

FOUR STEPS TO SPIRITUAL GROWTH

By Don Krider

(Acts 9:31 KJV) Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.

The Church is not found in the Old Testament. Even though there are types and shadows of how they picked out leaders and elders, and how they picked out workers, the pattern that Jesus Christ came to establish, He established on the day of Pentecost and He began to bring it forth. I want to show you four steps of spiritual growth, to help you grow a little bit.

I want to grow a whole bunch. I'm like Paul; I have not yet attained. ***"But this one thing I do, I'm forgetting the things that are behind and I'm reaching forward, pressing onward toward the mark of the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:13-14).*** I want to say that there is a moving of God's Spirit - it's happening everywhere. God isn't going to move; He's always been moving. The problem is that we got out of the flow, got on the bank and began to build a program that looked like that which God had. But the Church is coming back to the greatest days it has ever seen; greater than the day of Pentecost, greater than that outpouring (as great as it was).

The Church is going to experience something even beyond that - something beyond the speaking in tongues, something beyond the flames of fire. We're going to experience growth in the Church. Pentecost was given so you could grow. The Holy Ghost was given so you could be strong. The Holy Ghost came to guide you, to teach you, and to direct you into all things (John 16:13-15). He didn't come to get you to retire. I found out over these years that I have been preaching, that He's not interested in my program. No matter how good I make it look, He already has one.

The mother of a friend of mine got saved over fifty years ago at a tent meeting that my Grandfather preached in Sanger, Calif. and I was there. Years later I was asked to do her funeral and the thought that came to me that my Grandfather was used to bring to her into the kingdom of God, and I was used to usher her into the presence of God. Glory!

There are four things in the scripture above (Acts 9:31) that I want to share with you in this study. The Holy Ghost can do more in a few moments than we can do all night long. "Then had the churches rest..." Underline the word rest. If you are not at rest maybe you had better check your location. If you are not at rest, maybe you had better check where you are working; you may be working on the wrong job. You may be trying to perfect holiness without the Spirit. You may be trying to work something up without the Spirit of God. Let's look at Hebrews 4:10-11:

(Heb. 4:10 KJV) For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his. (11) Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.

He said to cease from your own works that we might enter into His rest, but we have to labor to enter that rest. You can say, "Well, I want to be in the rest of God, but there are these negative thoughts that come along; there are always bad reports that come along." When you are in the rest of God, it doesn't make any difference what is going on around you. It doesn't

make any difference what the action is going on around you. When you are in the rest of God you have great peace. When you are in the rest of God nothing moves you. When you are in the rest of God everybody can do anything they want to do; they can say anything they want to say, but none of these things offend you (Psalm 119:165). Nothing is going to move you or cause you to stumble.

The Church must enter into the rest of God. We must take our hands off of the Church, and let the Holy Spirit use us dynamically. The Holy Spirit will use us in a powerful way if we will take our hand off the print that God gave us to do the work by. I've noticed through the years that every time the Holy Spirit started to move, man jumped out of the river and he put a program on it. You couldn't get saved unless you had the baptism of the Holy Ghost. I said, "Where do you see that." "Well, it's our organization." That organization isn't going anywhere. You can't work your way into righteousness; you can't work your way into heaven. The best thing you can do is give up. Get up in the morning, shout the victory and say, "God, whatever you have in store, I'm not only going to live in the spirit, I'm going to walk in the spirit. I'm going to be in total rest. I'm not going to be overanxious about things. I'm not going to be tied up about things; I'm not going to worry about things. It's Your program. I'm just a part of the Church of the living God and You said that You would supply all my need according to your riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:19).

Sometimes God just makes us stop. There was one sacrifice made once for sin and that was through the blood of Jesus. He brought it into a place and He said, "I want you to rest here. I want you to rest in this place I've given you. I want you to rejoice in this place I have given you. I want you to be renewed in this place I've given you. I want you to take your hand off My program and let Me do what is good in My sight."

So the first thing I have to learn to do is rest. That is the hardest thing to do; have you ever noticed that. When you determine that you are going to rest, the phone rings, somebody needs something, and it's so urgent. They never called you before but all of a sudden it becomes so urgent. Jesus said to his disciples, "Come apart - take some time out - rest" (Mark 6:31). I heard an old saying one time: "If you don't come apart, you will fall apart." God is wanting a people who are at rest with Him no matter what the action is outside; no matter what the report is outside, they are at rest in the Lord. They are not worried or anxious about tomorrow. They are not concerned about everything. They are concerned only about their walk with Christ.

