

# Grow In Grace

**Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. 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. - 2 Peter 3:17-18**

Last week on verse 18 I spoke with you about grow in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. And today I want to speak with you hopefully, the Lord helping, on just simply grow in grace. Would you unite your hearts with me and let us all seek the Lord for His divine help and instruction?

*Our Father, as we grow, as our eyes are given to see, and we sit before you with a realization that this Almighty, Glorious God turned his back on his beloved Son that He might look upon sinful men and women. Eternity will not be sufficient in our thanksgiving. But the thing there is we do have eternity in seeing Thee. I believe, even growing there, in the vastness of the knowledge of our God. But Lord, if we do not start here, if there is no hearing, no eyes to see Thee, and no heart desirous of knowing, we're in a dreadful state, dear Lord. I never have known a child with a good mind, that was not anxious to become an adult. And as we move about in life, you've set all these things before us. The grain of dead corn falls into the ground and is buried. But it comes up with a different body, producing hundreds upon hundreds of grains, just like the little single one that was buried. What a magnificent Savior! Words limit us in speaking of Thee. The one thing we ask, Father, is for Thy Spirit that You might set before us, thy Son, and that in all the hearts of all your children here, that we all will go out with a larger concept, a greater degree of hunger, and knowing, and seeking after, and walking with this, our God. Father, give utterance in speaking to these. Give hearing ears in them and an understanding heart. Father, if it's pleasing to you when it's over, let us all, all as far as your children here, just pause long enough to thank you for the grace bestowed upon us and the desire to know you. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.*

I want to read verses 17 and 18 this morning. **2 Peter 3:17 - Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness.** You got one or two options here, children. Grow or fall from your steadfastness thus far. Always be conscious of that. Watch out for the wicked though they will not come dressed as the wicked. Watch out for the error of their words. "Oh, I serve the same God that you do. I can do this on the Lord's Day, and I'm never punished for it. And you'll get to thinking that you can also."

**2 Peter 3:18 - But grow (in grace).** Beware of being led away, but grow in grace. And as we looked last week **and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.** So the opposite of growth is standing still, remaining as you are, remaining where you are. Those of you that in the springtime plant a tomato plant or a pepper plant or you drop a seed, you do not expect that those plants you set out to be the same in a month. Sometimes you may have noticed that the plant might get almost grown and be loaded with blooms and then it begins to wilt. And you know something's wrong. And you pull it up and there's a cutworm that is cut around it beneath the surface that you didn't see. And the healthy plant is dead. There is no such thing, living, plant, animal, or human, that is in health and not growing. Something is dangerously wrong with a Christian if today you

are in the same place you were six months ago. And yet it seems that it doesn't bother us. We just remain where we are and going through the motions of what a Christian is supposed to do.

Now turn with me to 1st Peter, keeping your place here in 2 Peter. **1 Peter 2:1 Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings,** “But preacher, you don't know what he or she said about me.” Leave it alone. You talk with the Lord. If you ever start taking up for yourself, you're going to end up probably eating some of your own words that you should not have said. Malice, guile, hypocrisy, envies, and all evil speaking might be that little cutworm that is growing beneath the soil of your plant. You don't know it's there, pay little attention, and yet that fruit that you seem to have had a week ago has dried up. What's wrong, you child of God? **1 Peter 2: As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:** Now a baby doesn't desire milk to grow. When God birthed you into His family, He gave you the same appetite- spiritual appetite- that you had in the physical realm as a baby. You wanted milk until you were big enough to begin eating solid food. But you didn't eat to grow, you ate because you were hungry. But now the child of God, laying aside all these things, coming back to the Word, desiring just the sincere milk, the basics of God, of Christ, of salvation, desiring that, that you may grow. Now folk, only God, as I told you last week, can issue a command to His children, grow. You never could demand that of your children no more than your mom or dad could demand of you that you grow. But when God made the command, speaking through the pen of the Apostle Peter, “Grow”, provisions had already been made in the eternal counsel of God. Food was provided, drink was provided, and your appetite led you to partake of those things to satisfy it.

