

Reading: Philippians 3:4-14

“Be diligent in these matters; practice these duties, devote yourself to them so your progress may be evident to everyone” (1 Tim 4:15)

While spiritual birth happens at an instant, growth is a process. Born as the Son of God, Jesus took about 30 years for His growth (Lk 3:23). He did not begin His public ministry until then. Luke records that Jesus “grew” in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and with men (2:52)—intellectual, physical, spiritual and social growth.

The Boy Jesus knew so much even at the age of twelve. His wisdom surprised the religious leaders and people. But He did not rush into ministry eventhough He undoubtedly had a sense of urgency. He waited. He refused to be pressurised by the needs around. This preministerial preparation of Jesus is tacitly overlooked by us to our own disadvantage and disaster.

In his first letter to Timothy, apostle Paul stresses that a leader should not be a recent convert (1 Tim 3:6). An immature person gets puffed up with pride when he is catapulted to positions of authority. He crashlands and brings disgrace to himself and dishonour to the work of God. Paul equates it to the downfall of the devil. In verses 4 and 5 the apostle speaks of proving in domestic responsibilities, and in verse 7 he calls for public dignity. These are neither learnt nor developed overnight.

Our pulpits are downgraded by immature ministers. They defend themselves quoting Paul who started preaching “immediately” after his conversion (Acts 9:20). What they forget is the years of rigorous training and teaching this Jewish zealot had before his highway experience with Christ. All through his life Paul was committed to his personal growth (Acts 9:22a; Phil 3:8-14). Even while awaiting execution, he asked for his “books” (2 Tim 4:13).

When we stop growing we start going down. Dullness in life and staleness in ministry will be the inevitable result. For consistent and nonstop growth, we must not just be regular in spiritual disciplines but stay passionate after God to know Him and make Him known. Everyday with Jesus will be better than the day before!

*Day by day, O dear Lord, three things I pray:
To see Thee more clearly, love Thee more dearly,
Follow Thee more nearly, day by day!*
(St. Richard Chickester)

Almighty God,

We thank You for Your Fatherhood. We thank You, Jesus, for Your Saviourhood. We thank You, Holy Spirit, for Your Personhood. We thank You, O God, for bestowing on us prophethood and priesthood. Thank You for our fellowmen with whom we can enjoy brotherhood. Thank for Your passionate desire that we Your children grow from babyhood to manhood. Oh how much You love us and care for us! Blessed be Your holy Name!

Dear Lord, thank You for all the provisions You have made for us for our consistent growth. Thank You for our parents who help our *physical* growth. Thank You for our teachers and elders who help our *intellectual* growth. Thank You for our neighbours, colleagues and friends who help our *social* growth. Thank You for the Pastors and Preachers who help our *spiritual* growth. Father God, we pray that You give us humility to honour all these human instruments and never despise any of them. Let us walk honestly before You and honourably before men. Let Your favour and the favour of men abound in us. We commit ourselves to love You with all our heart, and love others as we love ourselves.

Dear Lord, we pray that You deliver us from the instant-growth mentality. Let us be patient in understanding Your ways. Your delayed answers to our prayers are only to strengthen our faith. The difficult passages in the Bible are only to sustain our meditation. The difficult people You place around us are only to soften us and shape us. The discouraging situations You take us through are only to teach us that the joy of Salvation alone is constant. Thank You for the promise that those who wait on You would never be ashamed.

Father God, we pray that You raise in our midst servants like Paul to grow many Timothys and Tituses for this generation and the next to come. We pray that our youngsters learn from them how to stay submitted to You and spiritual leadership so You might exalt them in due time. Give us spiritual discernment to catch the little foxes which spoil our vines. Help us identify the wolves in sheep's clothing. Grant us enlightenment to safeguard ourselves from Lucifer's angels of light. Bless us with mature leaders who would protect us from deception by false apostles, false prophets, false evangelists, false shepherds and false teachers. Let us never stop growing until we come to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Your Son. In His Name, Amen!

(Rom 8:15,16,26,27; 1 Pet 2:5,9; Heb 5:12-14; 6:1-3; Lk 2:52; Acts 20:28-30; 24:16;

Mt 22:37-39; Isa 49:23; 2 Tim 1:4,5; Titus 1:5; 1 Pet 5:5,6; SS 2:15;

2 Cor 11:13,14; Eph 4:11-16; 2 Pet 2:1; Jn 10:7,8,12)