

“Speaking the truth in love, ... grow up into Him in all things,
which is the head, even Christ.” Ephesians 4:15

What is it to grow in grace? It is to grow in favor with the Lord through an intimate personal acquaintance and fellowship of spirit with Him... To grow thus in grace and not grow in knowledge is impossible; for the very object of such communion is to build us up in a more perfect knowledge and acquaintance with the

Lord--to bring us into closer fellowship with the divine plan, and to give us the privilege of being "workers together with him" in executing that plan. If, therefore, we love and obey the Lord and desire to grow in his favor, his written Word is our daily meditation and study; and thus we grow in knowledge

"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 Savior, Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever. Amen."--2 Peter 3:17,18.

THERE is a touching tenderness in the epistles of the aged Apostle Peter to the household of faith, showing that, while he realized that the time of his departure was drawing nigh (2 Peter 1:14; John 21:18,19), his solicitude {*anxious concern*} for the growth and development of the Church was increasing. Accordingly, he writes two general epistles, not so much to advance new truth, as to call to remembrance truths already learned and fully received (2 Peter 1:12-15), and to counsel all to faithfulness and to growth in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

In the preceding verses he has been calling to mind some of these truths, and he recognizes the fact that those addressed are already established in them; but, in view of his knowledge that false teachers would arise to pervert the truth, he counsels special watchfulness against being led away from their present steadfastness by the error of the wicked. That this counsel of the Apostle has a special fitness to the Church in the last days, our days, and was evidently so designed by the Spirit of God, is clear from verse 3--"There shall come in the last days scoffers," etc.

Let us observe the manner in which the Apostle would have us guard against being led away by the error of the wicked. Is it by a careful investigation of all the claims which

every new false prophet that arises may intrude upon our attention, thus giving heed to every seducing spirit (1 Timothy 4:1)? No: that would be quite contrary to the teaching of "our beloved brother Paul," to whom Peter so affectionately refers, and whom he so fully endorses; for Paul had given no uncertain counsel on this subject; saying, "Shun profane and vain babblings; for they will increase unto more ungodliness, and their word will eat as doth a canker;" and "I entreat you, brethren, to mark those who are making factions and laying snares contrary to the teaching which you have learned, and turn away from them; for they that are such are not in subjection to our anointed Lord, but to their own appetite [for honor and praise among men, as great teachers-- 1 Timothy 1:6,7]; and by kind and complimentary words they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting. ...I wish you to be wise with respect to that which is good, and harmless with respect to that which is evil."-- 2 Timothy 2:16,17; Romans 16:17-19.

Peter felt the force of Paul's wise and earnest counsel, and with emphasis re-echoed the same sentiments. To give heed to such seducing doctrines, contrary to the doctrine which we have already received from the Lord and the apostles, argues a lack of faith in those doctrines. Such a one is not established in the faith. And indeed there are those--and such is

the general sentiment among the teachers of false doctrine--who think that it is not either necessary or advisable to be established in the faith. To be established is to be a bigot, is the idea they advance. And so it is, if one is so unfair in mind as to accept and tenaciously hold that which he has never proved either by sound logic or Bible authority. But he is not an unreasoning bigot who, in simple faith, on the authority of God, accepts the Word of God. And such, and only such, as do so are established in the truth. The difference between the strong and steadfast Christian and a bigot is that the one is established in the truth, while the other is established in error.

The former knows the truth, and the truth has made him free from all doubts and misgivings, and from all desire to delve into the muddy pool of human speculations. To all such Paul says, "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him, rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith, as ye have been taught [by us, the apostles], abounding therein with thanksgiving."--But, "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ."--Colossians 2:6-8.

With these sentiments of "our beloved brother Paul," Peter's counsel is in fullest harmony, his advice being, not to waste valuable time in investigating "the errors of the wicked;" but, on the contrary, to endeavor the more earnestly to "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ," who is the way, the truth and the life. The more thorough our knowledge of the Lord and the more intimate our acquaintance with him, the more secure we are in our own steadfastness.

But what is it to grow in grace? It is to grow in favor with the Lord through an intimate personal acquaintance and fellowship of spirit with him. It implies, first, a knowledge and recognition on our part of our redemption through his precious blood and a personal faith in and dependence upon all the promises of the Father made to us through him, and then an intimate communion with him in our daily life

of prayer, and of observation of his will and obedience to it.

