

## Spiritual Growth Lessons

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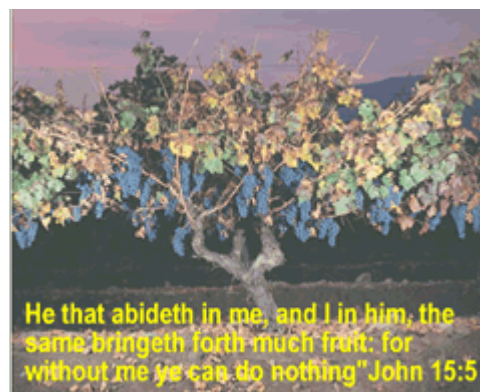
#### LIVING A VICTORIOUS LIFE

##### BE STRONG IN THE LORD!

*"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Ephesians 6:10-12).*

There are two spiritual kingdoms in this world - the kingdom of God, and the kingdom of Satan. When we are born into the kingdom of God, we become a true enemy of Satan and a true soldier of Jesus Christ (II Timothy 2:3-4). As a soldier of Jesus Christ, we must understand that the battle we are involved in cannot be won by any physical, mental, or moral strength of our own. That is why Paul wrote: *"For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh" (Philippians 3:3).*

We can only be an overcomer (one who lives victoriously) as we rely on the strength that Jesus Christ alone can give us. Be strong in the Lord! Jesus further illustrated this truth by comparing Himself to the true vine, and our relationship with Him is compared to the branches - which get their strength from the vine. *"Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing" (John 15:4-5).*



Paul said, *"I can do all things,"* but was careful to add *"through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:13).*

Some people have the mistaken idea that we can reach a place of spiritual maturity when all of our weaknesses will have been conquered, and we will be able to slack up a bit on our praying and seeking after God. Our character will be so molded after His image that we won't need to be so "spiritual" any more. The truth of the matter is that when a man *"thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall" (I Corinthians 10:12).* The Christ-like life is never lived by developing mature character in the manner one would attain book knowledge. It is the bearing of fruit because we are *"clinging to the vine."* As we learn more and more to yield our very lives to the true vine, Jesus Christ, we can bear more fruit of the Spirit unto perfection.

*"Therefore, I will all the more gladly glory in my weaknesses and infirmities, that the strength and power of Christ, the Messiah, may rest - yea, may pitch a tent over and dwell upon me. So for the sake of Christ, I am well pleased and take pleasure in infirmities, insults, hardships, persecutions, perplexities and distresses; for when I am weak (in human strength), then am I (truly) strong - able, powerful in divine strength" (I Corinthians 12:9-10, Amplified Bible).*

The word "infirmity" in Webster's Dictionary means, "the quality or state of being weak or frail, personal failings." The word "infirm" means "weak of mind, will, or body." The

word "infirmity" as used in the Bible comes from the Greek word "anaesthesia," and means "feebleness of body or mind, disease, infirmity, sickness, weakness, without strength or power, moral weakness."

When we are born into the kingdom of God, our weaknesses are not necessarily done away with, although we are greatly changed in many ways. In fact, often times our weaknesses are the driving force to bring us closer to Jesus Christ - to a total forsaking of the "self-life," and a total dependency upon Jesus.

Paul prayed three times for God to remove his weaknesses and infirmities, but God's answer to him was that His strength was made perfect in weakness. That is why he said, "*I will all the more gladly glory in my weaknesses and infirmities, that the strength and power of Christ... may rest... upon me.*" He went on to say "when I am weak (in human strength) then am I strong."

The secret of winning the battle over all things we face is to be strong in the Lord, and the power of His might. We must allow our weaknesses, trials, persecutions, perplexities, distresses -- and every negative thing that comes our way drive us to Jesus Christ. There is no better place than in His presence! *ds*

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