) sex; (3) play, the tendency toward motor activity; (4) herd or sociability tendencies; (5) self-assertion; (6) curiosity, and (7) acquisitiveness. Now a believer must realize that none of these is sinful in itself, but every one of these may become sinful if not controlled by the Lord's assistance during the living out of the salvation imparted. It is from these factors that comprise human nature that infirmities emerge. For the believer in his post-salvation experience these infirmities should be a matter of earnest concern since the inability to cope constructively with them may result in either partial or total shipwreck to his faith.

This shipwreck may come by way of such infirmities arising from the physical, psychological, social, or spiritual phases

---

3.   L. T. Corlett, *Holiness, the Harmonizing Experience* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1951), p. 87.
4.   Purkiser, *op. cit.*, p. 372.
5.   *Ibid.*, p. 373.

of his personality. It is also true that the Scripture shows these very "avenues" as the pathways which Satan uses in his attempt to cause such loss.[6] This is illustrated in his temptations addressed to both our first parents and to Jesus. Satan appealed, for example, to the physical appetite of hunger in his attempt to get Adam and Eve to eat of the forbidden tree. It was to this same drive for self-perservation by means of satisfying His physical hunger that Satan tried to get Jesus to make bread from stone following His extended fast. It is likewise true that many Christians inhibit their growth by either positive yielding to Satan's temptation to misuse their physical appetites or by refusal to discipline such appetites to glorify God. Sometimes the hunger drive leads to gluttony; the thirst drive to alchoholism. On the other hand, the body will stand by the mind and even offer itself as a sacrifice for the convictions of the soul.[7]

The danger of a Christian being destroyed by reason of misuse of these physical drives is clearly indicated by the Apostle Paul in stating: "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway" (I Cor. 9:27). The possibility of a Christian being victorious by disciplining his own body is likewise obvious from this same verse, for Paul claimed victory. One of the clearest principles to aid the Christian in his physical discipline is found in Paul's admonition to the Corinthian Christians: "...glorify God therefore in your body" (I Cor. 6:20).

One of the primary characteristics of Bible teaching concerning the body is that the physical body is the medium through which the Christian is to develop his highest spiritual life. Unlike the view of the Middle Ages that the body was a barrier, a thing that held back the individual's growth toward spiritual goals, the Bible tells us precisely the opposite. Our bodies are temples of the Holy Ghost, not things to be despised, and when Paul admonished the Christians at Rome to present their bodies, it was for the purpose of permitting Christ to manifest more completely His disposition through these physical instruments

---

6.   Compare S. D. Gordon, *Quiet Talks About the Tempter* (New York: Revell, 1910), pp. 113-131.

7.   W. Curry Mavis, *The Psychology of Christian Experience* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1963), pp. 73, 74.

(I Cor. 6:19; Rom. 12:1). In fact, the only way that the Christian can be developed is through his body. It is important, therefore, how he uses his hands, his feet, his tongue--every member of his body. "The whole use of bodily control is to make the body the obedient medium for expressing the right disposition. So the Bible, instead of ignoring the fact that we have a body exults the fact."[8] This leads to two observations: (1) the Bible exalts the laws of health and bodily care, and (2) God, in making man of the earth "earthy" (I Cor. 15:47), did not intend this to be his humiliation but his glory. "Christ in you the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27) marks the high goal for every Christian in his daily living.

Following the Christian's salvation experience there comes an inward desire to bring all parts of his personality into an integrated unity. In this process of integration many Christians make shipwreck of their lives because they are unaware of the unique but important function of the mind in effecting the desired balance. The need for this "balance of all of the components of human existence"[9] began when man fell into sin in the Garden of Eden. It was this event which threw the various aspects of human personality into disunity and confusion. Since then, each has tended to dominate the other aspects. This comprises one of the reasons for Christians having such difficulty in personality integration. The emotional part of personality, for example, may want to be pampered to the neglect of the rational. Perhaps even the spiritual aspect may attempt to dominate the personality and thus cause the Christian to neglect proper reliance upon the rational aspect in aiding Christian discipline. The importance of such integration seems to be illustrated in the life of Jesus who "increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man" (Lu. 2:52).

