

Growing In Grace And Knowledge?

by Staff

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Is changing doctrine a sign of growth? Is "new truth" progress?

The church of God is a dynamic, living, changing organism, ever growing into greater and deeper understanding. Through the Holy Spirit, God guides us into all truth, a process that will continue until Christ's return. He leads each generation of Christians into new avenues of insight. Doctrine may change from time to time in light of this new insight, but mature Christians are not shaken by carefully researched doctrinal development and growth.

Hold it! Do you agree with the above paragraph? Over a decade ago, ministers of God's true church made similar statements to condition the brethren for liberalizing changes of doctrine. Satan has worked hard during the last twenty years to "water down," "adjust" and change the doctrines of God. How well has he worked on you?

Christ placed His doctrine in the church over many years of learning and growth. For the leaders of the church, striving to understand and prove the truth meant learning painful lessons. As a result, most of us were handed the truth in a nearly finished package after it had been established and lived by others. Though constantly admonished to prove the doctrine themselves, many never made the effort.

Satan began influencing ministers to preach that to "grow in grace and knowledge" means Christians grow by changing from traditional teachings to new, watered-down ideas. Before long, the church was asked to reject many foundational beliefs. The Devil is indeed sneaky! In a very short time, he had introduced the idea of evolutionary change in doctrinal understanding. The world's churches have seen their doctrines evolve over the centuries, but should God's church? Do we today have a deeper understanding than Paul or Peter or John?

We can rest assured that the inspired authors of Scripture had a better understanding of the doctrine they wrote down for us than we do as readers of it! By believing the evolutionary concept, we would have to assume that in the resurrection the apostle Paul will be stunned by the depth of understanding of today's superior Christians! Then why will they have higher positions in God's Kingdom?

In reality Christ passed His Word down through the generations within His church. Each individual Christian could only come to grasp the truth in proportion to how intently he loved and sought it. This love of the truth varied greatly from era to era, but the truth was always there, hidden in the pages of the Bible.

What then is true growing in grace and knowledge? It is placing the truth of Scripture in one's mind and heart. It does not necessarily mean that we gain more knowledge, but what we do know becomes more firmly understood and practiced.

Of course, Satan saw how the church taught that repentance means change: to change from the traditions of this world's religions to the true doctrine and way of life that God instructs. Without change one cannot enter the Kingdom of God. But the god of this world influenced receptive

ministers to make a "minor adjustment" to this belief, and with this he coupled the lie that the church evolves into increased understanding. Soon, true doctrine had been scuttled and been replaced with new, "enlightened" counterfeits.

Nowhere does the Bible teach that the church should grow in doctrine, or that new doctrine would be needed and developed in future ages to deal with changing circumstances. To the contrary, the Scripture encourages us to obey the doctrine delivered to us (Romans 6:17; Jude 3). Many times we are warned to continue in it (I Timothy 4:16; II Timothy 1:13-14; 3:14-16). We are told to beware of any teaching contrary to the doctrine we have learned (Romans 16:17; I Timothy 1:3). And how could one "abide in the doctrine" (II John 9-11), if God caused it to change from time to time?

Clearly, the biblical record proves God does not want His doctrine changed. God does not change (Malachi 3:6; Hebrews 13:8), and neither do His teachings. His teachings, His doctrines, are the way He lives and how He wants us to live. So, as Peter said, "But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (II Peter 3:17), proving and living in His doctrine.