So He said, "I want to give you rest." Jesus said in His first message that He gave to the lost: "***Come unto me all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest***" (***Matt. 11:28***). Rest doesn't come from our ability. Rest comes from the Lord. He said that you have to enter into it; you have to want it, you have to desire it. You say, "Well, if I get into a restful position nobody will know that I am busy." Why do you care what people know you are doing or not doing? If you know that you are pleasing God with what you are doing, you can do that until Jesus comes, and that will be fine. We need to learn to rest and let God move in our lives when He wants to move, and how He wants to move. A natural need should never be a motivating factor for us to move.

"Then had the Churches rest throughout all Judea, Galilee and Samaria, and were edified." The Church should be edified. He said, ***"Let all things be done unto edifying"*** (1 Cor. 14:26). You can't grumble unto edifying. You can't complain unto edifying. You can't gripe unto edifying. You can't backbite unto edifying. You can't doubt unto edifying. Yet Paul tells the Corinthian Church, "Let all things be done unto edifying." We should examine ourselves to see if what we are doing is edifying the body. Is it going to build up the body? Is it going to strengthen the body? Is it going to bring a greater rest to the people of God? We don't need to tear the Church down; we need to build it up. We need to encourage one another; let one another know they are somebody in Christ. They do have authority, they do have power, they do have everything God said they had.

God is saying that we need to enter into His rest and we need to do everything that we are doing unto edification. The next time you want to complain, you want to talk about somebody, it's going to come to you and it's going to say, "Is that edifying? Is that really edifying?" The Lord wants us to realize that whatever we do, not only are we doing it as unto the Lord, whether it's in word or deed or whatever our hand finds to do unto the Lord, but the end result ought to be edifying one another. When we come to Church, we ought to edify one another. We ought to build up one another. We ought to make it an exciting place for people to come.

Look at this, "... and were edified and walking in the fear of the Lord." In Psalms 111:10 he said, ***"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."*** You don't even have the beginning of wisdom if you don't fear God. You need to have an awesome reverence that everything in the Bible has been written by the apostles and the prophets, and has been handed down to the Church and means what it says, and we need to be busily doing what it is we find written here. We don't need to write a new Bible; we don't need to write another testament. We need to live this testament. The reason some people write other testaments is because they are easier.

So we need the fear of God. If we are going to have wisdom to know how to work in this last day, we must have the fear of God in our hearts because that is the door, or the beginning of wisdom. It is not the end of wisdom; it's the beginning of wisdom. It's where you start from. But so many people don't fear God and they change the Word any way they want to. A beloved Pastor friend was in my office, and we were just talking and sharing together. He said, "Sometimes I preach this Word and it seems really hard. Some of the people get upset with me." I said, "Good, let them have it. Paul said, ***'The more I love you, the less I am loved of you'***" (2 Cor. 12:15).

If you are in the fear of God you are not looking for the applause or the approval of man. You don't wait and write your sermons so it appeals to the intellect, but you study and let God bring it the way He wants to bring it. Then it pours out and hits who it hits and strengthens who it strengthens. It convicts who it convicts and you can go home, you can lay down and you can say, "Praise God. I have done what You told me to do, I have said what You told me to say and Lord, I have done it all to edifying."

We need the fear of God in our hearts; that awesome reverence that pleases God when I do what He says. I am justified, not by hearing this; I am only justified when I do it. I am not justified by being in Church and hearing the word of God; I am only justified when I walk out the door and I begin to live it. I begin to put it into action. That's the fear of God.

I know that God means what He says and God is not going to take any excuses. God is not going to take any compromise. He is not going to take any reason for us not doing it; He has commanded us to do it. We are His servants, we are His witnesses, we are employed by the kingdom of God, and we are to represent the kingdom of God. We are representing the Lord Jesus Christ and we need to realize through the fear of God that the decisions we make, many times cause people to err.

A few years ago we were ministering in a Church in Montana, and they asked us to pray for their city, that there would be a revival, that there would be a move of God. We have been praying for that place ever since then, and it happened! It happened! We told them that we would pray for them and, bless God, when you tell somebody you are going to pray for them, you had better pray for them. When you say that you are going to do something that is a vow, and you had better get it done; you better stay in there and you better pray. I don't care if you don't think you are ever going to see any results, you hang in there, you keep praying, you keep believing God and you are going to get a good report one day.

