

J.R. Miller:

"First the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head." Mark 4:28

We understand this well enough in nature; but do we in spiritual life? The beginnings of Christian life are very feeble and imperfect. We must not expect in young converts, the maturity of character we look for in older Christians. Grace begins in a small way. We have no right to look at once for the ripened fruits of Christian experience.

But the wheat does not stop at the tender blade; it shoots up into a strong stalk, at last into ripeness. Christian lives should grow; they have no right to stay always at the starting-point. They should grow in knowledge, in power, in purpose, in achievement "until they put forth all the fruits of the Spirit, and grow into the ripeness of mature Christian experience.

We are to notice here also that while the growth is secret "its results are manifest. The growth of spiritual life are invisible "but the results are not. If a Christian is growing in grace "we shall know it by his life. He will wear more and more of the image of Christ, and the "mind of Christ" will appear more and more in his disposition and conduct!

Another thought suggested here, is that the beginnings of Christian life in young Christians ought to be most gently nurtured by those who are their spiritual overseers. The tender blades cannot endure a frost. Young converts cannot endure the sharp trials and temptations of this world. A clergyman is reported as saying, "I do not dare to bring too many children into my church "not because I do not believe in their sincerity and piety and fitness for church membership "but because there is no provision for their growth and nurture after they are in the church." Could any sadder confession be made? Something must be wrong with the church "when this is true. Let the words stand for the pondering of those whom they concern.