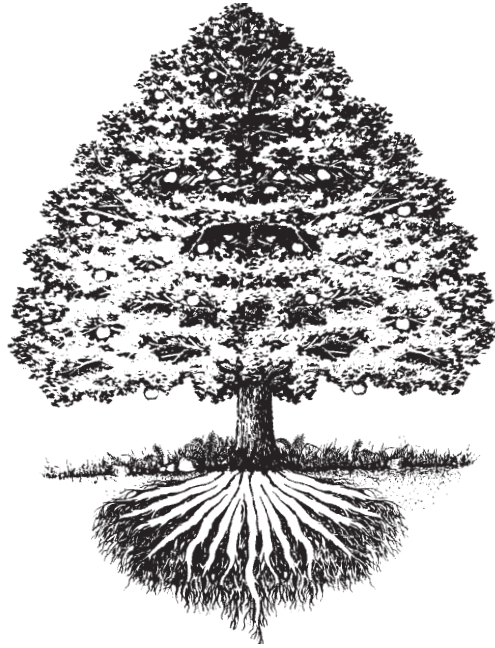


# **Growing In God**



**By B. R. Hicks**



## Growing In God

What is more exciting than something that is growing? Growth is the visible manifestation of the increase of life, whether it be in the natural realm or in the spiritual realm. How heartbreaking, then, to see those who, for some reason, have been stunted in their natural growth or in their spiritual growth!

In his letter to the church at Ephesus, the Apostle Paul set forth the possibility of growth to full maturity in the Spiritual Stature of Christ, which every believer is called to press toward.

And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; **For the perfecting of the saints**, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: **Till we all come in the unity of the faith**, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, **unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:** (Ephesians 4:11-13).

The shadow and figure of the Stature of Jesus Christ is unveiled in the detailed blueprint of the Old Testament Tabernacle, known as Moses' Tabernacle. This was the first Tabernacle, and it was a picture of the Second Tabernacle, the LORD Jesus Christ; therefore, we can find all Spiritual Principles of Wisdom, Understanding, and Knowledge hidden within it. The Mosaic Tabernacle was laid out in the form of the Cross, which was apparent in the positioning of its seven pieces of furniture. In the outer Court, or the beginning of the Cross, was the Brazen Altar where the sacrifices were slain and where blood was shed, which is a picture of the shed Blood of Jesus Christ. After the Sacrifice was slain, Fire came forth from God and lit upon the sacrifice, which is a picture of the Baptism of the Holy Ghost and Fire. Also, in the outer Court was the Brazen Laver where the Priests

washed once, outwardly, which is a picture of Water Baptism in the Name, Death, and Life of Jesus Christ. The Priests returned to this Laver, daily, to wash their hands and feet, which is a picture of dying daily to the fleshly, carnal nature within us.

These same Spiritual Principles were enacted when God led His people, Israel, out of Egypt. He first gave them the blood in Egypt, when they slew the Passover lamb, (Exodus 12:7), which was a picture of the shed Blood of Jesus Christ as God's sacrificial Lamb. While they were still in Egypt, and before they had travelled far, God gave them the Cloud and Pillar of Fire to lead them on their journey (Exodus 13:21,22). In First Corinthians 10:2, Paul called it a "baptism," which was a picture of the Baptism of the Holy Ghost and Fire. Their third experience, which brought them deliverance from Egypt, was crossing the Red Sea (Exodus 14:29). Paul also called this experience a baptism. They were *baptized* in the sea, which is a picture of Water Baptism in the Name of Jesus Christ. Thus, the LORD furnished Blood, Fire, and Water so that the children of Israel might be delivered from Egypt, a picture of the world.

God's beginning of spiritual growth, whether in the case of an individual or a nation, consists of the experience of Blood, Fire, and Water, which, together, make up the Foundational part of the Cross.

In the next section of the Tabernacle, the Holy Place, were three pieces of furniture: the Golden Altar of Incense, which is a picture of prayer through Holy Ghost Intercession and Travail in the Name of Jesus Christ; the Golden Candlestick, which is a picture of the Word of Wisdom, Understanding, and Knowledge or the Humble Mind of Christ; and the Golden Table of Shewbread, which, with its twelve loaves of bread, is a picture of the Governmental Strength of Christ.

The Priest's experience in the Holy Place relates to the second stage of Israel's journey from Egypt to Canaan's Land or the "Wilderness Experience." In this place of testing and proving, God wanted to see whether or not Israel would pray instead of murmuring. He wanted to see whether or not they would walk in the Light of His Wisdom, Understanding, and Knowledge instead of walking in the light of their own carnal reasoning. And He wanted to see

whether or not they would feast on His Governmental Strength instead of feasting on their own weak wills.

Israel's journey from Egypt to Canaan's Land and the journey of the Priest as he served in the Old Testament Tabernacle are beautiful pictures of spiritual growth in the Spiritual Stature of the LORD Jesus Christ.