Now in every child, the potential of an adult is there. Many of you have got grown children that have moved out of the house. I don't know if you've got little ones still there, but Lord willing, they will be adults one day. But with every child, there could be circumstances that could prevent him or her ever reaching the stage of an adult. An accident or a disease and they never get there. In every little small acre out there, there is a potential huge oak tree. But then only in about, well, I say probably one in a thousand or ten thousand acorns that fall upon the ground will they ever come up. Some are crushed, some are eaten, but there was the potential in that, of that large old oak tree. But with you, dear child, there is no such thing as uncertainties in your growth and development as a child of God. **Isaiah 46:10a - Declaring the end from the beginning.** Everything was already set out and set up even to the completion of it before Adam was ever created, before you ever got here. In **Hebrews 4:3b** - Paul said **the works** (of God) **were finished from the foundation of the world.** So, all God's children are going to grow. And every member that is a part of the bride, a part of the true church, elect from the foundation of the world, Christ coming, shedding His blood, you're going to grow. There is not a possibility of God ever losing one for whom Christ died. **John 6:37 - All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.** And whatever God has determined that you be in his church, an eye, an ear, a foot, an arm, or a hand, whatever, you'll reach that potential at the part that you have in the local assembly. You'll grow. And to ensure that you grow, you came into the world wanting food. And when God birthed you, you had a hunger for His Word. What happened? What took that hunger away? What has destroyed your appetite. Be sincere with yourself, dear soul. Since last we met, this old ball that we live upon has made seven complete rotations on its axis. Your world, since last we met, has moved one point closer or farther from the sun in your orbit around the SON. You've made gains if you are a Christian. The plant that your heavenly father planted, it's growing, maybe already it's blossomed and maybe already there is fruit that you have borne for the edification of the believers in his

church. But what about your knowledge? Jesus said to him that hath- that is to hold as a valuable, valuable treasure. I don't know, you might have something that is very special to you that grandmother or grandfather left you or mom or dad. It might not be too valuable on the market, but it's treasured by you. And you hold it. And Jesus said, everybody, everybody that has and holds on to what I give him, and that that I say to him or her out of my word, if they hold it as a valuable treasure, I'll give him more. But he that hath not, he sat in the assembly, he heard every word that the one sitting beside him heard, but the one beside held on to it because it was something very needful for them. But the one next to you did not hold it tight, and possibly before you got out of the assembly, you'd already lost it. He that hath not, he that does not hold as a treasure to him shall be taken from him, even that that he hath not, that he thought he had. – Paraphrasing Matthew 13:12

So, from time to time, the child of God, instead of seeing advancement in growth, will have what appears to you to be a decline. Maybe your appetite is not as strong as it was five years ago or six months ago, or your thirst is not what it was. That seems to have been lost. And so, the language of the psalmist has become a reality in all God's children's hearts. **Why art thou cast down, O my soul? And why art thou disquieted within me? - Psalm 42:11.** “Why do you roar, make such a noise? Why is there such a tumult in you, my soul? Can't you hope in God? Can't you look back one more time and see God and what He's done for you in Christ, and get out of this hopeless condition that you're in, and find your appetite again?” Or later, David the same would say, **Let my soul live, and it shall praise thee; and let thy judgments help me. Psalm 119:175.** “Let my soul live”? I don't hear people talking like that today. I hear folk that say, “I was saved”. But all they got to hope in is a date of 20 years ago. And were David to come back today and stand in the average pulpit and use such language as these verses I've quoted to you, you would sit there and say, “That man does not know God”. Does he not know that we have a living soul and it shall never die? What's wrong with David? What God is he serving? The better question would be, “What God am I serving that I do not go through times of being cast down, times of darkness and times of light, times of sorrow and grief and times of joy and delight.” That's the God, the living God you serve.

