

Continued from Page Three, "Increasing In Strength"

challenges us. Let us not apologize for controversy between truth and error. Let us, with a determined resolve, stand as Saul stood, and do what he did. Let us "confound the Jews" of our day and discern both good and evil that we might lead others to Christ. "Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." (Gal. 6:9)

**Conclusion**

Who knows the untold numbers of people that came to the Lord as a result of Saul's (Paul's) work (Acts 19:10,

28:23-24, 30-31, etc.). But, he could have done nothing had he sat on the sidelines and been satisfied to occupy his space, and not challenge error in her strongholds and citadels. Had he not "increased ... in strength" in his early days as a Christian, he may not have done all that he did.

You may never (physically) grow more than five feet tall, but you (and I) can be giants for the Lord when we increase in our spiritual strength and grow as a Christian should!

"Not to know is ignorance, but to refuse to learn is pride." - L.E. Sloan Credit: www.southside-churchofchrist.com ♦

**THINK ABOUT IT!**

When a farmer stops plowing his land, stops planting seed, and stops harvesting his crops, he has stopped doing those things that identify him as being a farmer. When a Christian stops attending worship services regularly, stops studying, stops giving as he has been prospered, and has stopped working for the Lord, he has stopped being a Christian because he has stopped doing those things that identify him as a Christian. "By their fruits ye shall know them," (Matthew 7:20).

**Things That Impress Visitors**

1. Members that day dream or sleep through the sermon; talk during observance of the Lord's Supper.
2. Members that open a bottle of pop during services which makes a noise each time it opens.
3. Scribbling in and playing with the hymnals.
4. Members who whisper, talk, write notes, and pass pictures, etc. during services.
5. Members who are privileged to serve during the worship, but are so over medicated that they sound drunk.
6. Persistent late-comers who disturb and distract the worshipers.
7. Members who do not speak to visitors.

**What Must I Do To Be Saved?**

- Hear and Learn - Rom. 10:17 m. 10:9-10 ; 1 Pet. 3:21 ; John 6:45; 17:3
- Believe - Heb. 11:6; John 6:29; 8:24
- Repent - Luke 13:3; Acts 3:19; 17:30
- Confess the Lord - Matt. 10:32-33; Romans 10:9-10; 1 Pet. 3:21
- Be Baptized - Mark 16:16; Acts 22:16; Gal. 3:26-27
- Continue in the Apostles' Teaching - Acts 2:42; 2 Tim. 3:14-17

**About the Hillcrest church of Christ**

**Evangelist: Jimmy Pettigrew**

**How to Contact Us**

Telephone: (920)499-5677  
E-mail: hillcrestcofc@live.com



**Our Address**

1621 Hillcrest Drive  
Green Bay, WI 54313



**Schedule of Assembly**

Bible Study: Sunday, 9:00am  
Worship Service: Sunday, 10:00am  
Bible Study: Wednesday, 7:00pm\*

\*A song service is held on the last Wednesday of every month

[www.hillcrestchurchofchrist.com](http://www.hillcrestchurchofchrist.com)



# The Voice of Truth



July 17, 2011

**Because of These Abominations  
By Jimmy Pettigrew**

People buy daily newspapers just to read their horoscope. Many plan their day's activities and conduct their business by the predictions and suggestions of the daily horoscope. Astrology is a religion of superstition that makes gods out of the sun and the heavenly bodies.

God has always denounced and condemned those who practice spiritualism, sorcery, witchcraft, astrology, and all other forms of divination. Such curious arts are an abomination to God because they transgress His will, violate His authority, and dishonor both Him and His creation. Moses warned the Israelites as they were about to enter Canaan: "When you come into the land which the Lord your God is giving you, you shall not learn to follow the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, or one who practices witchcraft, or a soothsayer, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or one who conjures spells, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. For all who do these things are an abomination to the Lord, and because of these abominations the Lord your God drives them out from before you. You shall be blameless before the Lord your God. For these nations which you will dispossess listened to soothsayers and diviners; but as for you, the Lord your God has not appointed such for you" (Deuteronomy 18:9-14 NKJV). They were not to be guided by the false practices of the Canaanite people; instead they were to follow in the way in which the Lord would guide them: by His word!

