

## GROWING IN GRACE

**TEXT: II PETER 3:17, 18; 1:1-8**

**INTRODUCTION:**

1. Peter concludes his second epistle with these words, "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (3:18).
2. To grow in grace implies there already is new life because dead things do not grow. The Christian life cannot be static. You are either growing or you are backsliding.
3. To grow in grace means you start off with saving grace. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2:8, 9).
4. Then after you are saved, you experience God's sustaining grace. God not only saves us by His grace, but He keeps us by His grace.
5. Jesus said, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand" (John 10:27-29).
6. The Bible also speaks of God's sufficient grace. The Lord told the apostle Paul, "My grace is sufficient for thee."
7. The hymnwriter said,

*At home or abroad, on the land or the sea,  
God's wonderful grace is sufficient for me;  
I'm finding it true that where'er I may be,  
His grace is sufficient for me,*

*For me, for me, His grace is sufficient for me. -- Leila Morris*

8. To grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, one must read the Bible, and be faithful in attending church services where the Bible is preached.
9. Second Peter 1:2 says, "Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord." This "knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord" comes from studying God's Word (cf. 1:3, 5, 6, 8; 3:18).
10. "The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple" (Psalm 119:130).
11. Continual spiritual growth is the effective safeguard against being led into error of the wicked and falling into sin (cf. II Peter 3:17).

## **I. THE RELATION OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH TO SANCTIFICATION.**

1. The principles of spiritual growth are given in the opening chapter of this epistle (1:1-8).
2. The persons addressed are referred to as having "escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust," and having already "become partakers of the divine nature" (1:4).
3. This deliverance from corruption precedes the command to grow in grace. We do not tell lost sinners to grow in grace.
4. We tell them, "Ye must be born again" (John 3:7).
5. Christians who are not growing in grace are still entangled in worldly corruption and worldly lusts.
6. When we trusted Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour, we became united to Him, and became partakers of His divine nature (1:1-4).
7. The very person of Christ, through the Holy Ghost, has come to dwell in our hearts, and by His indwelling becomes to us the substance and support of our spiritual life.
8. This is the relation of spiritual growth to sanctification -- God's indwelling presence.
9. Our Lord said in John 14:20, "At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you."
10. Our Lord said in John 15:5, "I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing."
11. The apostle Paul said, "Christ liveth in me" (Gal. 2:20). "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27).
12. The effect of this is to deliver us from "the corruption that is in the world through lust." God's indwelling and God's reviving presence excludes the power of sin and evil lusts.
13. Second Corinthians 5:21 says, "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Positionally we are in Christ.
14. The indwelling Holy Spirit is working in us so that our state conforms to our standing. This is the relation of spiritual growth to sanctification.
15. Because God has provided for our sanctification, and has imparted to us His divine nature, and has delivered us from the power of sin -- we are to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (3:18).

12. We do not grow into sanctification. The Bible teaches that we grow from sanctification into spiritual maturity. We grow into a closer union with Christ, and a more habitual and intimate dependence upon Him for all our life and actions.

## **II. THE RELATION OF GROWTH TO THE RESOURCES OF GOD'S GRACE.**

1. Second Peter 1:3 tells us that God has provided all the resources necessary for a holy and godly Christian life.

*Jesus Christ is made to me,  
All I need, all I need,  
He alone is all my plea,  
He is all I need.*

*Wisdom, righteousness and power,  
Holiness this very hour,  
My redemption full and free,  
He is all I need.*

2. These divine resources are provided for us through the graces and virtues of our Lord Jesus Christ, which we are called to receive and share.
3. It is not clear in I Peter 1:3, but "hath called us to glory and virtue," means, "hath called us to His glory and virtue."
4. First Peter 2:9 says, we should shew forth the praises of him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light.
5. The word "praises" literally means "virtues."
6. God has called us to His glory and virtue, so that we should shew forth His virtues.
7. We are to display the glory and virtue of Jesus.
8. A.B. Simpson said, God "clothes us with His character and in His garments, and we are to exhibit them to men and to angels. And these provisions of grace are brought within our reach through all 'the exceeding great and precious promises,' which we may claim and turn into heavenly currency for every needed blessing...Christ has, in Himself, the pattern of your life and mine, and all the materials. Our part is simply to receive, live out and exemplify them before the world."
9. Cf. Ephesians 2:8-10 -- "For we are his workmanship..."

