

# Fulton County Gospel News

Good News About Christ And His Church For All Of The World

“... Christ is the head of the church: and He is the Savior of the body.” - Ephesians 5:23

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## GROW IN GRACE AND KNOWLEDGE

### Part Two

#### HOW TO GROW IN KNOWLEDGE. . .AND IN GRACE

by Lee Moses

A Christian is continually to grow in his knowledge of the word of God. As seen in last month's issue of the **Fulton County Gospel News**, as one grows in the knowledge of God, he grows in the grace of God. Peter wrote, “*Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord*” (2 Peter 1:2, emphasis added)—God promises to multiply His grace to you as you add His knowledge to you. Certainly the desire to grow in God's grace is universal among those who profess faith in God. So should not likewise be the desire to grow in knowledge?

Having that noble desire, one might well ask, “How do I grow in knowledge?” Growth is not an automatic assurance to one who has become a Christian. There are steps one must take if he is to grow. Consider the following steps that will help one to grow in knowledge:

1. One must begin with the correct basis from which to derive his knowledge. If one is not growing toward a body of absolute truth, he cannot possibly grow in knowledge. Jesus informs all who would listen where that body of absolute truth is to be found: “*If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free*” (John 8:31-32, emphasis

added). God instructs the Christian to grow “*in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*” (2 Peter 3:18). It is only through the New Testament teaching that the Christian will grow in knowledge and in grace: “*Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue*” (2 Peter 1:2-3).

2. “*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction*” (Proverbs 1:7). Growth in knowledge begins with a spirit of reverence for the Lord. And reverence for the Lord engenders respect and appreciation for the power of His word (compare with Psalm 33:6-9; Isaiah 55:11; Romans 1:16; Hebrews 4:12). It has been suggested that some people are spending less time reading, studying, memorizing, and meditating upon the word of God partly because they view such as mere “academic exercise.” However, if these same people had the awe and devotion toward the Lord that His greatness demands, they would treasure every moment they could spend with His revelation to mankind (Psalms 1:1-3; 19:7-11;

119:18; Amos 8:11-12; 1 Timothy 4:15-16; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Hebrews 1:1-2; Revelation 1:3).

3. The Christian must remove from his mind and life those things which would stunt spiritual growth: “*Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby*” (1 Peter 2:1-2). If one is continuing to serve sin, he cannot grow into a profitable servant of the Lord (Romans 6:13, 16; 2 Timothy 2:13). And sinful thoughts and deeds are not the only thoughts and deeds that can stunt spiritual growth. Modern society is overwhelmed with activities and priorities that often relegate spiritual needs to a back burner. If one's mind and affections are set on things of the earth, it is impossible to grow in the things of heaven (Luke 8:14; John 5:44; Colossians 2:20-3:2). As a gardener first takes pains to remove weeds before planting, a Christian must remove all hindrances to spiritual priorities before he can expect fruitful growth.

4. One must determine to grow in spiritual knowledge. “*As newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious*” (1 Peter 2:2, emphasis added). Spiritual growth does not happen by accident. It begins with a longing for growth and for the means of growth—the word of God (compare with Matthew 4:4; Acts 20:32). And as a

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newborn baby who has fed on his mother's milk continues to desire that milk, the Christian who feeds on God's word will continue to grow in his desire for that spiritual nourishment. The greater one's awareness of the Lord's grace, the greater one's desire will be to know more about Him and how to serve Him. As the psalmist proclaimed his desire for God's word, "*I opened my mouth, and panted: for I longed for thy commandments*" (Psalm 119:131). And this begins with an initial determination to devote oneself to growth through God's word.

5. One must commit himself to Christian living. "*In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths*" (Proverbs 3:6). There are a great many factors involved in living the Christian life, and each of these factors contributes to spiritual growth. These include assembling with other saints (Hebrews 10:24-25;

3:13; I Thessalonians 5:11), regularly participating in acceptable worship (Psalm 73:17; Acts 2:42), study of God's word (Acts 17:11-12; Ephesians 3:3-4; 2 Timothy 2:15), a healthy prayer life (Psalm 55:17; Philippians 1:9; James 1:5-6), serving others (Matthew 20:26-27), personal evangelism (Ephesians 4:15-16), and progressively adding the "Christian graces" (2 Peter 1:5-8).

