

I. Know the Plan - 2 Peter 3:16-18: Synopsis of Gnosis

Spiritual growth varies with the individual therefore, every believer has his own lifestyle.

This means that it is impossible to determine what the Christian way of life is by observing Christians.

The Christian way of life can only be determined by a study of the Word of God.

From this study the individual believer learns the things God requires of him.

The mature believer is the one who, over a long period of time, has undergone adjustments in his thinking, made improvements in his decision making, and accomplished alterations in his lifestyle.

It is in this manner that the believer reflects the indwelling Shekinah Glory--he executes the lifestyle outlined by God for the Christian in the Bible.

Please note that discovery of the Christian walk demands that positive changes be made in one's thinking, decision making, and lifestyle.

Synopsis of Gnosis

We are expected to tolerate other believers in their growth process as they do us.

However, as the advancing believer begins to put the puzzle of the Christian walk together in his own soul, he is able to discern the level of growth of others.

Although he is not permitted to be judgmental, he is able to discern the current spiritual status of his fellow believer.

This enables him to silently defend his own soul from their erroneous thoughts and, if necessary, to avoid their company if their lifestyle is a threat to his spiritual growth.

Those with whom there is esprit de corps are the ones with whom he learns to have fellowship.

It is only by growing in grace and in knowledge that such discernment is possible.

2 Peter 3:18 - But keep on growing in the sphere of grace and in the sphere of knowledge ...

The word *gnosis* emphasizes the volitional act of giving doctrine an objective hearing for the purpose of determining its validity.

What Peter is emphasizing is really two things: (1) epistemology—the search for and the validation of truth; and (2) the part volition plays in that process.

In order to keep from drifting off course from the grace support system, Peter issues a command to grow, the present active imperative from the verb: *auxano* “keep on growing.”

Present - Durative; an action which began in the past and continues into the present. The past action is positive volition to truth and that status has continued to the present. This is the key to progress in learning the plan of God. You cannot learn how to execute the Christian way of life overnight. It is a day-by-day process. The command is therefore for the believer to be persistent in his attendance at Bible class and in the utilization of the first two spiritual skills: The Filling of the Holy Spirit and GAP.

Active - The positive believer produces the action by his use of rebound, attendance at Bible class, and positive response to the message communicated.

Imperative - Command; all imperative moods serve as a challenge to the individual believer's volition. He is either free to accept or reject the divine mandate.

So how do you fulfill the mandate to “keep on growing in the sphere of grace and in the sphere of knowledge?”

It is through epistemological habilitation: “to be endowed with ability and capacity.”

The imperative mood of *auxano* issues a challenge to the volition in the epistemological process.

The Holy Spirit has processed all the doctrinal information and made it academically understandable to the believer.

Thus, in the believer's quest for truth, the Holy Spirit has taken out all of the guesswork.

Under the filling of the Holy Spirit, academic understanding has been attained within an environment of objectivity.

Growth occurs when the believer responds to this information in a positive manner.

Thus, the imperative mood of *plusgnosis*, is a mandate for epistemological habilitation which results in spiritual growth.

Therefore, positive volition *tognosis* results in the Holy Spirit converting academic understanding into *epignosis*.

Epignosis means, “beyond *gnosis*,” and refers to the supernatural understanding by the believer of divine truth as revealed by God through His special grace system.

This is the only legitimate process for epistemology.

The successful search for absolute truth can only be accomplished through this method.

When accomplished it habitates the believer. “*To habitate*” means “*to make capable*,” “*to qualify oneself*,” “*to be endowed with ability and capacity*.”

God's truth circulating in the seven compartments of the believer's stream of consciousness endows him with the ability to execute the Christian way of life and the capacity to deal with outside adversity through the deployment of the 10 problem-solving devices on the FLOT Line of his soul.

Synopsis of Peter's use of *epignosis*

God the Holy Spirit inspired Peter to use *gnosis* rather than *epignosis*.

Growth occurs when the believer is positive to his academic understanding of revealed truth.

Positive volition to *gnosis* is the act of verifying in one's mentality the validity of truth.

Gnosis thus makes an issue out of faith perception within a grace process.

Growth is based on the identification of truth as it is brought to the believer's academic understanding by the Holy Spirit.

Once truth is verified by the Holy Spirit, the volition is then challenged to accept or reject it.

Growth thus requires the constant accumulation of facts from which the believer is epistemologically habilitated.

This volitional acceptance of truth is done by means of faith, in the sphere of grace, directed toward what is academically understood.

Faith perception of *gnosis* permits the Holy Spirit to convert revealed truth into *epignosis* and transfer it into the heart's stream of consciousness.

It is only by means of *epignosis* that the believer is able to execute the Christian way of life.

Gnosis is without any value to the believer as long as it remains in the left lobe of the soul.

Consequently, gnosis is like food on the shelf--it has no benefit for sustaining life until it is prepared and consumed.

We may refer to this process by using a dietary metaphor. Food which is not metabolized into the body is useless for physical growth.

Gnosis which is not metabolized into the heart is useless for spiritual growth.

Metabolization occurs when the believer responds positively to revealed truth, referred to by Jeremiah with the term, "*I ate them*":

Jeremiah 15:16 - Your doctrines were found [*gnosis or academic understanding*] and I ate them [*gnosis metabolized into epignosis*], therefore they became happiness for me [*9th problem solving device*] and the delight of my heart [*epignosis doctrine stored in the stream of consciousness*].

Consequently, Peter's use of gnosis plus the command to grow in the sphere of grace is a challenge to the believer to respond positively to the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit.

2 Peter 3:18 is a mandate for the believer's free will to search for truth and once identified to metabolize it into his heart resulting in epistemological habilitation.

2 Peter 3:18 - But keep on growing (an imperative mood thus a challenge to the volition) in the sphere of grace (Grace Apparatus for Perception] and in the sphere of knowledge (gnosis: volitional response to revealed truth] ...

Conclusions:

Peter by stopping at *gnosis* emphasizes the interaction between the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit and the volition of the believer.

Under God's grace system, the Holy Spirit is able to take divine truth all the way to the point of academic understanding before volition becomes an issue.

The only way the believer can advance beyond *gnosis* is for him to believe what the Holy Spirit has made clear.

This is why Peter uses *gnosis*; he seeks to emphasize the importance of human volition within the system.

To say yes to revealed truth is to obey the command to grow ... the imperative mood of *auxano*.

It is only when this occurs that spiritual growth may occur.