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IN STEP WITH THE SPIRIT ?

We've been talking about "intentional healthy Christian growth." First, you are "born again" when you become a believer. Then you "grow up" into your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. That's the "sanctification" aspect of salvation, becoming more like our Savior. But this is not merely "moralism" by simply improving your behavior. Unfortunately, that's the idea picked up by many people in or out of the pew. As Galatians 1:3-5 says, *"there are some who trouble you and want to distort the one true gospel of Christ."*

1- LIKE JESUS. This is your goal, and the desired outcome of sanctification. Galatians 2:20 puts it like this: *"if is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me."* It's the scriptural picture of "union with Christ." John 15 explains this as abiding in Jesus, the true vine, so that you produce His fruit, and become like Him. As a "new creation" in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17) and "predestined to be conformed to His image" (Romans 8:28), you "put on the new self which is being renewed after the image of its creator" and (Colossians 3:10), "growing up in every way into Him" (Ephesians 4:14), "being transformed into the same image of the Lord, for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit" (2 Corinthians 3:18).

The operative principle: *The Spirit of God works the Word of God so the people of God become like the Son of God.* An unexpected result of this can be an increasing sensitivity to sin in your life. This is not false humility but realistic thinking. As you grow closer to Christ, you become more aware of your need for the Savior, thankful for His grace, and dependent upon His power. So how does one grow in Him?

2- LETHARGY. You won't reach any goal through laziness, complacency, or self-righteousness. A.W. Tozer puts it this way: *"If we feel that we are what we ought to be, then we will remain what we are. We will not look for any change or improvement in our lives. This will quite naturally lead us to judge everyone by what we are. This is the judgment of which we must be careful. To judge others by ourselves is to create havoc in the local assembly."* If this is your attitude, you're basically saying, "I'm OK where I'm at so WE don't need no questions about our spirituality. Don't challenge me and don't try to change me." We've already seen how "quietism" let-go-and-let-God, can be a form of false pietism of extreme passive dependency, and another form of spiritual laziness. Conversely, "activism" go-fight-win, attempting to do everything in your own strength, is another form of spiritual pride. These are closely related to two more.

3- LEGALISM. You won't reach the goal through rules and regulations. But it's a big temptation to make man's laws requirements for salvation. Galatians 3:3 says *"are you so foolish, having begun by the Spirit, that you are now being perfected by the flesh and works of the law?"* Legalists try to enslave you. But being religious about man-made rules won't work to make you more like Jesus. God says you're set free from the penalty and the power of sin. Romans 14:17 says *"the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit."* Relationship, not religion.

4- LICENSE. This opposite extreme says there is no goal, it's all of grace so don't worry about sin. Taken to extreme, this leads to licentiousness, or living without legal or moral restraint. "Antinomianism" basically means "no law" and suggests you can receive Jesus as Savior but Lordship is optional. That's theological nonsense. You can distinguish Savior and Lord but you can't separate them in salvation (Romans 5). Jesus said *"whoever abides in Me will bear much fruit, and if you keep My commands you will abide in My love."* Galatians 4:6 says to believers *"because you are God's sons, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts"* and 5:1 says *"for freedom Christ has set us free."* So how do we live in this liberty?

5- LIVING IN THE SPIRIT. When Jesus sets you free you are free indeed. Liberty to live for Him by His power within. Galatians 5:18-25 says *"walk by the Spirit and you will not gratify desires of the flesh. The fruit of the Spirit is love: joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit."* In His grace, by His power, for His purpose.

As Galatians 6:7-9 says, *"Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we shall reap, if we do not give up."* Intentional- doing something about it. Healthy- staying strong. Christian- becoming more like Christ. Growth- bearing fruit. Trust and obey, by the Holy Spirit.