By reason of the centrality of faith at the moment of receiving Christ into the personality, the Christian often unintentionally views the entirety of his spiritual growth as depending upon faith alone. He forgets that it was his reason that first instructed him concerning whether Christ lived and died;

---

8.   Oswald Chambers, *Biblical Psychology* (Cincinnati: God's Revivalist Office, 1914), p. 169.

9.   Howard H. Hamlin, *From Here to Maturity* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1955), p. 26.

whether he had sins of which Christ could forgive him, and other Bible data which was first understood by his intellect before it could be appropriated by his faith. This likewise applies to the entirely sanctified believer who concludes that because he has presented his body a living sacrifice that it is unnecessary to cultivate his mental processes. The Apostle Paul, however, corrects this mistaken conclusion by stating forthrightly a guiding principle as a continuing process of mental change, which process results in a continuing change of the outward expression of the inner man. He states: "Be not conformed to this world:[10] but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind,[11]..." (Rom. 12:2).

In view of the previous data, however, it should be stated that the Gospel itself is not simply intellectual illumination. It is revelation expressed in facts and for redemptive purposes. The essence of Christian experience is not found in an illuminated mind, but in a renewed heart received from the Lord by way of the mind. It is not intellectual wisdom but supernatural wisdom that brings the remedy for sin to human personality. Paul states that Christ is this supernatural wisdom--the One who grants salvation Himself to the believer (I Cor. 12:21, 24). The believer should realize that his intellect is just as important in post-salvation experiences as it was in the acquisition of his initial salvation.

In view of the significant contribution that the intellect makes toward maturing the saint, certain cautions should be given because of the ease with which the mind can go to extremes in its tendency to integrate personality. If the believer is not careful, for example, he will be depending more upon his own intellect than upon the revelation of Christ's mind; he will be glorifying correct thinking above holy living--consequently,

---

10. Literal translation: "Stop assuming an outward expression which does not come from within you and isn't representative of you but is put on from without and is patterned after this age" (Kenneth S. Wuest. "Greek N.T. and Expository Preaching," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, January 1960, 40, 41).

11. Literal translation: "Change your outward expression (from that which came from depraved nature when unsaved) to one that comes from your inner being" (*loc. cit.*).

simplicity of the faith will be crushed "under the heel of intellectual arrogance."[12] The Scripture gives the Christian the directive for keeping his intellect properly disciplined by exhorting him to bring "every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ" (II Cor. 10:5).

Another drive which the believer has is the social impulse or the desire to fellowship with other people. God insists that the believer fellowship with other believers. This is one of the primary methods whereby there can be an interchange of spiritual strength. This perhaps is one of the reasons for the positive instructions to the Hebrew Christians that they should not neglect the assembling of themselves together (Heb. 10:25). It follows that much help accrues from such meetings as public worship services, prayer meetings, and other group gatherings of Christian believers. This value from public gatherings is suggested by the Greek word *koinonia* from which we get the word "fellowship," and means "that which one shares." The depth of meaning in "fellowship" is further indicated by the fact that "communion" in reference to the Lord's Supper also comes from the same root word.[13]

Since this social drive is not automatically selective in the type of people with whom it associates, it behooves the Christian to select the person or persons with whom to fellowship. It is true that unless you associate with non-believers it is unlikely that you will ever lead them to Christ. On the other hand, the extent to which you can associate with non-believers without detriment to your own spiritual life instead of helping them heavenward will depend upon the degree of maturity which you yourself have achieved.

This social tendency toward fellowship with others receives much satisfaction from the relationship between the Christian

---

12. William Dickie, *The Culture of the Spiritual Life* (New York: Eaton and Mains, 1905), p. 292. Cf. this extreme to rationalism defined as "the assertion that the intellectual ability of man himself is competent to arrive at all conclusions and to solve all problems...." W. C. Young, *Bulletin of the Evangelical Theological Society* (Fall, 1958), "Is There a Christian Philosophy?" p. 10.