As you know, the last three weeks, and I don't want this to get too personal here, but I've been having trouble getting a full breath that comes from deep within and then inhaling and fighting a low blood pressure, which I've not had in 30 years, and a rapid heart rate. But the steroid shot and antibiotics and antibiotics in tablet form had begun helping me. By Sunday night, I was beginning to feel better. And I got up Monday and there was a little improvement, and Tuesday a little improvement. And Tuesday I walked to the mailbox and there was a good breeze blowing. I'd been outside a thousand times when there was a strong wind or a breeze. I knew it was, but that day that little soft, blowing breeze had a special voice in it. It had a new meaning that day. I got a fresh breath. You and I live in a day in which the very air that we breathe has become so polluted. In Revelation 9, the bottomless pit has been opened and all those false preachers and demons have gone out and smoke has filled the land. You don't get a good breath in the gospel meaning of breathing. Not out there. So, you have to get out of the world and back to your closet. And try to get away from the smog of the world, the pollution that's all around you, and get back, of course, just you and God. And life is restored. **Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; Psalm 51:12a.** Oh, dear Lord, bring me back to the day I was converted and what happiness and joy filled my soul. But it's disappeared over the years.

Grow. Not a choice, not God warning you to do something. It is a command God made of His children. Now go back with me to **2 Peter 3.** Don't **fall from your own steadfastness - verse 17. Verse 18**

- **but grow in grace.** Last week I dealt with growth in knowledge, knowing that grace was a little more difficult to handle. Now think with me, since grace is the unmerited favor of God to you, a hell-deserving sinner, to me - one with you in that likeness. But God bestowed grace, not that any of us deserved it. God wasn't looking down through time and saw that one day you would accept Jesus. No, God, when you were all dead in trespasses and sin, God bestowed grace on you - His goodwill, His favor that you could never merit. **Grow in grace,** God's merciful kindness by exerting His holy influence upon your soul, turning you to Christ, and keeping you hemmed in in a narrow way with one object before your face, and that's the Lord Jesus, kindling you the exercise of all Christian virtues. That's God's gift to undeserving souls. And we call it the grace of God towards His children. Now, if it is a gift, how could you grow in something that God freely bestowed? Have you grown in grace? Does grace increase as the years pass? No. Absolutely not. But by growing, you're brought into a greater perception or an awareness of the grace of God. At conversion we all knew so little. The one thing we all did know was that we were sinners and it was against God. But back then we looked at sin as in the outward deeds I do. And it took years of walking with God, studying yourself, studying God and all his divine attributes. And then the depth of sin began to settle in upon you, that that you'd never known before. And what we know as aging saints, as to the degree and depth of sin that still lies within us, that would have driven a young convert to absolute despair. And some fifty years later, I live with two distinct realities. Sin is becoming more sinful. Not in practice out there somewhere, but in the awareness of it within. **For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing Romans 7:18a.** And some folk would take Romans 7 and say "That was Paul writing before he was a Christian." No. Before Saul of Tarsus was ever a Christian, he never had that attitude of himself – **in me... dwelleth no good thing.** That increases my need of a Savior, which is far greater today than it was a half century ago. You don't get saved by accepting Jesus and standing still at that point. And the death of Christ has more in it today to me than fifty some odd years ago. The entirety of the debt I owe, He paid the entirety of it. But I'm only learning the depth of sin as I journey towards Christ daily pursuing Him. I learn more of the exceeding sinfulness of sin and in that, I see more of the eternal debt I owe God of which I cannot pay. And having the reality of dwelling in a sinful nature and the restraining grace of God keeping all of His children from falling back into the depths of sin.

Grace. Sin has become exceedingly sinful, but it's magnified to me the grace of God. I've grown in the grace of God Not that there is more bestowed upon me or you today than at conversion, but I know more about my fallen nature today than I did at birth - Christian birth. I know more about sin and indwelling sin than I did at birth. Knowing all that, Jesus Christ paid the entirety of my debt. And I'm growing in grace as I learn myself and as I learn God.

One last, children. **Psalm 92:12a - The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree.** For those on the coast, with age on them, they stand majestically tall. **The righteous shall flourish.** That means to bud, to sprout, and to bloom. **Shall flourish like a palm tree, he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon – Psalm 92:12b.** The best of all the cedars in the land, in the world, are found there. **Those that be planted in the house of the LORD shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing;** - **Psalm 92:13-14** There's always been with me the dread of getting to the final years and falling away, as I've seen so many do. But I hang on to this promise and a few others that have to do with gray hairs. Righteous flourish, planted in the house of God like a Lebanon cedar. Even down to old age, they shall be blooming and bringing forth fruit.

