



The Bible Principles of Christian Growth

“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.

¹⁸But 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

Becoming a Christian is a new start, and the Bible describes it as a new birth or being born again (1 Peter 2:2, 1:23). In the natural world God intends for babies to grow up to be adults, so in the spiritual world God intends for new born babies in Him to grow up to be spiritual adults. When babies do not grow it reveals something is **very** wrong physically and when Christians do not grow but remain babies in Christ, it also reveals that something is **very** wrong spiritually.

One of the things it reveals and brings to the light is that you are unskillful in the word of righteousness.

The Bible says in Hebrews 5:12-14, “For when the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. ¹³For **everyone that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness**: for he is a babe. ¹⁴But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.”

Here Paul is addressing a people who had a knowledge of the truth and had been so thoroughly instructed in the word of God that they should be teaching others. But they had not

become proficient in the word, had not matured, and were underdeveloped. As a result they were unacquainted with the word, their knowledge grew dim or was limited, and their spiritual growth retarded and they became as babes again who needed milk.

Some people instead of going forward in Christian knowledge forget the very first principles that they had learned long ago and need to be taught again. It is reasonable and expected that a Christian advances in knowledge in proportion to their means and opportunities, and their time of professing religion. God intends that Christians grow up to the full stature of manhood or womanhood and partake of strong meat, and to be able to bear discourses on the mysteries of our religion, and not always rest comfortably in plain things.

Our inability or failure to grow causes a chain reaction which adds to additional spiritual problems.

In 1 Cor. 3:1, 2 Paul defines what the condition is of those who are babes and the problems they have as a result. “AND I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. ²I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. ³For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you **envying**, and **strife**, and **divisions**, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?”

Here Paul tells the Corinthians that he could not speak to them as unto spiritual men, but as unto carnal men, as unto babes in Christ. It was evident to Paul that they were under the command of carnal and corrupt affections, and that they were babes in Christ because of their

envying, strivings, and divisions among themselves. They were still responding to the promptings of the natural heart and these were proofs of their being carnal and Paul blames them for being such. The Bible says in 1 Cor. 2:14 that those who respond to the natural heart cannot receive spiritual things. “But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” He asked them, do you not walk as men? In other words, they were not living or acting as “spiritual” Christians but as “babes”. True religion makes men peaceable and not contentious. These feelings and desires of the natural heart must be subdued by the power of Christ in order for the Holy Spirit to have access to our hearts and implant the word of truth whereby we may grow in grace.

Spiritual babes in Christ are still children. In this next passage the strong’s concordance defines a child as a *simple minded person, an immature Christian*. “When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.” 1 Cor. 13:11. The present state is a state of childhood, the future that of manhood. You think and reason as a child. Such is the difference between earth and heaven. Children have narrow views, confused and indistinct notions of things in comparison to that of grown men. When reason is ripened and matured, how naturally do men despise and relinquish their infant thoughts, put them away, reject them, and esteem them as nothing. When we grow up as men, putting away our carnal characters, we shall despise our childish folly, instead of priding ourselves in them when we are children.

The scriptures teach that until we grow up in Christ we will be confused... “That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait

to deceive.” Eph 4:14. This scripture encourages us to no longer be children in knowledge, weak in the faith, and inconstant in our judgments, easily yielding to every temptation, readily complying with everyone’s humor, and being on everyone’s back. Children are easily imposed upon. We must grow up and correct the problem of being tossed to and fro, like ships without ballast, and carried about, like clouds in the air, with such doctrines that have no truth or solidity in them, but nevertheless spread themselves far and wide, and are therefore compared to the wind. Children that are tossed to and fro are taken by the subtlety of seducers and their cunning craftiness, by which they use their skillfulness to find ways to seduce and deceive.

The consequences of remaining a carnal Christian; one that lives to the flesh will die, that is, die eternally. It is the pleasing, and serving, and gratifying of the flesh, that are the ruin of the soul. “For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.”⁷ Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.⁸ So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.¹³ For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.” Romans 8:6-8, 13

How to Build on Your Faith and Grow

How does a Christian begin to grow? In what ways should we grow? How can we know for sure if we are growing?

2 Peter 1:3 tells us that God’s divine power has given us “all things that pertain unto life and godliness”. The Lord has withheld nothing that will aid us in our growth of grace, in our obtaining of godly characters, and our securing salvation.

“According as his divine power hath given unto us **all things** that pertain unto **life and godliness**, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue.” 2 Peter 1:3

Not only has He given us all things that pertain unto life and godliness but He wants us to grow up into him in all things. No matter what others around you do, we have been given all that we need to grow in grace.