Sorcery and astrology was practiced among the Babylonians: "Stand now with thine enchantments, and with the multitude of thy sorceries, wherein thou hast labored from thy youth; if so be thou shalt be able to profit, if so be thou mayest prevail. Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels: let now the astrologers, the star-gazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up, and save thee from the things that shall come upon thee. Behold, they shall be as stubble; the fire shall burn them; they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame: it shall not

be a coal to warm at, nor a fire to sit before. Thus shall the things be unto thee wherein thou hast labored: they that have trafficked with thee from thy youth shall wander every one to his quarter; there shall be none to save thee" (Isaiah 47:12-15 ASV). Isaiah declared that all of Babylon's sorceries and astrologers would be unable to turn away the punishment that God would inflict against her, and that the people would actually become weary of the false counsel of the astrologers, star-gazers, and monthly prognosticators, because of their many failures. Astrologers were those who pretended to foretell events by the appearance of the heavens. Star-gazers were those who claimed to make predictions by looking at the stars. Monthly prognosticators were men who professed to give predictions based on the beginning dates of the months, and that was because of the new moon that was observed at the beginning of the month. Many today rely on astrology to guide their lives. They do this to their own spiritual destruction.

Such evil practices were practiced by the Jews in their degenerate days. Notice: "And they forsook all the commandments of Jehovah their God, and made them molten images, even two calves, and made an Asherah, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served Baal. And they caused their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire, and used divination and enchantments, and sold themselves to do that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah, to provoke him to anger" (2 Kings 17:16-17 ASV). Did you notice God's stance on such evil practices? "Which was evil in the sight of Jehovah, to provoke him to anger." Of such men, the Bible reveals: "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of an image of corruptible man, and of birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts unto uncleanness, that their bodies should be dishonored among themselves: for that they

Continued on Page Two

**In This Issue...**

Pages 1 to 2 - Because of These Abominations  
Pages 2 to 4 - "Increasing In Strength"

Page 4 - THINK ABOUT IT!  
Page 4 - Things That Impress Visitors

*Continued from Page One, "Because of These Abominations"*

exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen" (**Romans 1:22-25 ASV**).

The Bible repeatedly portrays those who claim such powers as fakes and counterfeits (e.g., **Genesis 41:8; Exodus 7:10-12; Daniel 2:2-11**). Even the action of the so-called "witch of Endor," who actually is identified in the text as having "familiar spirit" (**1 Samuel 28:3ff.**), must be deemed fake for several reasons: (1) she was **surprised** that the spirit actually appeared (**vs. 12**); (2) she thought the spirit was elohim- the Hebrew word for God or gods (**vs. 13**); and (3) she did not recognize Samuel, but had to describe him to Saul who in turn recognized him (**vs. 14**). The belief in spirits, sorcery and astrology was in the New Testament age. There was a certain man, called Simon, (**Acts 8**) and Elymas in (**Acts 13**). All were phony and fakers! All these sorcerers and astrologers were fakes who had no real power – though they fooled a lot of people into thinking they did.

Those who wish to be Christians, those who wish to be

## "Increasing In Strength"

By Jarrod Jacobs

Spiritual growth is something that is required of all children of God. Unlike our involuntary physical growth, one can control his/her spiritual growth, and does so on a daily basis. In fact, the Bible even commands men and women to grow spiritually. The apostle Peter wrote, "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: .... But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen" (**I Pet. 2:2; II Pet. 3:18**). In the book of Hebrews, the Jewish Christians were chastised and rebuked for not growing as they should. They were told, "For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil" (**Heb. 5:12-14**).

Based on these passages, we can learn some vital points concerning spiritual growth. We learn that spiritual growth: **1)** Begins at an early spiritual age. Those who are new babes in Christ can and must "grow." **2)** One grows

pleasing to God, will give no credence to such claims today. Millions of people today have come to believe that their destiny is in the stars, rather than in the God who made the stars. "Power belongeth unto God" (**Psalms 62:11**). Greatness, power, glory, victory, and majesty are God's (**1 Chronicles 19:11**). God is eternal (**Psalms 90:2**); God is everywhere (**Psalms 139:8-9**); God knows everything (**Hebrews 4:13**). The Bible tells us God is able ... "Is there anything too hard for God?" (**Jeremiah 32:27**). The answer: "With God, nothing is impossible" (**Luke 1:37**).

The only reliable guide is God's Word. It is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path (**Psalms 119:105**). We need only to be guided by the Word of God, the wonderful words of life! The moment a person puts trust in something else other than God, and thinks that the future is determined by such practices, he is trusting in something other than God, and is sinning! "Trust in Jehovah with all thy heart, And lean not upon thine own understanding: In all thy ways acknowledge him, And he will direct thy paths. Be not wise in thine own eyes; Fear Jehovah, and depart from evil" (**Proverb 3:5-7 ASV**). •

through a diet of "milk" (or "the first principles") and then later advances to the "meat" of God's word. **3)** One grows from a babe in Christ to mature in Christ through "exercising" and using the senses. **4)** One's growth and maturity in Christ is seen as one is better able to discern "both good and evil."