We have to get out of this peanut thinking. "Well, just us few folks. We must be that little flock that Jesus talked about: ***Fear not little flock, for it's the Father's good pleasure to give unto you the kingdom (Luke 12:32)***. That must be us now. We are just a little flock." The strength is not in the flock; the strength is in the shepherd. We dumb sheep couldn't even protect ourselves from the wolf. We need a shepherd, and we need to submit to that shepherd (John 10:11,14). We need to begin to be confident that what He has promised, He is going to fulfill. Whatever He spoke is going to happen. Not one thing He prayed is ever going to fail; we are going to walk in unity. We are going to walk in the oneness of the Holy Spirit; we are going to walk in one mind before the Lord returns. So we need to fear God, don't we? If we don't fear God, we do anything we want to do. If the speed limit on the highway says 70, you are afraid to go 75 because you fear the long arm of the law hiding somewhere where you can't see him - up in an airplane, radar over the hill. It has happened to me; I know what I am talking about. It says 70 but 75 will be fine, 76 is a little better. I've got to hurry to get there now - 77, 78, 80 won't hurt. All of a sudden the highway patrolman screams at you with his siren and you say, "Where did you come from?" He says, "We have had our eye on you for several miles."

That's the way it is with God. We don't see Him so it must be O.K. God has had His eye on you and me. We are the apple of His eye and He watches over us and we think we are getting away with something. I want to tell you there comes a day when He is going to arrest us for that very thing we thought we were getting away with. That's why we need to repent every day and say, "Oh God, I'm sorry. I am going to go the speed limit and no more." I know that I fear God and I know that God has a chastening rod. I don't care what the government says

you can't do to your kids, God didn't make that rule. If you need chastening He will bring the rod to you and He will give it to you. He is not worried about whether the government is going to write a law against Him and throw Him in prison.

We need to come back to the fear of God and begin to do what God tells us to do. If God says do 70, we do 70. If God says, "I want you to turn here, we just turn here. If God says, "I want you to jump in this river," we are just going to jump in this river. The Church is getting back in the mighty flow of the Holy Spirit. Everywhere we are going the words are "prayer, prayer, prayer, prayer." We must seek God; we must pray. There seems to be an urgency in that one word alone that seems to be happening all over the country where I have been. It's "pray!" If I believe God and I fear God, then I am going to pray an effectual, fervent prayer without ceasing (James 5:16).

Look at this: "*...the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost...*" You don't get into the comfort of the Holy Ghost until you walk in wisdom. When you walk in your worldly wisdom, He is going to chasten you, not comfort you. In John 14:26 and John 15:26, Jesus called Him the Comforter, the Holy Ghost. He will be a Comforter. He is not just going to move in and move out; He's going to abide with you forever (John 14:16-17).

What we need is a Church that is at rest, edifying one another, obeying the word of God because the fear of God is there again. We have an awesome reverence to please God, not just because we don't want to get whipped but because we want to please Him. In everything we do and everything we say, we need to have the fear of God working there. When the fear of God works there, and everything that we have been guilty of has been dealt with, and got rid of, then the Comforter begins to comfort us. I remember when I was a kid we had those old feather down blanket and quilts, big old comforters they called them. One night I fell out of bed and didn't wake up. But I started getting cold, started getting chilled, and all of a sudden I realized that I was freezing to death and I was trying to get hold of the comforter to pull over me. I want to tell you, the comforter never moved; I moved. A lot of us have fallen out of the Gospel bed, haven't we? We need to get back where the Comforter is.

Now these are the steps for getting into that place; these are the steps that are going to bring results. You are not going to do much but complain, or maybe once in a while have victory if you are not walking in the fear of God. If you are not comforted by the Holy Ghost, if you are not edifying the body of Christ, if you are not resting in God, you're just going to be trying to find some rest, aren't you?

Look at this next phrase. I love this: "...were multiplied." Glory! They said, "We have to have some programs to draw people." No! God will draw the people He wants to draw when we start walking where we need to walk; when we start operating in the fear of God. When we start praying, we are going to see the crowd come. We are going to see us going out there and getting them. We are going to see them coming through the door. We know a person whose son is behind bars and he's evangelizing; reaching out from behind the walls into

the free society. We are reaching from the free society in behind the walls. We just need to reach everywhere. The highways and byways are a good place to start.