10. When we look at II Peter 1 we see that the first four verses tell us what God has done for us. Then the next four verses tell us what we should do -- "Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue," etc.
11. Because God has so abundantly provided for us, and because God is so mightily working in our lives and hearts, and because God has delivered us from the power of sin -- "Add to your faith..." (1:5).
12. This is what the apostle Paul means when he says in Philippians 2:12 and 13, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God that worketh in you to will and to do of His good pleasure."
13. This does not mean that we are to work for our salvation, for Paul is addressing those that are already saved. They were "saints" (1:1).
14. Beloved, we are to work out our salvation, not work for our salvation. We do not work for God in order to be saved; we work for God because we *are* saved.
15. "Giving all diligence" (II Peter 1:5; cf. vs. 10) suggests a holy and solemn sense of responsibility to make the most of our spiritual resources and opportunities, because "it is God that worketh in us."
16. The proper development of spiritual growth requires diligent cultivation. It is strenuous. That is why the apostle Paul often uses military and athletic terms.
17. "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds" (II Cor. 10:4).
18. "No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier. And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully" (II Tim. 2:4, 5).
19. "And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway" (I Cor. 9:25-27).
20. An athlete and a soldier have to be disciplined. One of the reasons many Christians are not growing spiritually is they lack discipline.
21. "Temperance" (1:6) means "self-control." The concordance defines this as "the virtue of one who masters his desires and passions, especially his sensual appetites."

### III. THE INCENTIVES FOR GROWING IN GRACE

1. There is potential for abundant growth. Second Peter 1:8 says, "For if these things be in you, and abound..."
2. The present verb tense implies a continuing process -- increasing, growing, and abounding.
3. Lack of growth is a sign of inner deterioration -- "barren" and "unfruitful."
4. "Unfruitful" pictures a tree that remains without fruit.
5. John the Baptist said, "And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire" (Matt. 3:10).
6. Jesus said, "Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire" (Matt. 7:19).
7. In Luke 13:7, Jesus said, "Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?"
8. Jude 12 warns of "trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots."
9. There is a neighborhood I drive through often on my way to church. After Hurricane Sandy many of the trees have died.
10. Many of the evergreen trees are no longer green, but brown, indicating these trees are likely to die very soon.
11. Second Peter 1:9 says, "But he that lacketh these things (that is, the things listed in verses 5-7) is blind..." Spiritually blind and morally blind.
12. Spiritually blind people are more concerned with material things than with spiritual things. Spiritually blind people live as if this world was all there is. Spiritually blind people lack spiritual discernment.
13. The other day, a basketball player declared he was a sodomite. He is obviously spiritually blind and morally blind. But what is even worse is the reaction to his admission that he was a pervert. He was proclaimed a great hero!
14. Spiritual blindness in Scripture means a deliberate refusal to see the truth. Jesus said to the Pharisees, "If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth" (John 9:41).
15. To "make sure" your calling and the election (1:10) means to confirm them by growing in grace.
16. If we stay close to the Lord, stay active in church, stay steadfast in prayer and Bible reading, we "shall never fall" (II Peter 1:10b).
17. That is God's promise!

18. Second Corinthians 13:5 says, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?"

**CONCLUSION:**

1. Matthew Henry said, "It requires a great deal of diligence and labour to make sure our calling and election; there must be a very close examination of ourselves, a very narrow search and strict enquiry, whether we are thoroughly converted, our minds enlightened, our wills renewed, and our whole souls changed as to the bent and inclination thereof."
2. Let us make determine today that we want to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (II Peter 3:18).