In the second stage of growth in Christ's Spiritual Stature, the believer experiences prayer offered in the Name of Jesus Christ at the Golden Altar. The believer also experiences further growth in the LORD's Wisdom, Understanding, and Knowledge from the Light of God's Word at the Golden Candlestick. And the believer experiences gaining Christ's Governmental Strength from the Table of Shewbread. Everything gained in the Courtyard and the Holy Place enables the believer to come under complete subjection to Christ's Headship.

Submitting himself to God's Headship makes up the third phase of the believer's journey. This third phase relates to the third part of the Tabernacle, the Holy of Holies, where the Ark of the Covenant and the Mercy Seat were.<sup>1</sup> This was God's Throne Room, where He promised to *meet* and to *commune* with Israel. From this position, God promised to be Israel's Spiritual Husband. The word *commune* appropriately indicates this relationship, and it means to arrange, to subdue, to answer, to appoint, to bid, to command, to destroy, to give, to name, to promise, and to teach. In other words, from the Ark, God promised to be a Head or to be a Husbandman to Israel.

The third phase of Israel's journey, which was her entry into Canaan's Land, pictured the same growing up into the Fullness of the LORD's Headship as does the joining of the believer's will to the Will of God and His Son, Jesus Christ.

Out of the first generation that left Egypt, only four—Caleb, Joshua, Eleazar, and Phinehas—endured the wilderness testing

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and entered into Canaan's Land. (See Scripture references: Joshua 14:1;15:13; and 22:13).

In comparing the believers' spiritual journey with Israel's literal journey from Egypt to Canaan's Land, we see that all believers begin in Egypt with the Blood when they accept Jesus Christ as their Saviour. However, because many lack a vision of growing up in Christ's Stature, they drop out along the way. Some stay in Egypt, but some progress to the wilderness stage of growth. Many stop there, but some keep walking and growing until they enter Canaan's Land, which is a place of Spiritual Union or a Marriage Relationship with Jesus Christ.

Let us not stop in the first phase of growth, the Courtyard or Egypt (the World); let us not stop in the second phase, the Wilderness, the Holy Place; but let us press on to the third phase, the Holy of Holies or Canaan's Land, Married Land.

John the Baptist had this revelation of growth to spiritual maturity when he said, "He [Jesus Christ] must increase [grow], but I must decrease." Here we find, in this short verse, a blueprint for growth which is the decrease of the old carnal heart so that the New Heart might increase.

When we accept Jesus Christ as our personal Saviour, He washes away our sins with His Blood, and He creates a new *baby* Heart within our old heart. This New Heart is perfect; it is created in Righteousness and true Holiness (Ephesians 4:24). It cannot sin because it is born of God (I John 3:9). However, creation of this new *baby* Heart, at the time of our Salvation, does not destroy the old heart. Only as we crucify our carnal heart, from day to day, can our New Heart grow. Paul declared that he died daily (I Corinthians 15:31). Although the sinner has only one nature—the corrupt, Satanic nature inherited from Adam the First, the Christian has *two* natures: the New Heart and the old heart. The conflict which rages between these two natures within the believer is tremendous indeed; and it is well described by the Apostle Paul.

**For that which I do I allow not; for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.** If then I do that which I

would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then **it is** no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but **how** to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me (Romans 7:15-20).

In verse 22, Paul said that he delighted in the Law of God after the *inward man* or his spiritual man; but with his flesh, he served sin. In the Book of Galatians, Paul describes this same warfare, which every believer experiences—the struggle between the fleshly man and the spiritual Man.

**For the flesh lusteth [wars] against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh:** and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would (Galatians 5:17).

Jesus Himself explained the believer's two natures in the *Parable of the Good Tree and the Bad Tree*. The good tree that could not bear evil fruit represented the new spiritual Heart; and the bad tree that could not bear good fruit represented the old carnal heart.

In the Book of Mark, Jesus described the corruption that flows from the carnal heart.

**For from within, out of the heart of men,** proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: **All these evil things come from within, and defile the man** (Mark 7:21-23).

The Apostle James, moved by the Holy Ghost, compared the two natures within man to a fountain sending forth both sweet and bitter water—the sweet flowed out of the New Man, and the bitter flowed

out of the old man. James concluded: “My brethren, these things ought not so to be.”

Surely, every one of us can agree with the Apostle James that these things ought not so to be, but what to do about them is another matter.

Let us look again at Paul’s testimony: “I die daily.” To what was he dying? He was experiencing death in his fleshly man, his carnal heart. Because Paul had this revelation he said:

**That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man,** which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; **And that ye put on the new man,** which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness (Ephesians 4:22-24).

Spiritual growth means putting off the old man, the corrupt, Satanic nature, and putting on the New Man, the Nature of the Lord Jesus Christ.