Every Christian has room and need for growth. There never comes a time when one can say, "I have completed my growth in the knowledge of God's word." To Christians who had already received grace and knowledge, Peter wrote, "*But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*" (2 Peter 3:18). As the Christian grows in knowledge, so does he grow in the grace of God. By consistently applying the principles mentioned above, one can be certain to grow in knowledge—and in grace.

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## THE LEGACY OF TERRI SCHIAVO

by Bob Spurlin

Why is it important for us to remember a deceased woman named Terri Schiavo? The media and news coverage before, during, and after the death of this woman has elevated the discourse about the gift of life. Schiavo suffered a heart attack more than fifteen years ago. This woman was not brain-dead or comatose, but breathed naturally on her own. She woke up to a state of minimal consciousness, and those visiting her on a regular basis saw her smile, laugh, cry, and understand simple instructions from medical personnel. Loving parents,

siblings, and friends caring for her on a daily basis saw a woman fighting for life while independent of mechanical breathing devices. Never has such a drama played out before the nation. Michael Schiavo, estranged husband and guardian, sought every legal means to have his wife's feeding tube removed using the courts to accomplish his purpose. One wonders how objective this fornicating husband could be while living with another woman and fathering two children. Florida Circuit Judge George Greer on March 18th issued an order that the feeding tube be disconnected from Mrs. Schiavo's body. The entire world would see the tragedy of a 41-year-old woman, who committed no crime, slowly, die of dehydration and starvation in the longest public execution in American history. The parents of Terri made twelve appeals going to the highest court of the land, yet their plea for the life of their daughter was denied. Thirteen days later this brave woman succumbed to a most cruel form of death.

This tragedy sends a bold and brutalizing signal by advocates of euthanasia. Many adhering to this philosophy would minimize the sick and infirm as they have become a nuisance to those that no longer want to bear the expense or time needed in providing such care. My wife and family for more than ten years have provided continuous care for this bedfast preacher. Although a feeding tube is not attached to my body, it never once occurred to me that my loved ones considered this act of kindness as a taxing exercise that should come to an abrupt end. It is comforting to know that a federal judge will not decide if my care will continue. The Schiavo case sets a legal precedent

for death by starvation, the cheapest form of execution, of any and everyone that is deemed “unfit”! Nazi Germany in the 1930’s had the ambition of a superior race, eliminating the handicapped and physically disabled. This is a scary dilemma for our nation, providing long-term reverberations to be felt for years to come.

### THE VALUE OF LIFE

The gift of life is inherently valuable, as “[God] breathed into [man’s] nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.” (Genesis 2:7). Human life has value within itself and we do not have the authority to cast it aside when it does not meet our standards. Who are we to boldly say, “He lives or she dies?” Taking one’s life during biblical times became an acceptable means of escaping the difficulties and hardships of life. Jesus brought attention to the sacredness of life and preserving it as a wonderful gift from the Creator. The compassion of Jesus for people, the miracles he performed and his teachings illustrate the importance of life and its sacredness (Matthew 8:5-13; Luke 10:30-37). Judges or a collection of individuals do not have the power to set up arbitrary rules that others must meet to conform to their definitions of “quality” of life. Life is of value within itself and not for the conveniences it may or may not bring us. Jesus counseled his audience, “Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?” (Matthew 6:25). Life has an intrinsic value. Regardless if a loved one is battling heart

disease, cancer, Alzheimer’s disease or mental disability – does he not have the right to expect the best of care with dignity?

### THE GIVER AND TAKER OF LIFE

We were made in God’s image (Genesis 1:26). The wise man said in Ecclesiastes 12:7, “*Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.*” God gave the spirit to man (Job 32:8; Genesis 2:7). It is His, and in the final analysis we should look upon it as a cherished gift. This is especially true for the Christian whose body is the temple of the Holy Spirit and we are not our own (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). This same principle applies when the apostle writes, “*For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself . . . whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord’s*” (Romans 14:7-8). Let us bear in mind that God alone has the right in deciding when to give and when to take life. The apostle addressed the philosophers at Mars Hill stating that the Creator of all “*giveth to all life, and breath, and all things*” (Acts 17:25).

It is usurping God’s authority for us to take another (innocent) human life. In the case of capital punishment, this is clearly authorized in passages like Genesis 9:6, Rom. 13:1-4. God is the one exercising the authority of life and death. When the state justly takes the life of the convicted murderer, it is really God who is taking that life through the agency of man’s hand (i.e., the sword, Romans 13:4).