Did you think that my language to you this morning was strange about an increase in the depth of sin? If you did not know what I was talking about, then you probably think that I was referring to the

times that I might have slipped out unknowingly and staggered in drunk, or down at the distant bar cursed out somebody. You might think that I was talking about all that, but it had nothing to do with my outward conduct. It had to do with knowing what lies within me. And as we walk in His light, we see light – paraphrase **Psalm 36:9b**. And one thing light does to you children, it manifests your blemishes. I've told you jokingly that's why I like a dim light over my mirror in the bathroom. I just don't like that fellow looking back at me. In the depths of sin, do you think Saul of Tarsus when he wrote Romans 7- a lengthy time after conversion - but prior to that, do you think he ever had a desire to be forgiven, to be cleansed? No. Because if he ever felt himself guilty, he could go down to the temple and perform certain rituals. And that would take care of his sin – he thought. You and I can't do that. We've got one source and one source only. And that's back to the fountain that flowed from Emmanuel's veins by all drops of sin that came from that pure, holy body. It cleansed my sin.

Grow in grace? Oh, absolutely. Not that I'm getting smarter. Just seeing more of what Christ paid. Not that I'm getting wiser. Seeing more of what God gave. My children, how can we go through the day without a thankful heart? Prior to Saul - I now say Paul - meeting Christ, there was a list of things he could glory in. **Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. Philippians 3:5-6** Now, instead of blameless, he writes, **when I would do good, evil is present with me – from Romans 7:21**. In other words, I don't do good. **O wretched man that I am – Romans 7:24a**. That's Paul looking into the brightness of the reflection of the Son of God. That's us. And as you journey, you learn more of the **pit whence ye are digged - Isaiah 51:1c**. And you see the depth of the hole that God brought you from. And you learn nothing but grace.

And then there's a verse, the last verse in **Luke Chapter 2:52 - And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man** - where it talks about the Lord Jesus He **increased**. That word increase means to beat forward, to lengthen out by hammering. One that was gifted in working in gold and shaping metals, when he would make the candlesticks that went in the tabernacle later in the temple, he would beat the gold out. The high priest's garments had a chain - gold. They had a little blue thread in that outer garment. **Jesus increased in wisdom**. Thirty-three years, the Son of man went out without having a place to lay His head, and finally giving in to wicked hands. Those 33 years, he was a beaten work - that pure, pure, spotless Lamb of God, that candlestick of gold. He was beaten out, beat forward, lengthened out by a hammer beating on him. And in the high priest's garments, there was the silver and gold. How did he get to be a tiny thread, or how did he get to be the solid piece of covering, it was beaten down, it was stretched out. How the Son of God had increased in wisdom! But here's the point in that verse- **in favor with God**. Now you take that home with you. The Son of God increased in grace - that's the same word - favor, and in goodwill. Was there ever a time in the life of the Lord Jesus other than on the cross when He was not in favor with God? And when the grace of God was not upon Him? No. But he didn't know about it. I know this. This is as far back as we can go in his life at 12 years of age. He knew God was his Father. So, from the toddler to the little boy running around in the carpenter's shop helping Joseph when He could, He was increasing in favor with God. And one day He knew, "Almighty God is my Father". And soon after, 30 years of age down here in this old world, he knew **I and my Father are one. – John 10:30**. Jesus grew in favor, in grace with God. And that's the command of God to you children. Don't let it be a waste.

I hope God has had something to say to your heart. And you'll get back to a dying Savior on Calvary -every drop of blood that was sustaining his physical life right before that last one was spilled. He

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said, **It is finished – John 19:30b. Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit – Luke 23:46b.** He bowed his head and he gave up the ghost. And He knew at 33, **I and my Father are one. – John 10:30.** And He as a Man clothed with humanity now, went back as a God-man to sit on the throne of God. Grow. Grow, my dear friend, grow. Get in the closet, stay in the book, and in good Christian fellowship, and grow in grace.

- Bro. Barrett Holloway