“But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in **all things**, which is the head, even Christ.” Ephesians 4:15

Once we have made the escape from sin, we must grow and build upon the fundamental principles of the gospel we have received. Growing up into Christ means being more deeply rooted and grounded in Him, in love, faith and knowledge. We should grow up towards maturity, which is opposed to being children. If in your experience you are not improving you are not growing, but still a child, still carnal. Those Christians who are improving will grow up into Christ. The more we grow up into an acquaintance with Christ, faith in Him, love to Him, dependence upon Him, the more we shall flourish in every grace. His is the head, and we should thus grow, that we may thereby honor our Head. And when we grow, we should assist others, especially who are members of the household of faith to grow as well.

How does a Christian begin to grow? By studying the word. Christian growth is connected to our knowledge of the Lord. The great invitation of the Lord is found in Matthew 11:28-30, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹Take my yoke upon you and **learn of me**; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. ³⁰For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

He invites us to learn of Him, and in so doing we grow in Him. Growth for God is always in direct proportion to our growth in the knowledge of the Lord. In order to grow in the knowledge of the Lord we must spend time studying, and applying the word of God

to our lives. We then must spend much time praying and meditating over what we are learning of Him. “Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord.” 2 Peter 1:2.

In order to grow you will need to develop a plan of Bible study which will help you to daily better understand His will for your life through the principles you learn from this point forward.

The four gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are a good place to start as they give us different pictures of Christ according to each personal perspective, allowing us to get to know Him better. Learning of Him will enable us to follow His steps, grow in His grace, and throw off the carnal yoke. And the Bible states this is why we were called.

“For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should **follow his steps**: ²²Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: ²³Who, when he was reviled, **reviled not** again; when he suffered, he **threatened not**; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.” 1 Peter 2:21-23

In what ways should we grow? Growing in grace means developing Christ-likeness of character. Having His character, the fruit of His Spirit. “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith. ²³Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.” Galatians 5:22, 23. It means allowing Him to live through us each day. It means thinking His thoughts, doing His deeds, seeing through the eyes of faith what He sees, and feeling what He feels.

Peter tells us one of the ways to grow in grace is by claiming the precious promises of God. “Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: **that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature**, having escaped

the corruption that is in the world through lust.” 2 Peter 1:4

To become fuller of the grace and characteristics of God we need to learn, claim, and live the promises of God. Those who receive the promises of the gospel partake of the divine nature. They are renewed in the spirit of their mind, after the image of God, in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. Their hearts are set for God and His service; they have a divine temper and disposition of soul. Those in whom the Spirit works the divine nature are freed from the bondage of corruption. Those who are, by the Spirit of grace, renewed in the spirit of their mind, become children of God, growing in grace until they become mature Christians.

But Peter does not end with partaking of the promises of God. He also tells us we need to add several things to these promises.

“And **beside this**, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; ⁶And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; ⁷And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. ⁸For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Without giving all diligence we cannot gain any ground or grow in the work of holiness. The expression giving all diligence to add to faith these other traits is to make your calling and election sure. It requires a great deal of diligence and labor to make our calling and election sure. There must be a very close examination of ourselves, a very narrow search and strict enquiry to determine if we are thoroughly converted, if our minds are enlightened, our wills renewed, and our whole souls changed. (See our Bible study on [“Examine Yourselves”](#)).

However, those who are slothful in the department of spiritual advancement will make nothing of it, and the Bible has much to say about slothfulness. “Slothfulness casteth into a deep sleep; and an idle soul shall suffer hunger.” Prov. 19:15. Luke 13:24 says we must strive to enter in at the straight gate. “Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.”

2 Peter exhorts us to press forward for the obtaining of more grace, and it is in this passage that the believer’s way is marked out step by step. Here we see that faith alone is not enough. We need to grow in virtue, the moral excellence, goodness and righteousness of the Lord. We should be trying to imitate Jesus, and put into practice the goodness and righteousness that He exercised to His fellowman. To this we are to add knowledge. Full discernment and acknowledgement of God and His marvelous character comes by reading, studying and praying your way through the word of God. To knowledge we are to add temperance. Growth means not allowing our passions and tempers and tongues to run out of control, but become more and more self-controlled. The Bible teaches sobriety as well as honesty, therefore, we must be sober and moderate in the use of the good things of this life such as food, clothes, sleep, recreation, talk, etc. An inordinate desire after these things is inconsistent with an earnest desire after God and Christ. To temperance we are to add patience. Patience is a cheerful or hopeful endurance. A Christian man is a patient man, not soon angered, or hasty in spirit. The Bible says in James 1:4 “But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.” In the world we will have much trouble, and patience comes through enduring tribulation. “And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience.” Romans 5:3. Tribulation