13. Wilbur M. Smith, *Peloubet's Select Notes on the International Bible Lessons for Christian Living* (Natick, Massachusetts: W. A. Wilde Company, 1963), p. 354.

and his Saviour in secret prayer and meditation. Sometimes Christians overemphasize public gatherings to the extent that they neglect the proper practice of private worship. The multiplicity of "external" activities that come to the believer in the whirl of our present society, lift into bold relief the importance of guarding times of "internal" spiritual cultivation. Although we may associate such private times of meditating on Christ with the life of a hermit, unless we "give the Holy Spirit time to do His work" the spiritual progress in our own souls will be greatly impaired. [14]

It is often true that through seeking spiritual insight by means of both private and public worship, the believer learns how to guide his "maladjustive impulses" to fulfill their proper ends. [15] It has been pointed out that such impulses, which are a part of the essential self, become maladjustive by seeking proper ends by improper methods. For example, the social drive causes the believer to desire to be accepted by others, but if the believer goes to the extreme of compromising his Christian principles in order to achieve such acceptance, this would thereby become an unacceptable impulse.

The Bible cautions the believer with respect to the expression of his social drive in relation to other believers who are weak in the faith. In view of this, Christians who are strong in the faith are exhorted to abstain from certain practices which might be misunderstood by the brethren weak in the faith and even lead to their downfall. Since "love avoids doing any wrong to one's fellow man" (Rom. 13:10, Weymouth), the ethical principle to follow is stated thus: "As for us who are strong, our duty is to bear with the weaknesses of those who are not strong, and not seek our own pleasure" (Rom. 15:1, Weymouth). This does not mean that the stronger Christian will be satisfied to permit the weaker Christian to *remain* weak, but to the contrary Paul avoids such an inference by adding that the believer should "endeavor to please his fellow Christian, aiming at a blessing calculated to build him up" (Rom. 15:2, Weymouth). [16]

---

14. John H. Paterson, *The Greatness of Christ* (Westwood, New Jersey: Revell, 1962), p. 72.
15. W. Curry Mavis, *op. cit.*, pp. 59-72.
16. J. Oswald Sanders, *A Spiritual Clinic* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1958), p. 82.

Another avenue of personality through which the believer may help or hinder his growth toward Christian maturity is through the manner in which he uses his post-salvation spiritual experiences. This is illustrated by the fact that those who have been saved for a long period of time have had seasons of inner exaltation which caused the desire to remain in such "mountain-top" spiritual experience. However, the test of our spirituality is the power to live in the valley for which we have been created. It is the daily routine of life that proves the depth of our spirituality, and not the frequency of ecstatic experiences. This means that for the Christian it is possible to go to extremes in emphasizing spiritual experiences that make one "feel good" instead of seeking to be faithful in obeying Christ in daily living. It was to this weakness that the Corinthian Christians yielded when they overemphasized the spiritual gifts to the neglect of maintaining a loving attitude toward one another.[17]

The temptation that comes to those believers who overemphasize spiritual experiences is to become censorious concerning other Christians. It was to the "spiritual" believers among the Galatians that Paul addressed his kind words: "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another. Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted" (Gal. 5:25-6:1).

In the post-salvation experience maturity is similar to humility in that it is largely unconscious. For this reason it is difficult to define. Some have nevertheless attempted to suggest characteristics of a maturing Christian. In summary, the twelve suggested by J. A. Wood are appropriate:

> 1. An increasing comfort and delight in the Holy Scriptures.
>
> 2. An increasing interest in prayer, and an increasing spirit of prayer.
>
> 3. An increasing desire for the holiness of others.
>
> 4. A more heart-searching sense of the value of time.
>
> 5. Less desire to hear, see, and know for mere curiosity.

---

17. I Corinthians, chapters 12-14.

6. A growing inclination against magnifying the faults and weaknesses of others, when obliged to speak of their characters.

7. A greater readiness to speak freely to those who do not enjoy religion, and to backward professors of religion.

8. More disposition to glory in reproach for Christ's sake, and suffer, if need be, for him.

9. An increasing tenderness of conscience, and being more scrupulously conscientious.

10. Less affected by changes of place and circumstances.

11. A sweeter enjoyment of the holy Sabbath, and the services of the sanctuary.

12. An increasing love for the searching means of grace.[18]

In this brief consideration concerning some of the factors involved in the growth of the individual Christian, it is hoped that help may have been given which will contribute to the reader's effectiveness as a disciple of Christ. By using some of the suggestions given, perhaps each can help prove the following to be false: "Men will usually search until it involves their established way of life, and then they settle for partial truth."[19]

---

18. J. A. Wood, *Perfect Love* (Chicago: The Christian Witness Co., 1880), pp. 311, 312.

19. Robert O. Ferm, *The Psychology of Christian Conversion* (Westwood, New Jersey: Revell, 1959), p. 208.