

Perhaps one of the most famous passages in the Bible is Rom 3:23, where God says through Paul, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Let's concentrate a little on the word 'short!' I have never been very tall. When I was younger I always thought about being short and wished I would grow. I remember that we had white door facings around my bedroom door, and I used to mark my height, and check it periodically to see if I had grown any. Every time I would grow a little, though, Mom would come around and wash it off, and I would have to start all over again. But this experience can give several ideas relating to Rom 3:23.

First of all, we are spiritually short in the sight of God. If you have ever been to Opryland or some other amusement park, you see that some of the rides have a little marker and sign that says, 'You cannot ride this ride if you are shorter than this mark.' And this is what God has said to us in his word, that in sin we cannot come to God; we fall short of the mark.

Secondly, we must be made aware that we are in sin. We must measure ourselves spiritually. And just as I could do nothing to instantly 'stretch' myself, we must rely totally upon the power of God and the blood of Jesus Christ to bring us that extra distance to the glory and salvation of God.

Thirdly, we must never stop measuring ourselves, because that is part of the spiritual growth process. The beautiful part of the Christian life is that we never have to stop growing. And we must continue to grow, because the end of growth is the beginning of death.

There are basically three categories of people present here tonight. There is the growing Christian. There is the stagnant Christian. And there is the unbelieving sinner. There may be those in the last two groups who need the help of this congregation and of God, either in a prayer for strength and growth, or to be baptized for the remission of their sins, and we hope and pray that you come for that help now, as we stand and sing...