### EUTHANASIA AND ASSISTED SUICIDE CONSTITUTE MURDER

Exodus 20:13 says, “*Thou shalt*

*not kill (murder).*” Exodus 21:12 says, “*He that smiteth a man, so that he die, shall be surely put to death.*” The Schiavo case underscores the guilt of those that sat on the judicial bench with folded hands refusing to extend life for the weakest in society. It is becoming fashionable to assist or lend a hand in suicide cases. Dr. Jack Kevorkian, otherwise known as “Dr. Death,” became infamous through assisting in acts of suicide. But, would not the principle of these passages condemn starving to death an innocent person who cannot feed herself? 1 John 3:17 warns, “*But whoso hath this world’s goods and seeth his brother in need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?*” What if my brother [wife] hath need to the point of starving to death, while I have the power to prevent it? Does the love of God dwell in me seeing that a need exists, I have the ability to furnish the need, and refuse to supply it in such a case? We often hear those endorsing euthanasia suggesting that death by starvation or dehydration is a peaceful and even euphoric way to go! What a warped sense of values is demonstrated discarding life in such a perverse way! (Isaiah 5:20).

“But, the judge and the adulterer Michael Schiavo did not kill her, but simply removed her feeding tube. Since the feeding tube is a life support system, and since she was not capable of feeding herself, they simply let her die a natural death. They did what is typically done all over America,” we are told. However, the feeding tube is simply one aid for delivering sustenance and nutrition, both of which are the natural means for sustaining life. Using this logic,



young infants are not capable of feeding themselves, but must depend on the aid of their mother nursing them or giving them a bottle. It was reported by some that Terri Schiavo while in her affliction could swallow some things. According to several medical experts this young woman, with proper therapy, could have learned to swallow more if given the opportunity to do so. Seeing all the events unfold this bedridden preacher kept thinking, "Why all the haste to bring the life of this young woman to an end?"

The death or euthanizing of Terri Schiavo seems to mark a turning point in our land of freedom to do as we please. Cultural elites do not like to hear about the absolute standards of right and wrong, but they will follow out-of-control courts and walk in lockstep despite the consequences, exterminating life when it is suitable to do so.

**CONCLUSION**

The universality of the judgment is highlighted by our Lord in Matthew 25:31-46, John 5:28-29, and by the apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 5:10. Many factors will come to light: our obedience to Christ, our living a faithful life, and whether or not we have manifested good deeds or bad "to one of the least of these my brethren." Judgment Day surprises will abound, but surely those that disregard the precious gift of life will face serious consequences. Terri Schiavo represents many who are now on euthanasia's death row. The mentally disabled, children with Downs' Syndrome, patients with Alzheimer's, and others with inconvenient health problems are candidates that do not meet the "quality of life" standard. Those

advancing the cause of euthanasia have determined the aforesaid persons do not pass the test as living a "quality life" and no longer deserve to live. The Scripture teaches that God hates "hands that shed innocent blood" (Proverbs 6:17).

Let us become cognizant of life and use our voices, influence, computers, pen and paper to cry out for the sanctity of life. Every year 35,000 men, women, and youth commit suicide. Every year about 1? million innocent babies in the womb are slaughtered in the abortion chambers in the name of choice. Is it not ironic the Terri Schiavo did not have a choice in deciding if she would live or die? Christians should in unison let their voices ring out that others will hear and know how we feel about the precious gift of life. As Paul poignantly said, "Think on these things."

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**GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION**

1. Hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17; Acts 16:32).
2. Believing what is taught (Mark 16:16; Hebrews 11:6).
3. Repentance (Acts 2:38; Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30).
4. Confession (Romans 10:9, 10; Acts 8:37).
5. Baptism (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; I Peter 3:21; Romans 6:3, 4).
6. After the above five steps, faithful Christian Living (I Peter 2:11, 12; Revelation 2:10).

**THE CHURCH OF CHRIST**

1. The Bible is its only guide (Romans 1:16; I Thess. 2:13).
2. Wears a Biblical Name (Romans 16:16).
3. Established at the right place (Isaiah 2:2, 3; Acts 2).
4. Established at the right time (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2).
5. Established on the right person (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:36).
6. Saved are in it (Ephesians 5:23; Acts 2:47).
7. Its members are enrolled in heaven (Hebrews 12:23).
8. Membership in it is obtained by obedience to God's commands including baptism (Acts 2:41-47; I Corinthians 12:13).

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