So He said they were multiplied when they had rest, when they were edified. Nobody wants to join a dry Church, a grumbling, mumbling bunch. They want to get into one where it's edifying. They come hurting, they go away edified. The Church has to learn to live, walk and move in the fear of God, and be obedient to the word. Then we have to learn to abide in the Comforter and let Him make us comfortable in whatever situation we find ourselves. Quit trying to change the situation to influence somebody to come to Church. Quit trying to change conditions. If God is drawing them, you can't stop them; they will run over you getting in the door!

Think about the Upper Room. Those people had proven they were in the fear of God. Do you think that when the Holy Ghost came, they weren't edified? Do you think that when the Holy Ghost came they weren't comforted? What they had waited for, all their expectations were exceeded. The second chapter of Acts tells us that three thousand men and I don't know how many women, were added to the Church that day, and just a few days later, there were five thousand added to the Church. Why? Because the Church was walking, the Church was moving, the Church was living. They were at rest. They had finally found a rest, hallelujah! They had finally found a place where they could cease from all that religious activity over in the synagogue. They could just get away from all of that bringing of lambs, bulls, and bullocks. They could just raise their hands now, come before God, and they were edified. They were at comfort.

They said, "Men and brethren, what must we do to be saved?" They were saying, "What can we do to get some of this? This is good stuff. I have been in the synagogue every day of my life but I never found this. I have been religious all of my life and never got this." We have to walk; we have to live in the rest of God. We have to absolutely purpose to be a person of edification. I don't care what we say or what we do; it should edify the body of Christ.

We must walk in the fear of the Lord; then we must let the Holy Spirit comfort us in whatever situation we find ourselves. There is a lot more to it than that, but just four simple little steps will change our life. Ask yourself, "Am I really, really in the rest of God? What moves me? What in the world troubles me?" You need to deal with those areas that trouble you. You need to come to God honestly and say, "Lord, this things bothers me." God will deal with it for you. We need to look and see when we come to Church and when we are together, "Am I edifying anyone? Am I edifying this brother or that sister, or am I just preaching a message because I have a few minutes here?" I want to tell you that we don't need to preach a message because we have a few minutes. We need to have something to say when we open our mouth; we need to challenge one another. We need to leave here edified and say, "Praise God, I can hardly wait until next Sunday. I don't know what the Pastor has from the table but I want to come to Church. Nothing is going to move me. I am at rest with God. I am an edifying machine and I am walking in the fear of God. Now I am in the comfort of the Holy Ghost."

I have heard some pretty weird stories about things they want to do to Christians in these last days - newspaper reports and television- but do you know something: I know who is in control. They won't do a thing to you until God lets them, and they may never do anything because God may take them away. We need to get back into the flow and quit trying to build the program; quit trying to edify ourselves at the expense of others. We need to walk in the fear of God and our comfort ought not to be flesh; our comfort ought to be the Holy Ghost. If someone says to you, "Nobody loves me, nobody cares," just give them this scripture:

(Zeph. 3:17 KJV) The LORD thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing.

The Lord sings over you with joy. He is rejoicing over you. Why do you care if nobody else, flesh and blood, approves of you? Old Paul was in prison by himself many times, and there wasn't a lot of approval of him, but he would win them to Christ. Do you know why? Because he was comfortable in his situation. He was in the fear of God. He was there to edify; he was there to save. He had a mission in life. It didn't end when he was chained up. He cared about the churches, so he began to write letters to the Philippians; he began to write letters to the Colossians; he began to write letters to the Galatians. He is in prison; he's bound, he's in chains many times. What is he doing with his time - feeling sorry for himself? No, he's comforted already; the Holy Ghost is there. The Holy Ghost is comforting him. The Holy Ghost can do something that man can't do. He stays with you 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The Holy Ghost can do that and He can comfort you regardless of your situation, regardless of what is going on in your life. You can begin to edify the Church.

"Well, I don't feel like going to Church tonight." Who asked you how you felt? I didn't see that in there. He said, "***Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together***" (Heb 10:25). If you have to drag yourself to Church, drag yourself down there, let somebody lay hands on you and anoint you with oil; get a little comfort, get a little edification. Begin to fear God and begin to do whatever it is God said to do in this Bible. If you can't get to Church, call for some elders to come and lay hands on you; anoint you with oil and you can come to Church next time.