If such be our constant attitude of mind and heart, there must be a constant ripening of the fruits of the spirit, rendering us more and more pleasing and acceptable to our Lord. A sense of the divine acceptance and favor is given to us from day to day in increasing measure, in fulfilment of that blessed promise of our Lord, "If a man love me he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."-- John 14:23.

This, as nearly as words can express it, is what it is to grow in grace; but the full and blessed understanding of it is best appreciated by those who from day to day walk with God in faith and obedience and love.

To grow thus in grace and not grow in knowledge is impossible; for the very object of such communion is to build us up in a more perfect knowledge and acquaintance with the Lord--to bring us into closer fellowship with the divine plan, and to give us the privilege of being "workers together with him" in executing that plan. If, therefore, we love and obey the Lord and desire to grow in his favor, his written Word is our daily meditation and study; and thus we grow in knowledge: not, however, by finding out each year that what we learned last year was false, but by adding to what we learned last year, by putting on more and more of the armor of God until we realize its glorious completeness in the full discernment of the divine plan of the ages. We are then ready to do valiant service for the cause of truth in withstanding the encroachment of error (Ephesians 6:10-13), being established, strengthened and settled in the faith (1 Peter 5:10) But even to those thus established in the faith there is abundant opportunity to grow in knowledge; for while they will see nothing new or different in outline or design, they will be continually charmed and cheered with newly discovered lines of harmony and beauty in the divine drawings of the wonderful plan of the ages. As pupils we may ever study the master workmanship of the Divine Architect,

"And still new beauties shall we see,
And still increasing light."

Our beloved brother Peter, zealous for our growth in knowledge, endeavors to inspire us thereto, by calling our attention to the wonderful events and the close proximity of the day of the Lord; saying,--

"The day of the Lord will come as a thief [unobserved by the world], in the which the heavens [present ecclesiastical powers] shall pass away with a great noise [tumult and confusion], and the elements [the various parties and sects composing it, split and torn by discordant views] shall melt with fervent heat [the heat of public discussion and investigation]: the earth also [society as at present organized under civil and ecclesiastical authority] and the works that are therein shall be burned up" (destroyed, in the strife and friction caused by increasing knowledge combined with selfishness. This will not be a literal fire, but, as described by the prophets, the fire of divine jealousy--Zephaniah 1:18; 3:8). (2 Peter 3:10) Already the noise and tumult, which shall thus eventuate {*to come as a result*} in worldwide anarchy, are distinctly heard in every nation: for the day of the Lord has indeed begun, and the heat of human passion is growing more and more intense daily, and the great time of trouble is very near.

"Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved [seeing that present arrangements and institutions shall all go down], what manner

of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens [the present ruling powers] shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?" Let us indeed lay to heart this solemn question, for we stand in the very presence of the Judge of all the earth. These words, while addressed to God's people eighteen centuries ago, and serving a purpose for good all along down this Gospel age, are specially meant by the spirit for us, who are living in this very Day of God.

"Nevertheless, we [we who have come into covenant relationship with the Lord--we, unlike the rest of the world, know of the divine plan and], according to his promise, look for new heavens [the Kingdom of God--to be established in power and great glory] and a new earth [a new organization of society under the rulership of Christ and his glorified bride, the Church] wherein dwelleth righteousness." Blessed assurance! how favored are we above the people of the world who have not this knowledge!

"Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless." (2 Peter 3:11-14) And Jude (24) reminds us that the Lord, in whose grace and knowledge Peter desires us to grow, "is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy." Amen. ▲

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2 Peter, Chapter 3

1 *This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance:*

2 *That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of*

the Lord and Saviour:

3 *Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts,*

4 *And saying, Where is the promise of his presence? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the*

beginning of the creation.

- 5 *For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water:*
- 6 *Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished:*
- 7 *But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.*
- 8 *But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.*
- 9 *The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*
- 10 *But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.*
- 11 *Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness,*

- 12 *Looking for and hasting unto the presence of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?*
- 13 *Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.*
- 14 *Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.*
- 15 *And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you;*
- 16 *As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.*
- 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.*
- 18 *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. ◇*