You may ask, “But how can I grow? How can I put to death my carnal nature?” Well, God in His Love and Mercy has made abundant provision: Blood, Fire, and Water. With these God-given provisions, the believer can crucify his flesh or his Adamic nature. Just as it took the experiences of blood, Fire, and Water for Israel to get out of Egypt, so it takes the Blood of Jesus Christ, the Baptism of the Holy Ghost and Fire, and Water Baptism in Jesus’ Name to deliver believers from Egypt, which is a type of the world. These three experiences comprise the spiritual Foundation upon which the penitent person’s Spiritual Building of Gold, Silver, and Precious Stones must be erected.

No substantial building in the natural realm can be built without a complete foundation. Neither can we build spiritually without a proper Foundation. Some try to build upon just the Blood; others try to build on the Foundation of Blood and Fire; but it takes the complete Foundation—Blood, Fire, and Water to erect a complete Spiritual Building.

The Apostle Paul declared that he had laid the Foundation, but for every man to take heed how he built thereupon, for no other Foundation can be laid than Jesus Christ. It was His Death that laid the Foundation of Blood, Fire, and Water upon which we have the privilege of building Gold, Silver, and Precious Stones.

At the Judgment Seat of Christ, our Building will be put into the Fire, and any wood, hay, or stubble (the works produced by our flesh) will be burned up (I Corinthians 3), while the Gold, Silver, and Precious Stones (works produced by the Will of God) will abide the Fire.

The Fire will reveal the nature of every person's works. What a surprise it will be in the Day of Judgment when the Fire devours the deeds that some believers have thought were so righteous, while, in truth, they were the works of the flesh produced their our own proud wills. But the thrill of it all is that if believers will allow the Fire of the Holy Ghost to burn up the wood, hay, and stubble (the works of the flesh), now, they can build on top of their Spiritual Foundation with Gold, Silver, and the Precious Stones of His Will, and these works will endure God's Judgment Fire!

The Apostle Paul's admonition in First Corinthians 9:24 was to "Run, that ye may obtain." Paul was speaking of obtaining the Prize of being in Canaan's Land, the Holy of Holies, and being the Bride of Jesus Christ, which is a Oneness of Spiritual Relationship between believers and their Saviour, which is achieved by growth in His Spiritual Stature.

Not every Christian is going to be in the Bride. In the natural realm, there are more people at a wedding than the bride and the bridegroom. There are the best man, the bridesmaids, the guests, and many others. In like manner, the Wedding Supper of the Lamb will have more than just the Bride and Jesus, the Bridegroom. There will be virgins (Matthew 25:1-10; Song of Solomon 6:8); there will be the best man (John 3:29); and there will be guests (Matthew 22:11). But the predominate one at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb will be the BRIDE, who has surrendered to her Bridegroom's Will and who has

grown to spiritual maturity (Song of Solomon 6:9; Revelation 19:7,8). She will be the one who has left the world of Egypt and the flesh of the wilderness and has become joined to Jesus Christ in Spiritual Canaan's Land, the Land that flows with milk and honey.

This is the excitement of living in the Crucified Way; this is why, as believers, we are busy "putting off" the carnal man and "putting on" the New Man, Jesus Christ. This is why we fast, pray, and desire to be like Him. This is why anything the LORD may demand is small compared to the Prize.

In the Word of God, we find three places of Eternal Abode for believers: the New Heavens, the New Earth, and the New City. Growth in the Stature of Jesus Christ determines in which one of these three places believers will spend Eternity.

One group of believers will wear White Robes (Revelation 7:9). Throughout Eternity, they will remain in the Temple of God in the New Heavens. These believers are the ones who will weep over what they have missed. Other believers will grow higher in the Spiritual Stature of Jesus Christ, into the Holy Place or the Governmental Realm. These believers will wear White Raiment and will reign on the New Earth (Revelation 4:4). But the occupants of the New City, the New Jerusalem, will be the Bride, the believers who, while on Earth, will have grown in Spiritual Stature into the realm of the Holy of Holies. They are the ones who will have become *one* with the LORD Jesus Christ. Throughout Eternity, these saints will rule and reign with their Bridegroom out of the New City. These overcomers, the Bride, will be dressed in White Linen (Revelation 19:7,8), and, with Jesus Christ, they will come out of Heaven on White Horses, at the end of the Tribulation Period, to begin Christ's Millennial Reign on the Earth.

After ruling with Christ for a thousand years, the Bride then will enter the New City, where she will be *one* with the Fullness of God forever. What a Prize to gain!

Knowing this, we can understand the Apostle Paul's zeal for winning the race and gaining the Prize when he said the following:

Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but *this* one thing *I do*, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth unto those things which are before, **I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus** (Philippians 3:13,14).

The vision of the Prize, the Bride of Jesus Christ, puts a run in believers' feet. This vision makes them count all else as dung that Christ might be won. The thrill of the Word of God is to *know* Him, to become *one* with Him, and to experience Spiritual Union with the Lord Jesus Christ!

May you be blessed with a desire to GROW into full, mature Spiritual Stature in Christ Jesus.