Now that we understand these points, let us study about one specific case of spiritual growth in the New Testament. Saul (Paul) is a prime example of one who grew spiritually, and grew fairly quickly in the faith. We find the record of his conversion in **Acts 9**. There, Christ told him to go to Damascus and it would be told him what he "must do" to be saved (**Acts 9:3-6**). Saul entered the city, and for three days and nights fasted and prayed before God (**v. 9, 11**). Once Ananias told him what he must do, Saul was baptized for the remission of his sins (**v. 17-18**). Then, "he took food and was strengthened" (**v. 19**).

Following this, we see Saul with the disciples at Damascus. Notice what happened then: "And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God. But all that heard him were amazed, and said; Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in

*Continued on Page Three*

*Continued from Page Two, "Increasing In Strength"*

Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests? But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ" (**Acts 9:20-22**).

Notice that in the text of **Acts 9:19-22**, the words "strengthened" and "strength" were used in reference to Saul. Do these words refer to the same thing? No. One time, Saul "was strengthened" after having received food. Remember, he had gone without food or drink for three straight days (**Acts 9:9**). The next time the word was used, we find Saul increasing "the more in strength" as a result of his preaching Christ (**v. 20**), and confounding (baffling) the Jews (**v. 22**).

Now, what was the difference between the first use of the word "strength" or "strengthened" and the second? The difference was that Saul was strengthened physically the first time, and spiritually the second time.

How did Saul increase "the more in (spiritual) strength"? It came through his learning and then his proclaiming the truth concerning Christ. Two, it came through his obedience and standing for the truth even when it contradicted his former lifestyle (**Acts 9:21**). It also came through controversy, i.e., confounding the Jews concerning Christ. What we read in **Acts 9:20-22** is a specific application of **Hebrews 5:14** which tells us spiritual growth requires us having our "senses exercised to discern both good and evil."

A problem that is plaguing the Lord's church in many places today is a lack of maturity on the part of Christians. Too many congregations have 20, 30, and 40 year-old babies when it comes to spiritual growth. These people cannot teach, they cannot lead the worship services, they cannot talk to someone about their soul one-on-one, they have little interest in spiritual matters, they know very little about the Bible, (other than what the preacher has said) and they certainly want nothing to do with controversy or with having to maintain the lines God has drawn against sin and error, i.e., "discerning good and evil" (See also: **Ezek. 22:26**)! It seems rather than increasing "the more in strength" as Saul did, they are satisfied to be baptized, and then "live and let live." They are spiritual weaklings (some call them "spiritual invertebrates" — no backbone!); spiritual babies who need to be rebuked for their lack of growth (**Heb. 5:12-14**).

Brethren, we cannot have this attitude if we are going

to be what God wants us to be. Let us have the fire and zeal of Saul. In fact, he would later write to Titus and say that Christ died "that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (**Tit. 2:14**). He wrote the Romans that Christians must be, among other things, "fervent in spirit; serving the Lord" (**Rom. 12:11**). We will not be what God wants us to be if we do not have that fire and fervor to stand for God's word, to proclaim it far and wide, and let the chips fall where they may!

It is past time that we got busy on our spiritual growth. Brethren, this is not something that you wait for like a teenager's "growth spurt." Spiritual growth is something we must work at on a daily basis.

Why did Saul increase "the more in strength"? It was not because someone else did his work, nor because he let people think what they wanted to about Christ and His church. He did not grow as a result of "taking his seat" and waiting for strangers to walk in the door at Damascus or Jerusalem. He did not grow by saying that he and the Jews were "worshipping the same God." Saul stands out as a good example for all of us, because when we do what he did, we will grow as he did!

Was this all Saul did in order to become strong spiritually? Of course, not! We see Saul (Paul) consistently in prayer with God (**Eph. 1:15-23, 3:13-21; Phil. 1:3-4; Col. 1:3; I Thess. 1:2; II Tim. 1:3**). We see sacrifices Saul (Paul) made for the Lord (**Acts 15:25-26, 16:22-23, 21:13, 23:12-13; II Cor. 11:8, 23-28, 12:15; Col. 4:10, 18**). We also find Saul (Paul) concerned about his brethren, and being a good example toward them (**II Cor. 11:28; I Thess. 2:2-12**). All of these things played a part in Saul's spiritual growth; and in **Acts 9:20-22**, we find a living example of **Hebrews 5:14**.

By the way, how is our growth? Are we still a ways off from where we would like to be as a Christian? I know of no person who would say they have grown as much as needed, do you? Therefore, let us get to work and be busy in our spiritual growth.

Let us follow the righteous example of Saul (Paul) who shows us what true strength is (**I Cor. 4:16, 11:1; Phil. 3:17**). Let us not merely tolerate, but demand that the strong, sound preaching of the gospel thunder forth from the pulpit. Let us challenge ourselves to bring others to Christ by explaining the truth to them. Let us not back down from the devil when he rears his head and

*Continued on Page Four*