requires the exercise and occasions the increase of this grace, by bearing all calamities and crosses with silence and submission, without murmuring against God or complaining of Him, but rather justifying Him who allows affliction to come to develop this grace. To patience we are to add godliness, and godliness is produced by patience. This means having a reverence for the Lord which will develop out characters more and more into His divine image. When Christians bear afflictions patiently, they get an experimental knowledge of the loving-kindness of their heavenly Father., and are through this means brought to the child-like fear and reverential love wherein true godliness consists. To this we are to add brotherly kindness. To love our neighbor as our self is one of the laws the commandments hangs on. The knowledge of God and imitation of His character will make us nicer to those around us, even those who misunderstand us. Brotherly kindness is a tender affection to all our fellow-Christians, who are children of the same Father, servants of the same Master, members of the same family, travelers to the same country, and heirs of the same inheritance. This grace leads us to love all with a pure heart fervently. To this we are to add charity. This is tied very closely to brotherly kindness. Love is the basic element of all our service to the Lord. This grace must be extended to all mankind, not only those whom we have delight in who are the children of God. God has made of one blood all nations, and all the children of men are partakers of the same human nature, all are capable of the same mercies, and liable to the same afflictions. Therefore, though upon a spiritual account Christians are distinguished and dignified above those who are without Christ, yet are they to sympathize with others in their calamities, and relieve their necessities, and

promote the welfare both in body and soul, as they have opportunity. This is how Christians can evidence that they are the children of God, who is good to all, but is especially good to Israel.

How can we know for sure that we are growing? Genuine charity revealed in the life. Wherever grace abounds there will be an abounding in good works. "This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. ¹³Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." John 15:12, 13.

When we are spiritual babes, or carnal if you will, we will not have the graces of God and the results will be as Peter describes in 2 Peter 1:9 "But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins."

On the other hand Peter tells us what the end results are if we develop these Christ-like characteristics. "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: ¹¹For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." 2 Peter 1:10, 11

Here we are told we will be kept from falling, at all times, even in those hours of temptation. When others shall fall into heinous and scandalous sins, those who are diligent in spiritual growth partaking of God's divine nature, shall be able to walk circumspectly and keep pressing forward and upward in the way of their duty. When many fall into errors, these Christians shall be preserved sound in the faith, and stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. He also brings out that those who are diligent in the work of spiritual advancement shall have a triumphant entrance into glory, while the Bible speaks of those few who get to heaven, some are scarcely saved (1 Peter

4:18), and with a great deal of difficulty, even as by fire (1 Cor. 3:15). Those who are growing in grace, and abounding in the work of the Lord, shall have abundant entrance into the joy of the Lord, and the everlasting kingdom that He has prepared for us, and they shall reign with Him forever and ever.

Conclusion

In order for us to grow in grace and mature as a Christian we have to first be a Christian. One of the first steps to being a Christian is to recognize your great need of Christ in your life, and make a full surrender to Him. Confess your sins to Him alone, repent, of your wrong lifestyle and in faith begin the journey towards His throne. Abounding in all the Christian graces will not allow us to be unfruitful and inactive, but will on the other hand make us very zealous and lively, vigorous and active in all practical Christianity, and eminently fruitful in the works of righteousness. These will bring much glory to God by bringing forth much fruit among men, which will give evidence that we are His servants abounding in the work He has given us to do. We must be diligent however, in our endeavors to attain all of these graces which are absolutely necessary for the obtaining of glory, honor, and immortality. It is the Christians' duty to make our calling and election sure. It requires a great deal of diligence and labor to make it so, and it cannot be attained and kept without assistance. Through diligence in obtaining these graces you will be kept from falling.

May the Lord help you, strengthen you, and bless you to press forward by His grace.

A Poem of God's Grace

I did not know His love before,
The way I know it now.
I could not see my need for Him,
My pride would not allow.
I had it all, without a care,
The "self-sufficient" life.
My path was smooth, my sea was still,
Not a cloud was in my sky.

I thought I knew His love for me,
I thought I'd seen His grace,
I thought I did not need to grow,
I thought I'd found my place.
But then the way grew rough and dark,
The storm clouds quickly rolled;
The waves began to rock my ship,
I found I had no hold.

The ship that I had built myself
Was made of foolish pride.
It fell apart and left me bare,
With nowhere else to hide
I had no strength or faith to face
The trials that lay ahead,
And so I simply spoke His name,
And bowed my weary head.

His loving arms enveloped me,
And then He helped me stand.
He said, "You still must face this storm,
But I will hold your hand."
So through the dark and lonely night
He guided me through pain.
I could not see the light of day
Or when I'd smile again.

Yet through the pain and endless tears,
My faith began to grow.
I could not see it at the time,
But my light began to glow.
I saw God's love in a brand new light,
His grace and mercy, too.
For only when all self was gone
Could Jesus' love shine through.