If we are going to move with the flow of the Holy Spirit, we have to get our toes off of the bank and into the water. We have to plunge into this thing. The Holy Ghost has to be our Comforter. What happens if all of a sudden you get cut off from everybody; who is going to comfort you then. What happens if all of a sudden everybody just turns against you because they don't like the way you talk? Who is going to comfort you then? I believe we had better develop something like Paul had, "My comfort is in the Spirit." He said in Phil 4:15, "***No man communed with me concerning giving, only you.***" The crowd got narrower every time he got in trouble.

It always works that way. When you are on the victory line, when you are shouting and dancing, everybody wants in. But when you are stretched out on the rack of circumstances nobody wants to join you. Paul said, "It doesn't make any difference, my comfort is in the

Holy Ghost. I am going to edify the Church. I am going to write them some letters. I am going to lift them up. I am going to tell them what God said because I fear God. While I am in this prison it doesn't make any difference; I'm going to get a good rest." Don't you know his body looked like it was beaten to death by a hailstorm? He must have had indents all over him. He wasn't wearing a five hundred dollar suit.

If things and conditions are what determine your rest, your fear of God, your comfort and your edification, if it's things you have to have, you are never going to be comforted because it will change every time. When the Holy Ghost becomes your Comforter He will go with you anywhere. He will abide with you forever. He'll go to the darkest place with you. He'll go to the highest, He'll go to the lowest with you and His job is to comfort you. Our job is to edify one another.

Don't let people get down in the mulleygrubs. When they start giving you an old song and dance routine: "Nobody knows the trouble I've seen," I say to them, "Nobody really cares, but there is One who can help you, but you have to want Him to help you. You have to want Him to touch your life. You have to want Him to be the One who brings the comfort of the Spirit of God to you." Do we do that for them, or do we bury them. They were still warm when we got there, but by the time we got through with them, we might as well dig a hole, throw them in, and it's all over with. We ought to come along and edify- lift up, build up, strengthen the body of Christ so somebody would say, "Man, I was glad you were here."

When you finish this study, are you going to be four steps higher? Are you in the rest of God, are you edified, are you walking in the fear of God, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost. Oh, I love it, being comforted by Him. Do you know what is going to happen? Somebody is going to see it, and they are going to say, "What in the world do you have? What are you happy about? I mean, everything is falling apart; what are you happy about?" I will say, "Let me tell you about my friend." You don't have to get religious with people; Jesus is your friend. Introduce people to Him as your friend, your Lord, and your Savior. Let them also know that they can have a friendship that lasts forever, too.

One day we are all going to leave here. When I leave here I want to be preaching and witnessing to somebody. When I walk out of this body, I don't care how much longer it stands around and jumps, I am going to have a friend. The same friend that walked with me day by day; the same friend that watched over me when I slept; the same friend that took care of me when I was in need is going to take me home. So, I am going to enjoy Him now. I want to see the Church multiplied. I'm not talking about being multiplied by charismatic individuals. I'm talking about the multiplication that took place on the day of Pentecost - that kind of multiplication. I want people to say, " You have something and I want it. I don't know what it is, but boy, I need it. What am I going to have to do to get it?" I will say, "I'm glad you asked."

God is so good, isn't He? Press on into everything God has for you. Let's pray: "Father, in the wonderful name of Jesus, I lift my hands, both of them, because I really want to press into everything you have. Lord, I thank you for the rest that You have given me. I thank You for

the edification that You have brought into my life. God, I thank You for the comfort of the Holy Ghost. I thank You, Lord, for the fear of God and all of these wonderful workings of the Holy Spirit that continue to change us from glory to glory. God, I want to walk in a greater enlightenment, a greater revelation, day by day. I want to see You more in your beauty and your holiness. God, I want the fear of God to grow in my heart. I want to be obedient to whatever the Word of God tells me to do. Help me, Lord. God, I pray for each one studying this. I pray that this might be a changing point in their lives. Men and women are going to be drawn by the joy that the Comforter brings; by the peace that comes with the Holy Spirit. God, I just ask You to touch each life; bring them into a newer place than they have ever walked before. In Jesus' mighty name! Amen!