

He says, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold. But one thing I do, forgetting what is behind and straining for what is ahead I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. In other words it is just as important for the Christian as the work he can do for God is the development of character, the development of Christian graces. Oh, how much harder this is. After you have given a great sermon, after you have done a tremendous work you feel for the Lord, then you hear somebody say, Wasn't that a great talk! And how the old ego swells up in you. How all the different weaknesses of the flesh take a hold of you just at the time when we think we've escaped them.

Sanctification is a long slow process and it is very very important that we move forward in it. It is very important that we learn to develop those graces that are called the fruit of the Spirit in Gal. 5:22-- love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. How God wants us to work on these things.

Just recently I heard of a man who had graduated from seminary. A man of ability. Someone told how if somebody was crossed how harsh he became. When he lost the opportunity to get something he wanted how he lashed forth at somebody. It is easy for all of us to fall into that sort of thing. We don't get out of it at one step. It is a gradual slow process, but that is what God has us here for--to develop within ourselves by His grace and by His power those fruits of the Spirit He wants us to have to live with Him thru all eternity.

It may be necessary for us to go thru a certain amount of suffering to acquire this. In the early middle ages people got the idea that by deliberately making their flesh suffer, by hitting themselves, by going without much food, all that sort of thing, that they could develop the graces sufficient. But that's not necessarily the way to do it.

In fact someone was telling about a monastery (this one was a Buddhist monastery) and he referred to someone there who was going thru the prayers, through the forms year after year after year. He said at the end of it the flesh, the old sinful nature was just as strong as it had been at the beginning. Suffering may be important in God's plan for us as the means for our development. But I don't think God wants us to seek suffering. I think He wants us to use every reasonable means to avoid it. But when it comes I think He wants us to recognize that it may be His means of helping us to move forward in the direction He wants us to go.

I think just a word about marriage at this point would be in order. Unfortunately many people marry because they get a sudden overwhelming fascination for somebody somebody. Oh, just to spend the rest of my life with this person! Wouldn't that be marvellous! Well, in most cases it just doesn't work out quite that way. In fact it is my impression that these fascinations some people (young) get for each other, are very often the result of something in the eye of the other person that reminds one of his mother. I've heard that said, and I think that ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ may